AUTISM AND THE 'LANDSCAPE OF FEAR'

Many individuals with autism experience high levels of anxiety as they struggle to respond to the demands of a school or work environment and to the social stress of everyday living. The prevalence of anxiety in the autistic population varies with age and ability levels so that able autistic adolescents experience the higher levels of anxiety (Grondhuis and Aman 2012).

Although anxiety is among the most common disorders of childhood, it is significantly more common among children with autism. A study by Settipani *et al.* (2012) found that 42 per cent of children diagnosed with an anxiety disorder were on the autism spectrum. A principal source of anxiety for these children was worrying about interpersonal relationships so that they frequently met the diagnostic criteria for a social phobia. Social anxiety which leads to increased social avoidance, inhibition and social discomfort were found to be particularly common among adolescents on the autism spectrum (Kerns and Kendall 2012). The link between social anxiety and autism was explained in terms of social difficulties leading to repeated social failures. Difficulties with the understanding and identifying of emotions were also considered to trigger anxiety. The restricted patterns of behaviour seen in autism are, in this paper, thought to reflect the difficulties in understanding the surrounding environment which might be re-framed as context blindness.

A wider range of sources for anxiety were identified in a study by Trembath *et al.* (2012). These included sensory issues, change, health concerns, perceived injustice to themselves or others and communicating with others. Settipani *et al.* (2012) found that children with autism had a greater fear of physical injury and medical situations than their neurotypical peers. Significantly, Kerns and Kendall (2012) found that higher anxiety levels of mothers were associated with increased anxiety in their children with autism. This is concordant with a study about the transition to secondary school (Fleming 2011) which found that successful transitions were associated with the flexibility of the school to meet the student's needs, the confidence that the parents had that the school could meet those needs and the existence of a positive relationship between the parents and key staff.

Anxiety levels for children with autism become increasingly more severe through childhood and adolescence and so are a key factor in understanding their behaviour and managing their well-being during their years at school. Once young people leave the school environment anxiety levels reduce in adulthood, but rebound again in later life, at around 49–65 years (Kerns and Kendall 2012)

The families of autistic children identified the most common sources of anxiety as:

- social situations

- changes of routine

- separation and expectations of independence.

School is a major source of anxiety for many children with autism as the school environment combines all three of these themes with the academic demands of a learning environment.

The signs of anxiety commonly manifest themselves in the form of what adults interpret as challenging behaviour, which may include physical or verbal aggression (fight response), avoidance of situations (flight response) or task refusal. Anxiety may also present as overactive or passive responses to situations (freeze response) or as somatic symptoms such as pains or disturbed sleep. The specific worries experienced by all children, for example about tests and examinations, may be experienced particularly intensely by children with autism.

It is often difficult for neurotypical adults to recognise the triggers for these high levels of anxiety in the school environment. These will be different for every individual which makes the identification more complex. If the sources of anxiety can be identified early, before patterns of task, lesson and school avoidance have become established, there is every opportunity to reduce the anxiety triggers for that individual and reverse the trend. The exercise of Mapping the Landscape is a practical tool that practitioners can use to identify the profile of anxiety triggers that may be affecting the behaviour of individual children at primary and secondary school.

The theoretical framework for exploring the triggers for anxiety in a school environment is presented in terms of what is known in the areas of ethology and social science as the 'Landscape of Fear'.

One of the first references to the concept of a Landscape of Fear was in a paper which explored the inner Landscape of Fear experienced by medical practitioners who had depression (Morrant 1992). The concept of the Landscape of Fear has since been developed by ethologists studying animals in their natural habitat. Researchers have found that prey animals respond to their perception of how dangerous a particular environment might be rather than to the actual amount of predation that occurred in that environment. The animals forage for longer in an environment that they perceive as less hazardous, even if there is a more abundant food source elsewhere.

Laundré, Hernandez and Altendorf (2001) describe fear as an emotional state that calibrates the costs and benefits of engaging in certain activities. Thus, a child with autism may perceive joining a group activity or going down a crowded corridor as highly risky activities that trigger a fear and are therefore to be avoided. Brown *et al.* (2004) argue that the question, 'Is it worth

the risk?' is one that people answer every time they get into the car or go for a job interview. The question captures the idea that we all balance potential rewards against the possible risks inherent in a situation. For a child with autism are the benefits of learning about 'X' worth the risk of going into that classroom and experiencing the anxiety that the physical and/or social demands trigger?

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF FEAR

The potential Landscape of Fear for children in school may be divided into three domains:

- the physical environment

- the social environment

- the learning environment.

The children/students are asked to complete the three forms, if necessary with support from a familiar adult. The respondents may benefit from some discussion about the more open ended questions such as:

- What might the school do to help you feel safer in your 'red' areas?

- For situations that you find the most difficult…what would make them easier for you?

  ○ Can you describe your ideal class/lesson?

However, it is the ideas of the students that are important so care should be taken not to lead their responses.

The mapping exercise will help adults to identify areas and situations that the student finds stressful so that arrangements may be made to reduce or eliminate the source of the perceived threat.

The mapping exercise has been used with students at primary and secondary school. It has also been used with children who were particularly anxious about the transition to secondary school anticipating anxieties. These potential 'threats' were able to be addressed as part of the transition process and strategies to support them were set out in a formal Inclusion Partnership Agreement drawn up by the key staff from primary school, secondary school and the parents. An Inclusion Partnership agreement is used by Hampshire schools to support the transition of vulnerable pupils from primary to secondary school.

Mapping the Landscape is an individual exercise to help practitioners to understand some of the triggers for anxious behaviour that they might see in the school environment. The idea is that the responses are used to structure discussions about what it is in a situation that makes the child feel anxious. For example:

> Physical environment: What is it about the corridor by the
> music room that makes you feel uncomfortable?

Social environment: Changing for PE seems to worry
you. Can you tell me more about that?

Learning environment: You really enjoy the science lessons but drama seems to be
difficult for you. Can you explain what makes one enjoyable and the other a problem?

TABLE 7.1 SUBJECT RATINGS

Science	Drama
• Can work on my own • Quiet	• Work in a group • Noisy • Teacher shouts

The adult tries to elicit from the child as many of his/her personal constructs about the lessons
as possible. The discussion then moves to what might make the non-preferred lesson more
comfortable:

Ways of working: 'You find reading aloud in class a problem.'

'Which lessons do you have to do this most?'

'Would it help for your teacher to know how you feel?'

The responses from a sample of students from two secondary resourced provisions and a special
school were analysed. Although all the responses were personal and different some common
themes did emerge.

The physical environment
Some difficult areas included:

1. The foyer and corridors were difficult areas for some students, particularly if there were
   people around (crowded). Other students specifically mentioned tight spaces and when
   there was a 'dead end'.

2. Areas which were unknown or infrequently visited under special circumstances such as
   the staffroom.

3. Classrooms were cited that were particularly noisy.

4. The design technology space was perceived by some as not only noisy but having dangerous
   tools and equipment.

5. Some students coloured red the areas associated with subjects they disliked, such as the
   maths block.

6. Toilet areas were perceived as uncomfortable and many students will avoid using toilets
   at school if at all possible.

The social environment
Some areas of difficulty included:

1. Students frequently cited the tutor group as a problem (Q1). One boy explained that they
   were not people he would choose to associate with. Tutor groups are often mixed ability
   and so the other students may not have been in his 'sets' of subject teaching.

2. Going into a new or different classroom, particularly if there was no teacher in the room
   (Q4).

3. Lunch times were difficult for many of the students. Waiting to go into the canteen (Q5),
   buying food (Q6) and sitting in the canteen (Q7) were frequently cited as being stressful.

4. Going out with other students at break times (Q8) was difficult and many students
   welcomed the opportunity of going to the resource provision base instead.

5. Changing for PE/games (Q9) and participating in PE/games (Q10) were difficult for
   some students but presented no anxieties for others.

6. The idea of catching a school bus was alarming for many of the students, but fortunately,
   because they were all in special provision, transport was provided for them.

