



ELSA

What is an ELSA?

An ELSA is a specialist Teaching Assistant who works with children who have shown a range of emotional or social difficulties. Children may be struggling to express or understand their emotions, including that of anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and sadness.

What happens during an ELSA session?

Each session is planned in advance by an ELSA and can last anywhere between 20 minutes to an hour, depending on the child's age and needs. It is the responsibility of the ELSA to decide the format for the session and subsequent activities. Usually, this will involve a range of resources, such as puppets for younger children, speaking and listening, role-play and more creative exercises.

These motivating and engaging activities are designed to improve children's emotional literacy; be this understanding their own or those around them. For example, a child may be encouraged to discuss a specific emotion, such as anger, in order to enable them to understand what triggers their behaviour and feelings.

Next steps

ELSA programmes are most effective when there is clear communication between an ELSA and the child's class teacher. Progress on all targets set will be carefully monitored during the ELSA programme. Children will be encouraged implement new social skills in the class or playground that they have learnt during their sessions. If the school feels that a child may require further support, the school has access to a range of external support services e.g. Educational psychologist and Primary Mental Health Worker.