

# An Exploratory Evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project

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# Contents

|                                                   |      |
|---------------------------------------------------|------|
| Contents .....                                    | ii   |
| List of Tables .....                              | viii |
| List of Figures .....                             | xi   |
| Abstract .....                                    | xiii |
| Acknowledgements.....                             | xiv  |
| 1 Introduction.....                               | 1    |
| 1.1 Background .....                              | 1    |
| 1.2 Rationale for Research Study.....             | 3    |
| 1.3 Research Questions.....                       | 4    |
| 1.4 Personal and Professional Interest.....       | 4    |
| 1.5 Summary of Chapters.....                      | 5    |
| 2 Literature Review.....                          | 7    |
| 2.1 Introduction to Chapter.....                  | 7    |
| 2.2 Social and Emotional Development.....         | 7    |
| 2.3 Terminology.....                              | 7    |
| 2.4 Emotional Literacy.....                       | 8    |
| 2.5 Why is Emotional Literacy Important? .....    | 9    |
| 2.6 Emotional Literacy Difficulties.....          | 10   |
| 2.7 School-Based Interventions.....               | 11   |
| 2.7.1 Universal Interventions .....               | 12   |
| 2.7.2 Targeted ‘Wave Two’ Interventions.....      | 13   |
| 2.7.3 Targeted Intervention Delivery.....         | 14   |
| 2.8 Teaching Assistants (TAs).....                | 15   |
| 2.9 Measurement of Emotional Literacy Skills..... | 16   |

|        |                                                    |    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------|----|
| 2.10   | Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)..... | 17 |
| 2.10.1 | ELSA Project Development.....                      | 17 |
| 2.10.2 | ELSA Training and Supervision .....                | 18 |
| 2.10.3 | ELSA Intervention Delivery .....                   | 19 |
| 2.10.4 | ELSA National Context.....                         | 20 |
| 2.10.5 | ELSA Local Context .....                           | 20 |
| 2.10.6 | ELSA Evidence-Base .....                           | 21 |
| 3      | Systematic Literature Review .....                 | 26 |
| 3.1    | Introduction to Chapter .....                      | 26 |
| 3.2    | Systematic Literature Review Rationale .....       | 26 |
| 3.3    | Systematic Literature Review Question.....         | 27 |
| 3.4    | Systematic Literature Review Procedure.....        | 27 |
| 3.4.1  | Inclusion Criteria .....                           | 28 |
| 3.4.2  | Search Strategy .....                              | 31 |
| 3.4.3  | Quality and relevance appraisal.....               | 32 |
| 3.4.4  | Reliability and Validity .....                     | 33 |
| 3.5    | Systematic Review Synthesis.....                   | 38 |
| 3.5.1  | Overview of studies included .....                 | 38 |
| 3.5.2  | Study Design .....                                 | 38 |
| 3.5.3  | Sample Characteristics .....                       | 39 |
| 3.5.4  | Intervention Delivery .....                        | 40 |
| 3.5.5  | Effectiveness of the Intervention.....             | 40 |
| 3.6    | Discussion and Implications .....                  | 41 |
| 4      | Methodology .....                                  | 44 |
| 4.1    | Introduction to Chapter .....                      | 44 |
| 4.2    | Applied Research .....                             | 44 |
| 4.2.1  | Evaluation Research.....                           | 44 |
| 4.2.2  | Evidence-Based Practice.....                       | 45 |
| 4.3    | Paradigms of Applied Research .....                | 47 |
| 4.3.1  | Post-Positivism .....                              | 47 |

|        |                                                          |    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 4.3.2  | Constructivism .....                                     | 48 |
| 4.3.3  | Transformative.....                                      | 49 |
| 4.3.4  | Pragmatism.....                                          | 49 |
| 4.3.5  | Epistemology of Current Study .....                      | 50 |
| 4.4    | Methodological Considerations .....                      | 50 |
| 4.4.1  | Quantitative Research .....                              | 50 |
| 4.4.2  | Qualitative Research.....                                | 55 |
| 4.4.3  | Mixed Method Research.....                               | 57 |
| 4.4.4  | Methodology of the Current Study .....                   | 59 |
| 4.5    | Research Design of Current Study.....                    | 61 |
| 4.5.1  | Quantitative Methods.....                                | 61 |
| 4.5.2  | Qualitative Methods .....                                | 63 |
| 4.6    | Evaluating the Quality of the Current Study.....         | 65 |
| 4.6.1  | Establishing Trustworthiness of Quantitative Strand..... | 65 |
| 4.6.2  | Establishing Trustworthiness of Qualitative Strand.....  | 68 |
| 4.7    | Participants.....                                        | 69 |
| 4.7.1  | Participant Selection .....                              | 69 |
| 4.7.2  | Sample Characteristics .....                             | 71 |
| 4.8    | Analysis of Results .....                                | 73 |
| 4.8.1  | Analysis of SCED data.....                               | 73 |
| 4.8.2  | Analysis of Pre- and Post-Intervention Measures .....    | 75 |
| 4.8.3  | Analysis of Qualitative data.....                        | 76 |
| 4.9    | Analysis within the Current Study.....                   | 79 |
| 4.9.1  | Research Question One .....                              | 81 |
| 4.9.2  | Research Questions Two and Three .....                   | 83 |
| 4.10   | Additional Considerations.....                           | 84 |
| 4.10.1 | Ethical Considerations.....                              | 84 |
| 4.10.2 | Stakeholder Involvement.....                             | 86 |
| 5      | Results .....                                            | 87 |
| 5.1    | Introduction to Chapter.....                             | 87 |

|       |                                                             |     |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 5.2   | Participant Profiles .....                                  | 87  |
| 5.3   | Intervention Fidelity .....                                 | 91  |
| 5.4   | Case Study Results.....                                     | 93  |
| 5.4.1 | Case Study One: Johnny.....                                 | 93  |
| 5.4.2 | Case Study Two: Oscar.....                                  | 105 |
| 5.4.3 | Case Study Three: Jessica.....                              | 115 |
| 5.4.4 | Case Study Four: Georgina .....                             | 125 |
| 5.4.5 | Case Study Five: Joseph.....                                | 140 |
| 6     | Discussion .....                                            | 152 |
| 6.1   | Introduction to Chapter.....                                | 152 |
| 6.2   | Research Question One: Summary of Findings .....            | 152 |
| 6.2.1 | Case Study One: Johnny.....                                 | 152 |
| 6.2.2 | Case Study Two: Oscar.....                                  | 152 |
| 6.2.3 | Case Study Three: Jessica .....                             | 153 |
| 6.2.4 | Case Study Four: Georgina .....                             | 153 |
| 6.2.5 | Case Study Five: Joseph.....                                | 153 |
| 6.2.6 | Discussion of findings related to existing literature ..... | 154 |
| 6.3   | Research Question Two: Summary of Findings .....            | 156 |
| 6.3.1 | Case Study One: Johnny.....                                 | 156 |
| 6.3.2 | Case Study Two: Oscar.....                                  | 156 |
| 6.3.3 | Case Study Three: Jessica .....                             | 157 |
| 6.3.4 | Case Study Four: Georgina .....                             | 157 |
| 6.3.5 | Case Study Five: Joseph.....                                | 158 |
| 6.3.6 | Discussion of findings related to existing literature ..... | 158 |
| 6.4   | Research Question Three: Summary of Findings.....           | 161 |
| 6.4.1 | Case Study One: Johnny.....                                 | 161 |
| 6.4.2 | Case Study Two: Oscar.....                                  | 162 |
| 6.4.3 | Case Study Three: Jessica .....                             | 162 |
| 6.4.4 | Case Study Four: Georgina .....                             | 163 |
| 6.4.5 | Case Study Five: Joseph.....                                | 163 |
| 6.4.6 | Discussion of findings related to existing literature ..... | 164 |

|       |                                                                                                                            |     |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 6.5   | Evaluation of Methodology .....                                                                                            | 166 |
| 6.5.1 | Case Studies .....                                                                                                         | 167 |
| 6.5.2 | Quantitative Strand .....                                                                                                  | 167 |
| 6.5.3 | Qualitative Strand .....                                                                                                   | 169 |
| 6.6   | Implications for Future Research.....                                                                                      | 171 |
| 6.7   | Implications for Practice .....                                                                                            | 174 |
| 6.7.1 | Schools .....                                                                                                              | 174 |
| 6.7.2 | Policy makers .....                                                                                                        | 175 |
| 6.7.3 | Educational Psychologists .....                                                                                            | 176 |
| 7     | Conclusion.....                                                                                                            | 177 |
| 7.1   | Main Findings .....                                                                                                        | 177 |
| 7.2   | Unique Contribution.....                                                                                                   | 178 |
| 8     | References .....                                                                                                           | 180 |
| 9     | Appendices.....                                                                                                            | 205 |
| 9.1   | Appendix 1: Eligibility of SLR studies .....                                                                               | 206 |
| 9.2   | Appendix 2: Description of Key Components of SLR ELSA<br>interventions using TiDieR Checklist (Hoffman et al., 2014) ..... | 210 |
| 9.3   | Appendix 3: Quality Indicators for Quantitative Research (Gerstein<br>et al., 2005, p152) .....                            | 211 |
| 9.4   | Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – Child .....                                                               | 212 |
| 9.5   | Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – ELSA .....                                                                | 214 |
| 9.6   | Appendix 6: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – Parent.....                                                               | 216 |
| 9.7   | Appendix 7: Repeated Measure Fidelity Check.....                                                                           | 218 |
| 9.8   | Appendix 8: NGT - Focus Group Outcomes.....                                                                                | 219 |
| 9.9   | Appendix 9: Table of key characteristics of utilised measures ....                                                         | 220 |
| 9.10  | Appendix 10: Inter-Rater Reliability Information Sheet.....                                                                | 221 |
| 9.11  | Appendix 11: Inter-Rater Reliability Record Sheet .....                                                                    | 222 |

|      |                                                               |     |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 9.12 | Appendix 12: Georgina’s Interview Transcript.....             | 223 |
| 9.13 | Appendix 13: Ethical Approval Letter .....                    | 228 |
| 9.14 | Appendix 14: School Information Sheet .....                   | 229 |
| 9.15 | Appendix 15: Parent/Carer Information Sheet.....              | 232 |
| 9.16 | Appendix 16: School Consent Form.....                         | 236 |
| 9.17 | Appendix 17: Parent/Carer Consent Form .....                  | 237 |
| 9.18 | Appendix 18: Child Consent Form.....                          | 238 |
| 9.19 | Appendix 19: Case Study Theory of Change Frameworks.....      | 239 |
| 9.20 | Appendix 20: Timelines of Intervention Evaluation Period..... | 242 |
| 9.21 | Appendix 21: Jessica’s Behaviour Record .....                 | 247 |
| 9.22 | Appendix 22: ELSA Intervention Fidelity Check .....           | 248 |

## List of Tables

|                                                                                                                                             |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 2.1 ELSA Training Overview (Burton, 2009).....                                                                                        | 18 |
| Table 2.2 Local LA ELSA Training Content .....                                                                                              | 21 |
| Table 3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Applied in the SLR .....                                                                         | 30 |
| Table 3.2 Weight of Evidence Framework and criteria for the SLR (Gough,<br>2007).....                                                       | 33 |
| Table 3.3 Study appraisal using Weight of Evidence framework .....                                                                          | 34 |
| Table 3.4 Key characteristics of studies included in the SLR .....                                                                          | 37 |
| Table 4.1 Hierarchy of Methods (Scott, Joughin & Shaw, 2001) .....                                                                          | 46 |
| Table 4.2 Types of SCED design (Robson & McCartan, 2016) .....                                                                              | 53 |
| Table 4.3 Mixed method research typology (Greene et al. (1989) in Mertens,<br>2015).....                                                    | 58 |
| Table 4.4 Threats to internal validity and actions taken within the current<br>research (Cook & Campbell, 1979).....                        | 66 |
| Table 4.5 Threats to internal validity in flexible designs and actions taken<br>within the current research (Robson & McCartan, 2016) ..... | 68 |
| Table 4.6 A summary of stages of NGT (de Ruyter, 1996) as applied within<br>the current research.....                                       | 70 |
| Table 4.7 Inclusion criteria applied within the current study.....                                                                          | 71 |
| Table 4.8 Summary of Participant Characteristics .....                                                                                      | 72 |
| Table 4.9 Features of outcome data for visual analysis (Kratochwill et al.,<br>2013).....                                                   | 74 |
| Table 4.10 Stages of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) .....                                                                         | 78 |
| Table 4.11 Summary of Procedures for Analysis Stage .....                                                                                   | 80 |
| Table 4.12 Key ethical considerations for the current study .....                                                                           | 86 |
| Table 5.1 Summary of Intervention Fidelity Checklist Data .....                                                                             | 92 |
| Table 5.2 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Johnny ....                                                                   | 95 |
| Table 5.3 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Johnny.....                                                                          | 96 |
| Table 5.4 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for<br>Johnny .....                                                      | 96 |
| Table 5.5 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for<br>Johnny .....                                                     | 96 |

|                                                                                        |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 5.6 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Johnny              | 99  |
| Table 5.7 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Johnny           | 103 |
| Table 5.8 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Oscar....                | 107 |
| Table 5.9 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Oscar.....                      | 108 |
| Table 5.10 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Oscar .....    | 108 |
| Table 5.11 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Oscar .....   | 108 |
| Table 5.12 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Oscar              | 111 |
| Table 5.13 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Oscar           | 114 |
| Table 5.14 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Jessica                 | 117 |
| Table 5.15 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Jessica .....                  | 118 |
| Table 5.16 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Jessica.....  | 118 |
| Table 5.17 Pre- and Post- Anger Expression Scale subscale scores for Jessica.....      | 119 |
| Table 5.18 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Jessica.....       | 121 |
| Table 5.19 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Jessica.....    | 124 |
| Table 5.20 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Georgina                | 128 |
| Table 5.21 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Georgina.....                  | 129 |
| Table 5.22 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Georgina ..... | 129 |
| Table 5.23 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Georgina..... | 129 |
| Table 5.24 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Georgina.....      | 133 |

|                                                                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 5.25 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Georgina ..... | 138 |
| Table 5.26 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Joseph                 | 142 |
| Table 5.27 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Joseph.....                   | 143 |
| Table 5.28 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Joseph .....  | 143 |
| Table 5.29 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Joseph ..... | 143 |
| Table 5.30 Pre- and Post-Child's Role Play Measure scores for Joseph...               | 145 |
| Table 5.31 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Joseph .....      | 147 |
| Table 5.32 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Joseph .....   | 150 |

## List of Figures

|                                                                                                                                                              |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 3.1 Stages of a Systematic Review Search (Gough, 2007).....                                                                                           | 27  |
| Figure 3.2 Flowchart illustrating the systematic search of literature.....                                                                                   | 32  |
| Figure 4.1 Basic Types of Case Study Design (Yin, 2014).....                                                                                                 | 56  |
| Figure 5.1 A scatter graph showing Johnny's Emotion Expression scores<br>across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines .....                       | 94  |
| Figure 5.2 A scatter graph showing Johnny's Emotion Expression scores<br>across baseline and intervention phases with trendlines .....                       | 94  |
| Figure 5.3 A scatter graph showing Johnny's Emotion Expression scores<br>across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines .....                  | 94  |
| Figure 5.4 Themes and subthemes for perceived change identified for<br>Johnny .....                                                                          | 98  |
| Figure 5.5 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for<br>Johnny .....                                                                      | 101 |
| Figure 5.6 A scatter graph showing Oscar's School Children's Happiness<br>Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with mean<br>lines .....      | 106 |
| Figure 5.7 A scatter graph showing Oscar's School Children's Happiness<br>Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with trend<br>lines .....     | 106 |
| Figure 5.8 A scatter graph showing Oscar's School Children's Happiness<br>Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with<br>stability lines ..... | 106 |
| Figure 5.9 Themes for perceived change identified for Oscar .....                                                                                            | 110 |
| Figure 5.10 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for<br>Oscar .....                                                                      | 113 |
| Figure 5.11 A scatter graph showing Jessica's behaviour scores across<br>baseline and intervention phases with mean lines.....                               | 116 |
| Figure 5.12 A scatter graph showing Jessica's behaviour scores across<br>baseline and intervention phases with trend lines .....                             | 116 |
| Figure 5.13 A scatter graph showing Jessica's behaviour scores across<br>baseline and intervention phases with stability lines.....                          | 116 |

|                                                                                                                                                       |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 5.14 Themes and subthemes for perceived changes identified for Jessica.....                                                                    | 120 |
| Figure 5.15 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Jessica.....                                                                 | 123 |
| Figure 5.16 A scatter graph showing Georgina’s Self-Report Coping Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines .....          | 127 |
| Figure 5.17 A scatter graph showing Georgina’s Self-Report Coping Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with trend lines .....         | 127 |
| Figure 5.18 A scatter graph showing Georgina’s Self-Report Coping Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines .....     | 127 |
| Figure 5.19 Themes and subthemes for perceived changes identified for Georgina.....                                                                   | 131 |
| Figure 5.20 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Georgina.....                                                                | 136 |
| Figure 5.21 A scatter graph showing Joseph’s Self-Report Social Skills Scale score across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines .....      | 141 |
| Figure 5.22 A scatter graph showing Joseph’s Self-Report Social Skills Scale score across baseline and intervention phases with trend lines .....     | 141 |
| Figure 5.23 A scatter graph showing Joseph’s Self-Report Social Skills Scale score across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines ..... | 141 |
| Figure 5.24 Themes and subthemes for perceived changes identified for Joseph .....                                                                    | 146 |
| Figure 5.25 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Joseph .....                                                                 | 149 |

## Abstract

The current thesis presents an exploratory evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project in primary schools. The ELSA intervention aims to improve schools' capacity to support children with emotional literacy needs by training Teaching Assistants to equip them with the skills, knowledge and resources needed to support the social and emotional learning of children. Existing literature indicates a positive foundation of the intervention. However, due to the small body of research evaluating the ELSA project, and limitations to the existing evidence-base, the need for further research has been acknowledged. Therefore, the current study aimed to ascertain the measurable impact of ELSA support, as well as establish any perceived intervention effect. Factors viewed contributory to the positive impact of the intervention were also explored.

A pragmatic, mixed methods approach was used, encompassing a multiple case studies design. Single case experimental designs were employed to consider the impact of ELSA support on individual intervention targets for five participants within one local authority. Results from SCEDs were triangulated with pre- and post- intervention measures. Post-intervention semi-structured interviews with participants and ELSAs were undertaken to explore views of the ELSA intervention in greater depth.

Visual analysis of single case experimental design graphs suggested that in some contexts, a positive impact of the ELSA intervention can be ascertained. However, a number of limitations to this approach resulted in difficulties in gaining a clear indication of the measurable impact of the ELSA intervention. Thematic analysis of qualitative interviews identified that a positive impact of the ELSA intervention was consistently perceived by both the ELSAs and children, and several factors contributing to its success were reported. The current findings were discussed with reference to existing literature and limitations of the study were outlined. Implications for future research and practice are provided.

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis investigates the impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project in primary schools. An exploratory, mixed method multiple case studies design was utilised, with five participants. This chapter will present the background and rationale for conducting the research. Details of the structure of the thesis will be provided, followed by the researcher's personal and professional interests in the topic and research.

## 1.1 Background

Within the United Kingdom (UK), the need to support the development of positive mental health in children and young people is increasingly recognised, as evidenced by recent policy documents, such as the *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper* (Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education (DfE), 2017), and *Future in Mind* (Department of Health (DoH), 2015). Importantly, research suggests that half of mental health disorders begin before the age of 14 (Kim-Cohen et al., 2003), and prevalence rates of mental health difficulties in children and young people remain a consistent concern (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005; Ford, Goodman & Meltzer, 2003). Notably, services to support children and young people with mental health difficulties are limited, and those in need are often unable to access appropriate, professional support within an adequate time frame (Green et al., 2005; Meltzer, Gatward, Goodman & Ford, 2000). In light of such difficulties, growing emphasis is being placed on the role of schools in providing input and support (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2016).

Historically, educational policy within the UK has focused upon students' cognitive skills and raising their attainment (Weare, 2010a; Cefai & Cooper, 2009). However, the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) agenda (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003) and subsequently The Children Act

(2004), captured a fundamental shift in emphasis, highlighting that children's outcomes cannot be improved by focusing solely on their academic progress and the quality of teaching (Burton, 2008). Instead, it was recognised that children's holistic development should be prioritised, and that to optimise wellbeing and life chances, children needed to: be healthy; be safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic wellbeing (DfES, 2003). Importantly, UNICEF's (2007) report found that children and adolescents in the UK had the lowest levels of wellbeing of the 29 countries reviewed, further highlighting the need in the UK to prioritise children's development beyond an academic curriculum.

Evidence suggests that early intervention is the most effective means to support the development of positive wellbeing (Durlak et al., 2011; Weare & Nind, 2010). Over the course of their educational lives, children in the UK spend over 7,800 hours at school (OECD, 2014), highlighting the crucial position of schools in supporting the development of children's positive social and emotional wellbeing. Notably, following the withdrawal of the National Strategies by the UK coalition government in 2011, and therefore the removal of *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL) as a core national initiative, schools have increased autonomy regarding which teaching methods and programmes to adopt (DfE, 2010). Therefore, it is essential that educational professionals and practitioners are provided with high-quality information of evidence-based social and emotional interventions to ensure that they can make informed choices of what will be most effective within their individual context (Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton & Wolpert, 2013; Bywater & Sharples, 2012).

This study will report on an exploratory evaluation of one Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) implementation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project, considering its impact on the children who receive ELSA support.

The ELSA project aims to improve schools' capacity to support the emotional needs of children (Burton, 2008). Specially trained teaching assistants (TAs),

ELSAs, work within schools to provide intensive, tailored emotional literacy support to children and young people experiencing social and emotional difficulties (Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). Since the ELSA initiative was adopted in 2016, the EPS that provides the location for the current research has trained 194 ELSAs, who are working within primary, secondary and special school settings. Places on future training events continue to be in high demand.

## 1.2 Rationale for Research Study

To date, the body of published, peer-reviewed research evaluating the impact of ELSAs within schools is extremely limited. Furthermore, the research that has been carried out has a number of significant methodological weaknesses. Yet, while there is only a small evidence-base to validate the ELSA programme, local authorities (LAs) are increasingly adopting the initiative and there is a growing number of ELSAs in schools throughout the UK (ELSA network, 2017).

The current research therefore aims to contribute to the evidence-base around the ELSA programme and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the project in one LA. Additionally, research suggests that early intervention to support children with social and emotional difficulties is key, and that doing so within primary school has the largest impact (McGinnis, 1990). This finding, taken alongside the understanding that the ELSA project was initially developed and primarily utilised within primary education (ELSA Network, 2017), highlights the importance of evaluating ELSA specifically within the primary school context. Therefore, the current research will focus on the impact of ELSA at a primary school level. Finally, due to the individualised nature of ELSA intervention targets and delivery, this research will consider the impact of the ELSA intervention on an individual basis.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The research investigates the impact of the ELSA project on primary school pupils and, where improvements *are* identified, attempts to uncover the factors that contribute to its positive implementation. The research attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?
- In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?
- Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?

### 1.4 Personal and Professional Interest

The topic of the current study was of particular interest to the researcher for a number of reasons. Primarily, for five years prior to undertaking doctoral study, the researcher worked in primary and special school settings within a range of roles, including as a teacher, TA and 1:1 tutor. It was during this time that an awareness and interest in the social and emotional aspects of learning emerged. Working with children with additional social and emotional needs highlighted that without feeling safe and happy within a school environment, children and young people are not able to effectively learn, and as such the importance of fostering children's emotional wellbeing was emphasised. While an understanding of psychology gained during undergraduate and postgraduate education enabled the researcher to support these children to an extent, it was discovered that beyond the universal Personal, Health and Social Education (PSHE) curriculum, there was limited guidance and support available on how to support children and

young people with additional social and emotional needs within an educational setting. This highlighted to the researcher the need to upskill school staff to feel able to provide both universal and targeted support to children and young people with their social and emotional development.

Furthermore, in undertaking a trainee educational psychologist (EP) role within the host EPS, it became apparent to the researcher that the service prioritises supporting the social and emotional mental health of children and young people. The EPS began to train ELSAs in 2016 and were considering how to evaluate the intervention in order to inform and tailor their training package. Following attendance at several ELSA training and supervision sessions, it was clear that this project aligned with the researcher's personal interests and values, and the ELSA intervention has become a particular professional interest of the author.

## 1.5 Summary of Chapters

In Chapter 2, literature relating to social and emotional skills and emotional literacy will be reviewed. Universal and targeted interventions supporting the emotional literacy of children within primary schools will be considered and an overview of the ELSA project provided alongside the current evidence-base.

In Chapter 3, a systematic literature review is presented, considering the existing research into the quantitative impact of the ELSA project. The research questions of the current research and the rationale for these are outlined.

In Chapter 4, the methodological considerations for the current research are discussed. Key research paradigms as well as research designs and methods are described, and an account of those used within the current research is provided. Finally, the procedure of the current research is outlined, including analysis, participant selection and ethical considerations.

In Chapter 5, the findings from the five case studies undertaken are presented and analysed.

In Chapter 6, the findings of the current research are discussed with reference to the literature described within Chapters 2 and 3. Limitations of the study are considered, as well as implications for practice and future research.

In Chapter 7, the final conclusions and the unique contribution of the current research are presented.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction to Chapter

The aim of this literature review is to introduce key theory and research surrounding the ELSA project. An overview of children's social and emotional development will be given, with particular reference to emotional literacy. A description of the ELSA project, including its aims, implementation, and current research evidence is provided.

### 2.2 Social and Emotional Development

Social development refers to how we come to understand ourselves in relation to others, how we make friends, understand the rules of society and behave towards others. Emotional development is how we come to understand our own and others' feelings, including understanding others' points of view and developing empathy (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008). Importantly, social and emotional skills have been emphasised in England as fundamental to children and young people's holistic development (DCSF, 2007a; 2007b).

### 2.3 Terminology

There is a lack of consensus over terminology concerning social and emotional development. "Social and emotional skills" appears to be the preferred term within government policy in England (i.e. DCSF, 2007a; 2007b). However, a range of terms are used within academic and professional literature, both nationally and internationally, leading to confusion for researchers and practitioners alike (Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka & Lendrum, 2010; Weare & Gray 2003). The most commonly utilised terms include "social and emotional intelligence", "social and emotional competence", "emotional literacy", "emotional intelligence", "emotional wellbeing" and "positive mental health" (Wigelsworth et al, 2010;

Weare & Gray 2003). While these terms are often used interchangeably within literature, it has been suggested that they may describe qualitatively different concepts, reflecting varying disciplines and motivations, and thus clear differentiation of these terms is essential to moving forward in this area (McLaughlin, 2008; Weare & Gray, 2003). Notably, the term emotional literacy appears to be favoured within UK educational research literature (McLaughlin, 2008; Qualter, Gardener & Whiteley, 2007).

## 2.4 Emotional Literacy

The term emotional literacy originates from the concept of emotional intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) originally coined the term 'emotional intelligence', later defining it as:

*...the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion, the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p.10)*

Emotional intelligence focused primarily on cognitive and behavioural features, and 'social intelligence' was identified as a distinct concept. However, since Goleman (1998) popularised the term, its definition has extended to encompass social competence, such as empathy and social skills, alongside personal competence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation.

Emotional intelligence remains a term popularly utilised within the United States (US) (Weare & Gray, 2003) whilst emotional literacy has become increasingly prevalent within the UK (McLaughlin, 2008). While the two terms are often used interchangeably, emotional literacy is preferred within educational research as the notion of 'intelligence' implies an innate, fixed

ability, while 'literacy' suggests a set of skills that can be learned and developed (Shotton & Burton, 2008; Weare, 2004).

Sharp (2000) described emotional literacy as "the ability to recognise, understand, handle, and appropriately express emotions" (p. 8). However, it has been noted that some definitions of emotional literacy overemphasise the individual's ability to manage emotions and neglect to account for a social element of emotional literacy (Roffey, 2008; McLaughlin, 2008; Weare & Gray, 2003). Alternatively, Weare (2004) considered emotional literacy to encompass both intra-personal skills and inter-personal skills:

*...the ability to understand ourselves and other people, and in particular to be aware of, understand and use information about the emotional states of ourselves and others with competence. It includes the ability to understand, express and manage our emotions and respond to the emotions of others, in ways that are helpful to ourselves and others (p. 2)*

More recently, an eco-systemic view of emotional literacy has been proposed, acknowledging the interrelating and dynamic nature of the variables and outcomes of emotional literacy (Roffey, 2008). While the specific definition of the term remains unclear, what is apparent is that it does not describe just one skill, but instead clusters of social and emotional competencies.

## 2.5 Why is Emotional Literacy Important?

A number of longstanding theories have suggested that emotional literacy has a fundamental impact on a range of life outcomes. For example, Maslow's (1970) theory of motivation highlighted the key importance of individuals having emotional needs met in order to be able to engage successfully with learning. This notion was further built upon by Gardner (1983), who suggested that a child's emotional and social skills could have a

greater influence on outcomes, such as personal wellbeing and school and career success, than conventional intelligence. Moreover, research suggests that emotional competence at pre-school is a predictive factor of concurrent and future social competence (Denham, Hatfield, Smethurst, Tan & Tribe, 2006), and that academic achievement is underpinned by social and emotional skills (Berger, Alcalay, Torretti & Milicic, 2011).

Positive social and emotional development gives rise to a range of social-emotional competencies, namely, cooperative and pro-social behaviour, initiation and maintenance of peer friendships and adult relationships, management of aggression and conflict, development of a sense of mastery and self-worth, and emotional regulation and reactivity (Squires, 2002). Importantly, children who exhibit high levels of social and emotional skills are likely to do better at school (NICE, 2008), demonstrating increasing motivation to learn and commitment to school, improved attention and attendance rates, reduced suspensions and expulsions, and increased school attainment and completion (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012; Malecki & Elliot, 2002). Furthermore, positive social and emotional development is associated with greater life outcomes, including higher earning potential and resilience for life (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Wahlberg, 2007; Catalano et al., 2004).

## 2.6 Emotional Literacy Difficulties

Contrastingly, social and emotional difficulties, and subsequently failure to achieve social-emotional competence, can lead to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties which negatively impact upon life chances (Cefai & Cooper, 2009; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Eisenberg, 2006; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). Specifically, experiencing social and emotional difficulties in childhood can decrease educational attainment (Edwards, 2003), and increase the likelihood of teenage pregnancy, smoking, unemployment, drug and alcohol misuse, violence and crime later in life (Adi et al. 2007; Graham & Power, 2004).

Importantly, when emotional needs are not met, children are at an increased risk of mental health difficulties (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Reduced emotional literacy ability has been associated with difficulties with empathy and regulating mood (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000), as well as higher levels of stress, depression and aggressive behaviour (Liau, Liau, Teoh & Liau, 2003).

In England, Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, previously categorised as Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD), refer to the range of behaviours which children and young people may display that are manifestations of social and emotional difficulties or underlying mental health difficulties, for example, challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour, or becoming withdrawn or isolated (DfE, 2014). Graham (2004) identified that most young people demonstrate high levels of social and emotional skills: enjoying and working hard at school, having positive relationships with parents and not engaging in high levels of risky behaviour. However, it remains that SEMH needs are one of the most frequently occurring categories of Special Educational Need (SEN) in England, accounting for 16.3% of SEN in children and young people, and 15.7% of all SEN in primary schools in the England (DfE, 2016). Given the prevalence of SEMH needs in children and young people at school age, and the associated poor outcomes, an understanding of how best to support these children and young people within schools is critical to improving practice (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017).

## 2.7 School-Based Interventions

The DCSF (2009) have suggested a 'three-wave' model to supporting social and emotional development: 'wave one' describes universal provision which is delivered at a whole-school, -year group or -class level, including to those without any difficulties; 'wave two' are more targeted interventions which provide focused input for pupils who are at-risk of developing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or show early or mild signs of difficulties; and 'wave three' are highly targeted therapeutic interventions for

those identified as having severe mental health problems (Weare, 2010b). Subsequently, there has been an exponential growth in the number of school-based interventions to support children and young people to become emotionally literate individuals, particularly encompassing wave 'one' and 'two' approaches, in the UK (Weare, 2015) and internationally (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Importantly, there is increasing evidence that school-based approaches to promoting emotional literacy can be effective in supporting the development of positive mental health, and social and emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2011), as well as improving academic performance and school behaviour (Carnwell & Baker, 2007; Green et al., 2005).

### 2.7.1 Universal Interventions

Universal 'whole school' approaches have been identified as particularly effective in promoting positive wellbeing and mental health (DfE, 2016). International evaluations of universal interventions have demonstrated that they can lead to significant improvements in children's mental health, social and emotional skills and classroom behaviour, and reductions in anxiety, depression and bullying (Durlak et al. 2011).

Furthermore, a range of universal approaches have been found to have positive impacts on children and adolescent's social and emotional development within the UK. For example, the SEAL scheme of work (Department for Education and Skills, 2005) has been identified as one of the most widely implemented interventions for promoting social and emotional well-being in children and young people and has been associated with a number of favourable outcomes, including improvements in pupils' social and emotional skills (Humphrey et al., 2008) and anger management strategies (Hallam, 2009). In addition to this, the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum (Humphrey, Barlow & Lendrum, 2018); FRIENDS (Stallard et al., 2014), Zippy's Friends (Clarke, Bunting & Barry, 2014), and R-time (Hampton, 2010), have all been identified as having a positive impact on children's social and emotional skills.

### 2.7.2 Targeted 'Wave Two' Interventions

Reviews evaluating the impact of targeted interventions have found a positive impact of programmes on both a national (Cheney, Schlosser, Nash & Glover, 2014) and international level (Payton et al., 2008). Specifically, social skills programmes (Denham, Hatfield, Smethurst, Tan & Tribe, 2006), Circle of Friends (Frederickson, Warren & Turner, 2005), and nurture groups (Binnie & Allen, 2008) are examples of evidence-based interventions to support positive social and emotional development. Importantly, it has been established that successful social and emotional interventions have several key characteristics in common: a high level of structure and consistency in delivery, close monitoring to ensure programme fidelity, and a level of human and/or financial resources (Durlak et al., 2011; Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2010). Interventions that are less structured in their approach have been described as 'loose enabling frameworks' (Weare, 2010). Such 'loose' programmes are based on broad guidelines and principles, and are intended to support school ownership and subsequently intervention sustainability. This flexible approach encourages schools to tailor implementation rather than following a single model, therefore allowing for individual circumstances, priorities and needs to be accounted for (Weare & Nind, 2011; Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2010). Notably, the evidence for loose enabling frameworks is less convincing than for structured interventions (see Durlak et al., 2011), i.e. Secondary SEAL (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2010). However, it has been identified that there is a lack of research evidence for targeted interventions undertaken in the UK (NICE, 2008). Current research is primarily being undertaken in the US, and thus may not be applicable to differing cultures. Furthermore, the research is small scale, and as such may not be applicable to wider implementation (Burton, 2008).

### 2.7.3 Targeted Intervention Delivery

It has been highlighted that an important practical consideration for targeted social and emotional programmes within schools is which professional should deliver the intervention in order to best ensure that they are effective and sustainable (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014; Stallard et al., 2014). A number of targeted interventions are delivered by EPs (Francis, Bennion & Humrich, 2017), as well as counsellors and specialist therapists or practitioners (McCree, Cutting & Sherwin, 2018), demonstrating the important role of professionals with extensive training and understanding in the theory and practice of a specific intervention. However, delivery from an external professional can significantly increase the costs of intervention delivery, and also reduce the likelihood of programme sustainability (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014).

Alternatively, intervention delivery by school staff may be cost-saving, and have the additional benefit of school staff being more likely to have a thorough understanding of a child and their needs as well as the context of concerns (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014). However, teachers receive limited input on children's mental health and wellbeing during their training, and it has been suggested that their knowledge and skills may not be sufficient to deliver targeted support programmes (Molins & Clopton, 2002). Furthermore, while teachers appreciate the vital importance of supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils (Cowburn & Blow, 2017), teachers and other school staff have reported that they feel underconfident and unequipped to promote and support their student's emotional wellbeing (Rothi, Leavey & Best, 2008). The Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey identified that only 32% of the teachers asked felt that they had received appropriate mental health awareness training for their job role, and two thirds believed that they lacked the training needed to help identify mental health issues in pupils (DfE, 2015). This evidence highlights that while teachers may want to support children's emotional and social needs, they may not have been provided with the understanding, or feel confident in their ability to do so.

Trained school staff have been found to deliver targeted intervention programmes effectively, reducing the social and emotional difficulties experienced by pupils (Stallard, Simpson, Anderson & Goddard, 2008). Moreover, evaluations of social and emotional programmes have demonstrated that teachers and school support staff can be trained to deliver programmes as effectively as EPs (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014; Barrett & Turner, 2001). However, Stallard et al. (2014) identified that training teachers to deliver a social and emotional wellbeing programme was not as effective as delivery by health professionals. While there are inconclusive findings as to the effectiveness of school staff-led, targeted interventions, evidence suggests that support from EPs when delivering an intervention is a key factor in programme effectiveness (Noell, Witt, Gilbertson, Ranier & Freeland, 1997). Therefore, engaging the expertise of EPs in training and supporting school staff could allow the intervention to be delivered effectively, by educational professionals who have greater insights into individual child and school contexts (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014).

## 2.8 Teaching Assistants (TAs)

As a result of significant investment into additional school support staff, substantial growth in the number of TAs within classrooms has been observed across the UK (Blatchford et al., 2011). Notably, the number of TAs has more than trebled since the year 2000 (DfE, 2010), making up a quarter of the total school workforce (DCFS, 2009). The role of TAs in mainstream primary schools is complex (Butt and Lance, 2009), and encompasses a broad spectrum of responsibilities at various levels (Kelly, 2005). Notably, while the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project (Blatchford et al., 2009) identified a range of TA responsibilities within schools, it is widely acknowledged that the role of TAs primarily involves supporting children with special educational needs (Webster, Blatchford and Bassett et al., 2010; Blatchford et al., 2009; Russell et al., 2005).

Importantly, the role of TAs' in supporting pupils' learning has been questioned (Blatchford, Bassett and Brown et al., 2009; Higgins, 2011), with

research identifying a limited, and sometimes negative impact on pupils' attainment (Blatchford, Russell and Webster, 2012). However, this research has predominantly focused on TAs' influence on academic outcomes for pupils (Saddler, 2014). As TAs are increasingly working with pupils whose special educational needs are social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Groom & Rose, 2005), their impact on social outcomes must also be acknowledged (Saddler, 2014). Research has identified TAs as fundamental to the inclusion of pupils with social and emotional difficulties (Burton & Goodman, 2011); namely in supporting their inclusion and engagement within a mainstream classroom (Blatchford et al., 2009; Groom & Rose, 2005).

## 2.9 Measurement of Emotional Literacy Skills

The increased emphasis placed on developing children's social and emotional ability within education has led to a growth in interest in social and emotional skill measurement (Wigelsworth, et al., 2010). Importantly, inconsistencies in the definition of emotional literacy, as described in Sections 2.3 and 2.4, alongside additional issues summarised by Wigelsworth et al. (2010), contribute several challenges for the measurement of social and emotional skills.

A number of tools are available to measure social and emotional ability (see Humphrey et al., 2011 for review), and notably, the scope and specificity of these measures varies significantly. Some measures providing a single indicator of overall social and emotional skills (i.e. TEIQue, Petrides et al., 2006), are typically short, and easy to administer and score, but are less change sensitive. Contrastingly, other measures are multi-dimensional (i.e. the Social Skills Rating System, Gresham & Elliott, 1990), which are lengthier but provide a more comprehensive profile. Alternatively, a single indicator of a specific domain of social and emotional skills can be provided by certain tools (i.e. Emotional Dysregulation Scale, Penza, Zeman & Shipman, 1998, in Wigelsworth et al., 2010). Therefore, it is recommended that the selection of measures is based on the context and purpose for which

the measure is being used. In particular, it is suggested that broad, unidimensional measures may not be sufficiently sensitive to capture intervention effects (Wigelsworth et al., 2010).

Tools to capture children's social and emotional skills can utilise information from a range of sources, further adding to the complexity of measurement. Notably, through introspection, children are able to offer the most thorough information about themselves. Yet their responses may be subject to socially desirable bias (Wigelsworth et al., 2010), and as self-awareness develops with age, the accuracy of response of younger children may be also affected (Denham, 2005). Alternatively, parents can consider behaviour within the home context, offering a different view of a child's social and emotional skills. However, recruitment and retention issues, and also a restricted frame of reference, can cause difficulties with this group (Wigelsworth et al., 2010). In contrast, teachers are able to have a wider frame of reference, although, experience can impact upon ratings (Denham, 2005), as well as further recruitment and retention difficulties. As it is apparent that each source has their own advantages and disadvantages, the importance of collecting views from a range of perspectives is highlighted (Wigelsworth et al., 2010).

## 2.10 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)

### 2.10.1 ELSA Project Development

Developed within Southampton LA in 2001, the ELSA programme was originally a peripatetic service to support children referred to the EPS with social and emotional needs (Burton, 2008). Subsequently, the project evolved to become a school-based provision, aiming to improve schools' capacity to support vulnerable children with social and emotional needs (Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). TAs were provided with training from the EPS to become ELSAs, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and resources needed to support the social and emotional learning of children (Burton, 2008). Alongside a whole-school approach, ELSAs worked with children and young people experiencing social and emotional difficulties

within schools to provide intensive, tailored emotional literacy support (Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009).

## 2.10.2 ELSA Training and Supervision

To become ELSAs, TAs typically receive five days of training delivered by EPs (Burton, 2009). The aim of the ELSA training is to provide a basic psychological understanding of the principal needs underpinning healthy emotional development in children, supporting TAs to think beyond presenting behaviours and consider the needs those behaviours may be expressing (Burton, 2018). ELSA training focuses on aspects of emotional literacy, including emotional awareness, self-esteem, anger management, social and friendship skills (Burton, 2009). The training provides ELSAs with practical guidance as well as drawing upon a range of psychological theories (Burton, 2008). An overview of the training content and relevant psychological theory drawn upon is displayed in Table 2.1.

| Day | Course content                                                                                                                | Psychological Theory                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Emotional Literacy</li> <li>• Raising Emotional Awareness</li> </ul> | Theory of Motivation (Maslow, 1970)<br>Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)<br>Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983)<br>Emotional Intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Esteem</li> <li>• Active Listening and Communication Skills</li> </ul>          | 'Building block' Model of Self-Esteem (Borba, 1989)<br>Theory of Motivation (Maslow, 1970)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger Management</li> </ul>                                                          | Assault Cycle (Breakwell, 1997)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Skills</li> <li>• Autism</li> </ul>                                           | Elements of Communication (Schutz, 1988)<br>Individual Psychology Theory (Adler & Rodman, 1988)<br>Social Skills Model (Argyle, 1987)<br>Recognition Hunger (Berne, 1975)<br>Theory of Motivation (Maslow, 1979)<br>Triad of Impairments (Wing & Gould, 1979)<br>Theory of Mind (Frith, 1989)<br>Social Stories (Gray & Garand, 1993) |
| 5   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendship Skills</li> <li>• Therapeutic Stories</li> </ul>                          | Circle of Friends (Pearpoint & Forest, 1992)<br>Therapeutic Story Writing (Brett, 1986)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

Table 2.1 ELSA Training Overview (Burton, 2009)

The content of the initial ELSA training is not considered exhaustive or definitive (Burton, 2018; 2008). Following completion of training, ELSAs receive ongoing group supervision for two hours every half term facilitated by an EP (Burton, 2009). Supervision sessions are intended to provide the opportunity for group problem-solving and sharing of resources and ideas, as well as input on additional topic areas and further discussion of psychological approaches (Burton, 2008).

### 2.10.3 ELSA Intervention Delivery

ELSAs are trained to plan and deliver programmes for children identified by their schools as experiencing temporary or longer term social or emotional needs (Burton, 2009). ELSA sessions aim to facilitate the children in developing new skills and coping strategies to allow them to manage social and emotional demands more effectively. For example, children may receive support to recognise and manage their emotions, raise their self-esteem, improve peer relationships, recover from a significant loss or bereavement, and resolve conflict effectively (Burton, 2009). While each session has its own individual objective, the intention is that these would build towards longer term aims for the child (Burton, 2008).

The ELSA programme is intended as a proactive, planned approach for supporting a child rather than as reactive, incidental support (Burton, 2018). Furthermore, ELSA is a time-limited intervention, with sessions typically lasting between half a term and a term, although occasionally support is provided for longer. Some informal contact between sessions or beyond the intervention period may be maintained to enable graduated withdrawal of support for those who may need this – for example checking in for a few minutes, or review sessions (Burton, 2009). The majority of ELSA support is expected to be delivered on an individual basis, although some small group work may be appropriate, for example with areas of friendship or social skills (Burton, 2009). Burton (2018) identified that an effective ELSA session should include:

- An initial warm up;
- A brief recap of the previous session;
- A learning activity;
- A summary of the main learning points;
- An optional ‘take-away’ task;
- If the session content has been emotionally demanding, a neutral activity to close.

#### 2.10.4 ELSA National Context

The ELSA intervention is now well-established across the UK, with over 100 LAs offering ELSA training and supervision, as well as many independent EP services (ELSA Network, 2017). ELSAs work within a range of settings, such as mainstream primary and secondary schools, and also special schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, or emotional and behavioural difficulties (Burton, 2008). While the core principles of ELSA remain the same nationally, there is variation in training content and delivery, with some LAs adapting training to six sessions rather than five (Burton, 2018).

Furthermore, from the available research, it is apparent that the delivery of ELSA in schools differs from setting to setting. Some ELSAs work with small groups of children, while others work entirely on a one-to-one basis (Bravery & Harris, 2009). Some involve parents or friends of the child in sessions (Hill, O’Hare & Weidberg, 2013; Bravery & Harris, 2009). The time available to ELSAs is an additional variation; some ELSAs are given protected time for weekly sessions, while others run “drop-in” sessions during lunchtime (Bravery & Harris, 2009).

#### 2.10.5 ELSA Local Context

In the researcher’s host LA, over 190 ELSAs have been trained since the EPS began delivering training in 2016. Schools typically have one ELSA trained, although some have several ELSAs practicing within the same

setting. ELSA training is delivered one day a week over five consecutive weeks. An overview of the content covered is presented in Table 2.2. There are currently nine supervision groups across the LA, ranging in size from ten to twenty ELSAs, with larger groups facilitated by two EPs.

| Day | Course Content                                                                 |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Am: Introduction to Emotional Literacy<br>Pm: Active Listening and Circle Time |
| 2   | Am: Self-Esteem<br>Pm: Friendship                                              |
| 3   | Am: Strong Emotions<br>Pm: Therapeutic Stories                                 |
| 4   | Am: Autism<br>Pm: Autism Interventions                                         |
| 5   | Am: Loss and Bereavement<br>Pm: ELSA Programme Planning                        |

Table 2.2 Local LA ELSA Training Content

## 2.10.6 ELSA Evidence-Base

### 2.10.6.1 *Perceived Impact*

Following the development of the ELSA project, Burton (2008) provided an overview of its initial outcomes through exploring the perceptions of those experiencing the intervention first-hand and investigating its impact on pupils. Questionnaires illustrated that all 13 ELSAs believed that the project had helped them in their ability to support vulnerable pupils. ELSAs commented that they felt empowered and valued in their new role. 83% of primary school pupils (n=48) and 50% of secondary pupils (n=10) reported that they thought they were making progress towards their ELSA targets, while the remainder felt they were improving sometimes. Furthermore, teachers (n=54) largely reported that the ELSA project had improved pupil progress towards their specified targets, with improvements including emotional understanding and regulation, social skills, self-esteem and confidence, and behaviour.

The experiences of primary school pupils taking part in the ELSA programme have been explored by Hills (2016). Questionnaire data from 53 children

revealed that all rated the ELSA project as effective, 42% giving the maximum effectiveness score. Semi-structured interviews were then used to investigate the perceived effectiveness in greater depth. Support with talking, friendships and improving confidence were viewed as the areas which ELSAs helped the most. Furthermore, acknowledging the important impact of parental engagement in intervention success (Zins et al., 2007), Wilding and Claridge (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with seven parents of primary school children who were supported by ELSAs to gain their perceptions of the impact of the programme. It was found that parents perceived the ELSA intervention to impact positively on social and emotional development, noting particular improvements with their child's emotional regulation and communication at home as well as within their school environment.

In addition to published studies, LA and doctoral research has contributed to the evidence-base around the ELSA intervention. Bravery and Harris (2009) used questionnaires to explore the views of ELSAs (n=21) and headteachers (n=17) in relation to the impact of ELSA work, finding that individual improvements in emotional wellbeing, relationships and behaviour were most apparent, while positive changes to attendance, academic achievement and bullying incidents were also reported. Barker (2017) established that a positive impact on pupil's emotional literacy was recognised by two children involved with the ELSA programme as well as their parents, with specific improvements identified in confidence, coping strategies, and emotional expression and regulation. Factors which helped identify change included gathering the views of others. Additionally, Grahamslaw (2010) found that children who had worked with an ELSA had higher self-efficacy beliefs (n=28), than those who had not been part of the ELSA intervention.

Notably, a number of studies into ELSA have been carried out by LAs and trainee EPs within unpublished theses (Pickering, Lambeth & Woodcock, 2019). However, due to the stakeholder status of LAs, as they develop and deliver ELSA training, and provide support and supervision for ELSAs, the risk of researcher bias must be acknowledged.

#### 2.10.6.2 *Perceived Contributing Factors*

In addition to considering its impact, research into the ELSA programme has explored the factors viewed as important to its effectiveness. The relationship between the child and ELSA with whom they are working has consistently been identified as fundamental. This factor has been identified as critical by children (McEwen, 2019; Barker, 2017; Hills, 2016; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013), parents (Barker, 2017; Wilding & Claridge, 2016), and ELSAs alike (McEwen, 2019). To increase understanding of the ELSA-child relationship, research has explored factors which are important to its development. Children believed that ELSA attributes, such as being calm, as well as enjoyable sessions, access to ELSAs and understanding session purpose were vital. Additionally, ELSAs identified that personal attributes, such as being a good listener, patience a caring nature, and confidence in their practice were influential. Availability of time and resources, and the understanding of leadership and the wider school were also key (McEwen, 2019). Furthermore, Miles (2015) discovered that giving time, having respect and understanding for the child, along with sharing their own experiences to find common ground were essential in the development of the ELSA-child relationship, while trust, confidentiality and flexibility were also considered by ELSAs to be important.

Further factors highlighted as contributory to the success of ELSA were creating a space to talk and problem-solve (Barker, 2017; Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Hills, 2016), teaching coping strategies and skills (Hills, 2016; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013), enjoyable, fun sessions (Barker, 2017), and enabling children to view a situation from a different perspective (Hills, 2016). Also, it was viewed as valuable for children to understand and consent to undertaking ELSA sessions (Barker, 2017; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013).

Bravery and Harris (2009) interviewed 21 ELSAs to explore key features of a school environment that were perceived as increasing the likelihood of effective practice. Efficient communication between teaching staff, senior

leadership and ELSAs concerning social and emotional needs was highlighted, and also recognition and understanding of the ELSA role across the school community. In addition, sufficient time to plan and deliver sessions, involvement in purchasing resources, and a quiet room or space for ELSA work were shared as important. Finally, being valued and supported by members of staff was considered key, as well as access to external support and further relevant training.

#### *2.10.6.3 ELSA Research Summary*

Research into the ELSA intervention to date offers important insights into stakeholder views of its perceived impact as well as factors which are felt to be important to its success. Yet, the research exploring the impact of the ELSA project is limited. To date, there are only three peer-reviewed studies into the effectiveness of the ELSA project (Hills, 2016; Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Burton, 2008). While the initial findings of these studies, alongside doctoral and LA research, indicate a positive foundation of the intervention, and that those involved in the process believe that it has contributed to improvements for the children and young people that have taken part, there are several limitations to the current evidence-base. Firstly, small sample sizes throughout the research limit the extent to which findings are generalisable. Moreover, it appears that the current ELSA evidence-base focuses largely on the qualitative data and individual perceptions of ELSA , and therefore their subjectivity and potential for bias must be acknowledged. In particular, as this information has been gathered from stakeholders, such as ELSAs as well as children and young people involved in the ELSA intervention and their parents, their investment in the success of the intervention could impact on their perceptions of its effectiveness. Additionally, the research described is reliant on interview and questionnaire data completed retrospectively, and therefore individual experiences of ELSA may have impacted upon participation. For example, individuals may be more likely to opt to taking part in the research if they have had positive experiences of the process, which therefore could present a skewed picture of ELSA intervention effectiveness.

As acknowledged by Gray (2001), service evaluations are often overly reliant on stakeholder surveys and interviews. While these information sources capture important views and make a key contribution to the knowledge-base of an intervention, it is also important to note that this does not present a complete picture. In addition to interview data and retrospective surveys, in order to build upon the existing evidence-base, it will also be fundamental to capture the actual impact ELSA has on the children concerned. This is increasingly addressed within ELSA research, and therefore the following chapter will present a systematic literature review of the research exploring the measurable impact of the ELSA project on children.

## 3 Systematic Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction to Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to present a systematic literature review (SLR) of studies that have evaluated the impact of the ELSA project for children and young people. The rationale and procedure undertaken for the systematic literature review will be described. A review of ELSA evaluation research undertaken to date will be provided, as well as the implications of this research for the current study.

### 3.2 Systematic Literature Review Rationale

An SLR aims to collate research findings to clarify and evaluate the evidence and quality (Gough, 2007), enabling sense to be made from a collection of research findings, with the aim of answering a research question around an intervention (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Traditionally, SLRs focused explicitly on quantitative research to explore such questions. However, more recently it has been acknowledged that qualitative research contributes valuable data to research questions, particularly with regard to reports of individual intervention experiences (Noyes, Popay, Pearson, Hannes & Booth, 2011).

The body of published, peer-reviewed research evaluating the impact of ELSAs within schools is limited (Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013), with current literature appearing to focus on perceived rather than measurable impact (McEwen, 2019; Hills, 2016; Wilding & Claridge, 2016). In spite of limitations to the evidence-base in support of the ELSA programme, an increasing number of LAs are adopting the initiative and there is a growing number of ELSAs in schools throughout the UK (ELSA network, 2017). While there is currently limited research into the measurable impact of ELSAs in schools, it remains useful to identify key findings, conclusions and difficulties within this domain (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Therefore, the current systematic synthesis aims to provide a

reflection of research undertaken into measurable impact of the ELSA project to date.

### 3.3 Systematic Literature Review Question

The current SLR aims to answer the following review question:

- What is the measurable impact of the ELSA intervention on the social and emotional wellbeing of children in schools in the UK?

### 3.4 Systematic Literature Review Procedure

SLRs involve three core phases: identifying and describing relevant literature, appraising the included research, and collating findings into a synthesis (Gough, Oliver & Thomas, 2012). Gough (2007) outlined stages that are typically within the first stage of a systematic review (see Figure 3.1). These guidelines will be used within the current review, to establish relevant literature to the research question outlined above.

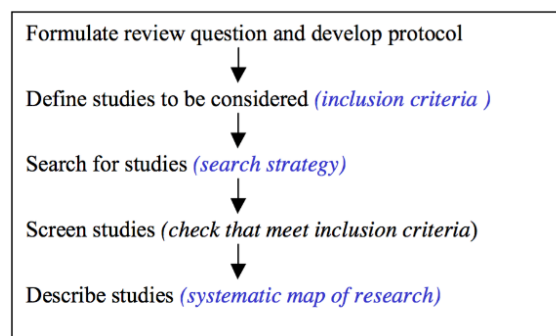


Figure 3.1 Stages of a Systematic Review Search (Gough, 2007)

#### 3.4.1 Inclusion Criteria

Following the development of a research question, inclusion and exclusion criteria were outlined prior to conducting a literature search to ensure that only relevant material was considered. The inclusion and exclusion criteria applied within the current review are described in Table 3.1.

|                      | Inclusion criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Exclusion criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of publication  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published, peer-reviewed research</li> <li>Unpublished or grey research</li> <li>Accessible as full text</li> <li>Published in English</li> <li>Published between 2008 and 2019</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies available only as an abstract or summary</li> <li>Published in any language other than English</li> <li>Published before 2008</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Participant sample   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children aged 4-18 years</li> <li>Attending educational provision in the UK</li> </ul>                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children outside of 4-18 years of age or research that investigates these ages alongside school-aged children</li> <li>Children attending alternative provision, or not in full-time education</li> <li>Attending school in country outside of the UK or research that considers UK participants alongside children from other countries</li> </ul> |
| Type of intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered by an ELSA</li> <li>Undertaken within school setting</li> <li>Implemented in the UK</li> <li>Delivered on a small group or individual basis</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not delivered by an ELSA</li> <li>Implemented outside of the UK</li> <li>Implemented out of school</li> <li>Whole class intervention</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Research design      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report primary data which evaluates the effectiveness of ELSA intervention on children's social and emotional wellbeing</li> <li>Description of the sample population</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematic or literature reviews</li> <li>Insufficient design information provided</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of the intervention and implementation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Data collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative data measuring changes to social and emotional wellbeing or identified emotional literacy target</li> <li>• Mixed method research with quantitative strand measuring changes to social and emotional wellbeing or identified emotional literacy target</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative data reporting perceived impact of intervention</li> <li>• Quantitative measure of variable that is not related to social and emotional wellbeing utilised</li> <li>• Retrospective questionnaire or survey data</li> </ul> |

Table 3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Applied in the SLR

### 3.4.2 Search Strategy

A systematic search was carried out to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relevant literature within the area of ELSA interventions. An internet-based search of literature was implemented in March 2019, using the University of Nottingham NUsearch function to identify relevant and accessible databases. The databases considered most appropriate and therefore utilised within the current systematic review were PsycINFO (OVID) and SCOPUS. Due to limited published peer-reviewed papers in this subject area, unpublished theses were also searched for using the EThOS database. To ensure that all relevant literature was obtained, synonyms were carefully considered when determining key word search terms. The following key terms were used to complete the searches: “school”, “education”, “Emotional Literacy Support Assistant”, “ELSA”, “Support Assistant” and “Teaching Assistant”.

The search was limited to English language research, undertaken within the UK between 2008 and 2019. Reference lists of published research were manually searched to identify any further relevant research that had not been identified by database searches. Further to this, a review of the ELSA Network website ([elsanetwork.org](http://elsanetwork.org)) was undertaken to identify additional unpublished research, including theses and research carried out by LAs. Systematic reviews were not included within the current synthesis; however, they were reviewed in order to identify potentially relevant primary studies. Figure 3.2 provides a visual description of the search strategy implemented. Results generated from both database and other searches were combined and duplicates removed. Studies were screened for eligibility initially using abstracts, before accessing full texts for appraisal of studies. An overview of the literature identified as well as reasons for the exclusion of papers is provided in Appendix 1. The search identified six studies which met the inclusion criteria outlined. Appendix 2 provides a description of the key components of the ELSA intervention utilised in each study within the systematic literature review using the TiDieR framework, as is recommended practice (Hoffman et al., 2014).

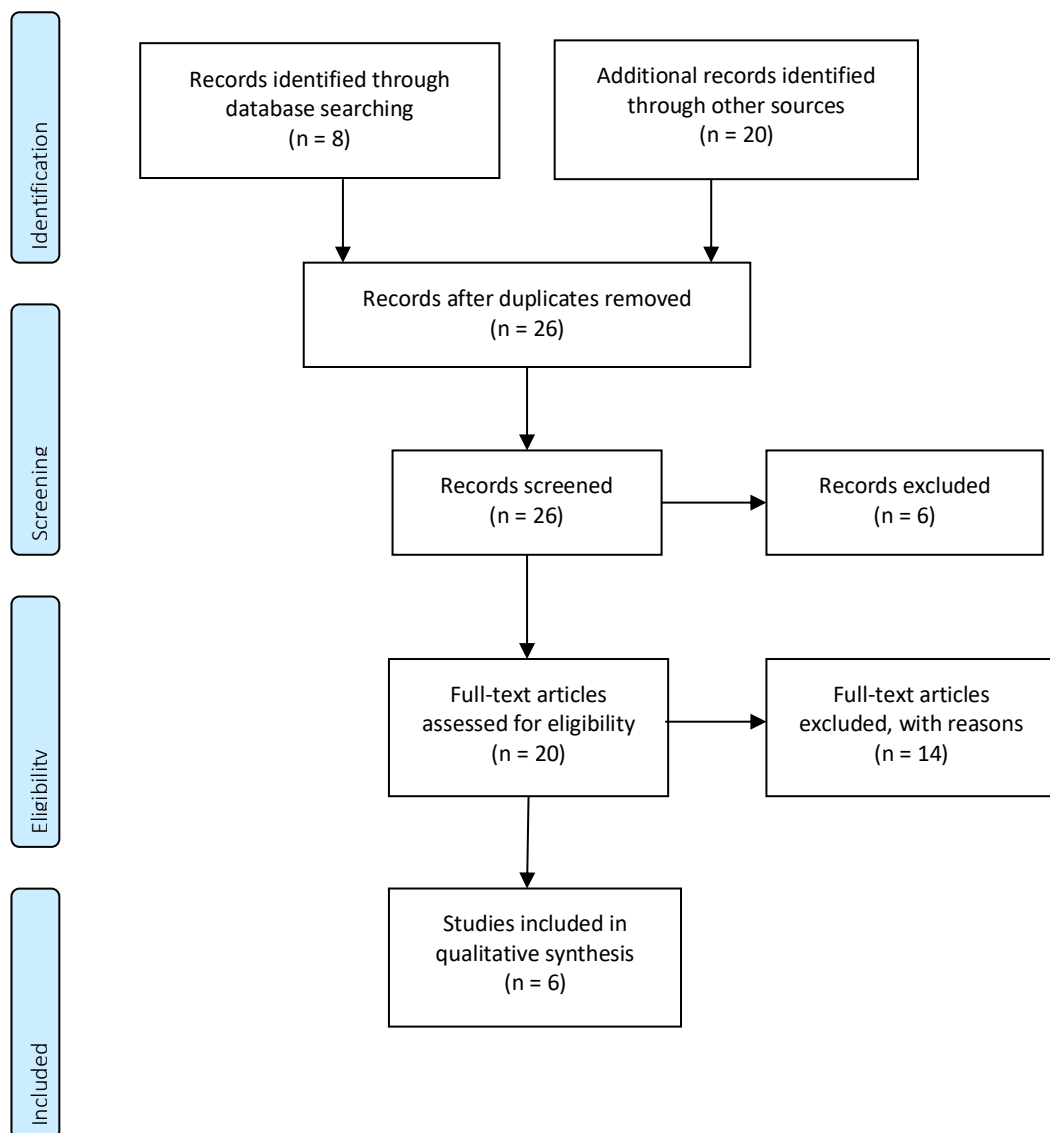


Figure 3.2 Flowchart illustrating the systematic search of literature

### 3.4.3 Quality and relevance appraisal

Gough (2007) outlined the ‘Weight of Evidence Framework’ as a means of assessing the quality and relevance of studies in systematic syntheses of applied research. It is suggested that this strategy ensures multiple dimensions of studies are considered and appraised (Harden & Gough, 2012). The dimensions for appraisal and implications for the current review are outlined in Table 3.2. Studies achieving a ‘low’ overall quality judgment are not included in the current review.

| Weight of Evidence Criteria                                                                                                                                                            | Current Review Implications                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Weight of Evidence A:<br>Generic, non-review specific judgment about the quality of evidence                                                                                           | Studies will be given credit for:<br>clear aims and objectives, appropriate research design, clear sampling methods, effective data collection, findings supported clearly by evidence, clarity of the report, and ethical awareness |
| Weight of Evidence B:<br>Review specific judgment about the appropriateness of a specific form of evidence for answering the current review question e.g. relevance of research design | Studies will be given credit for:<br>research question considering impact of intervention, quantitative measures of social, emotional health and wellbeing or emotional literacy                                                     |
| Weight of Evidence C:<br>Review specific judgment about the relevance of the focus of the evidence for the review question e.g. type of sample, method of data gathering or analysis   | Studies will be given credit for:<br>rigorous collection of quantitative data, control group, control of potential influencing variables when collecting data, statistical analysis                                                  |
| Weight of Evidence D:<br>Overall assessment of the extent that a study contributes evidence to answering a review question, typically a combination of A, B and C                      | Based on ratings given for criteria A, B and C, studies will be given an overall judgment of high, medium or low                                                                                                                     |

Table 3.2 Weight of Evidence Framework and criteria for the SLR (Gough, 2007)

#### 3.4.4 Reliability and Validity

Each of the studies to be included within the current review was appraised using Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence framework alongside Gerstein et al's (2007) quality indicators (Appendix 3). An overview the reliability and validity of each study is provided in Table 3.3.

| Study                                   | Reliability and Validity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Weight of evidence                                   |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Burton (2008)                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering intervention impact</li> <li>• Pre-post test</li> <li>• Small sample size</li> <li>• Details of sample age and individual targets provided</li> <li>• Some details of intervention delivery</li> <li>• Description of measure used</li> <li>• Potential bias in children's self-report</li> </ul>                                                                                       | A – Medium<br>B – High<br>C – Medium<br>D - Medium   |
| Burton, Trail and Norgate (2009)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering intervention impact</li> <li>• Clear methodology and recruitment process</li> <li>• Limited description of intervention aims and delivery</li> <li>• Pre-post test – statistical analysis used</li> <li>• Measures gathered views from multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Limited matched data sets cause challenges for drawing conclusions re group/individual interventions</li> </ul> | A – Medium<br>B – Medium<br>C – Medium<br>D - Medium |
| Burton, Osborne and Norgate (2010)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering intervention impact</li> <li>• Multiple measures used capturing range of perspectives</li> <li>• Wait list control group used</li> <li>• Limited description of sample characteristics</li> <li>• Clear methodology and results provided</li> <li>• Pre-post test – statistical analysis used</li> <li>• Small sample</li> </ul>                                                        | A – High<br>B – High<br>C – High<br>D - High         |
| Mann and Russell (2011)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering intervention impact</li> <li>• Measures gathered views from multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Pre-post test – statistical analysis used</li> <li>• Brief but clear description of study</li> <li>• Limited description and detail of sample</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                   | A – Medium<br>B – High<br>C – High<br>D - High       |
| Butcher, Cook and Holder-Spriggs (2013) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering intervention impact</li> <li>• SCED design – visual analysis used</li> <li>• Clear description of measures used</li> <li>• Individual targets described</li> <li>• Small sample but age and sex provided</li> <li>• Intervention timeframes provided</li> <li>• Limitations clearly acknowledged</li> </ul>                                                                             | A – Medium<br>B – High<br>C – Medium<br>D - Medium   |
| Mann (2014)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering intervention impact</li> <li>• Pre-post test w/control group - Statistical analysis applied</li> <li>• Small sample but limitations considered</li> <li>• Multiple measures used – administered by same individuals pre and post</li> <li>• Clear description of methods and results</li> <li>• Careful consideration of reliability and validity of methods</li> </ul>                 | A – High<br>B – High<br>C – High<br>D - High         |

Table 3.3 Study appraisal using Weight of Evidence framework

| Study Author and Date              | Sample                                                                                   | ELSA intervention details                                                                               | Research Design                                        | Data Collection                                                                      | Outcomes: Impact of ELSA project on children                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Burton (2008)                      | 1 Junior School<br>Pupils N=6<br>5 pupils aged 7-8 years, 1 pupil aged 11 years          | 5 pupils received group ELSA intervention<br>1 pupil received individual ELSA sessions                  | Pre and post measures                                  | Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS, 2005)                                       | Overall movement in a positive direction for perceptions of self as a learner. However, impact for individuals unclear.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Burton, Trail and Norgate (2009)   | Teacher N=107<br>Parent N=52<br><br>No information on school year or age of participants | 23 participants receiving individual interventions<br><br>15 participants receiving group interventions | Mixed method<br><br>Quan: Pre and post measures        | Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - Teacher and parent version          | Teacher-rated questionnaires revealed a significant decrease in the total questionnaire score indicating perceived improvements in the child's behaviour. Significant decrease in 'emotional problems', 'peer problems' and 'conduct disorder' and significant improvement in 'pro-social behaviour'<br><br>Parent-rated questionnaires indicated a significant decrease in total SDQ score. Significant decreases were seen in the 'hyperactivity' subscale, but otherwise no statistically significant improvements. |
| Burton, Osborne and Norgate (2010) | Primary and Secondary schools<br><br>Teacher-rated measures N=60                         | No additional information on ELSA intervention delivery                                                 | Quasi experimental design<br><br>Pre and Post measures | SDQ - Teacher version Emotional Literacy (EL) Checklist - Teacher and pupil versions | SDQ data revealed those receiving the intervention demonstrated significant improvements within the 'conduct problems' ( $p<0.005$ ) and 'hyperactivity' ( $p<0.05$ ) subscales.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

|                                         |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                        |                                          |                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                         | <p>Pupil-rated measures N=48</p> <p>No gender or age information reported</p>    |                                                                                                                                                        | Intervention group and wait-list control |                                                                                                                               | <p>Teacher-rated EL scores reported significant improvements to total emotional literacy scores for the ELSA group (<math>p&lt;0.001</math>), while no significant difference was observed for the control group. Subscales demonstrated significant improvements to empathy (<math>p&lt;0.05</math>), self-awareness (<math>p&lt;0.001</math>), and social skills (<math>p&lt;0.05</math>), as well as self-regulation (<math>p&lt;0.001</math>) for primary-aged only.</p> <p>Pupil-rated EL scores not significant</p> |
| Mann and Russell (2011)                 | <p>N=72<br/>18 settings</p> <p>Pupils N=60<br/>Teachers N=87<br/>Parents N=9</p> | No additional information on ELSA intervention delivery                                                                                                | Pre- and Post-measures                   | EL Checklist – Teacher, parent and pupil versions                                                                             | <p>Teachers identified significant improvements in pupils' emotional literacy (<math>p&lt;0.001</math>)</p> <p>Results of pupil and parent measures not significant</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Butcher, Cook and Holder-Spriggs (2013) | <p>N=2<br/>(2 male)<br/>Year 3<br/>1 Primary School</p>                          | <p>School identified children who had not received ELSA previously who would benefit from intervention</p> <p>Intervention delivered for six weeks</p> | Single-case experimental design (SCED)   | <p>Repeated observation measures in class and on playground based on individual EL targets</p> <p>Baseline: conducted 4-5</p> | <p>Visual analysis of SCED graphs indicates:</p> <p>Child A:<br/>Positive impact on time spent on task (average 50% to 81%), time spent as active member of peer group (average 35% to 63%). Small positive impact on number of times asking teacher for help (average 0.06 to 1.3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|             |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                         |                                                     |                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                         |                                                     | times within one week<br>Intervention: once a week for 6 weeks | Child B:<br>Positive impact on time spent on task (average 38% to 66%) and number of aggressive incidents (average 2.4 to 1.2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mann (2014) | Intervention group:<br>5 TAs and 5 pupils<br>Control group:<br>1 TA and 5 pupils<br><br>Gender and ages of pupils not given<br>Primary and Secondary schools | No additional information on ELSA intervention delivery | Mixed Method<br><br>Quan: quasi experimental design | Pre and post measures:<br>Pupil and TA EL checklist<br>SDQ     | TA EL checklist: Positive changes for all participants in experimental group, decrease in scores for control<br>Pupil EL checklist: 4 of 5 participants reported improvements, 1 pupil decreased in scores reported. 4 of 5 in control group reported improvements, 1 no change<br>TA SDQ: Changes in desired direction for 4 of 5 pupils in experimental group, while 3 of 5 in control group experienced positive change, 2 scores remained unchanged<br><br>Unable to ascertain statistical significance of changes in scores |

Table 3.4 Key characteristics of studies included in the SLR

## 3.5 Systematic Review Synthesis

### 3.5.1 Overview of studies included

Six studies were identified to be included in the current systematic review. A description of the main characteristics of each study is provided in Table 3.4. Information collected from the studies included their aim, design, sample characteristics, intervention details, measures and results. Data has been synthesised from a qualitative perspective as a meta-analysis was considered to be inappropriate due to the heterogeneity of the research designs and measures used.

Of the six studies reviewed, all were undertaken in England. Most of the studies included were LA evaluations (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). One was unpublished doctoral research (Mann, 2014), and one was a peer-reviewed, published study (Burton, 2008). The studies were appraised using Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence framework and rated from Medium to High.

### 3.5.2 Study Design

Several studies utilised a mixed method approach, and results from quantitative measures were reported alongside additional data not considered within the current review (Mann, 2014; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). Quasi-experimental designs were applied in two studies (Mann, 2014; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010), while three studies applied non-experimental designs using pre and post measures to assess impact with no control group (Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009; Burton, 2008). One study used a single case experimental design (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013). Follow up measures were not utilised in any of the research reviewed.

Most studies utilised standardised measures to identify pupil progress. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) was utilised in three studies (Mann, 2014; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009), the Emotional Literacy (EL) Checklist (Faupel, 2003) was used in three studies (Mann, 2014; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010) and one study applied the Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS, 2005) (Burton, 2008). Alternatively, one study created tailored observation measures to assess pupils' individual ELSA targets (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013).

Of the research considered within the current review, pupil-completed questionnaires were carried out within four studies (PASS: Burton, 2008; EL Checklist: Mann, 2014; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010), teacher-completed questionnaires in four studies (EL Checklist: Mann, 2014; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; SDQ: Mann, 2014; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009), and parent-completed questionnaires in two studies (EL Checklist: Mann & Russell, 2011; SDQ: Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009).

### 3.5.3 Sample Characteristics

The studies reviewed were predominantly small in scale taking place within one or two LAs. Study sizes ranged from a single school (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Burton, 2008), to across 18 schools (Mann & Russell, 2011). The sample size of studies ranged from two participants (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013) to 107 (Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). The research reviewed all took place within mainstream settings. One study was undertaken within a primary school (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013), one within a junior school (Burton, 2008) and two studies included both primary and secondary pupils within their sample (Mann, 2014; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). School type was unclear in the remaining studies (Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009).

The age and gender composition of the participants was not described in four studies (Mann, 2014; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). While Butcher, Cook and Holder-Spriggs (2013) described that their sample was two male children aged 7-8, the participants in Burton's (2008), research were aged 7-11 years.

#### 3.5.4 Intervention Delivery

In two studies, some participants were part of group ELSA sessions while others received individual sessions (Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009; Burton, 2008), in the remaining four studies, no information of intervention delivery was provided. In one study it was described that participants received the ELSA intervention for 6 weeks (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013), but otherwise no detail of duration of the ELSA intervention was given.

#### 3.5.5 Effectiveness of the Intervention

The data gathered from teachers ascertaining the impact of the ELSA project are largely positive (Mann, 2014; Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). Statistically significant changes were observed in overall emotional literacy ability (Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010) and behaviour (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). Positive changes in on-task behaviour, peer interaction and aggressive behaviour were also observed (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013). Ratings from caregivers indicated statistically significant decreases in overall behaviour concerns when using the SDQ, but only positive changes to the hyperactivity subscale were significant (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). However, no statistically significant results were reported when using the EL Checklist.

The results from pupil-reported measures present an unclear picture of the impact of the ELSA intervention. Some positive initial findings were reported:

one study concluded that a more positive view of themselves as learners was established (Burton, 2008). However, due to the presentation of results it is difficult to gain a clear view of the changes in individual pre- and post-intervention scores. Furthermore, one study identified positive changes to emotional literacy, but statistical significance could not be established. Two studies identified that the children and young people perceived little change in their emotional literacy ability following the ELSA intervention (Burton, Osborne & Norgate 2010; Mann & Russell, 2011).

### 3.6 Discussion and Implications

A systematic review of the research exploring the measurable impact of the ELSA intervention to date revealed that several studies have established positive findings. For example, statistically significant improvements in children's emotional literacy (Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010) and in several subscales of the SDQ (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009), as well as a reduction in challenging behaviours (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013) have been observed. However, these findings were established from data gathered from teachers. While parent-rated responses also indicate improvements (Burton Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009), importantly, child-report measures do not appear to reflect the same positive findings (Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton Osborne & Norgate, 2010).

Notably, a number of potential factors that could influence these differences in adult and child reports have been suggested. For example, adult reports focus on one context, home or school; while child responses encompass all facets of their lives, which could impact on their ratings. Additionally, a lack of child self-awareness prior to beginning the ELSA intervention could have skewed pre-intervention ratings, reducing the pre-post ratings gap (Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton Osborne & Norgate, 2010). Furthermore, the sensitivity of the measures applied, such as the SDQ and the EL Checklist

has been questioned, and it has been highlighted that using these quantitative measures limits the outcomes to those aspects measured within the questionnaires used, and subsequently does not consider any wider impact (McEwen, 2019).

Moreover, only three studies reviewed utilised a control group or SCED design (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann, 2014; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). As current research into measurable impact of ELSA appears to primarily be reliant on pre-and post-measures, it is not possible to establish if the findings are a direct result of ELSA intervention or if they have been impacted upon by external factors. Importantly, this limitation may be due to difficulties in applying experimental methods to the ELSA project, due to the individualised nature of the intervention targets and delivery (Pickering, Lambeth & Woodcock, 2019), highlighting the need to encompass rich descriptions of the ELSA intervention context and delivery within studies.

An additional consideration appears to be that stakeholders have been heavily involved in researching the intervention, such as the lead of the initial ELSA projects (Burton, 2008; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009), as well as research undertaken by LAs, who primarily deliver the ELSA training (Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann & Russell, 2011). Therefore, an independent perspective is likely to contribute helpfully to the current body of research around ELSA.

Significantly, the current review emphasised that there is a very small body of research ascertaining the impact of the ELSA intervention, as well as key limitations to many of the studies that have been undertaken, and the need for further research into the intervention has been acknowledged (Burton, 2008). Therefore, the researcher aims to consider and address some of the limitations of research to date, and contribute to the research around ELSA by exploring the following research questions:

- Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?
- In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?
- Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter describes the methodology used in the current study to address the research questions identified in the previous section. An outline of the key paradigms of applied psychological research is presented, before a description of the epistemological stance of the current study. A description of the study design, including an outline of the data collection and analysis procedures, as well as ethical considerations is then provided.

### 4.2 Applied Research

Applied, or real-world, research aims to understand the lived reality of people in society to explore problems or better understand issues that impact directly on their lives. Applied research is undertaken outside of laboratory conditions and instead is conducted within applied settings, such as within the educational field. However, applied research typically takes place within highly complex and often volatile situations (Robson & McCartan, 2016), causing difficulties with manipulating variables and measuring outcomes with the same level of precision that is possible in research laboratories (Stoiber & Waas, 2002). It is therefore a challenge for applied researchers to make meaningful, helpful contributions about these 'messy' situations whilst remaining necessarily tentative in their conclusions (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

#### 4.2.1 Evaluation Research

Applied research is typically open-ended and exploratory in nature, and endeavours to make an original contribution to the field by extending knowledge and theory (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Yet, much applied research is essentially some form of evaluation: an assessment of the effects and effectiveness of something (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Evaluation research encompasses a range of aims, including appraising programmes, interventions or policy initiatives, and increasing the effectiveness of managing people and resources (Kelly, 2007). It is particularly important due to the increasing emphasis on accountability within public services, such as education, health and social care (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Within education, Hartas (2010) identifies that evaluation research has three principal aims: to evaluate the mechanisms of a programme over time to provide evidence for its benefits; to inform the development of design and implementation of a programme; and to generate knowledge to support further understanding and investigation.

An important distinction within evaluation studies relates to the purpose of the research being undertaken (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Formative evaluation aims to help in the development of a programme and facilitate ongoing decision-making by primarily focusing on processes and mechanisms, answering “how” questions (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Hartas, 2010). Alternatively, summative evaluation is intended to assess the effects and effectiveness of a programme, typically focusing on its outcome and total impact to provide evidence regarding its worth (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Hartas, 2010).

#### 4.2.2 Evidence-Based Practice

Notably, evaluation research has been identified as fundamental to the development of evidence-based policy and practice (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Frederickson, 2002). Due to the current climate of risk management, accountability and restricted funding (Robson & McCartan, 2016), increasing focus has been placed on the essential role of evidence-based practice within the public sector (Gulliford, 2015; Frederickson, 2002). Therefore, the importance of research seeking to answer questions regarding *what* interventions are likely to work best, for *whom*, and therefore *why* has been highlighted (Gulliford, 2015). In line with this, a key goal of applied research

within educational psychology practice is to identify ‘what works’ in producing improved outcomes for students (Stoiber & Waas, 2002). Importantly, the role of EPs has been emphasised not only by using research evidence to inform practice, but also, crucially, in undertaking research to evaluate outcomes of interventions and contributing to the evidence-base themselves (Frederickson, 2002).

The ‘hierarchy of methods’, as outlined in Table 4.1, is often cited as underpinning evidence-based practice (Gulliford, 2015). This hierarchy illustrates the consensus within health research, that specific types of design are more reliable and thus are given precedence in informing practice: increased weight is given to fixed, experimental designs, compared to designs grounded within ‘softer’ approaches (Gulliford, 2015; Frederickson, 2002).

| Rank | Design                                                     |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Several systematic reviews of randomised controlled trials |
| 2    | Systematic review of randomised controlled trials          |
| 3    | Randomised controlled trials                               |
| 4    | Quasi-experimental trials                                  |
| 5    | Case control and cohort studies                            |
| 6    | Expert consensus opinion                                   |
| 7    | Individual opinion                                         |

Table 4.1 Hierarchy of Methods (Scott, Joughin & Shaw, 2001)

However, it has been argued that randomised control trials (RCTs), while considered by some to be the ‘gold standard’, are not the most appropriate design for all research questions (Ramchandani, Joughin & Zwi, 2001), and instead the aim should be to generate the best available evidence of the most appropriate type (Frederickson, 2002). Therefore, within the current research, the research questions asked and the philosophical assumptions of the researcher will guide the approach adopted, as discussed within the following sections.

### 4.3 Paradigms of Applied Research

A paradigm is a way of experiencing and thinking about the world, encompassing beliefs of morals, values, and aesthetics (Morgan, 2007). Within research literature, a range of terminology has been used to describe the set of philosophical assumptions underpinning research, including “worldviews” (Creswell, 2014), “epistemologies and ontologies” (Crotty, 1998), and “research methodologies” (Neuman, 2009). Notably, there are contrasting views as to the necessity of acknowledging underlying assumptions (Mertens, 2015), and as such, paradigms are often not described within research (Slife & Williams, 1995). However, as outlined by Mertens (2015), “a researcher’s philosophical orientation has implications for every decision made in the research process” (p. 7), emphasising the importance of understanding paradigms and their underlying philosophical assumptions when planning and conducting research.

Each paradigm is associated with its own distinct set of assumptions regarding ontology, the nature of reality; epistemology, the nature of knowledge; and methodology, the approach to enquiry. Subsequently, the paradigm within which a research study sits has important implications for the research questions posed and the methods used to address them (Punch, 2009). Within educational and psychological research, the most prevalent paradigms have been described as post-positivism, constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism (Mertens, 2015; Creswell, 2014). The following sections will explore each of these key paradigms in order to establish the most appropriate paradigm for the current research.

#### 4.3.1 Post-Positivism

The post-positivism paradigm emerged from positivist belief systems which have dominated traditional educational and psychological research (Mertens, 2015). Positivism is guided by the core assumption that an objective understanding of the world can be realised, and that the aim of scientific

research is to achieve nomothetic knowledge (Punch, 2009). Within this paradigm, it is held that scientific knowledge is gained through empirical observation (Mertens, 2015), and therefore 'invisible' or theoretical concepts are not considered (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Notably, positivism has faced significant criticism from 'a range of philosophical standpoints' (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In particular, with regard to research into human behaviour, positivism has been critiqued due to its failure to account for the unobservable elements of human experience, such as thoughts and feelings (Mertens, 2015), and overlooking the influential biases of the researcher on data collection (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Post-positivism seeks to maintain core aspects of positivism in addition to addressing the criticisms (Mertens, 2015). Post-positivism upholds the belief that a single reality exists and seeks to develop general laws and theories. However, post-positivists argue that reality can only be known imperfectly due to researcher limitations (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Post-positivists provide detailed accounts of threats to internal validity (Cook & Odom, 2013), acknowledging that the theories, hypotheses and knowledge held by the researcher can influence observation and interpretation, and that many of the assumptions required for rigorous application of the scientific method are difficult to achieve within applied research (Mertens, 2015).

#### 4.3.2 Constructivism

Contrasting the assumptions of positivism and post-positivism is the constructivist paradigm. At its core, constructivism holds that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2015), and therefore when undertaking research, the researcher should attempt to understand the complex lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000). Furthermore, constructivism acknowledges the influence of researcher values (Mertens, 2015). The predominant methods associated with this paradigm are qualitative in nature, such as interviews and observations (Mertens, 2015).

#### 4.3.3 Transformative

An alternative worldview adopted by researchers is the transformative paradigm. Within this paradigm, it is held that post-positivist assumptions “imposed structural laws and theories that did not fit marginalised individuals in our society or issues of power and social justice, discrimination and oppression that needed to be addressed” (Creswell, 2014, p. 9).

Furthermore, the constructivist stance was criticised for not going far enough to advocate for action to help marginalised people (Creswell, 2014).

Therefore, the transformative paradigm holds that research should be change-oriented and should confront social oppression at whatever level it occurs (Mertens, 2015). Research should be collaborative, provide a voice for participants, and aim to advance the agenda for change to improve lives (Creswell, 2014).

#### 4.3.4 Pragmatism

In contrast to the paradigm-driven approaches described within positivist, post-positivist, constructivist and transformative paradigms, the starting point for pragmatism lies with the research problem (Punch 2009). Pragmatism is less concerned with the nature of truth or reality, and instead employs the approaches available to understand and answer the research questions under investigation (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, the pragmatic paradigm rejects that research must be wholly quantitative or qualitative (Punch, 2009), and instead adopts the view that both can be combined to best solve a problem (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In line with this, within the pragmatic paradigm, the researcher has freedom of choice as to the methods used to gather and analyse data, considering the approaches that best meet the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2014).

#### 4.3.5 Epistemology of Current Study

As described by Creswell (2014), when planning and conducting research, the researcher should make their philosophical stance explicit by presenting the philosophical worldview proposed in the study. Within the current research, due to the individualised nature of the ELSA intervention to support children's emotional literacy development, alongside the exploratory nature of the research questions the current study is aiming to address, it is likely that a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is most appropriate. Therefore, a pragmatist stance was adopted by the researcher as opposed to a paradigm-driven approach, enabling the research questions to be central to the approach undertaken and allowing the flexibility to adopt the most suitable methodological approaches to understand and answer them.

#### 4.4 Methodological Considerations

When designing a study, the researcher must decide not only on the paradigm and subsequently whether to undertake quantitative, qualitative or mixed method research, but also within these choices, the research design to adopt (Creswell, 2014). It is fundamental to the pragmatic paradigm that the most appropriate method to answer questions is applied (Robson & McCartan, 2016). While the pragmatic paradigm does not dictate which research method to utilise, it is typically aligned with mixed method designs, where both quantitative and qualitative approaches are drawn upon (Denscombe, 2008). The following section will describe quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches, before outlining the methodology of the current research.

##### 4.4.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is rooted within the positivist paradigm, and as such its aim is to establish causal relationships by hypothesis testing (Mertens,

2015). To study the relationship between variables, quantitative research has traditionally strived to replicate scientific methods: using experiments and observations to gather objective evidence in a numerical form which can then be analysed mathematically (Hartas, 2010). While traditional experimental methodologies continue to be highly regarded in some domains, there is an increasing awareness of the difficulties encountered when implementing such designs within applied educational research (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Kratochwill, Hitchcock, Horner, Levin, Odom, et al., 2013). Therefore, the scope of quantitative research has broadened over recent decades to include a wider range of post-positivist approaches (Hartas, 2010), including quasi-experimental designs, causal comparative and correlational research, and survey methods (Mertens, 2015).

Quantitative research can enable researchers to test existing theories and hypotheses, establish causal relationships, provide numerical data for analysis, and study large populations; leading to increased generalisability of findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Nevertheless, a notable difficulty arises when investigating atypical populations, such as children and young people with social and emotional difficulties. Due to the large amount of variance between individuals within such populations, difficulties in establishing homogeneity cause comparisons of groups, such as using RCTs, to be largely inappropriate (Odom, Brantlinger & Gersten, 2005). In the light of difficulties with group-based designs, the valuable contribution of single-case experimental designs (SCEDs) to evidence-based practice has been increasingly recognised (Kratochwill, et al., 2013).

#### *4.4.1.1 Single Case Experimental Designs*

SCEDs seek to “clearly establish the effects of an intervention on a single individual” (Neuman & McCormick, 1995, p. 1), and are based on the notion that a participant can act as their own control (Barlow, Nock & Hersen, 2009). This is achieved through the manipulation of an independent variable, and monitoring the impact on one or more dependent variables using a

series of repeated measures (Reason & Morfidi, 2001). A number of elements distinguish SCEDs from other research approaches (Neuman & McCormick, 1995). Firstly, a baseline phase of multiple measurements prior to the intervention is completed to establish the participant's initial performance. Kratochwill et al. (2013) suggest that a stable baseline is established through collecting a minimum of five data points which show relative stability; however, achieving a stable baseline is acknowledged as often posing pragmatic difficulties (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Following this, variables are manipulated, and repeated, frequent measurement is undertaken throughout the intervention phase (Gulliford, 2015). Control procedures are in place during both baseline and intervention phases, to ensure that changes in behaviour are the result of intervention and not due to chance or other factors (Neuman & McCormick, 1995).

A range of designs can be implemented using a single-case experimental approach, as outlined in Table 4.2. The strength of the causal relationship they are able to establish varies.

| Design            | Design Features                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Advantages                                                                                                                                                | Disadvantages                                                                                                    |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A-B               | Baseline phase (A) prior to intervention followed by a second phase where the intervention is introduced (B)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Applicable in professional practice<br>Useful as pilot phase                                                                                              | Several threats to internal validity lead to difficulties in establishing causal relationships                   |
| A-B-A             | As A-B design, but with an additional third phase which reverts to pre-intervention baseline condition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Internal validity enhanced – causal relationship can be inferred                                                                                          | Ethical concerns of withdrawing an intervention that appears effective                                           |
| A-B-A-B           | Addition of second intervention phase to an A-B-A design                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Internal validity and ability to establish causal relationship further enhanced<br>Avoids potential ethical problems of finishing with return to baseline | Additional resources – time and effort<br>Ethical concerns of withdrawing an intervention that appears effective |
| Multiple Baseline | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Across settings: Dependant variable is measured in two or more situations. Change is made from the baseline condition to the intervention at different times in the different settings</li> <li>2. Across behaviours: Two or more behaviours are measured. Change is made from the baseline condition to the intervention at different times for the different behaviours</li> <li>3. Across participants: Two or more participants are measured. Change is made from a baseline condition to the intervention at different times for the different participants</li> </ol> | Case for causal relationship further enhanced<br>Avoids ethical concerns of withdrawing potentially effective intervention from participants              | Not applicable within certain contexts i.e. if intervention begins at same time for all participants             |

Table 4.2 Types of SCED design (Robson & McCartan, 2016)

In order to quality assure SCED research, Kratochwill et al. (2013) recommend several 'standards' for good practice:

- The independent variable must be systematically manipulated rather than a naturally occurring event;
- There must be at least three attempts to demonstrate an intervention effect at three different points in time;
- Each outcome variable must be measured systematically over time by more than one assessor;
- A phase must contain a minimum of three data points; at least five is preferred.

The use of SCEDs is well established in areas of severe learning and behaviour difficulties in educational and clinical settings (Richards, Taylor, Ramasamy & Richards, 1999). Notably, there has been growing application of SCEDs within mainstream education (Neuman & McCormick, 1995), demonstrating the utility of such designs for EPs in evaluating interventions (Gulliford, 2015). Furthermore, the application of repeated measures allows for exploration of data patterns; therefore, in addition to gathering information regarding intervention effect, SCEDs can offer potential insight into the specific mechanisms involved.

A fundamental limitation of SCEDs is the extent to which findings can be applied to participants, settings, materials and behaviours beyond those outlined in the study. However, providing operational descriptions of the participants, context, and factors influencing participant behaviour prior to intervention may enhance the external validity of SCEDs. Additionally, replication of effects across participants, conditions, and measures of the dependent variable further enhances SCED generalisability (Horner, Carr, Halle, McGee, Odom & Wolery, 2005).

#### 4.4.2 Qualitative Research

In contrast to the inherently positivist paradigm of quantitative research, qualitative research remains open to a range of possible paradigms, including post-positivism and constructivism (Punch, 2009). Qualitative research is more diverse than quantitative research, and encompasses multiple approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Within educational and psychological research, the major types of qualitative research include ethnographic studies, grounded theory studies, action research and, of particular importance to the current research, case studies (Mertens, 2015). Qualitative studies are flexible designs, and as such can be modified as research progresses (Creswell, 2014), making them particularly well-suited to applied research (Punch, 2009).

Qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth description of a programme, practice or setting (Mertens, 2015). While there is significant variation across approaches, a major characteristic of qualitative designs is that they are naturalistic: studying people, things and events in their natural settings (Punch, 2009). Additionally, the researcher is viewed as a key instrument for data collection within qualitative research, typically gathering information from a range of sources, including interviews and observations, as well as analysis of written and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 2014). However, due to the fundamental role of the researcher in gathering and interpreting information, the influence of their biases, values and background must be acknowledged and explicitly identified (Creswell, 2014).

##### 4.4.2.1 Case Studies

Case study research involves empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson & McCartan, 2016). A case may be an individual, a group of individuals, a classroom, a school or an event (Mertens, 2015). Notably, a case study is not a specific technique, but a strategy or approach to research

(Robson & McCartan, 2016), which encompasses multiple methods of data collection (Mertens, 2015), and can incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data (Yin, 2014).

Case studies can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory in nature. They seek to explain ‘why’ or ‘how’ a phenomenon occurs and are particularly relevant if questions require an extensive, in-depth description of social phenomena (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) identifies two dimensions of case studies, and subsequently four basic types of design, depicted in Figure 4.1.

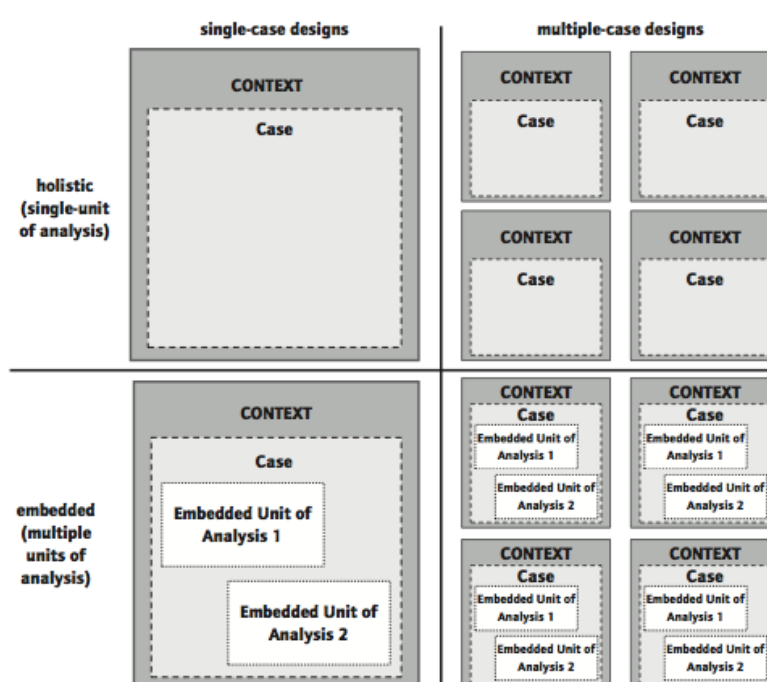


Figure 4.1 Basic Types of Case Study Design (Yin, 2014)

Case study research can centre upon a single case, where the focus is within the case to either gain a more in-depth understanding or give insight into a particular issue, or multiple case studies, where the focus can be both within and across cases (Punch, 2009). While single-case designs may be appropriate in providing critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal cases, multiple-case study designs are typically considered more robust and their results more compelling (Yin, 2014). Multiple-case designs allow cross-case conclusions to be made (Yin, 2014), which in turn enables new theories to be generated (Willig, 2008), and improves the potential for generalisability

(Creswell, 2014). However, multiple-case study research can be challenging for a single researcher due to extensive requirements in terms of time and resources (Yin, 2014). A further important distinction within case study designs is based on the level at which they are analysed. Holistic case studies aim to examine the global nature of the case, using a single unit of analysis and applying an entirely qualitative approach (Yin, 2014; Scholz & Tietje, 2002). Alternatively, embedded case studies include more than one unit of analysis and are not limited to qualitative methods (Yin, 2014).

Importantly, case studies offer a versatile approach and can be used to address a wide range of questions about the experiences and behaviours of individuals in particular situations (Willig, 2008), penetrating situations beyond numerical analysis and observing effects within unique and dynamic real-life contexts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). However, the lack of rigour as well as the extent to which case study designs are generalisable remain common criticisms of the approach (Yin, 2014; Punch, 2009).

#### 4.4.3 Mixed Method Research

Mixed method research is “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Denscombe (2008) outlines the defining characteristics of a mixed method approach:

- quantitative and qualitative methods within the same research project;
- a research design that clearly specifies the sequencing and priority that is given to the quantitative and qualitative elements of data collection and analysis;
- an explicit account of the manner in which the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research relate to each other, with heightened emphasis on the manner in which triangulation is used;
- pragmatism as the philosophical underpinning for the research.

The core rationale for this form of inquiry is that a combination of qualitative and quantitative features provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2014). Many researchers are intuitive in their selection of a mixed method approach, believing that by incorporating techniques from quantitative and qualitative traditions can answer questions that could not be addressed any other way (Mertens, 2015). However, Greene et al. (1989) consider more explicitly the reasons for applying a mixed method approach (See Table 4.3). Notably, due to complex research requiring multiple questions to be asked (Mertens, 2015), mixed method research has particular value in considering problems present within educational and social contexts (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

| Purpose         | Description                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Triangulation   | Compare findings from qualitative data with the quantitative results                                                                                                 |
| Complementarity | Seek elaboration, illustration, enhancement, and clarification of the findings from one analytical strand                                                            |
| Development     | Use the results from one analytical strand to help inform the other analytical strand                                                                                |
| Initiation      | Discover paradoxes and contradictions that emerge when findings from the two analytical strands are compared that might lead to a reframing of the research question |
| Expansion       | Expand breadth and range of a study by using multiple analytical strands for different study phases                                                                  |

Table 4.3 Mixed method research typology (Greene et al. (1989) in Mertens, 2015)

A number of types of mixed method designs have been identified in the literature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), emphasising “mixed method” as an umbrella term covering a range of procedures which combine, integrate and link different types of methods and data (Punch, 2009). Two overarching mixed method designs have been established, defined by the order of the analytical strands that occur (Mertens, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009):

- Parallel (Concurrent) form: two types of data are collected alongside each other simultaneously or with small time lag;

- Sequential form: one type of data provides the basis for collection of the subsequent data type.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) extend these designs further, considering not only the timing of each method used, but also the relative importance given to each, and how the methods and data are combined. They describe that parallel designs can be either explanatory (qualitative data collected after quantitative data to try and explain the quantitative results), or exploratory (qualitative data collection followed by quantitative data collection to explore a phenomenon) in nature. Sequential designs are either triangulated (use both quantitative and qualitative data to see if there is convergence in findings), or embedded (one type of data plays a dominant role while the other type of data plays a supportive role).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) explain the fundamental strength of a mixed method approach: that combining qualitative and quantitative approaches offers the opportunity to benefit from the strengths provided by each approach, whilst also compensating for the weaknesses. Furthermore, mixed method research provides methodological triangulation (Robson & McCartan, 2016), by improving the accuracy of data, producing a more complete picture by combining information from complementary data sources, and avoiding the biases intrinsic to single-method approaches (Denscombe, 2008; Bryman, 2006). However, a mixed method approach demands that the researcher is proficient in both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Mertens, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Furthermore, it has been suggested that mixed method designs can produce unfocused and disjointed research, and thus the need for a clear rationale for the approach has been emphasised (Mason, 2006).

#### 4.4.4 Methodology of the Current Study

Taking into consideration the pragmatic paradigm within which the researcher is practicing, and therefore the central value of the research

questions to informing approach (Punch, 2009), a mixed method approach was undertaken within the current research. A solely qualitative approach was viewed to be inappropriate due to the research questions being addressed, particularly with regard to establishing the measurable impact of the intervention. Furthermore, an entirely quantitative approach was rejected due to the individualised nature of the intervention, emotional literacy needs of children, and settings (Pickering, Lambeth & Woodcock, 2019), which needed to be taken into account when answering research questions. It was perceived that a mixed method approach would enable all research questions to be effectively addressed, considering both measurable impact of the ELSA programme by applying a quantitative approach to explore the relationship between variables, as well as exploring the findings in greater depth, using a qualitative approach (Mertens, 2015).

An embedded, mixed method design was applied, with strands complementary in nature, using the qualitative strand to triangulate and elaborate upon findings of the quantitative strand (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The purpose of the quantitative strand within the current research was to identify if the ELSA intervention creates measurable change for the children undertaking the intervention. The qualitative strand of the current research aimed to account for the exploratory nature of the investigation: capturing perceptions of change, considering whether these views are consistent with quantitative outcomes, and provided the opportunity to investigate contributing factors for any positive outcomes of the ELSA intervention. Multiple case studies were undertaken in order to account for the adaptive nature of the ELSA intervention (Pickering, Lambeth & Woodcock, 2019). Case studies enabled the researcher to establish the individual contexts, explore the impact of ELSA, and consider in greater depth why and how ELSA potentially 'works' for each case (Yin, 2014).

## 4.5 Research Design of Current Study

Due to the complexity of the topic, and diverse participant needs and contexts, as well as the adaptive nature of the intervention (Pickering, Lambeth & Woodcock, 2019), an embedded mixed method case study design was adopted within the current research to answer the identified research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered likely to make a valuable contribution to answering the research questions, rather than one approach being considered as more appropriate than another. Quantitative information gained from SCEDs, was considered alongside qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with both ELSAs and children who received ELSA support. The information gathered for each child was collated to create multiple case studies. Each case study will be described, considering the individual context of each ELSA intervention explored.

### 4.5.1 Quantitative Methods

The purpose of the quantitative strand within the current research was to measure changes over time in the pupils' emotional literacy skills, in order to establish the impact of the ELSA intervention.

#### 4.5.1.1 *Single Case Experimental Designs*

SCEDs were used to establish the effects of the ELSA intervention on each child participant. As noted in Section 4.3.1.1, this is achieved through the manipulation of an independent variable, i.e. the ELSA intervention, and using repeated measures to establish any change over time. The current research adopted an AB SCED design, measuring baseline and intervention phases for each participant. Alternative SCED designs were deemed inappropriate due to the restricted timescale for data collection, and the potential ethical implications of removing an effective intervention.

A key component of SCEDs is the implementation of repeated measures to establish change over time. Gulliford (2015) highlighted the critical contribution of clearly defined and objective repeated measures to the reliability of SCEDs. Due to the individualised nature of ELSA intervention targets, it was considered inappropriate to use the same measure across all participants. Therefore, the concerns identified and directly targeted within the ELSA intervention were used to develop individual measures for each child. To gain this information, an initial interview was undertaken with the school Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCo), pupil's teacher and/or school ELSA where the specific targets for each child were established and clarified. The measures employed for each case are described in Section 4.72.

Barlow, Nock and Hersen (2009) outlined that data measures should be collected in "exacting and standardised conditions" (p. 63). In order to ensure that the measures taken were as reliable as possible, for each child, the same member of staff undertook each measure, as far as possible on the same day of the week and time of day, and if appropriate, in the same room. As specific data measures were developed dependent upon the ELSA targets for the child, the frequency of these data points varied.

Fidelity checks were taken by the researcher to ensure the measures taken were accurate and reliable. Achieving a stable baseline of five data points was the initial aim, as is recommended practice (Kratochwill et al., 2013). However, due to the ethical implications of withholding a potentially beneficial intervention from a child, the intervention phase was begun prior to the collection of five data points in all cases.

The intervention phase lasted for the duration of the ELSA intervention, ranging from six to ten weeks.

#### *4.5.1.2 Pre- and Post-Measures*

In addition to SCED data, pre- and post-intervention measures were taken for each participant using the EL checklist, a tool recommended for assessing intervention impact (Faupel, 2003). This measure was selected due to its previous use in ELSA research, as indicated in Chapter 3. The SDQ (Goodman, 1997) was identified as a further tool often used within ELSA research to capture impact. However, the EL checklist includes a self-completed pupil-checklist, standardised for ages 7-11 years, in addition to teacher and parent versions, and as such enabled responses from a range of perspectives to be gathered (Wigelsworth et al., 2010). The pupil-completed version provides a single, overall emotional literacy score, and therefore may lack change sensitivity; however, the parent- and teacher-rated versions offer a multi-dimensional indication of emotional literacy ability, and therefore are more likely to be sensitive to domain-specific change (Wigelsworth et al., 2010). The purpose of this information was to triangulate the data gathered from target-specific SCED repeated measures by exploring the views of pupil, their parents and teachers with regard to pupil emotional literacy. Furthermore, this information would be used to capture impact on emotional literacy that may not have been addressed within the SCED measures.

#### *4.5.2 Qualitative Methods*

The purpose of the qualitative research strand was to further consider the impact of the ELSA intervention and whether this complemented or contrasted with the findings of the quantitative strand. Additionally, contributory factors for any positive changes perceived as a result of the ELSA interventions were explored.

##### *4.5.2.1 Interviews*

Interviews are recommended as a particularly important source of data within case studies (Yin, 2014), and as such were utilised within the current

research. Semi-structured interviews were used as these enabled the researcher greater flexibility in the time and attention given to different topic areas (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Children can be particularly challenging to interview effectively for a number of reasons, including a tendency to answer the way they think the adult wishes them to or giving 'don't know' responses; being relatively easily distracted; having potentially differing interpretation of the questions asked, and being hesitant in their answers (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Shaw & Smith, 2006). Therefore, when undertaking interviews with children, their cognitive and linguistic development should be carefully considered (Cohen, Manion & Morrison; 2007). Arksey and Knight (1999) describe several criteria important to interviewing children successfully such as establishing trust, putting them at ease, making the interview non-threatening and enjoyable, using straight forward language, asking age-appropriate questions and allowing time to think and respond. Additionally, interviews with children should employ open-ended questions to elicit more in-depth responses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). These criteria informed both the planning and conducting of interviews with children in the current research.

Interviews were undertaken for each case study. All pupil participants were interviewed following the conclusion of the ELSA intervention, as well as the ELSAs delivering the intervention for each case. In one case, due to the focus intervention targets and availability, an additional parent interview was undertaken. The purpose of these interviews was to explore perceptions of the impact of the ELSA intervention. If the ELSA intervention was believed to have made a positive difference, contributory factors to this were also investigated. Further contextual information was gathered as necessary within the ELSA interviews in order to clarify initial aims, as well as reasons for referral, and details of session delivery. Using the outline suggested by Robson and McCartan (2016), a semi-structured interview schedule was developed to guide questioning for pupil, ELSA and parent interviews, primarily using open-ended questions to explore the perspectives of the ELSA intervention (Appendix 4-6). The interviews took place on a 1:1 basis

within school time in a private room. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 10 and 25 minutes for the child interviews, while ELSA interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

## 4.6 Evaluating the Quality of the Current Study

Due to the mixed method design of the current research, threats to both quantitative and qualitative designs must be considered to ensure that the research findings are trustworthy (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Mertens, 2015; Breakwell et al., 2006). These threats, and the actions taken to limit their impact within the current research, are outlined in the following sections.

### 4.6.1 Establishing Trustworthiness of Quantitative Strand

Within the current study, the quantitative strand encompasses both SCEDs and pre- and post-measures. The trustworthiness of quantitative research is determined by its validity and reliability. Reliability refers to the dependability of data: that if the research was repeated again, the same result would be obtained, while validity is the extent to which a method measures what it intends to measure (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

#### 4.6.1.1 *Internal Validity*

Internal validity refers to the extent to which a study is able to plausibly demonstrate that changes in outcome are due to an intervention effect (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Importantly, several possible threats to internal validity have been outlined, which could lead a researcher to inferring a causal relationship which does not exist (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Table 4.4 provides a description of the threats to internal validity relevant to the current research, as well as the steps taken to limit their impact. Where it has not been possible to address threats to internal validity, this remains a limitation to the current research and therefore is discussed in Chapter 6.

| Threat to Validity                                                                                                      | Steps taken to limit threat                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| History:<br><i>Events occurring within the research period that could influence results other than the intervention</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular contact with participating school staff ensured that awareness of school environment and events sustained throughout research</li> <li>• Participants sought that were not due to undertake additional interventions aimed at supporting emotional literacy during course of research</li> </ul>                                                                     |
| Maturation:<br><i>Changes in participants across the research period unrelated to the intervention</i>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research encompassing multiple cases may help to reduce this threat if results are replicated across participants</li> <li>• Short time period of research may limit effect of maturation of participants</li> <li>• Stable baseline aimed for; however, unable to achieve and short in some cases</li> <li>• Unable to control for additional contextual changes</li> </ul> |
| Testing:<br><i>Changes occurring due to experience of measures</i>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of several measures during baseline phase may help to reduce this as any practice effects should be highlighted</li> <li>• Period of at least 8 weeks between pre- and post- tests</li> <li>• Gathering data from multiple sources may reduce this threat</li> </ul>                                                                                              |
| Instrumentation:<br><i>Changes in the application of measures</i>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidelity checks of repeated measures undertaken by researcher</li> <li>• Same members of staff completed repeated measures for each participant</li> <li>• Measures undertaken in the same environment and at the same time of week and day where possible</li> <li>• Use of standardised measures where appropriate</li> </ul>                                              |
| Statistical Regression:<br><i>Tendency for participant scores to regress towards the mean</i>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of repeated measures across time supports in reducing this effect</li> <li>• Threat remains for pre- and post- measures</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Experimental Mortality:<br><i>Loss of participants across the research period</i>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sheets shared with school staff and parents to ensure full understanding of expectations of research</li> <li>• Consent gained from key members of school staff, including senior leadership and the ELSA directly involved in gathering data</li> <li>• Regular contact with participating school staff</li> </ul>                                              |

Table 4.4 Threats to internal validity and actions taken within the current research (Cook & Campbell, 1979)

The structure of SCEDs inherently accounts for major threats to internal validity (Kratochwill & Levin, 2010), for example through using repeated measures of an individual across phases (Kratochwill et al., 2010). However, the internal validity of SCEDs, particularly within AB designs, is limited, presenting challenges to establishing causal relationships (Kazdin, 2010). Kratochwill (1992) outlined several actions to increase the internal validity of SCEDs, including studying the result of direct intervention, monitoring the implementation of the intervention, and considering results across a number of cases which differ on a range of characteristics. These recommendations were taken into account when planning and undertaking the current research.

#### *4.6.1.2 External Validity*

While systematic replication of SCEDs can improve their external validity (Martella, Nelson & Marchand-Martella, 1999), a small sample size results in significant challenges to the generalisability of any conclusions. Notably, the intention of the current study was to establish the impact of the ELSA intervention for the participants involved, rather than to draw conclusions for a wider population. However, Horner et al. (2005) present several recommendations for enhancing the external validity of SCED research, highlighting the importance of providing operational descriptions of the participants and their contexts, which can be found in Chapter 5.

#### *4.6.1.3 Reliability*

Difficulties in establishing reliable research findings can be caused by participant error, participant bias, observer error, and observer bias (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Various steps were taken within the current research to limit the extent to which these causes of unreliability impact upon results. Participant measures were undertaken by the same member of staff, on the same day and time of day where possible. For cases where the repeated measure was a self-report questionnaire, scripts were developed to ensure

that these were presented consistently. Furthermore, an observation was undertaken of the ELSA presenting the repeated measure and a fidelity check completed (Appendix 7).

#### 4.6.2 Establishing Trustworthiness of Qualitative Strand

The use of the inherently positivist terms *reliability* and *validity* within qualitative designs is contested (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). However, it remains that issues of internal validity should be recognised and threats considered (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Robson and McCartan (2016) identify several threats to internal validity, which are considered with relation to the current research in Table 4.5.

| Threat to Validity                                                            | Steps taken to limit threat within the current research                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description:<br>Presenting inaccurate or incomplete data                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-recording of interview data</li> <li>• Interviews transcribed verbatim</li> <li>• Clear audit trail presented</li> </ul>                                           |
| Interpretation:<br>Researcher imposing meaning rather than emerging from data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standardised analysis procedure applied across transcripts (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006)</li> <li>• Clear audit trail presented</li> <li>• Triangulation of data</li> </ul> |
| Theory:<br>Researcher not considering alternative explanations of phenomena   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of impact of researcher and need for critical analysis of findings</li> </ul>                                                                                  |

Table 4.5 Threats to internal validity in flexible designs and actions taken within the current research (Robson & McCartan, 2016)

## 4.7 Participants

### 4.7.1 Participant Selection

Within a multiple case study approach, several cases are chosen because the researcher believes that understanding them will lead to better understanding about a larger collection of cases, contributing to understanding a phenomenon in a broader context (Yin, 2014). Notably, when choosing participants for case study research, it is essential that the researcher considers the purpose of the case study as well as logistics, receptiveness and available resources (Stake, 2006). Due to variability in implementation and delivery of the ELSA intervention across schools, the researcher identified contexts within which the intervention was being implemented in a thorough and predictable manner, in order to improve the likelihood of consistent intervention delivery and positive engagement with the research process.

#### *4.7.1.1 Nominal Group Technique*

To determine the factors that contribute to effective ELSA practice, Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (Stewart et al., 2007) was used to facilitate discussion within a focus group of EPs involved with ELSA training and supervision sessions within the host LA. The four stages of NGT are summarised in Table 4.6 (de Ruyter, 1996).

| Stage of NGT                             | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Generating Ideas                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work individually to write down ideas to answer the question “What factors contribute and are important to effective ELSA practice?”</li> <li>• No limit to number of ideas</li> <li>• No right or wrong answers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2. Recording Ideas                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record round robin of ideas on flipchart</li> <li>• Map group thinking and generate as wide a possible range of ideas</li> <li>• Read out one idea in turn and keep going around group until all recorded</li> <li>• If new ideas come to you during exercise then add to list</li> </ul>                                                                                                       |
| 3. Clarification and discussion of ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read through all ideas</li> <li>• Are there any questions or comments group members would like to make about the item?</li> <li>• Is any clarification needed?</li> <li>• Any ideas to group together/separate/rephrase?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4. Voting                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which is most essential/has the biggest contribution to effective ELSA practice?</li> <li>• Individually choose 5 most important of these ideas</li> <li>• Rate in order of most – least important</li> <li>• Most important = 5, least important = 1</li> <li>• Feedback and tally scores next to each idea</li> <li>• Identify group top 5 most important factors in ELSA practice</li> </ul> |

Table 4.6 A summary of stages of NGT (de Ruyter, 1996) as applied within the current research

Factors identified by the focus group as contributory to effective ELSA practice are presented in Appendix 8. Those considered to be the most important were:

- Protected time to prepare and deliver sessions;
- Other staff recognising and valuing the ELSA role;
- Commitment to the role of ELSA and genuine care about the wellbeing of children;
- Understanding of the role and purpose of ELSA from the wider school community;
- Commitment of SLT;

- Resourceful and creative ELSA, able to access and adapt resources.

Schools that were perceived by EPs within the host EPS to have these factors in place, alongside additional school inclusion criteria presented in Table 4.7, were then approached and invited to take part in the current research.

| Inclusion Criteria |                                                                                 | Rationale                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| School             | Characteristics identified by EPs in place                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent, high quality intervention delivery</li> </ul>                                              |
|                    | Mainstream Primary School                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on early intervention</li> <li>• Predominant setting for ELSA intervention in host LA</li> </ul> |
|                    | ELSA at least one-year post-training                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA familiar and confident with intervention aims</li> </ul>                                          |
| Participant        | Key Stage Two                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with interview</li> </ul>                                                                   |
|                    | ELSA intervention viewed as beneficial for them                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical practice</li> </ul>                                                                            |
|                    | Not part of alternative intervention addressing emotional literacy difficulties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve internal validity of research</li> </ul>                                                       |

Table 4.7 Inclusion criteria applied within the current study

#### 4.7.2 Sample Characteristics

A sample of five participants was used in the current study. The participants were identified by their class teacher and school SENCo as requiring support through the ELSA intervention and meeting the participant inclusion criteria in Table 4.7. To gather initial information regarding the difficulties the child was experiencing, and subsequently the targets for ELSA intervention, an initial interview was undertaken with the school SENCo and/or ELSA. This information was then used to inform the repeated measure utilised. A summary of core characteristics of each participant and the repeated measure utilised is provided in Table 4.8, while a summary of the key features of each measure is provided in Appendix 9. A more detailed account

of each participant is provided in Chapter 5. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of participants.

| Case Study |          | Gender | Age    | Year | ELSA target area                                                                                                                   | Repeated Measure Used                                                 |
|------------|----------|--------|--------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.         | Johnny   | Male   | 10y 6m | 6    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional understanding and regulation</li> <li>Loss</li> </ul>                             | Emotion Expression Scale for Children (Penza-Clyne & Zeman, 2002)     |
| 2.         | Oscar    | Male   | 9y 2m  | 5    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer relationships</li> <li>Resolving conflict</li> <li>Overall school wellbeing</li> </ul> | The School Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007)                          |
| 3.         | Jessica  | Female | 7y 5m  | 3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anger management</li> </ul>                                                                 | School Behaviour Record                                               |
| 4.         | Georgina | Female | 10y 3m | 6    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer relationships</li> <li>Resolving conflict</li> <li>Managing emotions</li> </ul>        | Amended Coping Efficacy Scale (Sandler et al., 2000)                  |
| 5.         | Joseph   | Male   | 8y 9m  | 4    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer relationships</li> <li>Social skills</li> </ul>                                        | Children's Self-Report Social Skills Scale (Danielson & Phelps, 2003) |

Table 4.8 Summary of Participant Characteristics

## 4.8 Analysis of Results

### 4.8.1 Analysis of SCED data

#### 4.8.1.1 *Visual Analysis of SCED data*

Interpretation of SCED data traditionally relies on the visual analysis of results to determine the presence and strength of a relationship between independent and dependent variables (Kratochwill et al., 2013; Brossart, Parker, Olson & Mahadevan, 2006). To do so, participant data is gathered, calculated, and transferred onto graphs to enable comparison of the different phases of the study to be carried out (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Kratochwill et al. (2013) suggest a four-step method for the visual analysis of SCED research:

1. Documentation of a predictable and stable baseline pattern of data;
2. Examine the data within each phase of the study to assess within-phase patterns;
3. Compare the data from each phase with the data in the adjacent phase to establish any “effect”;
4. Integrate information from all phases to determine whether there are at least three demonstrations of an effect at different points in time.

To provide a holistic evaluation of data, SCED data should be analysed according to a number of indices of change (Ninci, Vannest, Willson & Zhang, 2015; Lane & Gast, 2014). Kratochwill et al. (2013) outline six features of outcome data which should be visually analysed. To analyse data within phases, the trend, level, and variability of data are considered. Furthermore, patterns in data across phases can be discussed through considering immediacy of effect, overlap and consistency of data patterns across similar phases (Kratochwill, et al., 2013). A description of these techniques is provided in Table 4.9.

| <b>Outcome-Measure Type</b> | <b>Indices of Change</b>                           | <b>Description</b>                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Within Phase                | Trend                                              | Slope of the line of best fit for the measures within a phase                                        |
| Within Phase                | Level                                              | Overall average of the measures within a phase                                                       |
| Within Phase                | Variability                                        | Range of measures about the best fitting line                                                        |
| Across Phase                | Immediacy of effect                                | Change in level between one phase and the next                                                       |
| Across Phase                | Overlap                                            | Proportion of data from one phase that overlaps with data from previous phase                        |
| Across Phase                | Consistency of data patterns across similar phases | Examining the extent to which there is consistency in data patterns from phases with same conditions |

Table 4.9 Features of outcome data for visual analysis (Kratochwill et al., 2013)

#### *4.8.1.2 Reliability of Visual Analysis*

Importantly, visual analysis enables a judgement to be made regarding the presence of reliable and consistent intervention effects (Kazdin, 2010). However, the reliability of this approach for SCED data analysis has been questioned due to its subjective nature (Kazdin, 2003). For example, researchers have been found to disagree when establishing effect (Brossart et al., 2006), and an increased likelihood of Type 2 errors, or false negatives, has been suggested (Baer, 1977). To enhance reliability, standards have been developed to outline expectations for visual analysis (Kratochwill, et al., 2013). Furthermore, it is recommended practice for the level of agreement between independent raters to be calculated (Brossart et al., 2006).

#### *4.8.1.3 Statistical Analysis of SCED data*

Numerous researchers argue that any intervention effect significant enough to be important to practitioners will be ascertained using visual analysis, and as such, the application of further methods is unnecessary (Nugent, 2010;

Matyas & Greenwood, 1990; Parsonson & Baer, 1986). Contrastingly, an increased emphasis on reliable, objective data within educational and psychological research has led to a growth in the use of statistical analysis within SCED designs (Parker, Hagan-Burke & Vannest, 2007). Notably, the use of statistical tests has been recommended as particularly beneficial to supplement visual analysis if moderate or strong intervention effects are observed (Kratochwill et al., 2013; Brossart et al., 2006), when no stable baseline is achieved, if expected treatment effects are unclear, and in the presence of extraneous factors (Kazdin, 2010). A range of methods have been applied to the analysis of SCED data (Parker & Brossart, 2003). However, due to the individualised nature of SCED designs, there are numerous complexities in applying conventional statistics to analyse results (Kamil, 1995), and subsequently statistical assumptions are often violated (Kratochwill et al., 2013). Furthermore, different methods have been identified as giving fundamentally dissimilar outputs (Parker & Brossart, 2003). Therefore, a consensus regarding the criteria for statistical analysis of single-case data is yet to be ascertained (Kratochwill et al., 2013), and applying statistical analysis to such designs remains a debated issue (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

#### 4.8.2 Analysis of Pre- and Post-Intervention Measures

The application of traditional group comparison methods for the statistical analysis of pre- and post- measures is inappropriate for individual cases due to their statistical assumptions (Barlow, Nock & Hersen, 2009), and the lack of information they provide about individual intervention effects (Jacobson, Follette & Revenstorf, 1984). In response to these key limitations, Jacobson and colleagues (1984) proposed the analysis of 'clinical significance' to consider the degree of change at an individual level. Jacobson and Truax (1991) outlined an approach to calculate Reliable Change Index (RCI), which has become widely used amongst researchers (Bauer, Lambert & Nielson, 2004). Jacobson and Truax (1991) proposed using the difference between two points to establish the clinical significance, dividing the difference

between pre- and post- scores by the standard error. A score above 1.96 indicates real change that has not occurred as a result of chance. RCI is calculated using the following formula:

$$RCI = \frac{x_{post} - x_{pre}}{\sqrt{2S_E^2}}$$

The standard error for the above formula is calculated as:

$$S_E = SD\sqrt{1-r_{xx}}$$

$x_{pre}$  = Pre-intervention participant score

$x_{post}$  = Post-intervention participant score

$SD$  = Standard Deviation from the normative sample

$r_{xx}$  = Coefficient Alpha for the normative sample

In response to critique of the Jacobson-Truax method (i.e. Speer, 1992; Hsu, 1989), several alternative approaches to calculating clinical significance have been developed (McGlinchey, Atkins & Jacobson, 2002; Speer & Greenbaum, 1995). While there appears to be a consensus across researchers that further development of the original Jacobson-Truax method is necessary (Wise, 2004), this approach remains recommended due to its wide usage, relative ease of calculation and the absence of a better alternative (Bauer, Lambert & Nielson, 2004; McGlinchey, Atkins & Jacobson, 2002; Speer & Greenbaum, 1995). As summarised by McGlinchey et al. (2002), “the evidence ... supports the Jacobson Truax method as a ‘null’ method that has yet to be rejected by an alternative method of superior performance” (p. 542).

#### 4.8.3 Analysis of Qualitative data

While approaches to qualitative data analysis are diverse and complex, there is considerable overlap between methods (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

Thematic analysis is a foundational approach to qualitative analysis and is widely used within psychological research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It aims to address research questions by identifying, analysing and reporting patterns

in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A key strength of this approach is its flexibility, in that it is not aligned with a particular paradigm as with other qualitative approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Historically, there has been little consensus about “what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it”, leading to inconsistent application and a lack of coherent approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Attride-Stirling (2001) highlights the importance of transparent reporting of ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ qualitative analysis has been carried out. Therefore, to enhance the theoretical and methodological understanding of researchers, whilst maintaining the flexibility of the approach, Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six stages of thematic analysis, presented in Table 4.10.

| Phase                          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Familiarisation             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcribe data</li> <li>• Read and re-read</li> <li>• Note down initial ideas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       |
| 2. Generation of initial codes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematically code features of the data</li> <li>• Collate data relevant to each code</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               |
| 3. Searching for themes        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate codes into potential themes</li> <li>• Gather all relevant data to each potential theme</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      |
| 4. Reviewing themes            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check if themes work in relation to the coded extracts and entire data set</li> <li>• Generate thematic 'map' of the analysis</li> </ul>                                                                                        |
| 5. Defining and naming themes  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing analysis to refine specifics of each theme and overall story of the analysis</li> <li>• Generate clear definitions and names for each theme</li> </ul>                                                                  |
| 6. Producing report            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select vivid and compelling extract examples</li> <li>• Final analysis of selected extracts</li> <li>• Relate back to the analysis of the research question and literature</li> <li>• Produce report of the analysis</li> </ul> |

Table 4.10 Stages of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Within thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between inductive theme generation, where codes and themes emerge purely from data; and theoretical, or deductive theme generation, where analysis is guided by predetermined codes or themes generated from previous research literature or research questions. The strength of the link between the themes and the data is a key advantage of an inductive approach (Patton, 1990). However, the influence of theoretical knowledge and epistemological beliefs of the researcher may remain (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Alternatively, a deductive approach can enhance analysis by sensitising the researcher to features of data that may otherwise have been missed (Tuckett, 2005). Yet, it is also recognised that this approach can bias aspects of data by leading the researcher to ignore potentially important themes (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

## 4.9 Analysis within the Current Study

Table 4.11 presents an overview of the methods of analysis used within the current study and presented in Chapter 5 to answer each of the three research questions.

| Research Question                                                                                                                      | Method                 | Timeframe                        | Who with?           | Measures                                    | Analysis          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in pupil's emotional literacy target area?                                 | SCED Repeated Measures | Baseline and Intervention Phases | Pupil               | Case Specific: See Table 4.8 for summary    | Visual Analysis   |
|                                                                                                                                        | Pre- and Post-Measures | Pre- and Post-Intervention       | Pupil               | EL Checklist Pupil Version (Faupel, 2003)   | RCI               |
|                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                  | Teacher             | EL Checklist Teacher Version (Faupel, 2003) |                   |
|                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                  | Parent              | EL Checklist Parent Version (Faupel, 2003)  |                   |
| In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?                 | Interview Questions    | Post-Intervention                | Pupil               | Appendix 4<br>Question 4                    | Thematic Analysis |
|                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                  | ELSA                | Appendix 5<br>Question 3, 5                 | Thematic Analysis |
|                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                  | Parent (for Johnny) | Appendix 6<br>Question 3, 5                 | Thematic Analysis |
| Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention? | Interview Questions    | Post-Intervention                | Pupil               | Appendix 4<br>Question 5-7                  | Thematic Analysis |
|                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                  | ELSA                | Appendix 5<br>Question 4, 6                 | Thematic Analysis |
|                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                  | Parent (for Johnny) | Appendix 6<br>Question 4, 6                 | Thematic Analysis |

Table 4.11 Summary of Procedures for Analysis Stage

#### 4.9.1 Research Question One

The answer to this question was considered using quantitative information collected from SCEDs as well as pre- and post-intervention measures.

