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**Slough ELSA Training**

**What is an ELSA?**

ELSA is a highly regarded programme that is well established in many areas of Berkshire and was introduced in Slough in 2016.

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.

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.

There has been consistent feedback from schools across the UK that the introduction of ELSAs has made a significant positive impact on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people and their ability to manage better at school — socially, emotionally and academically.



**Who would make a good ELSA?**

Someone who:

* has a warm personality and is able to stay calm under pressure
* demonstrates good interpersonal skills with children and adults
* is able to gain the confidence of children who are behaviourally challenging or socially withdrawn
* enjoys learning
* is able to work independently and show initiative
* has good time management and organisational skills
* is able to plan programmes of support that incorporate variety, interest and pace
* is able to keep succinct records of involvement.

**What does being an ELSA involve?**

* attendance of 4 training days and group supervision sessions led by the Integrated Support Service (ISS)
* planning and delivery of individualised programmes of support for children to develop their emotional literacy, including:
* awareness of own and other people’s emotions
* development of an increased range of emotional vocabulary
* management of stress, grief, anger and conflict
* development of social interaction skills
* development of the ability to initiate and maintain friendships
* promotion of a realistic self-concept and good self-esteem
* planning and delivering programmes of support to small groups of children to develop social and friendship skills
* writing succinct session plans and add subsequent evaluative comments
* liaise with teachers and other support assistants about the needs and progress of children receiving support
* share knowledge and ideas from training/supervision sessions with other school staff as appropriate
* meet regularly with line manager to review ELSA work
* work within own competencies and level of development, under the guidance of the line manager
* liaise with parents in line with school policy.

**How does ELSA work?**

Most ELSA delivered programmes in school 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.

**How can ELSA’s be helped?**

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
* 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!)

**You can find out more about ELSAs at** [**www.elsanetwork.org**](http://www.elsanetwork.org)