Team Prestbury and ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)

There will always be children and young people in schools facing life challenges that detract 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. It also supports the development of spiritual capacities, as children learn to understand who they are and what makes them unique.

In order to support the fulfilment our vision, 'Working together for Fullness of Life,' we are lucky enough to have three qualified Emotional Literacy Support Assistants at Prestbury St Mary's Federation. Mrs Goodwin at the Junior School and Mrs Hodson at the Infants School, have been trained by Educational Psychologists to plan and deliver programmes of support to pupils who are experiencing temporary or longer term additional emotional needs. 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, we use a range of activities such as: games, role-play with puppets or arts and craft. ELSA sessions mainly take place in our Reflection Room which provides a calm, safe space for the child to feel supported and nurtured.

In ELSA we aim to provide support for a wide range of emotional needs: Recognising emotions, Self-esteem, Social skills, Friendship skills, Anger management, Loss and bereavement. In this way, we ensure that we care for all aspects of our children's lives, including their spiritual as well as their emotional development.

How does ELSA work?

Children are usually referred for ELSA support by their class teacher or on occasion their parents. Every half term the ELSA team SLT and SENDCo team meet to discuss referrals and to identify and prioritise which children require a weekly programme and which children may just need a 'one off' session. 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. What we 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. 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. The Educational Psychologist that works with our school would be able to offer advice on suitability or nature of ELSA involvement in complex cases.

If you want to know more about ELSA support across the Federation, please do contact Mrs Lunnon (our Federation SENDCo) clunnon@psm-school.co.uk