

## Emotional Literacy Support Assistants

### What is ELSA?

There will always be children and young people in schools facing life challenges that distract from their ability to engage with learning. Some will require greater support to increase their emotional literacy than others. ELSA is an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists. It recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. Our vision at school is to Challenge; Inspire; Empower and prepare for adulthood providing students with ELSA intervention we are helping all students regulate their emotions this is a skill they will have for life. Interventions take place in a designated room that has been resourced to provide a comfortable and calming space for individual and groups to work in a supportive and nurturing environment.

### How does ELSA work?

Students are usually referred to ELSA support by their class teacher or on occasion their parents. The ELSA then assesses each referral and identifies and prioritise which students require a weekly programme for the next 10 weeks this support maybe for longer every Student is unique. With the programme aims in mind we then plan support sessions to facilitate the student in developing new skills and coping strategies that allow them to manage social and emotional demands more effectively.

The majority of ELSA work is delivered on an individual basis, but sometimes small group work is more appropriate, especially in the areas of social and friendship skills. Sessions are fun and we use a wide range of activities such as, Games, arts and crafts, exercise, breathing techniques, yoga, Zumba, dance, music, or sports to help students express and understand their emotions in a relaxed way.

In ELSA we aim to provide support for a wide range of emotional needs: Recognising emotions, self-esteem, social skills, Friendship skills, Anger Management, Anxiety, Loss, and Bereavement. Helping students manage their emotions helps break down these barriers to learning.

### Supporting - not fixing

ELSA's are not there to fix students problems. What we can do is provide emotional support. We aim to establish a warm respectful relationship with a student and provide a reflective space where they can share honestly their thoughts and feelings without judgment. It needs to be appreciated that change cannot necessarily be achieved rapidly and is dependant upon the context and complexity of the presenting issues. For students with complex or long-term needs it is unrealistic to expect ELSA intervention to resolve all their difficulties, however support will be designed to target specific aspects of a students need. Training and development of ELSA'S is an ongoing process, and the ELSA will signpost students and their families to the appropriate level of support if they feel their needs are beyond the level of expertise. We keep in close contact with the family to offer support for any challenges that might arise at home in student's behaviour and share helpful strategies that have worked in school and vice versa.

