

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY



THE ELSA
PROGRAMME

At Sacred Heart we recognise that there will always be children facing life challenges that detract from their ability to engage with learning. As a result, some children will require greater support to increase their emotional literacy than others. We are pleased to offer the ELSA Program at Sacred Heart, an initiative developed and supported by Educational Psychologists.

The ELSA at Sacred Heart is Mrs Genco-Billington.



What is an ELSA?

An ELSA is a specialist teaching assistant with experience of working with children.

ELSAs are trained and regularly supervised by the Educational Psychologists in the Leicestershire Local Education Authority. They deliver programmes of support to children who are experiencing temporary or longer term additional emotional needs. The majority of ELSA work is delivered on an individual basis but sometimes group work is more appropriate, especially in the areas of friendship and social skills.

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

How does the referral process work?

At Sacred Heart the children are usually referred to the ELSA by the class teacher. The ELSA then plans sessions to support the child's specific needs. The length of the program may vary depending on the complexities of the referral. The class teacher will usually have had a conversation with a parent regarding the referral and subsequently a letter will be sent home outlining the details. Any questions can then be put to the class teacher before sessions commence.

Supporting – not fixing

We must always remember that 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.

So what do the children think?

On completion of their ELSA programme, we ask the children to reflect on their experiences and to kindly leave us some feedback. Here are some of the lovely comments we receive:

'ELSA has made me feel confident in my work and about myself'

'I feel that my work has improved'

It has helped me with my friendships'

'I am better at telling adults my problems'