##### *4.9.1.1 Analysis of SCED data within the Current Study*

To consider the impact of the ELSA intervention for each case, repeated measures from SCEDs were assessed using visual analysis. Graphs were created using Microsoft Excel in accordance with guidance from Neuman and McCormick (1995). Dotted lines were used to indicate missing data, for example school holidays and pupil or staff absence. To increase the rigor of the visual analysis, a range of indices of change were considered and presented, as recommended by Kratochwill et al. (2013) and described in Table 5.1. For the current data sets, it was not possible to discuss 'consistency of pattern across similar phases' due to single baseline and intervention periods. The reliability of the visual analysis was assessed using inter-rater reliability checks.

While it is recommended that statistical analysis of effect size is used to supplement visual analysis, there are significant limitations to these methods and a consistent approach to the statistical analysis of SCED data is yet to be established. Therefore, statistical analysis was not applied within the current research.

##### *4.9.1.2 Inter-Rater Reliability of Visual Analysis*

Inter-rater agreement measures were used within the current research to address the subjectivity of visual analysis. The researcher and a second rater independently reviewed and analysed the SCED graphs.

For each case, each rater reviewed three graphs for each case, displaying the raw data with mean lines, raw data with trend lines, and raw data with

stability lines. The visual analysis summary tables for each case were also available to review. The script used for the inter-rater assessment is provided in Appendix 10, and the recording sheet is shown in Appendix 11. Consistent with Brossart et al.'s (2006) recommendations, the raters were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 (not at all certain) to 5 (very certain):

*“How certain or convinced are you that there was a practical and significant improvement in the participant’s target between the baseline and intervention phase?”*

The level of agreement between the two raters was statistically analysed using Cohen’s weighted Kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960). Altman (1999) provides guidelines to describe the strength of agreement from the Kappa coefficient, recommending that a Kappa of <0.20 indicates a “poor” agreement, 0.21-0.40 indicates a “fair” agreement, 0.41-0.60 indicates a “moderate” agreement, 0.61-0.80 indicates “good” agreement, and 0.81-1.00 indicates a “very good” agreement.

The level of agreement between the two raters was 0.865. This score indicates a very good level of agreement (Altman, 1999), and therefore enhances the reliability of the visual analysis judgements made by the researcher.

#### *4.9.1.3 Analysis of Pre and Post-Intervention Measures within the Current Study*

Quantitative data from pre- and post-intervention measures is presented for each case. The pupil’s emotional literacy ability collected prior to and following the ELSA intervention, as rated by pupil, class teacher and parents using the EL Checklist (Faupel, 2003), is presented. An overall ‘emotional literacy’ score is reported, alongside scores for emotional literacy subscales from the parent and teacher-rated responses. Emotional literacy subscale information is not available for the pupil-rated checklist and therefore could

not be included. The difference in ratings between pre-and post- measures is presented.

In order to establish significant changes, a statistical analysis of group means was deemed inappropriate due to focus within the current study on individual cases. Therefore, the RCI was calculated to determine if any differences are statistically significant. An online RCI calculator was used, alongside the psychometric properties of the EL Checklist outlined by Faupel (2003). Numerical data is reported to two decimal places.

In cases where additional pre-and post- measures were collected, these have been presented in further tables and the RCI calculated where possible.

#### 4.9.2 Research Questions Two and Three

In order to consider the answers to Research Questions Two and Three, interview data was qualitatively analysed.

##### *4.9.2.1 Analysis of Qualitative data within the Current Study*

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data within the current study as this approach aligned with the researcher's paradigm. An inductive approach to code and theme generation was utilised due to the exploratory nature of the research. However, while the researcher made efforts to remain neutral, it is acknowledged that an awareness of previous literature in this area may have sensitised to certain features. Additionally, once themes from one case were established, these may have impacted upon the analysis of subsequent data sets.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendations, the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, listening to interview recordings at least twice in order to ensure that transcripts were accurate (See Appendix 12 for

a sample interview transcript). Paper copies of transcripts were read, and re-read to gain familiarity, and key features were noted and pertinent quotes highlighted. Following this, for each case features of interest were coded and organised according to similarities. Codes were grouped to create potential themes and extracts were re-read to ensure they corresponded appropriately. Theme names were given and ongoing reflection to refine each theme was undertaken. Thematic maps were created for each case. Finally, themes were organised according to each research question, and extracts to represent themes were selected to report within Section 5.4.

## 4.10 Additional Considerations

### 4.10.1 Ethical Considerations

As outlined by Robson and McCartan (2016), the importance of ethical considerations is exacerbated when working with vulnerable groups, including children under the age of 16. In order to ensure that the ethical guidelines and principles set out by relevant professional bodies were adhered to, in depth consideration of ethical standards was made when planning and conducting the study. The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (University of Nottingham, 2013) were referred to throughout the planning and implementation of the current research. Ethical approval was obtained for the current study by the University of Nottingham Ethics Committee prior to the research being undertaken (Appendix 13). The key ethical considerations related to the current study are summarised in Table 4.12.

| <b>Ethical Consideration</b> | <b>Account of how ethical concerns were minimised</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Valid Consent                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An information sheet, stating in writing the aims and data collection methods was provided to head teachers, SENCOs, ELSAs and parents to ensure that all parties understood the research prior to consenting to take part (Appendices 11 and 12)</li> <li>• ELSAs or SENCOs shared this information in person with the child in order to gather the child's consent</li> <li>• The contact details of the researcher and research supervisor were provided within the information sheets to enable any questions or queries to be addressed</li> <li>• Written, opt-in consent was obtained from schools, parents and participants prior to data collection (Appendices 13-15)</li> </ul> |
| Right to Withdraw            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and their parents and schools were informed via the information sheets of their right to withdraw their participation and data, or retract specific information, at any point prior to data analysis</li> <li>• Details regarding how to withdraw were provided and it was stated that this would not impact on the child's access to the ELSA intervention</li> <li>• The right to withdraw was reiterated verbally to the children by the researcher prior to undertaking semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Debrief following interviews further reiterated the right to withdraw and provided an opportunity for questions to be asked</li> </ul>                          |
| Confidentiality              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All data gathered was stored securely and confidentially</li> <li>• Paper copies of information were stored in a secure and locked office, transferred into electronic copies and shredded within two weeks</li> <li>• Electronic information was encrypted and password protected</li> <li>• Electronic information was anonymised and pseudonyms were used within interview transcriptions</li> <li>• All identifiable information was removed. Raw data will be destroyed after two years</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Minimising potential harm    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During interviews with participants, the researcher was aware that 'sensitive' information might be disclosed and that participants could find it difficult to talk about some of the topics covered during the ELSA sessions</li> <li>• Participants were made aware of the broad areas which would be discussed via the ELSA, and also the information sheet explained what was expected of them prior to the interview</li> <li>• It was made clear to participants that if there were any questions they were not comfortable answering then they were not required to answer them</li> </ul>                                                                                          |

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SENCOs/ELSAs were made aware of the risk of sensitive topics arising, and were on hand to support the young people as necessary. A list of support agencies was also compiled and made available to the SENCO, young people and their parents as required</li> <li>• It was explained that any information shared that led the researcher to believe that they or others are at risk, then this would be shared to ensure their safety. The researcher conducted the interviews, and ensured that safeguarding protocol was adhered to throughout</li> <li>• The researcher ensured that they were aware of the Designated Safeguarding Person(s) within each school where the interviews took place</li> </ul> |
| Debrief | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On completion of the study, a letter was written to each participant, their parents and schools to explain the findings of the research.</li> <li>• An opportunity to discuss the results with the researcher was provided.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

Table 4.12 Key ethical considerations for the current study

#### 4.10.2 Stakeholder Involvement

The term stakeholder refers to those who have a stake in the outcomes of the research, and can include those from whom the data is collected, as well as administrators, staff, and others in the community who will be affected by the results of the inquiry (Mertens, 2015).

For the current study, potential stakeholders include:

- University of Nottingham;
- Local Authority;
- Participating schools and ELSAs;
- Developers of the ELSA intervention;
- Other researchers interested in the ELSA intervention, or other interventions to support children's emotional literacy.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Introduction to Chapter

In this chapter, descriptions are provided of each of the participants. Following this, the results of the current research are described and analysed. Each case study is presented individually, including both quantitative and qualitative strands of research.

### 5.2 Participant Profiles

The following section outlines the key characteristics of study participants. Descriptions of each participant and their intervention contexts are provided, based upon the TiDieR checklist (Hoffman et al., 2014). Details of the anticipated inputs, mechanisms and outcomes of each intervention are outlined in Appendix 19 using a theory of change framework (NECS, 2016). Individual timelines of the ELSA intervention and data collection dates for each participant are presented in Appendix 20.

#### 5.2.1.1 Case Study One: Johnny

“Johnny” was 10 years and 6 months old at the time of the initial baseline measure. He was in Year 6 and had been referred for ELSA support due to concerns expressed by his mother regarding his anger at home, which had been exacerbated following the death of his pet dog the previous year. Referral information collected from the class teacher suggested that Johnny had difficulties concentrating in class and could appear preoccupied, and that he was often tearful on entering school in the morning. The ELSA targets for Johnny were to develop his ability to express how he feels and why, and to regulate his strong emotions, particularly anger, as well as supporting him to cope following his bereavement. ELSA sessions were undertaken once a week for approximately an hour. He received ten ELSA sessions over the course of the intervention.

In order to measure the impact of the ELSA intervention on Johnny's target of improved emotional understanding and regulation, the Emotion Expression Scale for Children (Penza-Clyne & Zeman, 2002) was used as a repeated measure. This measure is a self-report questionnaire comprising 16 statements to be rated by the child on a five-point Likert scale. It was developed to examine two aspects of emotion expression in children: eight items relate to 'poor awareness', that is the awareness of and ability to describe and label their own emotions; and eight items relate to 'expressive reluctance', measuring willingness to communicate emotions, particularly negative emotions, to others. This measure was selected as it would capture the broad aims of the intervention for Johnny, was developed for use with children aged 9 years and above, and was shorter than similar measures, which the researcher felt made it more appropriate for use as a weekly measure. The questionnaire was completed by Johnny weekly at the start of each ELSA session.

#### *5.2.1.2 Case Study Two: Oscar*

"Oscar" was aged 9 years and 2 months at the time of the first baseline measure. Oscar was in Year 5, and was referred for ELSA support due to difficulties with peer relationships, specifically during break and lunchtimes. He was reported by the SENCo as "on the periphery": finding it hard to initiate peer interactions and typically spending his break times with available adults. Oscar had experienced difficulties with a group of peers, and was reliant on adults stepping in to resolve arising problems. Oscar was described as appearing 'low' in school and aware of his differences. Targets identified for the ELSA intervention were primarily to support Oscar in developing friendships as well as strategies to manage peer difficulties more independently. It was hoped that these focuses could support Oscar to feel happier within school. ELSA sessions were undertaken once a week for half an hour for six weeks.

To measure the impact of the ELSA intervention on Oscar's targets, The School Children's Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007) was used as a weekly measure. This self-report measure focuses on the child's experience in school over the previous week and was undertaken with Oscar at start of his ELSA session each Friday, where he sorted 30 statements, indicating whether "I agree a lot", "I agree a little", "I disagree a little" and "I disagree a lot". This measure was selected as it is appropriate for children in Key Stage Two, is relatively short, and is recommended for use in assessing the impact of interventions to improve child subjective wellbeing.

It was initially hoped that additional observation measures of Oscar would be undertaken during play or lunch times focusing on his interactions with peers. However, following collection of baseline measures, it was no longer possible to undertake these observations and as such, they have not been reported.

#### *5.2.1.3 Case Study Three: Jessica*

"Jessica" was aged 7 years and 5 months at the time of the first baseline measure. She was in Year 3 and had been referred for ELSA support due to difficulties her mother had reported at home following her parents' separation, particularly around managing her anger which resulted in behavioural outbursts. In school, she was described as tearful during lessons and with separating from her mother in the mornings. The targets for the ELSA intervention were to develop her understanding of strong emotions, particularly anger, and providing her with strategies to manage these difficulties. Jessica attended weekly ELSA sessions which were approximately half an hour in duration. She received ELSA sessions for eight weeks.

While the primary focus of the intervention was for improvements in Jessica's behaviour at home, this was considered to be difficult to measure within the scope of the current research. Therefore, information was gathered from school regarding her behaviour during school time, considering this to be a

proxy measure of her behaviour at home. Information of the frequency, duration and intensity of Jessica's tearful behaviour was completed by her class teacher on two days a week by completing a behaviour record (Appendix 21).

Additionally, to ascertain any changes with regard to Jessica's views of her anger management, the Anger Expression Scale (Steele et al., 2009) was utilised. As this was deemed too lengthy a self-report questionnaire to complete at regular intervals, it was used as an additional pre- and post-measure.

#### *5.2.1.4 Case Study 4: Georgina*

"Georgina" was in Year 6 and aged 10 years and 3 months at the time of the first baseline measure. She was reported as becoming increasingly stressed both at home and at school as a result of difficulties with peers. In school, Georgina was described as a quiet, popular child, and "very emotionally aware". However, she would typically internalise her feelings within school, not wishing to burden her class teacher. While she would seek out the school ELSA during break times if she was experiencing problems, her behaviour at home was challenging as a result of her 'build up' of emotions. ELSA support had been sought by Georgina's parents due to her increased levels of anxiety regarding coming to school, and expressions of anger at home. The focus of the ELSA intervention was to support Georgina to understand her own feelings, build her tolerance of others, and support her ability to cope with peer difficulties. Georgina received ELSA sessions for 30 minutes twice a week for eight weeks. During the intervention period this time was extended as ongoing support around transition to secondary school was thought to be beneficial.

The purpose of the ELSA intervention was primarily to build Georgina's ability to cope with peer difficulties; therefore, an amended version of the Coping Efficacy Scale (Sandler et al., 2000) was used to evaluate its impact.

The scale was selected as it explores a child's beliefs about their ability to deal with challenging situations and is appropriate for use with children aged 9-11 years. This tool consists of seven questions to consider satisfaction of coping ability over the past month. The tool was amended for use as a weekly measure, asking Georgina to reflect on how satisfied she was with how she handled difficulties over the past week. An additional pre- and post-measure considered Georgina's beliefs regarding her ability to cope specifically with peer situations. The Self Report Coping Scale was used as it could be adapted to consider Georgina's coping responses for peer difficulties (Causey & Debow, 1992).

#### *5.2.1.5 Case Study Five: Joseph*

"Joseph" was aged 8 years and 9 months at the time the first baseline measure was completed. He was in Year 4 and had joined his current school in the Spring term of the previous school year. It was shared that since arriving, he had not made secure friendships with his peers. The focus of the ELSA intervention was on developing his understanding of friendships and key social skills, hoping to increase his positive peer interactions. ELSA sessions were undertaken weekly for six weeks and lasted approximately 40 minutes. The Children's Self-Report Social Skills Scale (Danielson & Phelps, 2003) was used as a weekly measure for Joseph to consider any changes in his perspectives of his own social skills. The development of an observation repeated measure was considered to investigate Joseph's peer interactions. However, due to difficulties in the feasibility of implementing this, the Child Role Play Measure (Dodge, McClaskey & Feldman, 1985) was utilised as an additional pre- and post- measure to assess Joseph's responses in a number of peer situations.

### **5.3 Intervention Fidelity**

To consider the content and quality of the ELSA intervention delivered for each of the cases in the current research, an observation of each of the ELSA interventions was undertaken by the researcher across the

intervention period. The primary purpose of this observation was to ascertain the fidelity of the intervention for each case: gathering contextual information regarding session delivery as well as consideration of session content. A fidelity checklist was developed based on the ELSA good practice guidelines (Burton, 2018) (Appendix 22). The researcher observed one session for each case, apart from Oscar where this was not possible. The information gathered from these observations is summarised in Table 5.6. The intervention fidelity check established that the ELSA interventions had been delivered consistently, and that the sessions demonstrated positive characteristics of ELSA practice as recommended by Burton (2018).

| Case     | Characteristic            | Observed :<br>Y/N |
|----------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Johnny   | High quality relationship | Y                 |
|          | Working with purpose      | Y                 |
|          | Appropriate area of focus | Y                 |
|          | Safe space                | Y                 |
| Jessica  | High quality relationship | Y                 |
|          | Working with purpose      | Y                 |
|          | Appropriate area of focus | Y                 |
|          | Safe space                | Y                 |
| Georgina | High quality relationship | Y                 |
|          | Working with purpose      | Y                 |
|          | Appropriate area of focus | Y                 |
|          | Safe space                | Y                 |
| Joseph   | High quality relationship | Y                 |
|          | Working with purpose      | Y                 |
|          | Appropriate area of focus | Y                 |
|          | Safe space                | Y                 |

Table 5.1 Summary of Intervention Fidelity Checklist Data

## 5.4 Case Study Results

The results of each case study are presented individually, considering visual analysis of repeated measures, statistical analysis of pre- and post-intervention measures to answer Research Question One. To answer Research Questions Two and Three, thematic analysis of interview data was undertaken. For each case, thematic maps are presented to illustrate themes and subthemes for each research question, as well as supporting interview extracts for each theme.

### 5.4.1 Case Study One: Johnny

#### *5.4.1.1 Research Question One: Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

##### 5.4.1.1.1 Analysis of Repeated Measures

The repeated measure used for Johnny was the Emotional Expression Scale for Children (Penza-Clyne & Zeman, 2002). Within this scale, a lower score indicates greater awareness and expression of emotions, and therefore a reduction in Emotional Expression Scale score would be a desirable intervention effect.

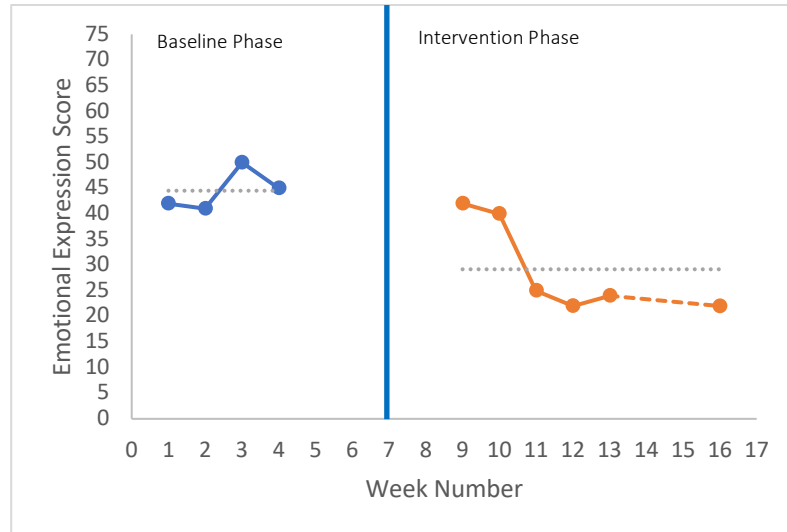


Figure 5.1 A scatter graph showing Johnny's Emotion Expression scores across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines

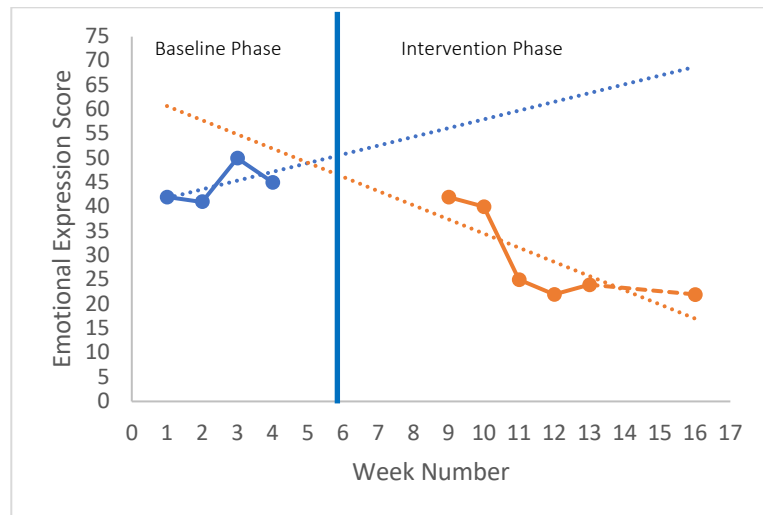


Figure 5.2 A scatter graph showing Johnny's Emotion Expression scores across baseline and intervention phases with trendlines

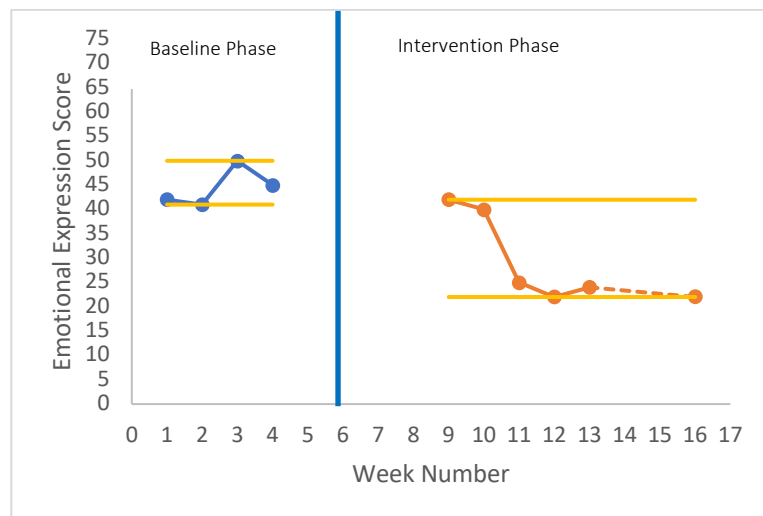


Figure 5.3 A scatter graph showing Johnny's Emotion Expression scores across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines

| Characteristic      | Descriptive Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level               | Figure 5.1 shows a mean score within the baseline phase of 44.5. The mean score of the intervention phase was 29.17. There was a mean level decrease of 15.33 between baseline and intervention phases.                                                                                         |
| Trend               | Figure 5.2 shows an upward trend in the baseline phase and a downward trend in the intervention phase.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Variability         | Figure 5.3 shows that scores within the baseline phase were between 41 and 50 (range = 9; standard deviation = 4.04). Within the intervention phase, scores were between 22 and 42 (range 20; standard deviation = 9.26), demonstrating an increase in the variability of scores across phases. |
| Immediacy of Effect | Unable to establish due to gap in data collection immediately following intervention start date.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Overlap             | 16.67% of data points in the intervention phase overlap with data in the baseline phase                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Table 5.2 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Johnny

#### 5.4.1.1.2 Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis

Visual analysis of Figures 5.1-5.3 presented in Table 5.2 suggests a positive intervention effect, demonstrated by a notable decrease in mean scores between phases and a low percentage overlap across phases. A positive change in trend line direction further supports this assertion. While there has been an increase in variability across phases, suggesting that the intervention phase data may be less stable and reliable, it should be acknowledged that the final four data points show limited variability, and that the decreased level of score appears to be maintained.

#### 5.4.1.1.3 Analysis of Pre- and Post-Measures (EL Checklist, Faupel, 2003)

|                          | Pupil     |            | Parent    |            | Teacher   |            |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                          | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score |
| Emotional Literacy Total | 78        | 98         | 70        | 83         | 66        | 69         |
| Total Difference         | +20       |            | +13       |            | +3        |            |
| RCI                      | -2.92     |            | -2.45     |            | -0.74     |            |
| Significant              | Yes       |            | Yes       |            | No        |            |

Table 5.3 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Johnny

|                 | Parent    |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 17        | 18         | 1          | -0.42 | No          |
| Motivation      | 13.5      | 16         | 2.5        | -1.08 | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 12        | 16.5       | 4.5        | -1.89 | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 10.5      | 14.5       | 4          | -1.73 | No          |
| Social Skills   | 17        | 18         | 1          | -0.57 | No          |

Table 5.4 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Johnny

|                 | Teacher   |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 16        | 10         | -6         | 3.33  | Yes         |
| Motivation      | 10        | 15         | 5          | -2.97 | Yes         |
| Self-Awareness  | 11        | 16         | 5          | -2.81 | Yes         |
| Self-Regulation | 14        | 13         | -1         | 0.58  | No          |
| Social Skills   | 15        | 15         | 0          | 0     | No          |

Table 5.5 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Johnny

#### 5.4.1.1.4 Summary of Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

Table 5.3 shows that there was an increase in Johnny's overall emotional literacy scores reported across the pupil-rated, parent-rated and, teacher-rated EL checklists, with statistically significant improvements for the pupil and parent responses. This data is supportive of a positive intervention effect and consistent with that of the visual analysis. While Table 5.4 shows that within the parent-rated checklist, a positive difference was observed in all areas of emotional literacy, none of these differences was individually statistically significant. Table 5.5 shows that while no overall significant positive changes in Johnny's emotional literacy from the teacher-rated checklist were observed, statistically significant improvements were identified in the self-awareness and motivation subscales. However, no change was observed in Johnny's social skills, and a slight decrease in Johnny's self-regulation ability was identified. A significant decrease in Johnny's empathy ability was reported.

5.4.1.2 Research Question Two: In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?

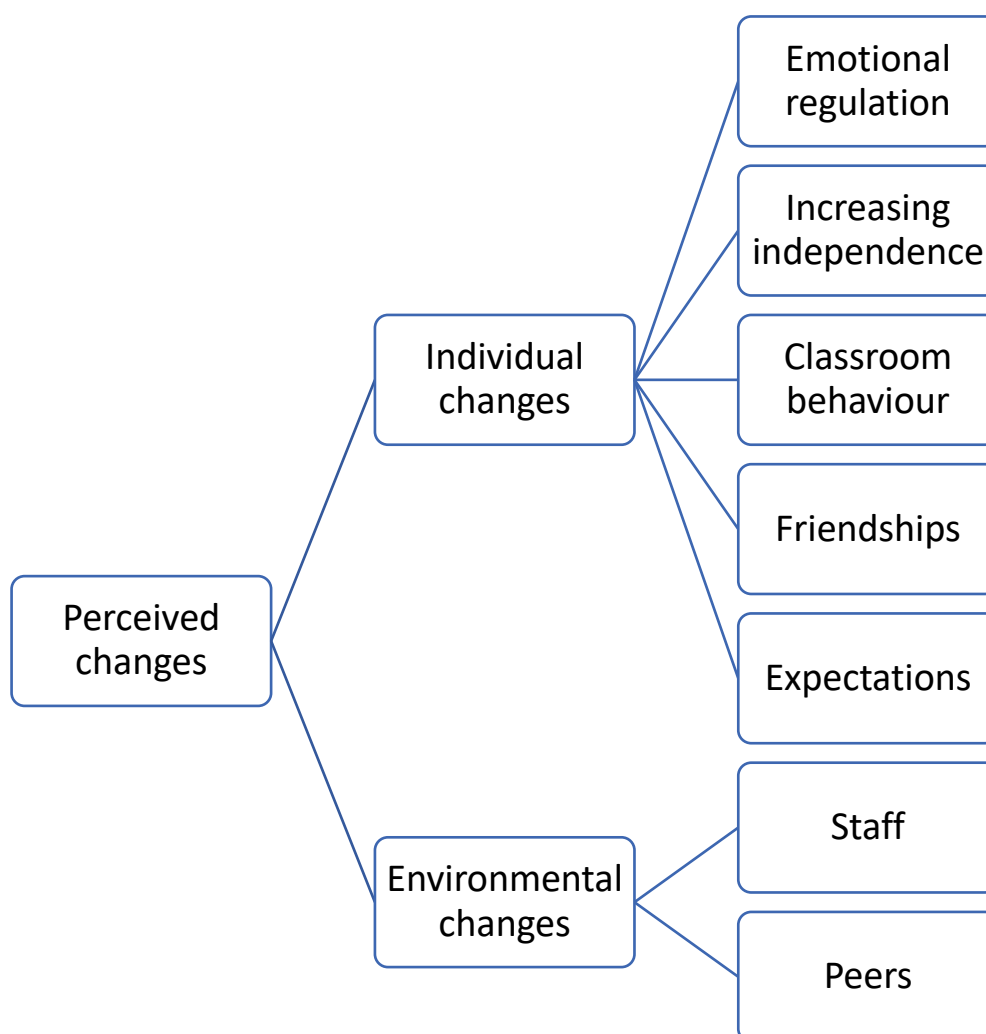


Figure 5.4 Themes and subthemes for perceived change identified for Johnny

| Theme: Individual Changes    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |        |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                     | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Source |
| Emotional regulation         | <i>"before I started ELSA I was not managing my anger and getting really stressed and upset, but now I can control my anger and think about the sad things"</i>                                                                            | Pupil  |
|                              | <i>"before he couldn't process it. He didn't understand"</i>                                                                                                                                                                               | Parent |
|                              | <i>"he hasn't got a lot of the you know, the issues that he had with, like you say, controlling his anger and the thoughts that he would still have in his head"</i>                                                                       | ELSA   |
| Increasing independence      | <i>"I used to (visit out of sessions), but now I just see like see if she's all right and when we're doing the next session just so I remember"</i>                                                                                        | Pupil  |
|                              | <i>"throughout the time that we've been doing the ELSA I've seen that he used to come to me initially quite a lot ... it has got less and less"</i>                                                                                        | ELSA   |
|                              | <i>"it was like somebody switched a switch, where he was, less on his shoulders and more kind of 'yeah, I can face this'"</i>                                                                                                              | Parent |
| Classroom behaviour          | <i>"His teacher literally today has just said that yes, she knows it's made an impact"</i><br><i>"...he is really knuckling down in class. His concentration is much better, he's more focused"</i>                                        | ELSA   |
| Friendships                  | <i>"Another ELSA child that wasn't his friend initially, but he has become friends since the ELSA... it's been quite a little network for them to get together"</i>                                                                        | ELSA   |
|                              | <i>"we've kind of become better friends because we understand each other now more"</i>                                                                                                                                                     | Pupil  |
| Expectations                 | <i>"I didn't realise it would have such an impact, in all honesty"</i>                                                                                                                                                                     | Parent |
|                              | <i>"I suppose the work we've done with that has had a better impact than I thought it would"</i>                                                                                                                                           | ELSA   |
| Theme: Environmental Changes |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |        |
| Subtheme                     | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Source |
| Staff                        | <i>"the teachers are looking out for me more I'd say, and like just say 'Johnny are you're alright. Do you need to go and take five?' and stuff"</i>                                                                                       | Pupil  |
| Peers                        | <i>"he did say that getting together it felt that they did understand him a little bit more"</i><br><i>"they sort of would support Johnny if needed...they understood that he's got these strategies and they could actually help him"</i> | ELSA   |

Table 5.6 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Johnny

A thematic analysis of interviews completed with Johnny, his ELSA and parent demonstrated a perceived positive impact of ELSA across a number of areas as presented in Figure 5.4 and Table 5.6. With regard to internal, individual changes, Johnny was viewed as being more able to regulate his emotions since working with his ELSA: managing his anger and negative thoughts, and having an increased level of understanding of his emotions. It was also noted that he was managing his emotions with an increased level of independence, relying less and less on support from the ELSA outside of sessions as the intervention progressed. Additionally, Johnny's increased ability to manage his emotions contributed positively to his behaviour in class, where he was viewed as more able to engage with his work. The intervention was reported to have led to the development of new friendships with other children receiving the intervention, providing support and understanding for each other that had previously not been present. In terms of the changes that had been observed, both ELSA and parent expressed that the positive impact of the intervention had exceeded initial expectations.

In addition to the individual improvements perceived, the ELSA intervention was viewed as contributing positively to environmental changes for Johnny. Specifically, both teachers and peers were acknowledged as having an increased awareness and understanding of Johnny's needs, and were seen to be looking out for him and supporting him as needed.