Subject rating
The subject ratings were very individual, as would be expected. The most universally highly
rated were science and maths but with information and communications technology (ICT)
having a more mixed response. In one school for one year group history was rated highly,
perhaps because of a particularly inspiring teacher. Drama was on average least liked although
some students liked that subject.

The learning environment
Stressful situations included:

1. The most cited source of stress was (Q23) having to stop what I am doing before I have
   finished. However, only one student thought this rated as 5 on the anxiety scale. The
   notes to support the Checklist for Learning Style (Chapter 3) discuss this area of difficulty
   and some possible interventions.

2. Reading aloud in class was a source of anxiety for many of the students (Q11).

3. Q28: 'When other students try to distract me' was a less cited, but highly rated source
   of anxiety. Students often described their ideal setting as a quiet, with a small group of

students and no distractions. The choice of seating was also important for them, especially to be near supportive classmates.

4. Homework was a source of anxiety for many of the students (Q26).

5. As with many children of any age, tests and assessments were a cause of stress.

Other frequently cited sources of anxiety were:

- Working in a group or with a learning partner (Q6, Q7)
- Working when other students are messing about (Q10)
- When the teacher is tells off other students (Q15)
- When the teacher is marking my work (Q17)
- Sharing equipment in practical lessons (Q27).

Some individual comments showed how important it was for the teachers to explain the work in a way that they could understand, thereby avoiding the stress of asking for help in front of classmates (Q8). Other students clearly found written tasks stressful. From looking at the self-recording on their forms, they clearly had difficulties with the mechanics of handwriting and benefited from using word processing facilities as an alternative means of recording.

The case studies are used to demonstrate how mapping the Landscape of Fear for each individual can be used to generate strategies that reduce anxieties and lead to more successful inclusion. Experiencing high levels of anxiety in the school environment has a negative impact on both the academic attainments and the mental health of the individual concerned.

CASE STUDY: DAVID

David was first, briefly, introduced in Chapter 3. He had attended a mainstream primary school and for the first few weeks appeared to have made a smooth transition into secondary school. A few early changes of timetable led to David becoming anxious about any potential change of teacher or classrooms. A TA was assigned to support David during tutor time to go over any planned changes for the day, particularly with reference to any cover teachers. Despite this intervention, David became reluctant to go into some lessons. If a TA accompanied him to the lesson, he would try to prevent them from leaving him once the class was settled and he understood what to do at the start of the lesson.

As David's anxiety levels escalated and the number of lessons that he was reluctant or refused to attend increased, it was decided to map his inner Landscape of Fear.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

David coloured in red specific classrooms in which he had experienced changes of teachers or rooms that had changed. He coloured in yellow the corridors that led from the foyer to his tutor group room and to most of the teaching bases.

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

David expressed anxieties about:

- Q2: Walking down corridors at lesson changeover time
- Q3: Lining up to go into a classroom before the lesson
- Q4: In class, if there is no teacher in the room
- Q15: Talking to classmates.

Subject rating

David was particularly anxious about science and technology, the two subjects that had changes of room and teacher during his first few weeks at the school. ICT rated positively; David explained that the ICT suite was a quiet space and he was able to get on with the work on his own.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Working with a learning partner (Q6) was rated marginally less stressful than working in a group (Q7). Sharing equipment was difficult for him (Q27). He was also anxious about being asked to answer questions in class (Q1) and reading aloud (Q11). David spoke in a very quiet voice and his head would drop, making him even less audible when he was unsure in a situation.

David's difficulties appeared to have been triggered by changes of teacher for which he had not been prepared (Q18) and changes of room (Q19). He rated both of these items as situations that he would choose to avoid.

The mapping of David's personal Landscape of Fear facilitated some targeted intervention to lower his levels of anxiety.

1. Initially, David was put on a part-time timetable so that he attended classes in which he felt comfortable and confident. The teachers for science and technology, his main sources of anxiety, sent work for a TA to do with him in the safety of the special needs base.

