Reviewer's report

Title: The school environment and student health: a systematic review and meta-ethnography of qualitative research

Version: 2 Date: 31 May 2013

Reviewer: Robert Young

Reviewer's report:

This is a useful paper which collates several strands of qualitative research. While I am not a qualitative researcher I am aware of the issues in school research from a quantitative perspective. Accordingly I do not address any of the more specifically qualitative aspects of the research. I have a few specific points or queries, which are outlined below.

- Minor Essential or discretionary Revisions

1: Several potentially 'physical 'aspects of the school are omitted. I am unclear if this is due to pupils not reporting this as a concern or if they were not considered important by the authors.

a) Reference to religion or denomination is omitted. In both qualitative and quantitative studies Catholic or other religious denominational schools tend to report different approaches to pastoral vs. educational goals when compared to non-denominational schools.

b) Although not 'rural' several of the schools were classified as suburban. I would have expected to find detectable differences between relatively 'suburban' and relatively 'Urban' schools. Have the authors considered this aspect.

c) The previous point might also be related to school size and the protective or specialist networks that are possible within smaller vs. larger schools.

2: Another peer related factor I thought may be detected was the influence of significant or important peer leaders (top or powerful girl/boys).

3: The study reviewed research from 2010. Have the authors checked for any important papers since 2010?

4: Do the authors distinguish between secondary and primary schools? Do the authors make any distinction between them in interpretation and recommendations?

5: I am not sure I understand the type of intervention implied by the authors second recommendation - spatial patterning of risk. Could they clarify or expand on this by example?
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests