

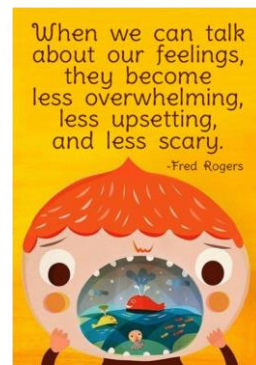
# Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA)

## What is ELSA?

There will always be children and young people in schools facing life challenges that detract from their ability to engage with learning, and 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.

### In ELSA we aim to provide support for a wide range of emotional needs:

- Recognising emotions and feelings
- Self-esteem
- Social skills
- Friendship skills
- Anger management
- Loss and bereavement
- Anxiety



### How does ELSA work?

The child's class teacher, parent or on occasion the SENCo, usually refers children for ELSA support. Parents who wish to refer their child should talk to the class teacher in the first instance. With the programme aims in mind we then plan support sessions to facilitate the pupil in developing new skills and coping strategies that allow them to manage social and emotional demands more effectively.

### Supporting – not fixing

Remember, ELSAs are not there to fix children's problems. In most cases we can't.

What ELSAs can do is provide emotional support. We aim to establish a warm, respectful relationship with a pupil and to provide a reflective space where they are able to share honestly their thoughts and feelings. In our ELSA role we use basic counselling skills (including active listening, problem clarification, open questions) to guide conversations. We avoid rushing in with suggested solutions and instead assist the pupil to reflect on their concerns and lead them to explore possible strategies and solutions for themselves.

It needs to be appreciated that change cannot necessarily be achieved rapidly and is dependent upon the context and complexity of the presenting issues. For children 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 child's need. Training and development of ELSAs is an ongoing process and wisdom is required to recognise when issues are beyond the level of expertise that could reasonably be expected of an ELSA.