2. David's key worker went through his timetable each morning and prepared him for any changes of room or teacher. If the different room was not familiar to him, the TA would take him to see it during tutor time.

3. David was anxious about moving round the school at lesson changeover times and lining up to go into class. His keyworker took him to classes and waited with him, a little apart from the rest of the group, until the teacher had arrived and settled the class.

4. The seating plans for his lessons placed him near the front and the door with selected students as his neighbours.

5. If there was group work or work with a learning partner planned for a lesson, several alternatives were made available:

    ⋏   Working with a TA as his learning partner.

    ⋏   Leaving the classroom during group work when he was particularly anxious. The time was used to develop the skills of working and learning as a member of a group (Chapter 4) while addressing the group work task.

    ⋏   For lessons where David was more confident he worked with a small group of selected students with a TA to facilitate the group. He was given a specific role in the group. This was sometimes the role of managing access to the equipment.

6. All teachers were asked to avoid asking David direct questions or to read aloud in class. David was reassured by this and gradually gained the confidence to volunteer information in class.

David was able gradually to re-build his confidence about attending classes and is working towards a full timetable. He is using strategies such as waiting a little distance away from the group that is lining up outside the classroom and walking in with the teacher. Group working is still facilitated by a TA, but he no longer feels so anxious that he has to leave the room when there is group working.

CASE STUDY: NOAH Y5

Noah had a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome and was in Y5 at his mainstream primary school. He had difficulties with understanding complex, abstract language and needed time to process the instructions or verbal explanations that are used in the classroom. He was anxious about making errors in his work and would erase or cross out work that did not meet his desired standard. He had difficulties with the pragmatic aspects of language and would benefit from support to develop his conversational skills. Non-verbal communication was a particular area of difficulty for Noah. He found it hard to recognise and regulate his own emotions, interpersonal

skills, and to respond appropriately to the emotions of other people. Social understanding presented problems for Noah, who tended to over-react to situations, so that he would benefit from the self-regulation programme (Chapter 8).

His teachers identified triggers for anxiety which included:

⋏   not understanding instructions or verbal explanations

⋏   making errors or fear of making errors if he has not fully understood a task

⋏   changes of routine, teacher, room

⋏   not understanding social situations and teasing.

Noah would tic when he was particularly anxious. His parents were highly anxious about his transition to secondary school and Noah was reported already to be concerned about this change.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Noah coloured all the school yellow: 'I feel anxious/uncomfortable in this space.' He coloured the infant play area red and explained that he felt anxious among little children who run around and make noise. His own classroom, the junior playground and the adventure playground were coloured green: comfortable areas to be.

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Rather surprisingly, given the adult perceptions of his high levels of anxiety, Noah rated few situations as either 1 (I avoid this if I can) or 2 (I am very anxious about this).

Three of the situations that triggered anxiety focused on the transition into school in the morning.

⋏   Q1: Coming into school in the morning

⋏   Q4: Finding my job to do when I come in

⋏   Q5: Finding a place where I can sit.

The other identified anxiety trigger was:

⋏   Q8: Choosing times.

He also rated as mildly anxiety provoking a 3 on the scale Q11: Changing for PE.

Subject ratings

Rated at 4 or 5 were: ICT, reading, PE/games, drama, topic work, maths, art, making things, writing, dance, music.

He only rated at 1 or 2: science, RE, geography, spelling, maths investigations.

There were many more lessons that Noah claimed to like rather than to dislike.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
Working in class

Some of the issues that Noah found anxiety provoking appeared to be connected with the ability to understand and process sufficiently quickly the level of language that was used by adults in classrooms:

- Q3: Following instructions (rated as 2)

- Q8: Asking a teacher for help when I have not understood something (rated as 2).

A high level of anxiety was expressed for:

- Q17: When I go into class and my usual teacher is not there (rated as 1)

- Q20: When I have to stop what I am doing before I have finished

- Q25: The almost universal: class test and assessments.

Noah also identified the distractions provided by other children as difficult to manage.

- Q10: Working when other children are messing about (rated as 3.5)

- Q24: When other children try to distract me (rated as 3).