5.4.1.3 *Research Question Three: Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

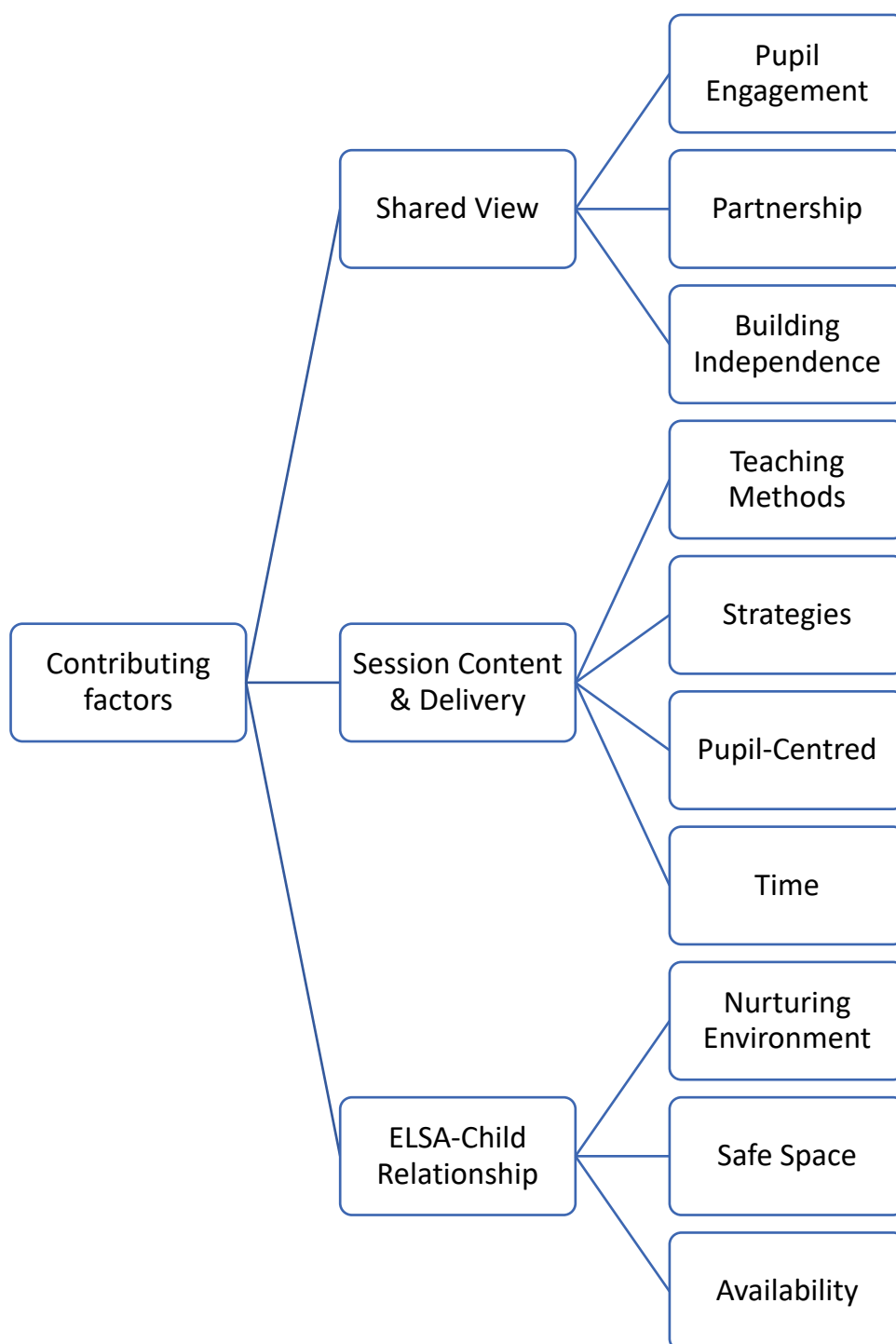


Figure 5.5 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Johnny

| Theme: Shared View                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |        |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Source |
| Pupil Engagement                    | <i>"I think that's partly down to the fact that Johnny has really been on board with the program and he has really wanted to make things better for himself"</i>                                                                                            | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>"even though I miss out on lessons, it's like would you rather do lessons and get angry or come out of a lesson be calm and think of how you can calm down"</i>                                                                                          | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"he was willing. He just needed help and he knew that he needed help with his head, you know, he'd had enough and had enough at snapping, shouting, you know, so I think he knew it was time to yeah get something sorted"</i>                           | Parent |
| Partnership                         | <i>"communication between parents, obviously Johnny himself, and teacher is vital within ELSA... so that we can all support each other to help here"</i>                                                                                                    | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>"He loves talking about ELSA, to be honest and he'll show me (his ELSA work)"</i>                                                                                                                                                                        | Parent |
|                                     | <i>"I keep up to date as to what his strategies are, so if he goes off and does something ...you know, it's the ELSA"</i>                                                                                                                                   | Parent |
| Building Independence               | <i>"if something happened like an argument, I wouldn't just go straight to Mrs *. I'd use like the strategies and like carry on what I've been doing"</i>                                                                                                   | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"for Johnny to learn that even though the door is always open and ELSA has finished, to learn not to depend on it so much but to do it off your own back with you yourself and your strategies and you know become just Johnny, not Johnny and ELSA"</i> | Parent |
|                                     | <i>"he really does have to try and cope. You know, that's what we've spoken about, he does have to try and manage things for himself because there won't always be an (ELSA) there"</i>                                                                     | ELSA   |
| Theme: Session Content and Delivery |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |        |
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Source |
| Teaching Methods                    | <i>"I think the activities that he's done, like the games and he's done a photo, you know, bring in photos, that sort of thing has allowed him to open up"</i>                                                                                              | Parent |
|                                     | <i>"I think the work, I think literally the resources I've had... I've felt for the first time, especially with Johnny, I feel that yeah, I really have used lots of different things to help"</i>                                                          | ELSA   |
| Strategies                          | <i>"It has really helped me. Like I used to have like an explosion, but now it's like do your breathing or do your, write it down, now I've got the strategies"</i>                                                                                         | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"you don't worry about him snapping to the extent that he did, and now because he knows how to use the strategies"</i>                                                                                                                                   | Parent |
|                                     | <i>"I introduced the calming strategies and things that he could use to help with his anger and he's been using those and those"</i>                                                                                                                        | ELSA   |

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |               |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
|                                       | <i>hopefully work really well for him, you know, he is using them I've seen that he's using them"</i>                                                                                                                |               |
| Pupil-Centred                         | <i>"ELSA is so individual, it really broke it down and was about finding what works for him"</i>                                                                                                                     | Parent        |
|                                       | <i>"I would say the week before, 'next week Johnny, going on what we've done today, let's think about what we're going to do' ... 'What do you think about that Johnny? Do you think that would help you?"</i>       | ELSA          |
|                                       | <i>"(A session) can change a little bit depending on how we get on and what Johnny talks about ... because sometimes you really need to work on what they need help with there and then"</i>                         | ELSA          |
| Time                                  | <i>"I think he just needs that release and I think he's come he's been able to calm down... just have that time away"</i>                                                                                            | ELSA          |
| <b>Theme: ELSA-Child relationship</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |               |
| <b>Subtheme</b>                       | <b>Supporting Extract</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Source</b> |
| Nurturing Environment                 | <i>"I think it's making him feel secure in the fact that I'm going to try and solve a problem"</i>                                                                                                                   | ELSA          |
|                                       | <i>"the temperament of who runs it really has a key part to play, you know, it's almost a like a mumsy thing... I think it's almost like a home from home"</i>                                                       | Parent        |
|                                       | <i>"it doesn't feel school-y in the ELSA room... I do think the environment and the atmosphere helps and the calming"</i>                                                                                            | Parent        |
| Safe Space                            | <i>"the ability just to talk, cry, scream, whatever he needed to do, he could do it without anybody saying anything really...he could just do what he wanted, it was the freedom just to release those emotions"</i> | Parent        |
|                                       | <i>"he's been able to come away and have that ... for someone to listen, for someone to advise and help him"</i>                                                                                                     | ELSA          |
| Availability                          | <i>"he's got an open door to the ELSA room...he knows he's got the access to it which is really useful"</i>                                                                                                          | Parent        |
|                                       | <i>"(ELSA) lets me come speak to her any time when I'm free"</i>                                                                                                                                                     | Pupil         |
|                                       | <i>"in his head it doesn't really finish I don't think"</i>                                                                                                                                                          | Parent        |
|                                       | <i>"you always have a place within the ELSA room, this is a place where he can come, you know, I can sit down there and we can have a chat"</i>                                                                      | ELSA          |
|                                       | <i>"ELSA never ends because I can still see (ELSA) whenever I need to go and talk to her"</i>                                                                                                                        | Pupil         |

Table 5.7 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Johnny

Thematic analysis of the interviews carried out to explore the factors perceived as contributing to positive change within the ELSA sessions highlighted several key themes summarised in Figure 5.5 and evidenced in Table 5.7. Gaining a shared view across all individuals involved within the ELSA sessions was perceived as important. In particular, Johnny's engagement and investment in the process was highlighted. Additionally, the necessity of a partnership between school and home was key, with communication between ELSA, parents, class teacher, and Johnny being described as 'vital'. The final subtheme identified was a shared view of the aims of the project: to build independence. Within all interviews, it was expressed that the best hope for the ELSA intervention was for Johnny to manage his difficulties without the support of an ELSA, and that transparency around this from the start of the intervention was crucial.

A further theme identified was the content and delivery of the ELSA sessions. The teaching methods and activities undertaken within the ELSA sessions had enabled Johnny to 'open up'. In particular, the strategies that Johnny had been introduced to were thought to be supportive of him managing his emotions. Moreover, it was perceived that the individualised nature of the ELSA session content contributed to its success, that the strategies and activities covered were helpful to Johnny specifically, and that his input was sought throughout. An additional subtheme was providing time and space for Johnny away from the classroom, where he could share his feelings and feel calmer.

The development of a strong ELSA-child relationship was highlighted as important to positive change for Johnny, which had been contributed to by several factors. Firstly, the creation of a nurturing environment, specifically the temperament of the ELSA-child relationship and the atmosphere within the ELSA room, had enabled Johnny to feel secure within sessions. Additionally, creating a safe space where Johnny felt able to freely express himself and be listened to without judgement was viewed as essential. The final factor was the availability of the ELSA outside of session time, and in providing on-going support after the end of the intervention period.

## 5.4.2 Case Study Two: Oscar

### 5.4.2.1 *Research Question One: Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

#### 5.4.2.1.1 Analysis of Repeated Measures

The repeated measure used for Oscar was the School Children's Happiness Scale (Ivens, 2007). This measure focuses on the child's experiences of school within the past week and considers their subjective wellbeing. A higher score indicates more positive subjective wellbeing, and therefore, an increase in score would be the desired intervention effect.

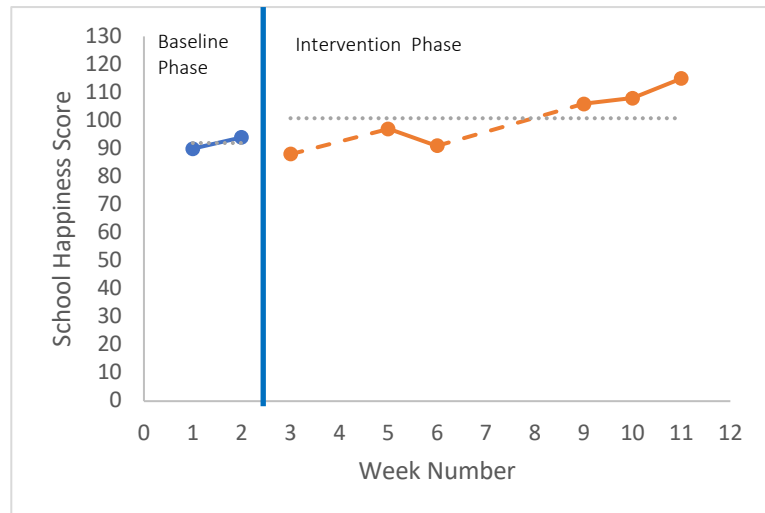


Figure 5.6 A scatter graph showing Oscar's School Children's Happiness Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines

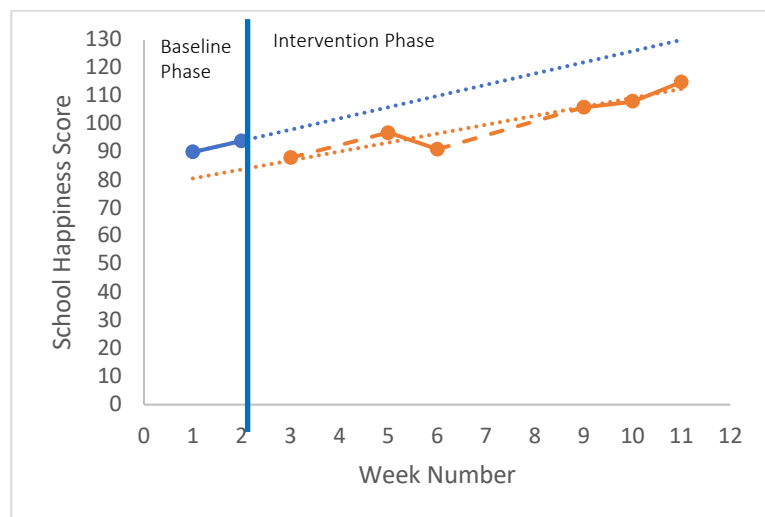


Figure 5.7 A scatter graph showing Oscar's School Children's Happiness Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with trend lines

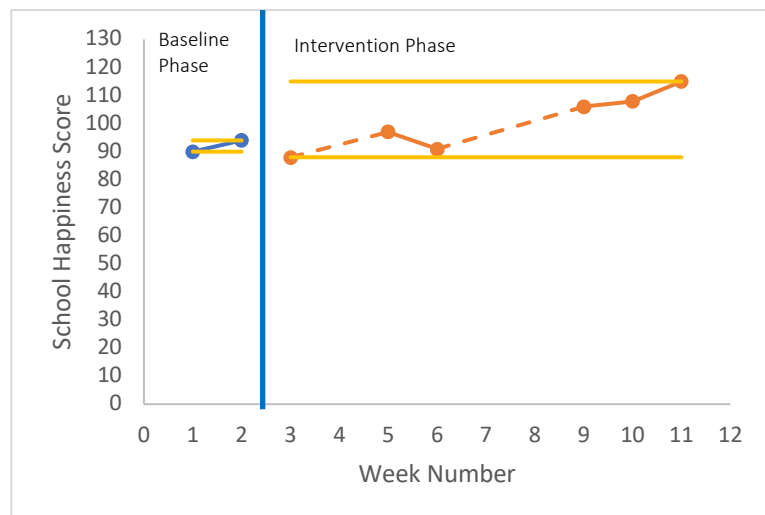


Figure 5.8 A scatter graph showing Oscar's School Children's Happiness Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines

| Characteristic      | Descriptive Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level               | Figure 5.6 shows that there was mean score within the baseline phase of 92. The mean score of the intervention phase was 100.83. There was a mean level increase of 8.83 between baseline and intervention phases.                                                                                  |
| Trend               | Figure 5.7 shows slight upward trend in the baseline phase and a slight upward trend in the intervention phase.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Variability         | Figure 5.8 shows that scores within the baseline phase were between 90 and 94 (range = 4; standard deviation = 2.83). Within the intervention phase, scores were between 88 and 115 (range = 27; standard deviation = 10.53), demonstrating an increase in the variability of scores across phases. |
| Immediacy of Effect | No immediate effect was observed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Overlap             | 33.33% of data points in the intervention phase overlap with data in the baseline phase                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Table 5.8 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Oscar

#### 5.4.2.1.2 Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis

Visual analysis of Figures 5.6-5.8 suggests a possible, small intervention effect. As illustrated in Table 5.8, an increase in the mean level occurred between the baseline and intervention phase, and the overlap between phases was limited. However, the assertion of a possible intervention effect is confounded by a limited baseline phase. While an upward trend is observed in the intervention phase, this is also observed in the baseline phase, and as such, positive change could have occurred regardless of intervention.

#### 5.4.2.1.3 Analysis of Pre- and Post-measures (EL Checklist, Faupel, 2003)

|                          | Pupil     |            | Parent    |            | Teacher   |            |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                          | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score |
| Emotional Literacy Total | 80        | 84         | 55.5      | 55.5       | 54        | 45         |
| Difference               | +4        |            | 0         |            | -11       |            |
| RCI                      | -0.58     |            | 0         |            | 2.22      |            |
| Significant              | No        |            | No        |            | Yes       |            |

Table 5.9 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Oscar

|                 | Parent    |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 12.5      | 12         | -0.5       | 0.21  | No          |
| Motivation      | 11.5      | 11         | -0.5       | 0.22  | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 12.5      | 13.5       | 1          | -0.42 | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 8.5       | 9          | 0.5        | -0.22 | No          |
| Social Skills   | 10.5      | 10         | -0.5       | 0.28  | No          |

Table 5.10 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Oscar

|                 | Teacher   |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 11        | 9          | -2         | 1.11  | No          |
| Motivation      | 10        | 7          | -3         | 1.78  | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 9         | 10         | 1          | -0.56 | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 9         | 7          | -2         | 1.17  | No          |
| Social Skills   | 15        | 12         | -3         | 2.08  | Yes         |

Table 5.11 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Oscar

#### 5.4.2.1.4 Summary of Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

Table 5.9 shows that Oscar's overall emotional literacy ability, as measured by the pupil-rated version of the EL checklist, increased between pre- and post- measures; however, this change was not statistically significant. The parent-rated checklist shows no change between pre- and post- measures in overall emotional literacy ability, while the teacher-rated checklist identified a significant decrease in Oscar's overall emotional literacy ability. Although the pupil-rated emotional literacy is consistent with the small, positive change identified from the visual analysis, the scores from parent- and teacher-rated checklists are not consistent with this finding.

The findings of parent- and teacher-rated checklist subscales (Table 5.10-5.11) do not support a positive intervention effect. No significant change was identified within the subscales of the parent-rated checklist, reflecting the limited differences in scores pre-and post-intervention. While, within the teacher-rated checklist, a small, non-significant increase in self-awareness was recorded, in all other areas of emotional literacy, a decrease in ability was reported. However, this was only identified as statistically significant within the social skills subscale.

5.4.2.2 *Research Question Two: In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?*

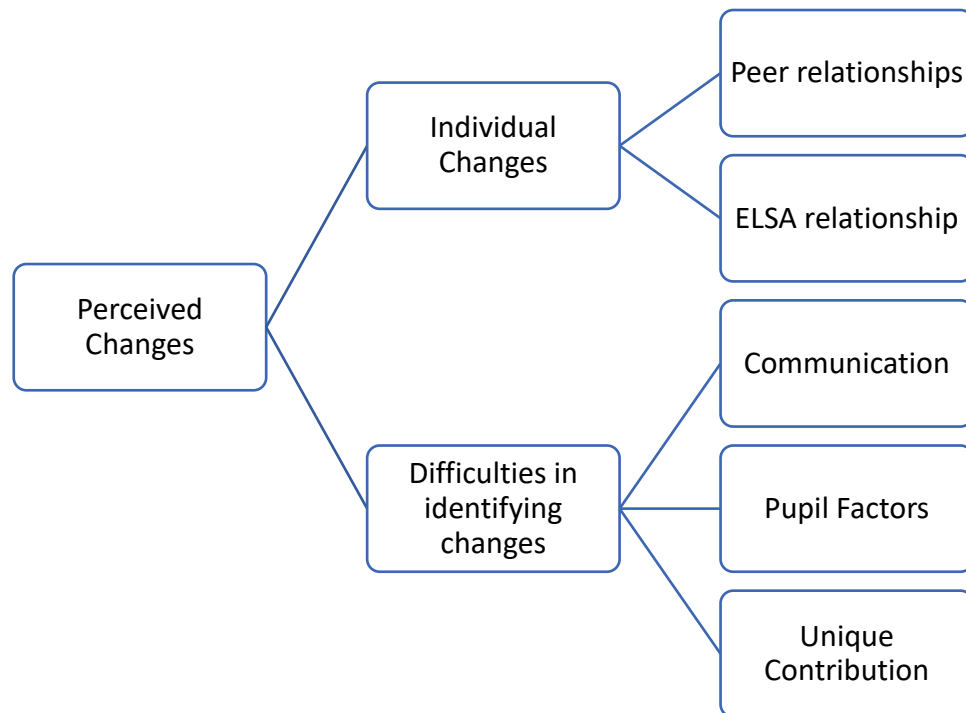


Figure 5.9 Themes for perceived change identified for Oscar

| Theme: Individual Changes                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |        |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                                   | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Source |
| Peer relationships                         | <i>"He seems happier on the playground... he's been building that friendship with the one particular boy"</i>                                                                                                                                                      | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>(What've you learned?) "To deal with people hurting me without retaliating"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                 | Pupil  |
|                                            | <i>"he will still seek out adults and seek out jobs"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                           | ELSA   |
| ELSA relationship                          | <i>"we didn't really know each other, so he wouldn't necessarily sort of make eye contact even or speak or, whereas now... it's sort of evolved into quite like a nice little friendship that, another adult relationship that he's got that he really enjoys"</i> | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>"he has been a little bit more open sort of leading up to this last week"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                   | ELSA   |
| Theme: Difficulties in identifying changes |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |        |
| Subtheme                                   | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Source |
| Communication                              | <i>"I've not really been able to catch up his teacher an awful lot so it's difficult for me to say"</i>                                                                                                                                                            | ELSA   |
| Pupil factors                              | <i>"He's a tricky one to read"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>"it was quite difficult to gauge whether he was really getting a lot from it"</i>                                                                                                                                                                               | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>"I think sometimes he tries to say the right thing that he wants the adult to hear"</i>                                                                                                                                                                         | ELSA   |
| Unique contribution                        | <i>"I'd like to think that some of the things that we learned... helped him build his friendship with the other boy, but whether it would have happened organically or not I don't know"</i>                                                                       | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>"he's got a big school move, his grandmother has just died suddenly, so he's got a lot going on at home, so it's sort of became not an issue, school, because he's got other things going on"</i>                                                               | ELSA   |

Table 5.12 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Oscar

Two overarching themes were identified from thematic analysis of interview data when considering the perceived changes for Oscar since the start of ELSA sessions (Figure 5.9 and Table 5.12). Within the theme of 'Individual Changes', two subthemes emerged. Firstly, it was acknowledged that improvements had been noted in Oscar's relationships with his peers. Oscar shared that the ELSA had supported him to manage peer difficulties more constructively, while the ELSA described that a friendship with a particular peer had developed resulting in him appearing happier during unstructured times. However, the ELSA also recognised that Oscar's preference to gravitate towards adults remained, highlighting her view of limitations in progress towards his intervention targets. A positive change was also described in Oscar's relationship with the ELSA, The ELSA shared that their new relationship had made a positive difference for Oscar, in that he had a new adult to go to for support. Furthermore, the development of this relationship appeared to have a positive impact on Oscar's behaviour within ELSA sessions, where he was described as being increasingly open as the intervention progressed.

In addition, a theme of 'Difficulties in identifying changes' was apparent. Within this theme, it appeared that the ELSA found it challenging to gain information on progress towards Oscar's ELSA targets as a result of several factors. Distance from Oscar outside of ELSA time and limited communication with staff members who see Oscar at more regular intervals than the ELSA was felt to cause difficulties. Furthermore, the information shared by Oscar, and his perceptions of ELSA support were seen to affect the picture that the ELSA was able to ascertain. Finally, reservations were also shared in attributing change to the ELSA sessions specifically, and the impact that external factors may have had on Oscar's progress was described.

5.4.2.3 *Research Question Three: Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

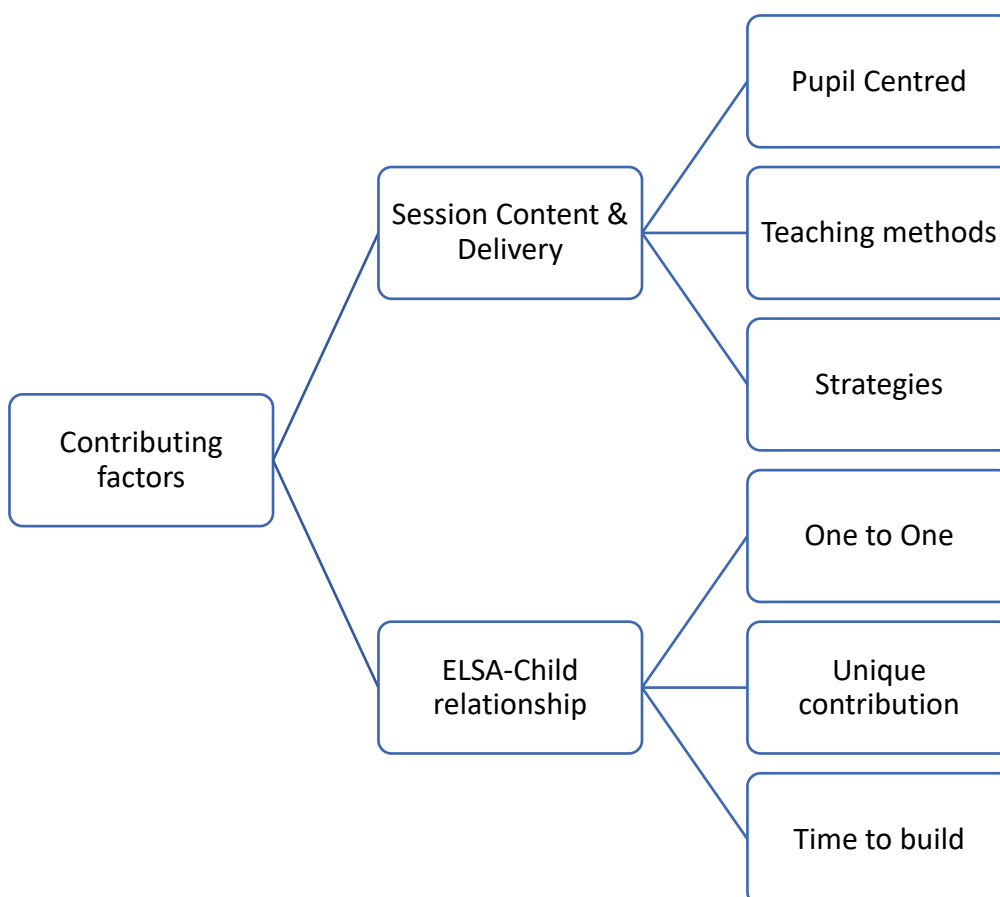


Figure 5.10 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Oscar

| Theme: Session Content and Delivery |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |        |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Source |
| Pupil Centred                       | <i>"we want Oscar to have friends, but does Oscar want Oscar to have friends?"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>"when you've had a conversation with a child and they've told you that actually the reason this is happening in classes not because of that, not because of what the teacher thinks but actually because you know, they're X, Y and Z, then of course you're going to go to X, Y and Z and completely change everything"</i> | ELSA   |
| Teaching Methods                    | <i>"Just being able to do stuff that you wouldn't do in class"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"he's loved all the creative stuff we've done"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | ELSA   |
| Strategies                          | <i>"I didn't like know the strategies at first, and then I learnt them"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"Strategies to help with dealing with people who hurt me...They're quite helpful"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Pupil  |
| Theme: ELSA-Child relationship      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |        |
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Source |
| One to One                          | <i>"I think probably the adult, just having a one-to-one with an adult is what he's really really enjoyed"</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | ELSA   |
| Unique Contribution                 | <i>"I don't think I am a special person for Oscar. I think Oscar would go to any trusted adult if he was feeling a certain way, I don't think it would specifically be me"</i>                                                                                                                                                  | ELSA   |
| Time to Build                       | <i>"I would have liked to have more time with him to build that relationship because I think if he'd felt really really comfortable with me, I think, possibly different things would have come out and he would have been a little bit more open"</i>                                                                          | ELSA   |

Table 5.13 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Oscar

As illustrated within Figure 5.10 and Table 5.13, when considering the contributing factors for the perceived changes for Oscar, two themes emerged. Within 'Session Content and Delivery', flexibility of session content and ELSA targets to ensure pupil views were central was considered vital. Additionally, the teaching of sessions in a creative way, and introducing strategies to manage challenging situations independently were viewed as beneficial. In terms of the 'ELSA-Child relationship', the one-to-one interactions were highlighted as a key factor to progress and engagement with the ELSA sessions. However, it was also acknowledged that time to build this relationship was important. Furthermore, the unique contribution of the ELSA-child relationship was viewed as unclear, as for Oscar, he had positive relationships with numerous adults across the school, and as such, whether the ELSA-child relationship was distinct was questioned.

### 5.4.3 Case Study Three: Jessica

#### *5.4.3.1 Research Question One: Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

##### *5.4.3.1.1 Analysis of Repeated Measures*

For Jessica, weekly behaviour observations undertaken by the teacher were utilised as a repeated measure. These observations considered Jessica's emotional regulation when entering school on a Friday each week. Jessica was described as regularly coming into school distressed, and thus a reduction in the minutes she spent crying would indicate a positive intervention effect.

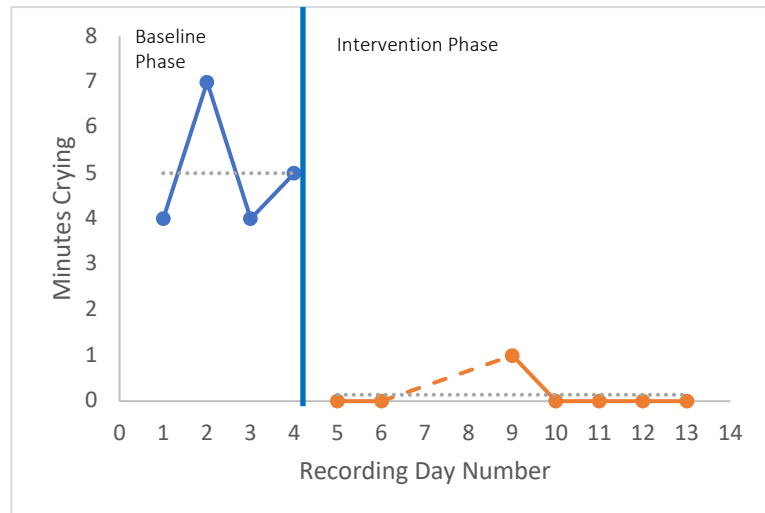


Figure 5.11 A scatter graph showing Jessica's behaviour scores across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines

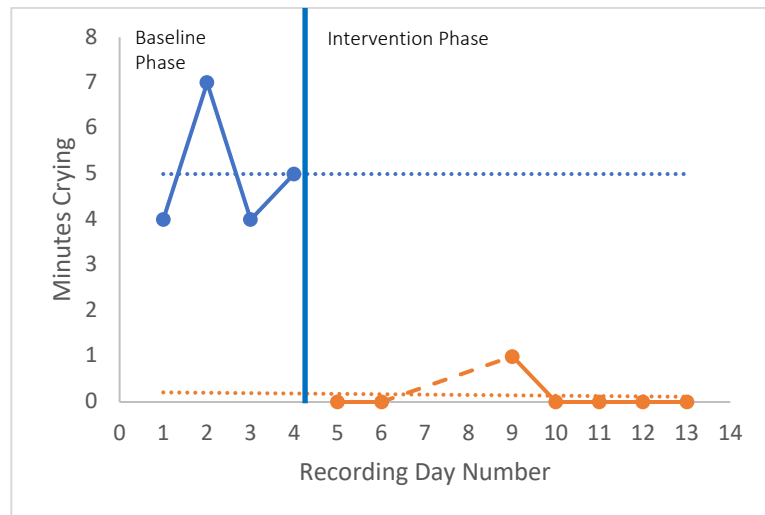


Figure 5.12 A scatter graph showing Jessica's behaviour scores across baseline and intervention phases with trend lines

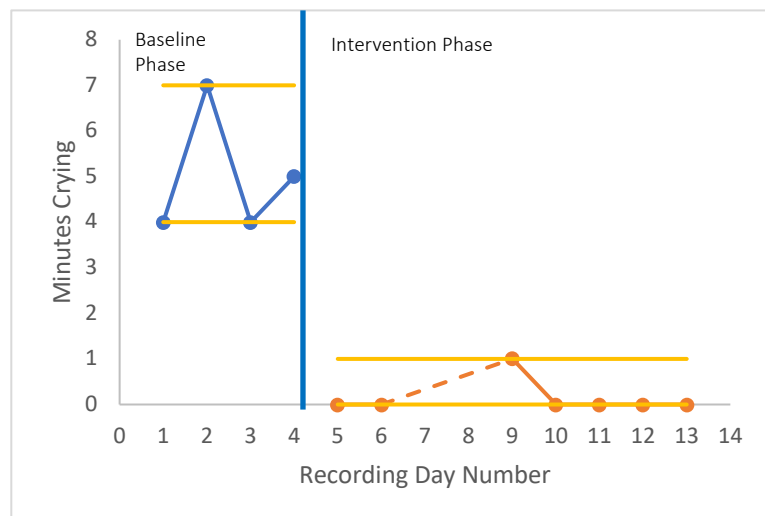


Figure 5.13 A scatter graph showing Jessica's behaviour scores across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines

| Characteristic      | Descriptive Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level               | Figure 5.11 shows a mean score within the baseline phase of 5. The mean score of the intervention phase was 0.14. There was a mean level decrease of 4.86 between baseline and intervention phases.                                                                                          |
| Trend               | Figure 5.12 shows a stable trend in the baseline phase and a stable trend in the intervention phase.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Variability         | Figure 5.13 shows that scores within the baseline phase were between 4 and 7 (range = 3; standard deviation = 1.41). Within the intervention phase, scores were between 0 and 1 (range = 1; standard deviation = 0.41), demonstrating a decrease in the variability of scores across phases. |
| Immediacy of Effect | There was a decrease in level between the last three data points of the baseline phase and first three data points of the intervention phase                                                                                                                                                 |
| Overlap             | 0% of data points in the intervention phase overlap with data in the baseline phase                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Table 5.14 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Jessica

#### 5.4.3.1.2 Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis

Visual analysis of Figures 5.11-5.13 indicates a positive intervention effect for Jessica. As shown in Table 5.14, a reduction in the mean score is observed as well as no overlapping data points between baseline and intervention phases and an immediate effect. A reduction in the variability of data sets demonstrates more consistent, reliable data has been gathered in the intervention phase.

