

Oxfordshire Educational Psychology Service Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) Information for Families

What is an ELSA?

ELSAs are Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs). These are usually Teaching Assistants (TAs) who have received training from and continue to receive ongoing supervision from the Educational Psychology Service focused on supporting children's emotional development.

ELSAs are skilled in listening to children, helping to develop children's emotional literacy and social skills as well as making sessions fun and enjoyable.

What is Emotional Literacy?

Emotional literacy is our ability to recognise, understand and express our emotions. These skills develop throughout our life. By recognising our emotions, we can then develop an emotional vocabulary to describe them and learn to use strategies to express and manage them appropriately.

How do ELSAs work?

ELSAs work with school staff who know children well to plan a focus for their ELSA sessions. They will create a SMART target (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) that is focused on helping children to develop their emotional literacy skills.

Most ELSA interventions last for around 6 to 8 sessions and take place one-to-one with your school's ELSA. ELSAs carefully plan these sessions including building on children's strengths and interests to make the activities fun while also helping children develop their emotional literacy skills.

After these individual sessions have ended, teachers and TAs will help children to use the skills they have been learning with the ELSA in other settings, such as in the classroom and on the playground.

Some ELSA work takes place with small groups of children, or larger groups or whole classes, to help develop skills around co-operation, friendships, belonging and resilience.

Working with Families

School staff will talk to families about any ELSA intervention before it starts and the focus of these sessions. Knowing the skills your child is learning means that you can encourage them to use these new skills at home and when out in the community.

ELSAs will also ask for your feedback after sessions have ended to help review the skills children have developed and plan how they can help them to apply these new skills in a range of settings.