He was also concerned about Q18: Making sure that I have all the books and equipment I need for the task.

Noah's own perceptions of his anxiety levels were used to plan strategies to support him in school.

- He had rated most of the school as an uncomfortable place to be and was anxious about coming into school in the morning. A meet and greet strategy was introduced so that a trusted TA would meet him and take him to the classroom. He did not have to wait in the playground with the other children. Any change of adult was pre-warned the day before with a picture of who would be meeting him instead.

- The TA who met Noah in the morning used a visual timetable to go through his school day and prepare him for any changes to the routine.

- The teacher put out a preferred task at a clearly marked place at a table for Noah to do when he came into the classroom. The task was agreed the day before so that he knew what to expect. He liked reading and so the task was often to read. Noah could sit in his place until all the other children had come in and settled down. He would then join them on the carpet. This had been rated positively by Noah at Q5 on the social environment checklist.

- Noah found choosing difficult. A choice board was introduced. At first he made his choice from two visually presented options and then from three. If Noah expressed his own acceptable choice this was always accepted. Acceptable meant appropriate for the context, for example, not going on the adventure playground (a preferred area) in a thunder storm.

- Noah was becoming aware of some bodily changes associated with puberty and was given the option of changing for PE in one of the toilet cubicles.

- Noah was anxious about understanding what he was meant to do. Staff were aware of his problems so that they simplified and repeated instructions and provided visual support for verbal explanations. His teacher or TA checked that Noah understood what he had to do before he started a task (Working in class Q3, Q8).

- The amount of work that Noah was asked to do was differentiated so that he had every chance of completing the work in the time allocated (Working in class Q20). If this was not achieved, he was told when he would be given time to complete the work. Refer to Chapter 3, Learning Style for other strategies.

- Any changes of teacher, room or routine made Noah highly anxious. The TA meet and greet strategy helped him to accommodate to changes (see above). The whole class benefitted from a 'who is helping us today' visual display with photographs of the staff. Photographs are removed when someone has to leave the room and the photograph placed on the 'back soon' square. Planned absences can be accommodated using the 'at home' square. See Chapter 3, Learning Style for a more detailed explanation.

Noah remains an anxious boy in the school environment. The parents, primary school class teacher, SENCo and key members of staff from his chosen secondary school met to agree the strategies to be put in place to facilitate a successful transition and longer-term plans for inclusion.

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUR SCHOOL

Primary age: Pupil version

1. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
Instructions

- Look carefully at the map of your school.
- Use the highlighter pens to mark how the areas on the map make you feel.

  Green = I feel calm and relaxed in this space.

  Yellow = I feel anxious/uncomfortable in this space.

  Red = I would like to avoid this space as it makes me very anxious.

- For the areas that you have coloured red, what makes you feel unsafe?

- What might the school do to help you feel safer in your 'red' areas?

Thank you for colouring the map.

2. THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

During the school day children work with their class and talk to other children and adults. Sometimes this can be fun but sometimes we can feel anxious about being with other people. What things that you do with other people make you happy or upset you?

1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this If I can	I am very anxious about this	I feel anxious/ uncomfortable about this	I feel comfortable about this	I enjoy this
☹		☺		☺

1 Coming into school in the morning	1	2	3	4	5
2 Hanging up my coat or putting my bag in the cloakroom	1	2	3	4	5
3 Going into the classroom when the children are all moving round	1	2	3	4	5
4 Finding my job to do when I come in	1	2	3	4	5
5 Finding a place where I can sit	1	2	3	4	5
6 Carpet times	1	2	3	4	5
7 Lining up with my class	1	2	3	4	5
8 Choosing times	1	2	3	4	5
9 Going out to play	1	2	3	4	5
10 Sitting in the dining hall with other children	1	2	3	4	5

11 Changing for PE	1	2	3	4	5
12 Joining in with games, PE, dance	1	2	3	4	5

3. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
Subject preferences

Many different subjects are taught in school and some we find easier and more interesting than others. Rate the subjects on the list on a scale of 1–5.