#### 5.4.3.1.3 Analysis of Pre- and Post-measures (EL Checklist, Faupel, 2003)

|                          | Pupil     |            | Parent    |            | Teacher   |            |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                          | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score |
| Emotional Literacy Total | 64.5      | 79         | 59        | -          | 65.5      | 70.5       |
| Total Difference         | +14.5     |            | -         |            | +5        |            |
| RCI                      | -2.27     |            | -         |            | -1.28     |            |
| Significant              | Yes       |            | -         |            | No        |            |

Table 5.15 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Jessica

|                 | Teacher   |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 16        | 16         | 0          | 0     | No          |
| Motivation      | 14        | 15         | 1          | -0.65 | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 9.5       | 11.5       | 2          | -1.17 | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 14        | 14.5       | 0.5        | -3.33 | No          |
| Social Skills   | 12        | 13.5       | 1.5        | -1.04 | No          |

Table 5.16 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Jessica

#### 5.4.3.1.4 Summary of Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

A post-intervention measure was not obtained for the parent-rated checklist and therefore pre- and post- comparisons for this strand and its subscales were not possible. A statistically significant difference was reported for the pupil-rated data (Table 5.15). While the teacher-rated measures indicated an improvement in overall emotional literacy ability (Table 5.15), as well as positive changes across four subscales, none of these differences were significant (Table 5.16). Overall, this data provides support for the positive impact of the intervention identified within the visual analysis.

#### 5.4.3.1.5 Additional Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

For Jessica, an additional pre- and post- measure was used to capture her specific difficulties with managing anger. Jessica completed the Anger Expression Scale (Steele et al., 2009), both prior to the ELSA intervention, and again once she had finished attending weekly sessions. For each subscale within this measure, a higher score is indicative of greater difficulties. Table 5.17 demonstrates an overall improvement in Jessica's anger management. While no change was observed in the 'anger suppression' subscale, in all other areas a reduction in the level of difficulty was recorded, and for 'trait anger', this was statistically significant.

|                   | Pre-Score | Post Score | Difference | RCI  | Significant |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------|-------------|
| Trait Anger       | 22        | 13         | -9         | 2.91 | Yes         |
| Anger Expression  | 11.5      | 8.5        | -3         | 1.25 | No          |
| Anger Suppression | 9         | 9          | 0          | 0    | No          |
| Anger Control     | 17        | 16         | -1         | 0.35 | No          |
| Total             | 59.5      | 46.5       |            |      |             |
| Difference        | 13        |            |            |      |             |

Table 5.17 Pre- and Post- Anger Expression Scale subscale scores for Jessica

5.4.3.2 Research Question Two: In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?

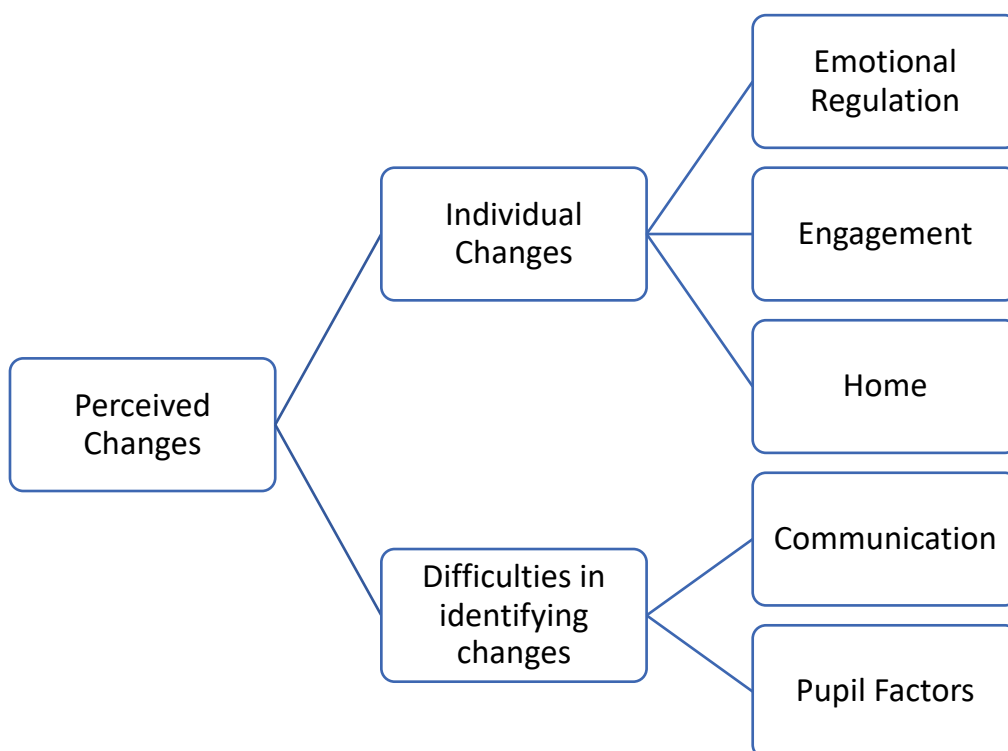


Figure 5.14 Themes and subthemes for perceived changes identified for Jessica

| Theme: Individual Changes                  |                                                                                                                                                                                      |        |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                                   | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                   | Source |
| Emotional regulation                       | <i>"I think her teacher has to some extent... they have noticed she is not as anxious, she's not crying as much, she's not as unhappy"</i>                                           | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>"She'd be very clingy. She would be crying...Those things either don't happen at all now, or very very infrequently. Coming into school is so much easier for her definitely"</i> | ELSA   |
| Engagement                                 | <i>"I think there are pockets now where she's much more ready to engage"</i>                                                                                                         | ELSA   |
| Home                                       | <i>"It's helped...not fighting with my sister"</i>                                                                                                                                   | Pupil  |
|                                            | <i>"I don't know if any behaviours have changed at home. In terms of relationships her sibling I don't think it has changed particularly"</i>                                        | ELSA   |
| Theme: Difficulties in Identifying changes |                                                                                                                                                                                      |        |
| Subtheme                                   | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                   | Source |
| Communication                              | <i>"I don't think at home, I'm not sure. There hasn't been a great deal of feedback"</i>                                                                                             | ELSA   |
| Pupil factors                              | <i>"Sometimes particularly in the early days, she would kind of ask me if that was 'right'. She was very keen to give the 'right' answer"</i>                                        | ELSA   |
|                                            | <i>"Although to be fair in school, we've always said we don't know how she's feeling"</i>                                                                                            | ELSA   |

Table 5.18 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Jessica

For Jessica, two overarching themes were identified for perceived changes as a result of the intervention, as well as several subthemes (Figure 5.14). Table 5.18 presents each theme, subtheme and supporting interview data. The theme of 'Individual Changes' emerged, with subthemes of the differing areas where these were present. Within school, it was noted that generally Jessica appeared more able to regulate her emotions: she was happier and less anxious. Particular improvements were identified with transitions, where the previous observed difficulties were no longer present. Jessica's behaviour had also changed within ELSA sessions. While it remained that she was quiet and cautious in her engagement, it was felt that there were times where she appeared more open and willing to contribute as the ELSA sessions progressed. At home, divergence in the perceived changes was apparent. While Jessica felt that the ELSA sessions had helped her to not fight with her sister, reports from home appeared to suggest that Jessica's difficulties and behaviour at home remained unchanged.

A further theme: 'Difficulties in identifying changes' emerged from interview data. Establishing the positive impact of ELSA was challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, limited communication between home and school had resulted in difficulties clarifying any changes that had occurred outside of the school setting. This was problematic as the aim of the ELSA intervention was to support Jessica's wellbeing and behaviour at home. Furthermore, 'Pupil Factors' further contributed to challenges in identifying impact, due to the Jessica's presentation within school and the perception that she sought to please the ELSA in her answers, rather than being entirely honest and open.

5.4.3.3 *Research Question Three: Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

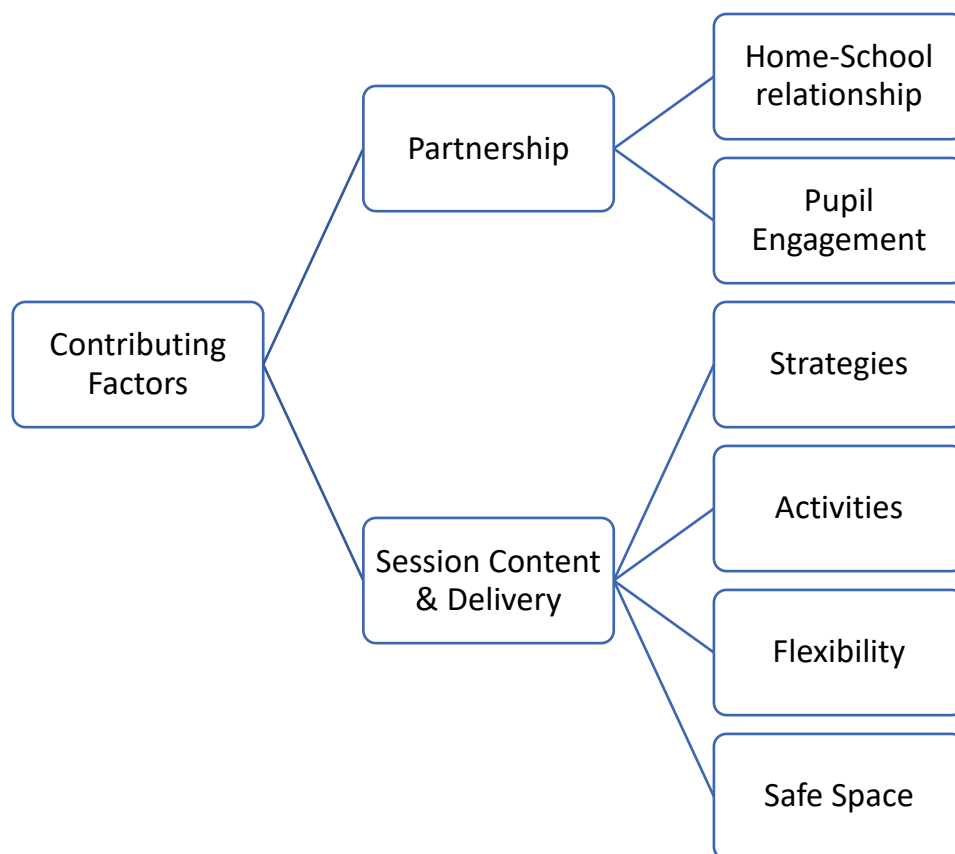


Figure 5.15 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Jessica

| <b>Theme: Partnership</b>                  |                                                                                                                                                                     |               |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Subtheme</b>                            | <b>Supporting Extract</b>                                                                                                                                           | <b>Source</b> |
| Home-School relationship                   | <i>"Mum's been on board throughout and it has been helpful"</i>                                                                                                     | ELSA          |
| Pupil Engagement                           | <i>"...the fact that she knows that Mummy and I chat, and that Daddy has been here, and that her sister comes to play, has made her feel much more comfortable"</i> | ELSA          |
|                                            | <i>"I think she likes coming, but it hasn't been without its fears"</i>                                                                                             | ELSA          |
| <b>Theme: Session Content and Delivery</b> |                                                                                                                                                                     |               |
| <b>Subtheme</b>                            | <b>Supporting Extract</b>                                                                                                                                           | <b>Source</b> |
| Strategies                                 | <i>"kind of physical strategies...that was one of the things she liked having and liked doing"</i>                                                                  | ELSA          |
| Activities                                 | <i>"sometimes my sister comes with me and she likes playing in the sand with me.... because then I get to be nice"</i>                                              | Pupil         |
|                                            | <i>"...she has enjoyed drawing. And making little things...So that kind of making and doing she quite likes to do"</i>                                              | ELSA          |
| Flexibility                                | <i>"I don't really like missing out on lessons"</i>                                                                                                                 | Pupil         |
|                                            | <i>"I think it's just been vital to keep the sessions as fluid as possible... So not seeing her on the same day at the same time"</i>                               | ELSA          |
| Safe space                                 | <i>"I think it's just giving her the opportunity to have a safe space in which to voice some of those opinions that she thinks a little bit naughty"</i>            | ELSA          |
|                                            | <i>"(It's helped) that we've talked about it. In my angry folder, my feelings about my sister because she is annoying sometimes"</i>                                | Pupil         |

Table 5.19 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Jessica

Figure 5.15 illustrates the two themes and associated subthemes that were identified as contributing to the perceived changes for Jessica as a result of working with the ELSA. These themes and subthemes are presented in Table 5.19 with supporting evidence from interviews. The first overarching theme that emerged was 'Partnership', which captured the importance of all involved having a shared view of the focus of ELSA. The home-school relationship, and the support demonstrated by parents were acknowledged as helpful factors, and also the engagement of the pupil in sessions. Although Jessica had been hesitant to engage at times, her knowledge of support from home was viewed as a supportive factor. A further theme of 'Session Content and Delivery' was identified as fundamental for change. Within this theme, giving input on strategies, as well as giving space to be creative and explore through play was felt to be important. An additional factor was flexibility within session delivery. Jessica shared anxieties around missing lessons, and as such, it had been essential to be flexible in her session timings to ensure that the same lesson each week was not missed. Finally, the creation of a safe space, where Jessica was given time and space to talk freely and with unconditional positive regard, was seen to be beneficial to her progress.

#### 5.4.4 Case Study Four: Georgina

##### *5.4.4.1 Research Question One: Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

##### *5.4.4.1.1 Analysis of Repeated Measures*

For Georgina, the repeated measure utilised was an amended version of The Coping Efficacy Scale (Sandler et al., 2000). This measure asked Georgina to reflect on the previous week at school, and assesses how satisfied she was with how she handled difficulties, as well as her confidence with managing future problems. Within this scale, higher scores reflect a higher

level of self-efficacy, and therefore an increase in Coping Efficacy Scale score reflects a positive intervention effect.

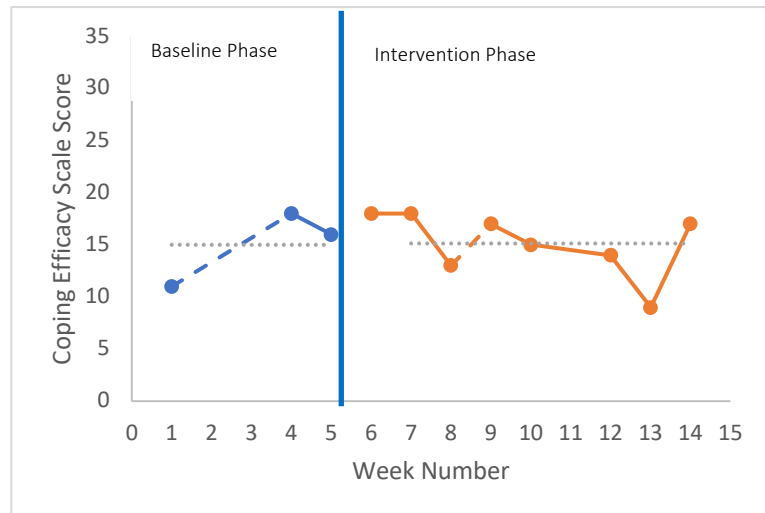


Figure 5.16 A scatter graph showing Georgina's Self-Report Coping Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines

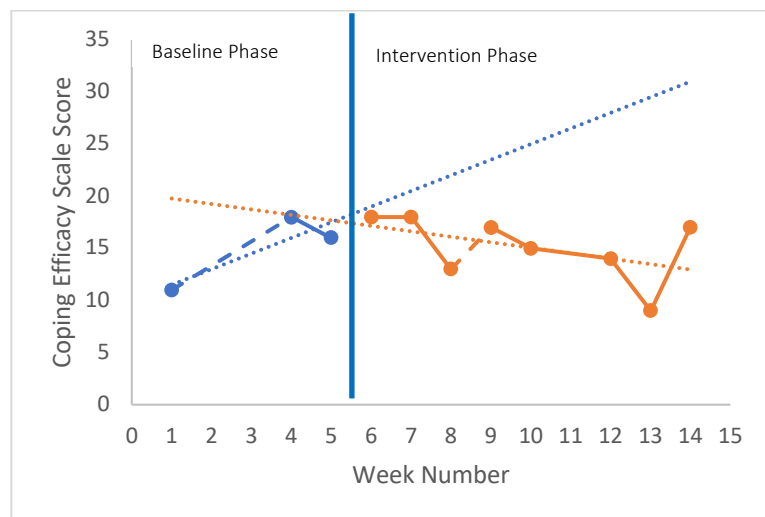


Figure 5.17 A scatter graph showing Georgina's Self-Report Coping Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with trend lines

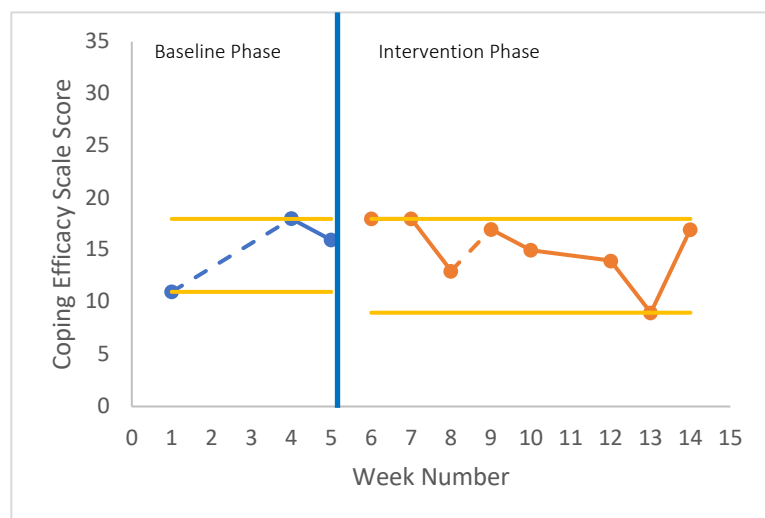


Figure 5.18 A scatter graph showing Georgina's Self-Report Coping Scale scores across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines

| Characteristic      | Descriptive Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level               | Figure 5.16 shows that there was mean score within the baseline phase of 15. The mean score of the intervention phase was 15.13. There was a mean level increase of 0.13 between baseline and intervention phases.                                                                  |
| Trend               | Figure 5.17 shows an upward trend in the baseline phase and a slight downward trend in the intervention phase.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Variability         | Figure 5.18 shows that scores within the baseline phase were between 11 and 18 (range = 7; standard deviation = 3.60). Within the intervention phase, scores were between 9 and 18 (range 9; standard deviation = 3.09), demonstrating similar variability of scores across phases. |
| Immediacy of Effect | There was no change in level across the final three data points of the baseline phase and the first three data points of the intervention phase.                                                                                                                                    |
| Overlap             | 100% of data points in the intervention phase overlap with data in the baseline phase                                                                                                                                                                                               |

Table 5.20 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Georgina

#### 5.4.4.1.2 Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis

Visual analysis of repeated measures data displayed in Figures 5.16-5.18 provides limited evidence for the occurrence of an intervention effect. As summarised in Table 5.20, a minimal increase in mean scores between baseline and intervention phases is identified. However, any assertion of an intervention effect is mediated by an overlap of all data points across phases, as well as change in the direction of trend. A limited, unstable baseline period causes difficulties for analysis and identifying clear intervention effects.

#### 5.4.4.1.3 Analysis of Pre- and Post-measures (EL Checklist, Faupel, 2003)

|                          | Pupil     |            | Parent    |            | Teacher   |            |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                          | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score |
| Emotional Literacy Total | 71.5      | 60.5       | 81        | 77         | 67        | 72         |
| Total Difference         | -11       |            | -4        |            | +5        |            |
| RCI                      | 1.73      |            | 0.80      |            | -1.28     |            |
| Significant              | No        |            | No        |            | No        |            |

Table 5.21 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Georgina

|                 | Parent    |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 18        | 17         | -1         | 0.42  | No          |
| Motivation      | 17        | 19         | 2          | -0.99 | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 14        | 14         | 0          | 0     | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 15        | 11         | -4         | 1.79  | No          |
| Social Skills   | 17        | 16         | -1         | 0.59  | No          |

Table 5.22 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Georgina

|                 | Teacher   |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 11        | 13         | 2          | -1.28 | No          |
| Motivation      | 11        | 13         | 2          | -1.31 | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 16        | 15         | -1         | 0.59  | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 13        | 15         | 2          | -1.32 | No          |
| Social Skills   | 16        | 16         | 0          | 0     | No          |

Table 5.23 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Georgina

#### 5.4.4.1.4 Summary of Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

The teacher-rated EL checklist indicated an increase in overall emotional literacy ability; however, this was not a significant effect. Pupil- and parent-rated results reflected a decrease in emotional literacy ability, although, these were also not statistically significant findings (Table 5.21). No significant differences were identified within the parent- and teacher-related subscales (Table 5.22 and 5.23). These findings are consistent with the results of the visual analysis which demonstrated no substantial change.

5.4.4.2 Research Question Two: In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?

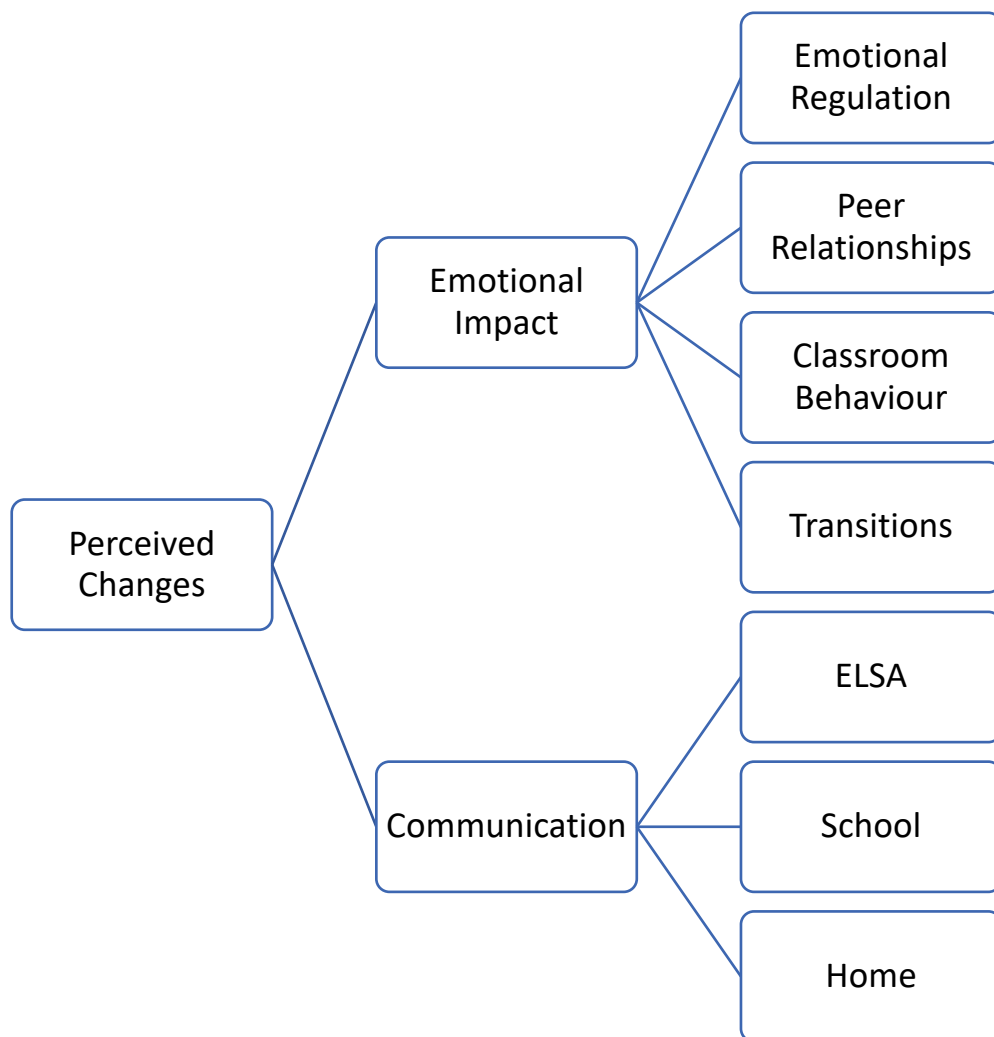


Figure 5.19 Themes and subthemes for perceived changes identified for Georgina

| <b>Theme: Emotional Impact</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                 |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Subtheme</b>                | <b>Supporting Extract</b>                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Source</b> |
| Emotional Regulation           | <i>"I found it really hard in the past, like really hard, and I used to take it out on people at home and all my friends and I've stopped and it means I have more friends"</i> | Pupil         |
|                                | <i>"I think she is aware now of what makes her angry or stressed"</i>                                                                                                           | ELSA          |
| Peer Relationships             | <i>"Friendships, so she does have difficulty, so that's not changed, we've not cured it or anything, but she's a lot more tolerant of the girl that was bothering her"</i>      | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"we're getting in less arguments"</i>                                                                                                                                        | Pupil         |
|                                | <i>"I've met new people and made new friends from collecting them and seeing them and stuff"</i>                                                                                | Pupil         |
| Classroom Behaviour            | <i>"Classroom things are better"</i>                                                                                                                                            | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"I put my hand up a bit more and I'm more interactive with other kids and I help other kids more and stuff"</i>                                                              | Pupil         |
| Transitions                    | <i>"she would come to school, but not willingly... that doesn't happen now Mum doesn't bring her in and she comes in quite nicely"</i>                                          | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"Mum and dad said they do recognise that she is calmer and happier to come to school"</i>                                                                                    | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"I'm happier at school and home and it doesn't mean I don't want to go to school and stuff. So, it does really help"</i>                                                     | Pupil         |
| <b>Theme: Communication</b>    |                                                                                                                                                                                 |               |
| ELSA                           | <i>"she was very uptight when she first came to me and quite wary of me I think...she's definitely opened up"</i>                                                               | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"she was coming to me every day, two or three times a day... what I have found over the last few, probably the last couple of months, is that she doesn't come as often"</i> | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"Before she was stressed or angry, now she's coming to say hello and it's like a comfort thing"</i>                                                                          | ELSA          |
| School                         | <i>"she does seek (class teacher) out occasionally, not all the time, she'd prefer to come here...but she's starting to so that's better"</i>                                   | ELSA          |
|                                | <i>"it makes me feel more like confident to go tell teachers like talk to teachers about stuff when (ELSA)'s not here."</i>                                                     | Pupil         |
|                                | <i>"(her teacher) can also see now that she's getting wound up ...ELSA is great for getting staff as well to become"</i>                                                        | ELSA          |

|      |                                                                                                                                     |       |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
|      | <i>more aware of the children that might need it, so they can identify and look out for these things quicker</i>                    |       |
| Home | <i>"I'm less angry with mum and dad and they're understanding more and they know what I'm going through and that's always good"</i> | Pupil |
|      | <i>"It hasn't really changed at home...the home life is still reportedly same"</i>                                                  | ELSA  |
|      | <i>"she tends to want to speak to me rather than (parents)"</i>                                                                     | ELSA  |

Table 5.24 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Georgina

As shown in Figure 5.19, two themes emerged from the interview data considering perceived changes for Georgina following the start of the ELSA intervention; these, as well as their subthemes and supporting extracts are presented in Table 5.24. The 'Emotional Impact' of the ELSA intervention appeared to be significant for Georgina and encompassed several subthemes. Firstly, changes to emotional regulation were identified; she was described as more aware of her emotions and difficulties, and also felt more able to manage her strong emotions compared to times prior to seeing the ELSA. The positive impact that improved emotional regulation had on Georgina's friendships was also recognised. While it was described that Georgina's difficulties with peers were ongoing, she was reported as increasingly tolerant and less confrontational in her behaviour. Furthermore, it became apparent that ELSA support had enabled Georgina to develop new friendships with others who she had not encountered prior to sessions. A further positive change that arose as a result of Georgina's increased emotional management was captured was her classroom behaviour. It was reported that her wellbeing and behaviour in the classroom had generally improved, and Georgina described more specifically that she felt better able to engage in classroom learning: interacting with peers more constructively and feeling more confident to contribute to whole class discussions. Changes were also observed in Georgina's behaviour around transitions. Georgina had previously struggled when entering school. However, since the ELSA intervention, changes were described in her external behaviours, appearing calmer and more willing to come to school, but also in her internal thoughts, as she described herself as feeling happier and wanting to go to school each day.

Changes in 'Communication' had been reported since the start of the ELSA intervention. When considering her communication with the ELSA, within sessions Georgina was described as becoming increasingly open and honest as the intervention progressed. Furthermore, changes had been perceived in her interactions with the ELSA outside of sessions. A reduction in her visits to the ELSA throughout the school day was reported, but also a shift in their function, from an opportunity to share frustrations to seeking

reassurance that the ELSA was available if needed. Furthermore, it was perceived that some change in Georgina's communication with additional adults in school had been observed. While a preference to speak to the ELSA remained, Georgina was described by the ELSA as beginning to seek support from her class teacher, and herself shared that she felt more confident to do so if the ELSA was not available. The ELSA intervention was also seen as supportive of the class teacher's communication with Georgina around her difficulties: raising awareness and understanding. Finally, while improvements at home were described by Georgina in terms of improved understanding of her parents, according to the ELSA, Georgina's communication with her parents reportedly remained limited.

