

ELSAs are those professionals who assist with and lead emotional literacy support in school settings. They are Learning Support Assistants who have carried out specialist training from educational psychologists to support the emotional development of children and young people.

Rachael Gentle

Learning Support Assistant and ELSA Lead at St. Anne's School

An ELSA helps 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 they manage them.

How does ELSA work at St. Anne's School?

Most ELSA programmes will last for 6 to 12 weeks.

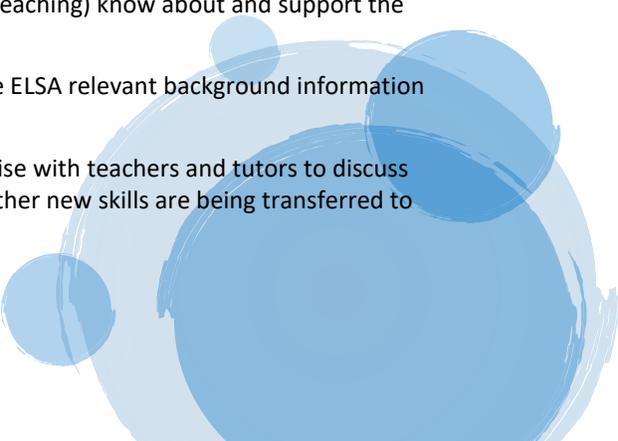
The aim of the programme is to help the child or young person at St. Anne's School to learn some specific new skills or coping strategies. SMART targets need to be set early on and each session has an objective – something the ELSA wants to help the person understand or achieve.

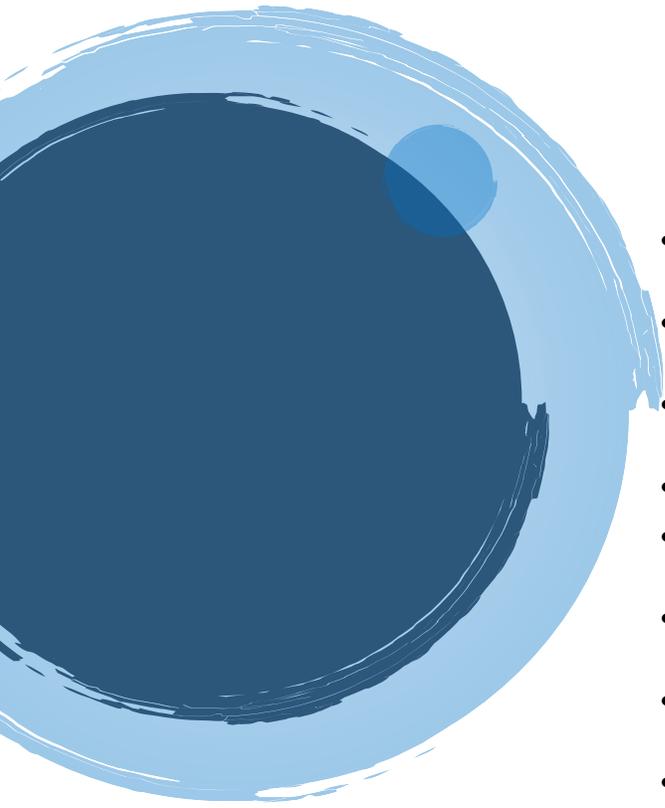
No quick fixes

The ELSA isn't there to 'fix' the child or young person. 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. Our ELSA, Rachael Gentle will be supported by our SENCo and Inclusion Lead on a day-to-day basis with our Educational Psychologist, Rachel Sykes providing supervision.

What and how can we support our ELSA?

Having an ELSA will make the most difference at St. Anne's School when:

- all staff (teaching and non-teaching) know about and support the work
 - teachers and tutors give the ELSA relevant background information on the child and family
 - the ELSA is given time to liaise with teachers and tutors to discuss progress and check on whether new skills are being transferred to class settings
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- the ELSA is supported by the Senior Leadership Team in adequate 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 or young people to work with at one time
- They aren't taken away from ELSA time to carry out other duties
- There is a consistent, private space in which to work, free from interruptions
- Children and young people are released from lessons regularly to enable continuity of support
- The ELSA role isn't confused with behavior management (ELSA time isn't meant for sorting out incidents or telling children off)
- Children and young people are helped to find their own solutions rather than ELSAs telling them what to do

What it isn't

ELSA isn't a reward for poor behavior. By building a positive relationship with challenging children the ELSA can help them think about and reduce their troublesome behavior.

In summary

ELSA work should be rewarding – it should be fun! – this is what makes the difference. Remember it will take time, but will be worth it in the end.

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

Compiled by Martin Winward
Ref. ELSA Network – notes compiled from 'Tips for Schools'
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