1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this subject	I do not like this subject	This is OK	I like this subject	I really enjoy this subject

e.g. If you really enjoy maths...

List of subjects	Rating
Maths	5

My subject ratings are:

Subject	Rating	Subject	Rating
Science		Art	
ICT		Making things	
Reading		Geography	
PE/games		Writing	

Drama		Spelling	
Topic work		Dance	
RE		Music	
Maths			

Working in class

Classes involve different ways of working and some we will find more comfortable than others. Use the 5-point rating scale to indicate how you feel about different things that happen in classes.

1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this if I can	I am very anxious about this	I feel anxious/ uncomfortable about this	I feel comfortable about this	I enjoy this

1 Answering questions in class	1	2	3	4	5
2 Listening when the teacher explains what we are going to do	1	2	3	4	5
3 Following instructions	1	2	3	4	5
4 Knowing what to do to start a task	1	2	3	4	5

5 Working on my own	1	2	3	4	5
6 Working with a learning partner	1	2	3	4	5
7 Working in a group	1	2	3	4	5
8 Asking a teacher for help when I have not understood something	1	2	3	4	5
9 Working in a quiet class	1	2	3	4	5
10 Working when other children are messing about	1	2	3	4	5
11 Reading aloud in class	1	2	3	4	5
12 Written work – handwriting	1	2	3	4	5
13 Recording what I have done in pictures, diagrams or graphs	1	2	3	4	5
14 Using the computer to record what I have done	1	2	3	4	5

15 When the teacher tells off other children	1	2	3	4	5
16 When the teacher is marking my work	1	2	3	4	5
17 When I go into class and my usual teacher is not there	1	2	3	4	5
18 Making sure that I have all the books and equipment I need for the task	1	2	3	4	5
19 When I have a learning support assistant (LSA) supporting me in class	1	2	3	4	5
20 When I have to stop what I am doing before I have finished	1	2	3	4	5
21 When the teacher uses pictures, diagrams, videos, etc. to help to explain things	1	2	3	4	5
22 Homework	1	2	3	4	5
23 Sharing equipment in practical lessons, e.g. art or design and technology (DT)	1	2	3	4	5
24 When other children try to distract me	1	2	3	4	5

25 Class tests and assessments	1	2	3	4	5

Look at your rating about what happens in class. Can you describe your ideal class/ lesson?

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUR SCHOOL

Primary age: Adult version

1. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Equipment

Map of the school, showing all areas labelled, e.g. include outside space, bike sheds, toilets, corridors, stairs, hall, resourced provision, SEN base, etc.
Coloured highlighter pens: red, yellow, green.

Instructions for the children

Go through the instructions with them to ensure that they understand the map and the areas that it shows.

- Look carefully at the map of your school.
- Use the highlighter pens to mark how the areas on the map make you feel.

  Green = I feel calm and relaxed in this space.

  Yellow = I feel anxious/uncomfortable in this space.

  Red = I would like to avoid this space as it makes me very anxious.

- For the areas that you have coloured red, what makes you feel unsafe?

- What might the school do to help you feel safer in your 'red' areas?

2. THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Instructions for staff

Explain the task carefully to the children so that they understand that some social encounters can be positive but others may cause anxiety. Check that they understand the rating scales and how to complete them.

During the school day children work with their class and and talk to children and adults. Sometimes this can be fun but sometimes we can feel anxious about being with other people. What things that you do with other people make you happy or upset you?

1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this If I can	I am very anxious about this	I feel anxious/ uncomfortable about this	I feel comfortable about this	I enjoy this

☹   ☺   ☺

1 Coming into school in the morning	1	2	3	4	5
2 Hanging up my coat or putting my bag in the cloakroom	1	2	3	4	5
3 Going into the classroom when the children are all moving round	1	2	3	4	5
4 Finding my job to do when I come in	1	2	3	4	5
5 Finding a place where I can sit	1	2	3	4	5
6 Carpet times	1	2	3	4	5

7 Lining up with my class	1	2	3	4	5
8 Choosing times	1	2	3	4	5
9 Going out to play	1	2	3	4	5
10 Sitting in the dining hall with other children	1	2	3	4	5
11 Changing for PE	1	2	3	4	5
12 Joining in with games, PE, dance	1	2	3	4	5

For any of the social situations that they express anxiety about, explore with them what makes them anxious. e.g. Q7: Lining up with my class might be difficult because of the close physical contact, uncertainty about the transition, leaving the known space of the classroom or because of many other triggers.

The situation	Anxiety triggers
7 Lining up with the class	
11 Changing for PE	

3. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
Subject preferences
INSTRUCTIONS FOR STAFF

Talk to the children about something they enjoy doing in school. Explain that people like different things and find some things easier than others. Explain the rating scale so that they know a 5 is something they really like and feel good at.

The list of subjects is not definitive; please add any subjects that the children do in the class and delete any that are not appropriate for the age group.

When the children have rated their subjects, choose one that has been rated as a 5 and one that has been rated as a 1 or 2. How the children describe what makes their experiences different for these two subjects can be used to explore their personal constructs and give some insights into triggers for anxiety.

Example: What makes ICT a good lesson for you, and what worries you about PE?

Score 1 or 2	Score 4 or 5
PE	ICT
⅄ We all have to change in the classroom ⅄ It is noisy, I lose my things ⅄ We have to find a partner or join a group	⅄ I have a computer to myself ⅄ I like doing things on the computer at home and school ⅄ My work looks neat

Many different subjects are taught in school and some we find easier and more interesting than others. Rate the subjects on the list on a scale of 1–5.

1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this this subject	I do not like this subject	This is OK	I like this subject	I really enjoy this subject

☹   😐   ☺

e.g. If you really enjoy maths...

List of subjects	Rating
Maths	5

My subject ratings are:

Subject	Rating	Subject	Rating
Science		Art	
ICT		Making things	
Reading		Geography	
PE/games		Writing	
Drama		Spelling	
Topic work		Dance	
RE		Music	
Maths			

Working in class

Explain to the children how different lessons involve different ways of working and some we find more comfortable than others. Ask them to think about these ways of working and rate them using the 1–5 scale.

Classes involve different ways of working and some we will find more comfortable than others. Use the 5 point rating scale to indicate how you feel about different things that happen in classes.

1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this if I can	I am very anxious about this	I feel anxious/ uncomfortable about this	I feel comfortable about this	I enjoy this

☹   😐   ☺

1 Answering questions in class	1	2	3	4	5
2 Listening when the teacher explains what we are going to do	1	2	3	4	5
3 Following instructions	1	2	3	4	5
4 Knowing what to do to start a task	1	2	3	4	5
5 Working on my own	1	2	3	4	5
6 Working with a learning partner	1	2	3	4	5
7 Working in a group	1	2	3	4	5
8 Asking a teacher for help when I have not understood something	1	2	3	4	5
9 Working in a quiet class	1	2	3	4	5
10 Working when other children are messing about	1	2	3	4	5

11 Reading aloud in class	1	2	3	4	5
12 Written work – handwriting	1	2	3	4	5
13 Recording what I have done in pictures, diagrams or graphs	1	2	3	4	5
14 Using the computer to record what I have done	1	2	3	4	5
15 When the teacher tells off other children	1	2	3	4	5
16 When the teacher is marking my work	1	2	3	4	5
17 When I go into class and my usual teacher is not there	1	2	3	4	5
18 Making sure that I have all the books and equipment I need for the task	1	2	3	4	5
19 When I have a learning support assistant (LSA) supporting me in class	1	2	3	4	5
20 When I have to stop what I am doing before I have finished	1	2	3	4	5

21 When the teacher uses pictures, diagrams, videos, etc. to help to explain things	1	2	3	4	5
22 Homework	1	2	3	4	5
23 Sharing equipment in practical lessons, e.g. art or design and technology (DT)	1	2	3	4	5
24 When other children try to distract me	1	2	3	4	5
25 Class tests and assessments	1	2	3	4	5

Look at your rating about what happens in class. Can you describe your ideal class/lesson?