

What is an ELSA?

ELSAs are emotional literacy support assistants. They are teaching assistants who have had special training from educational psychologists to support the emotional development of children and young people in school. ELSAs have regular professional supervision from educational psychologists to help them in their work.

ELSAs help children and young people learn to understand their emotions and respect the feelings of those around them. They provide the time and space for pupils to think about their personal circumstances and how they manage them.

How does ELSA work?

Most ELSA programmes will last for 6 to 12 weeks, helping the pupil to learn some specific new skills or coping strategies. Clear programme aims (SMART targets) need to be set early on and each session has an objective - something the ELSA wants to help the pupil understand or achieve.

The ELSA isn't there to 'fix' the child. For pupils with complex or long-term needs, it's unrealistic to expect ELSA support to resolve all their difficulties. Change is a long-term process that needs everyone's help.



How can we help?

Having an ELSA will make most difference in your school when:

- other staff know about and support the ELSA work
- staff give the ELSA relevant background information on the child and family
- the ELSA liaises regularly with teachers to discuss progress and check on whether new skills are being transferred to class
- the ELSA has regular time for planning and delivering programmes

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- ELSAs attend supervision regularly to get new ideas and develop their skills
- they aren't given too many children to work with at one time
- they aren't taken away from ELSA time to do other things
- there is a consistent, private space in which to work, free from interruptions
- pupils are released from lessons regularly to enable continuity of support
- the ELSA role isn't confused with behaviour management (ELSA time isn't meant for sorting out incidents or telling children off!)
- pupils are helped to find their own solutions rather than ELSAs telling them what to do.



ELSA work should be fun – that's what makes the difference. It *isn't* a reward for bad behaviour. By building a positive relationship with challenging children the ELSA can help them think about and reduce their troublesome behaviour. It will take time, but will be worth it in the end.

You can find out more about ELSAs at www.elsanetwork.org



Tips for Schools