5.4.4.3 *Research Question Three: Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

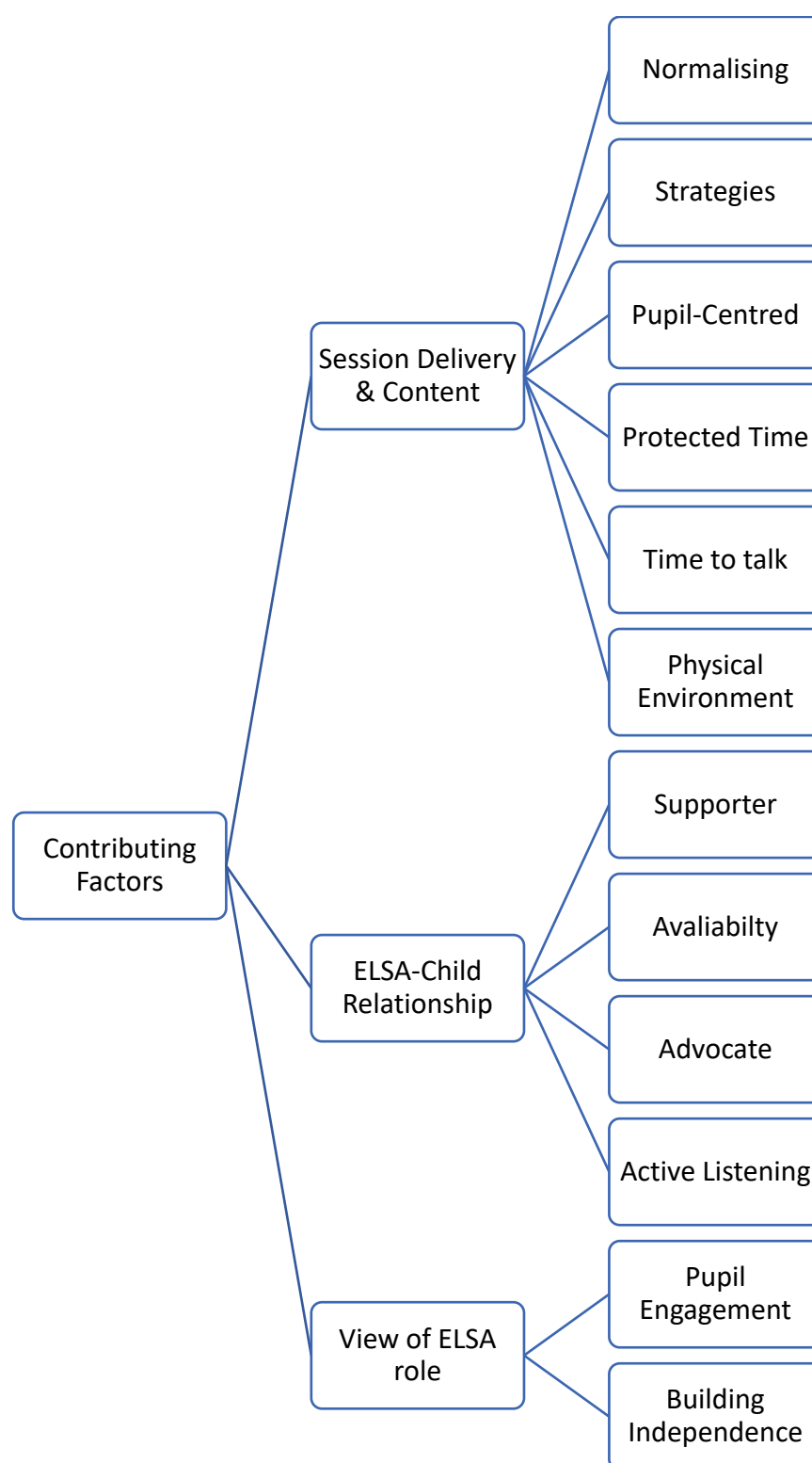


Figure 5.20 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Georgina

| Theme: Session Delivery and Content |                                                                                                                                                                                    |        |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                 | Source |
| Normalising                         | <i>"I used to think I was the only one that felt this way but then it shows that other people actually do and that helps because you feel like you're not alone"</i>               | Pupil  |
| Strategies                          | <i>"I didn't really know what to do. I used to think that like screaming at people would like make them understand"</i>                                                            | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"We've talked about strategies and she's thought of ideas and I've given suggestions, she knows how to use them"</i>                                                            | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>"(ELSA) tells you strategies of how to deal with it and I have to like think of strategies...it really helped because she tells you like 'don't do that, try this'"</i>         | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"It's just at that point now where she's now got to use them, so she's thinking about it, but she can't quite stop herself"</i>                                                 | ELSA   |
| Pupil-Centred                       | <i>"Normally, if there's a topic that I keep bringing up then we'll do more stuff on that"</i>                                                                                     | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"I change it. So, you have to have loose plans...but by day two, I've gone off topic because of what we're talking about"</i>                                                   | ELSA   |
| Protected Time                      | <i>"I'm one of those people who likes to know before time, if I don't know I start getting really worked up about stuff"</i>                                                       | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"on the whole, we've got a timetable and we stick to it and it doesn't change"</i>                                                                                              | ELSA   |
| Time to Talk                        | <i>"when you tell somebody about it really helps you because it means that it's not all bottled up inside"</i>                                                                     | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"once we talked about it, you could see that she'd relaxed"</i>                                                                                                                 | ELSA   |
| Physical Environment                | <i>"It's like more relaxed...it makes you want to open up a bit more because you're not in like a grey room"</i>                                                                   | Pupil  |
| Theme: ELSA-Child Relationship      |                                                                                                                                                                                    |        |
| Supporter                           | <i>"with ELSA you know that there's a teacher who's going to be there with you, for you, if you getting stressed in the day, so you feel safer at school and you feel happier"</i> | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"I think she feels like I'm on her side, and I understand"</i>                                                                                                                  | ELSA   |
| Advocate                            | <i>"when she feels that she can't talk to her teacher or another adult, she knows that I would go for her"</i>                                                                     | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>"if something's really bothering me then she can sort out and that really helps"</i>                                                                                            | Pupil  |
| Availability                        | <i>"what we did is have sort of dinnertime drop-ins... just so that I can be there for her to offload on and that did help a little bit"</i>                                       | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>"she always has time for you ...she always like be there for you and she won't like leave you or something"</i>                                                                 | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>"she's nice because she listens"</i>                                                                                                                                            | Pupil  |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                       |       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Active                          | <i>"(ELSA) always says the right things"</i>                                                                                                          | Pupil |
| Listening                       | <i>"knowing that I can recognise, hopefully, recognise what it is that she's struggling with and find things to help her, has helped"</i>             | ELSA  |
| <b>Theme: View of ELSA role</b> |                                                                                                                                                       |       |
| Pupil                           | <i>"She really believes that it can help her which is great"</i>                                                                                      | ELSA  |
| engagement                      | <i>"she asks questions too ... she will say 'what can I do if this happens though?', or 'if I try that and that's not the same, what you think?'"</i> | ELSA  |
| Building                        | <i>"when I introduced this to her and I said we'd do six to eight weeks...she sort of said 'Oh, what do I do after that?'"</i>                        | ELSA  |
| independence                    | <i>"it's not going to be something I can just stop, that's it. She relies on it too much"</i>                                                         | ELSA  |
|                                 | <i>"...she'll say things like 'but (ELSA) is a professional'"</i>                                                                                     | ELSA  |
|                                 | <i>"it's never could you go and speak to them...she's quite 'Oh no, don't tell them about it. I want to work it out between us'"</i>                  | ELSA  |

Table 5.25 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Georgina

For Georgina, from the interviews undertaken, several themes were identified as contributing to the perceived changes as a result of the ELSA intervention (Figure 5.20 and Table 5.25). Firstly, the content and delivery of the ELSA sessions. Within this theme, the resources used were viewed as supporting Georgina to understand that others experienced similar emotions; as a result, she felt less 'alone' in her difficulties. The practical strategies developed within ELSA sessions were also viewed as important. Georgina expressed that she had not understood how to overcome her difficulties prior to the ELSA sessions, and that the strategies that had been introduced and discussed had helped her to recognise new ways of managing a situation. While her understanding of these strategies was acknowledged by the ELSA as being improved, the consistent implementation of these strategies was viewed as a next step for Georgina. The opportunity to talk freely was viewed as having a crucial impact on Georgina's progress, and was expressed as a release for "bottled up" feelings, which helped her to relax and regulate her emotions more effectively. Additionally, adapting support to align with Georgina's changing needs was considered key, as well as the need for consistency in session timing, highlighting the importance of individualisation and protection of ELSA sessions within the current context. Finally, the physical environment was commented upon as helping to create a 'relaxed' atmosphere, which enabled Georgina to feel more able to share her thoughts.

The interview data also revealed the contribution of the relationship between the ELSA and Georgina to positive change. Feeling understood and supported by a member of staff within school, as well as having someone to advocate on her behalf where necessary was thought to have helped Georgina to feel 'happier' and 'safer' within school. Furthermore, the knowledge that the ELSA was available when needed outside of session time was seen as supportive. In addition, the responses of the ELSA when Georgina shared her concerns was clearly important. Feeling genuinely listened to was identified as a central factor, but also the ELSA's responses were seen as key in that they were able to recognise Georgina's difficulties and respond in the 'right' way.

Finally, the theme of 'Views of ELSA' was identified as important. Within this theme, the subtheme of 'Pupil engagement' was apparent. It was shared within interviews that Georgina was invested in the intervention, and was ready for change to take place. Furthermore, Georgina's behaviour within the ELSA sessions demonstrated her engagement: seeking to deepen her understanding by asking questions and considering alternative outcomes. The subtheme of 'Building independence' also arose. Georgina felt that she would struggle without ELSA support and the ELSA did not feel able to withdraw her involvement, in spite of the initial hopes of the intervention. Georgina's perception that the ELSA was able to provide 'professional' support, which she could not gain elsewhere, was a contributing factor to this. However, it was also noted that while ongoing support felt necessary, Georgina sought to implement strategies and overcome peer difficulties independently, demonstrating that while she thought ELSA support was important, the opportunity to overcome challenges herself was also evident.

#### 5.4.5 Case Study Five: Joseph

##### *5.4.5.1 Research Question One: Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

###### 5.4.5.1.1 Analysis of Repeated Measures

The Self Report Social Skills Scale (Danielson & Phelps, 2003) was the repeated measure utilised to consider the intervention effect on Joseph's social skills. A higher score on this scale reflects greater social skills, and therefore an increase in score was the desirable intervention effect.

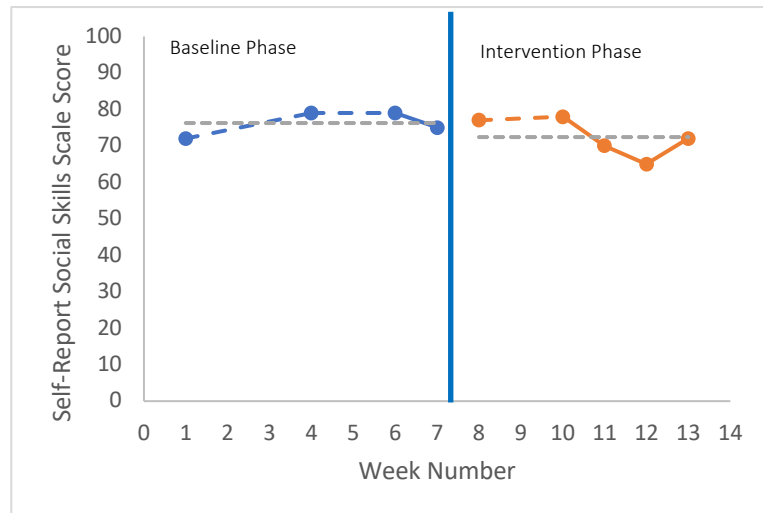


Figure 5.21 A scatter graph showing Joseph's Self-Report Social Skills Scale score across baseline and intervention phases with mean lines

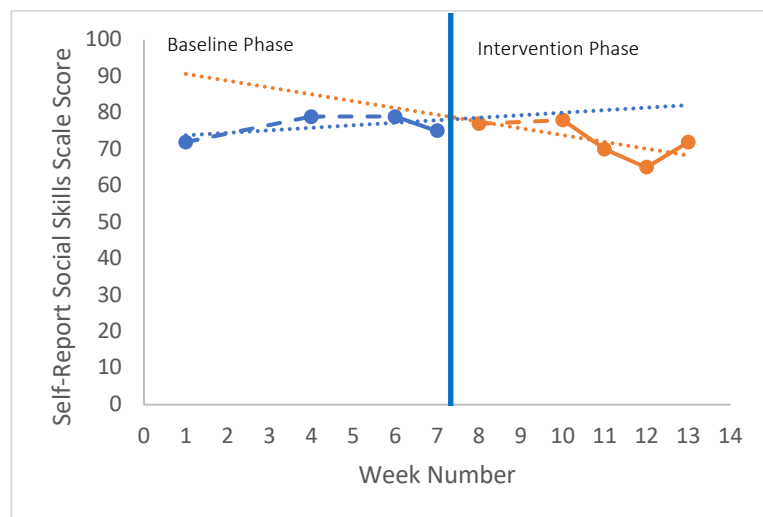


Figure 5.22 A scatter graph showing Joseph's Self-Report Social Skills Scale score across baseline and intervention phases with trend lines

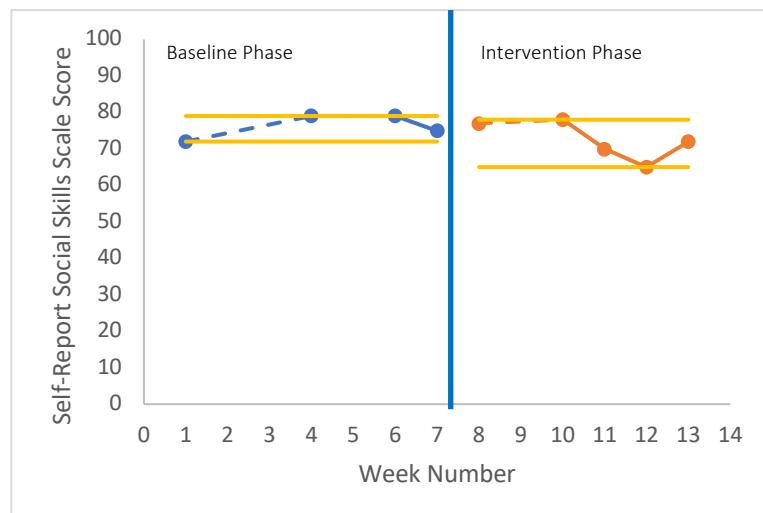


Figure 5.23 A scatter graph showing Joseph's Self-Report Social Skills Scale score across baseline and intervention phases with stability lines

| Characteristic      | Descriptive Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level               | Figure 5.21 shows that there was mean score within the baseline phase of 76.25. The mean score of the intervention phase was 72.4. There was a mean level decrease of 3.85 between baseline and intervention phases.                                                                                  |
| Trend               | Figure 5.22 shows a slight upward trend in the baseline phase and a slight downward trend in the intervention phase                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Variability         | Figure 5.23 shows that scores within the baseline phase were between 72 and 79 (range = 7; standard deviation = 3.4). Within the intervention phase, scores were between 65 and 78 (range 12; standard deviation = 5.32), demonstrating a slight increase in the variability of scores across phases. |
| Immediacy of Effect | No immediate effect was observed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Overlap             | 100% of data points in the intervention phase overlap with data in the baseline phase                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

Table 5.26 Summary of visual analysis of repeated measures for Joseph

#### 5.4.5.1.2 Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis

Visual analysis of repeated measures data presented in Figures 5.21-5.23 and summarised in Table 5.26 demonstrates a reduction in the mean score and a high level of overlap. Additionally, a change in trend line direction, reflecting a slight negative trend can be observed. While several missing data points in the baseline phase cause difficulties for interpreting results, limited evidence of a positive intervention effect is provided.

#### 5.4.5.1.3 Analysis of Pre- and Post-measures (EL Checklist, Faupel, 2003)

|                          | Pupil     |            | Parent    |            | Teacher   |            |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                          | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Pre-Score | Post-Score |
| Emotional Literacy Total | 67        | 72         | 65        | 65         | 38.5      | 36         |
| Total Difference         | +5        |            | 0         |            | -2.5      |            |
| RCI                      | -0.73     |            | 0         |            | 0.62      |            |
| Significant              | No        |            | No        |            | No        |            |

Table 5.27 Pre- and Post- Total EL Checklist scores for Joseph

|                 | Parent    |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 16        | 12         | -4         | 1.68  | No          |
| Motivation      | 10        | 12         | 2          | -0.87 | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 11        | 13         | 2          | -0.84 | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 14        | 14         | 0          | 0     | No          |
| Social Skills   | 14        | 14         | 0          | 0     | No          |

Table 5.28 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Parent-Rated subscale scores for Joseph

|                 | Teacher   |            |            |       |             |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------------|
|                 | Pre-Score | Post-Score | Difference | RCI   | Significant |
| Empathy         | 7         | 5          | -2         | 1.11  | No          |
| Motivation      | 7         | 5          | -2         | 1.19  | No          |
| Self-Awareness  | 8.5       | 9.5        | 1          | -0.56 | No          |
| Self-Regulation | 8         | 10         | 2          | -1.17 | No          |
| Social Skills   | 8         | 6.5        | -1.5       | 1.04  | No          |

Table 5.29 Pre- and Post- EL Checklist Teacher-Rated subscale scores for Joseph

#### 5.4.5.1.4 Summary of Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

As shown in Table 5.27, pupil-rated pre-and post- intervention scores reflect a non-significant increase in emotional literacy ability. While parent-rated scores demonstrated no change, and teacher-rated scores were indicative of decreased emotional literacy ability, these were also not statistically significant changes. Parent-rated emotional literacy subscales shown in Tables 5.28 demonstrate no significant changes: small increases in motivation and self-awareness as well as a decrease in empathy were identified. No significant changes were identified within the teacher-rated subscales shown in Table 5.29, reflecting the limited differences in scores. These findings are consistent with the interpretations of visual analysis, suggesting limited intervention effect.

#### 5.4.5.1.5 Additional Pre- and Post-measures Analysis

Joseph undertook additional pre- and post- measures using the Child's Role Play Measure (Dodge, McClaskey & Feldman, 1985) to consider his thinking around the application of social skills in a range of situations. Within this scale, a higher score illustrates a higher level of social skills. Therefore, an increase in score would indicate a desirable intervention effect. Joseph's scores from this measure pre- and post-intervention are summarised in Table 5.30. These scores demonstrate a statistically significant increase in social skill ability. Of the subscales, increases in score were identified in 'peer group entry' and 'response to provocation'.

|                         | Pre-Score | Post-Score |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Peer group entry        | 22        | 24         |
| Response to provocation | 22        | 26         |
| Response to failure     | 16        | 16         |
| Response to success     | 6         | 6          |
| Social expectations     | 24        | 24         |
| Teacher expectations    | 6         | 6          |
| Total                   | 96        | 102        |
| RCI                     | -2.79     |            |
| Significant             | Yes       |            |

Table 5.30 Pre- and Post-Child's Role Play Measure scores for Joseph

5.4.5.2 *Research Question Two: In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?*

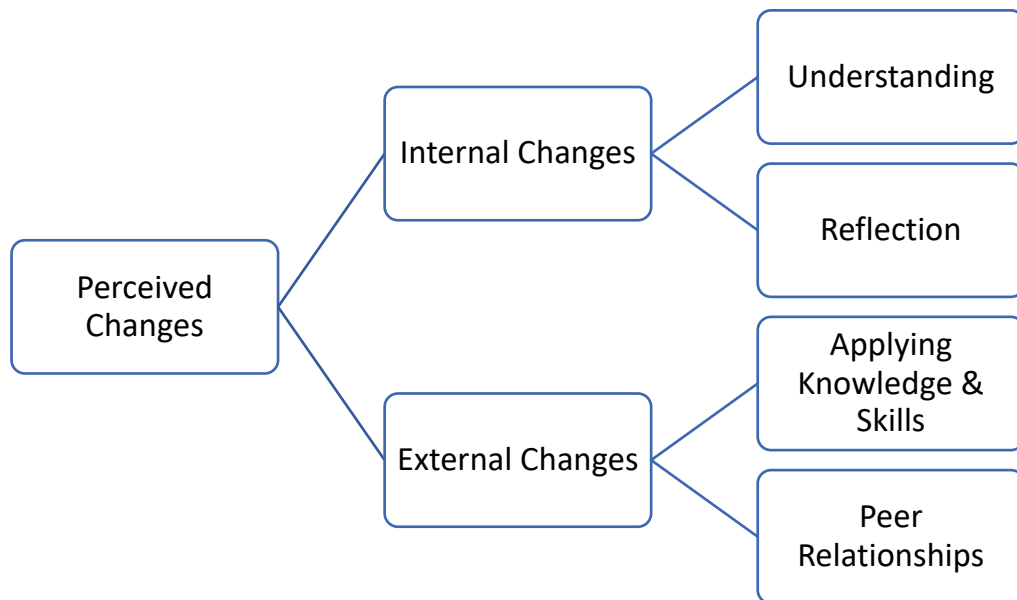


Figure 5.24 Themes and subthemes for perceived changes identified for Joseph

| Theme: Internal Changes       |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                      | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                   | Source |
| Understanding                 | <i>"he knows the basic core skills that are needed to form friendships"</i>                                                                                                                          | ELSA   |
|                               | <i>"I think he just saw it is him, it was all quite self-centred, and now I think he's actually took that step further and thinks beyond himself"</i>                                                | ELSA   |
| Reflection                    | <i>"I think the beginning he found it difficult to think beyond himself, but within a couple of sessions that had changed"</i>                                                                       | ELSA   |
|                               | <i>"In the beginning, it was almost me giving that information, but he was actually, once he got the basic sort of skills of friendship, he could then work out himself how he could apply that"</i> | ELSA   |
| Theme: External Changes       |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |        |
| Subtheme                      | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                                   | Source |
| Applying Knowledge and Skills | <i>"He's able to take on what we'd discussed...whether he's able to apply it is it is another matter. So that's the next step"</i>                                                                   | ELSA   |
|                               | <i>"I don't usually try it in the classroom, I usually try it outside"</i>                                                                                                                           | Pupil  |
| Peer Relationships            | <i>"It's helped me to get a couple more friends and helped me to do more things and get more people involved in different things"</i>                                                                | Pupil  |
|                               | <i>"It's worked quite a bit but it's not like, I want like more friends still"</i>                                                                                                                   | Pupil  |
|                               | <i>"Talking to a supply teacher last week about how he was, she thinks he has made progress"</i>                                                                                                     | ELSA   |
|                               | <i>"Talking to his class teacher, she doesn't feel it has (made a difference) this stage"</i>                                                                                                        | ELSA   |
|                               | <i>"I think there's still episodes where he does struggle"</i>                                                                                                                                       | ELSA   |

Table 5.31 Themes and supporting extracts for perceived changes for Joseph

As shown in Figure 5.24 and evidenced in Table 5.31, for Joseph, two themes were identified in the changes that had been perceived: 'Internal Changes' and 'External Changes.' Firstly, within internal changes, improvements were seen in terms of Joseph's understanding of the core skills of friendship, specifically understanding the reciprocal nature of friendships. Furthermore, Joseph's ability to reflect on difficulties he had experienced and consider how he could apply the skills he had learned was viewed as improving throughout the ELSA sessions. A mixed view was recognised in terms of the external, observable changes for Joseph. While his understanding was improving, his application of learned skills remained inconsistent, with Joseph explaining that he had only applied his skills in the playground rather than in the classroom, suggesting that the implementation of his knowledge had not become embedded and remained a conscious effort. Specific to the development of peer relations, Joseph reported that ELSA had helped him to form new friendships; however, he continued to wish for further positive relationships with his peers. While some positive changes were observed by school staff, Joseph's class teacher reportedly did not perceive an intervention effect.

5.4.5.3 *Research Question Three: Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

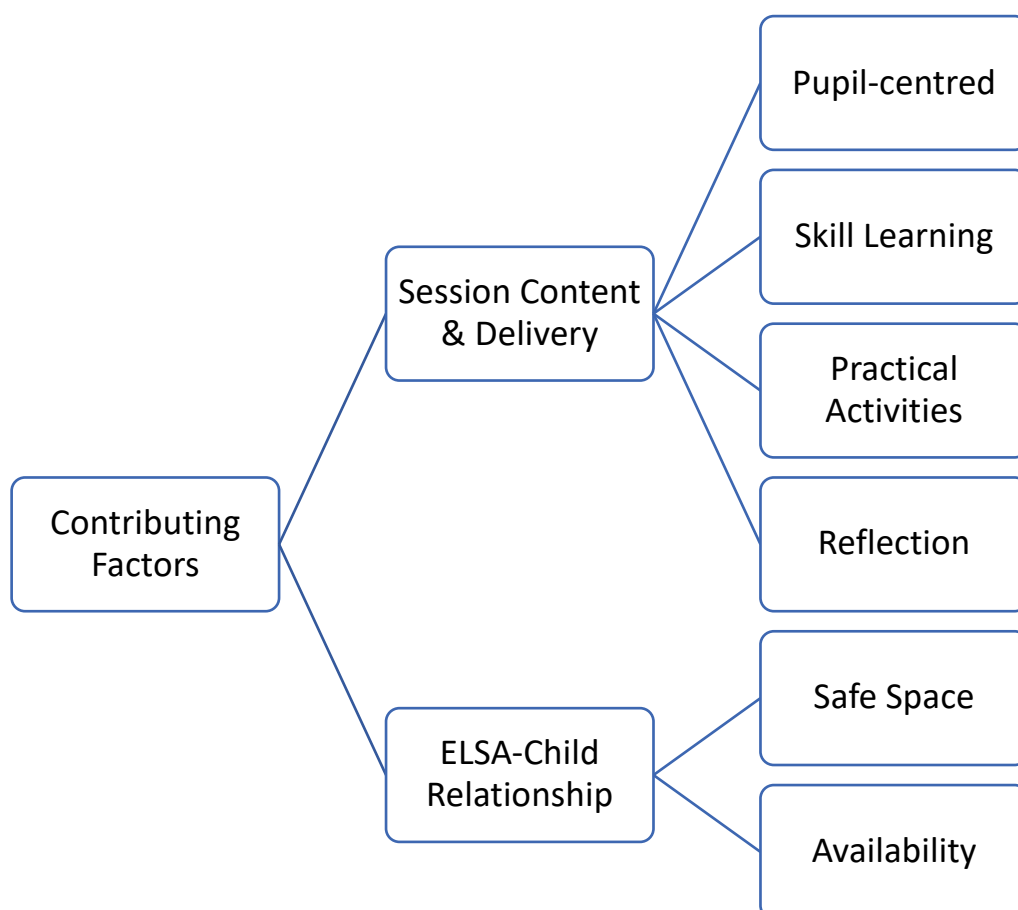


Figure 5.25 Themes and subthemes for contributing factors identified for Joseph

| Theme: Session Content and Delivery |                                                                                                                                                                                             |        |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                          | Source |
| Pupil Centred                       | <i>“he said that he does struggle making friends so it was what he felt was his need as well”</i>                                                                                           | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>“he’s actually been quite open to what we’ve talked about and has the willingness to try it”</i>                                                                                         | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>“getting him to think and come up with the strategies himself I suppose, encouraging him to think so he actually takes some ownership of the work rather than being told what to do”</i> | ELSA   |
| Skill learning                      | <i>“I get to learn more things about friendship”</i>                                                                                                                                        | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>“ I think realising that he's got that that skill already I think that's boosted his confidence up as well”</i>                                                                          | ELSA   |
| Practical activities                | <i>“we’ve been like trying stuff out and then what I've been doing is I've been like trying that on the playground outside”</i>                                                             | Pupil  |
|                                     | <i>“He enjoys like the practical side of things. So, there's a lot of sort of doing things, you know, like a little bit of role play”</i>                                                   | ELSA   |
| Reflection                          | <i>“I think him getting to reflect on his behaviour and to problem solve for himself what he needs to do”</i>                                                                               | ELSA   |
| Theme: ELSA-Child Relationship      |                                                                                                                                                                                             |        |
| Subtheme                            | Supporting Extract                                                                                                                                                                          | Source |
| Safe Space                          | <i>“I think just having that quiet time on a one-to-one, having that trusting relationship”</i>                                                                                             | ELSA   |
|                                     | <i>“not being judged and not being criticised as well”</i>                                                                                                                                  | ELSA   |
| Availability                        | <i>“Probably the knowledge that he, that I'm around as well that once he's left the room, that's not the end of it, I'm always available”</i>                                               | ELSA   |

Table 5.32 Themes and supporting extracts for contributing factors for Joseph

When considering the contributing factors to the outcome of the ELSA intervention for Joseph, 'Session Content' and 'ELSA-Child relationship' emerged as overarching themes (Figure 2.25 and Table 5.32). Within 'Session Content', the pupil-centred nature of the intervention was perceived as important, particularly that Joseph's views as to his areas of difficulty were aligned with the aims for the intervention. This shared focus was seen as contributing to Joseph's engagement with the intervention, and also his positive attitude and willingness to take on new ideas. Additionally, ensuring that strategies and input were discussed together, and that Joseph's thoughts and ideas were elicited and valued was felt to be essential to him having ownership and feeling empowered within sessions. The learning that took place during the sessions, and also the opportunity to reinforce skills and knowledge that Joseph already possessed were highlighted as supporting to build confidence and contributing to progress. In addition to the content covered, the delivery of sessions, focusing on practical skills, and the space created for reflection were valued.

The ELSA-Child relationship was felt to have contributed to the perceived improvements for Joseph. In particular, creating a safe space, where he could have a trusting relationship with a supportive adult was important. Demonstrating unconditional positive regard, was felt to support the development of this relationship. Finally, the accessibility of the ELSA outside of session time, and the knowledge that they are available when needed throughout and beyond the end of the ELSA intervention was perceived as contributory.

## 6 Discussion

### 6.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter provides a summary of the results of the current research in relation to each research question and discusses these findings with reference to the literature described within Chapters 2 and 3. A critical evaluation of the current research is presented, and implications for future research and professional practice are explored.

### 6.2 Research Question One: Summary of Findings

*Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

#### 6.2.1 Case Study One: Johnny

Visual analysis indicated a positive intervention effect for Johnny's ELSA targets. In concurrence with the SCED data, significant improvements in Johnny's total emotional literacy scores were ascertained across the pupil- and parent-rated pre- and post-measures. While the teacher-rated measures demonstrated a positive, but not statistically significant change to Johnny's total emotional literacy, statistically significant improvements were found in relation to the self-awareness and motivation subscales. A significant decrease in Johnny's empathy ability was reported.

#### 6.2.2 Case Study Two: Oscar

Visual analysis of SCED data was indicative of a possible, small intervention effect. However, this finding was not consistently supported by pre- and post-measures. A significant decrease in Oscar's total emotional literacy ability was found within the teacher-rated questionnaire, with a significant decrease identified within the social skills subscale. Parent-rated measures identified

no significant change, while pupil-rated measures indicated a positive, but not significant improvement.

### 6.2.3 Case Study Three: Jessica

Evidence for a positive intervention effect was provided by visual analysis. This finding was supported by the statistically significant improvement in pupil-rated total emotional literacy score. Positive, but not significant changes were ascertained from the teacher-rated pre- and post-measures. Jessica's scores from additional pre- and post-measures show an overall improvement in Jessica's anger management, with a statistically significant reduction in 'trait anger'.

### 6.2.4 Case Study Four: Georgina

Visual analysis provided limited evidence for an intervention effect. No significant changes were ascertained from pre- and post-measures, with only the teacher-rated checklist identifying a positive change to overall emotional literacy scores.

### 6.2.5 Case Study Five: Joseph

Visual analysis of repeated measures offers limited evidence for a positive intervention effect. Consistent with the interpretation of SCED data, no statistically significant changes to pre- and post-emotional literacy scores were found, with only pupil-rated scores reflecting an increase in emotional literacy ability. Joseph's scores from the additional pre- and post-measure demonstrate a statistically significant increase in social skill ability, with improvements noted in 'peer group entry' and 'response to provocation' (Table 5.30).

#### 6.2.6 Discussion of findings related to existing literature

For two of the case studies (Johnny and Jessica), a positive intervention effect was evidenced from both visual analysis and pre-and post-measures. These results indicate that the ELSA intervention can lead to improvements in both emotional literacy target, as well as wider emotional literacy ability; a finding that is consistent with previous quantitative research identifying a positive impact of the ELSA intervention (Mann, 2014; Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009; Burton, 2008).

Importantly, for both Johnny and Jessica, while teacher-rated EL Checklist responses indicated positive findings, these were the only non-significant results from the pre- and post-measures. This limited intervention impact, as reported by teachers contrasts with findings of previous research that have suggested teacher-rated responses are largely positive when compared with parent and pupil responses (Mann, 2014; Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail & Norgate, 2009). The differences in teacher reports and child or parent reports could be explained by the context upon which reports have been based (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). For Johnny and Jessica, their emotional literacy difficulties were reported as most prevalent within their home contexts, and were less apparent in school. This may have impacted upon teacher reports, as perhaps they were less aware of the extent of pupil difficulties at home, and highlights the importance of gaining perspectives from several sources when gathering measures of impact (Wigelsworth et al., 2010).

A significant decrease in emotional literacy was reported within the teacher version of the EL checklist for Oscar, while a non-significant decrease was reported for Joseph's emotional literacy ability, further contrasting the findings of previous research describing positive effects ascertained using teacher-rated measures (Mann, 2014; Butcher, Cook & Holder-Spriggs, 2013; Mann & Russell, 2011; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010; Burton, Trail

& Norgate, 2009). Limited evidence for an intervention effect was ascertained from the visual analysis and pre- and post-measures of Oscar and Joseph. However, while not significant results, positive changes were indicated within the pupil-rated questionnaires. This finding may align with the suggestion of Wigelsworth et al. (2010), that children are able to provide the most detailed information about themselves compared to other sources. Therefore, these results could indicate subtle change only identified through introspection, and that internal developments, such as reflective capacity or understanding, had occurred, rather than changes to observable behaviours. However, socially desirable responses are also more likely to be provided by children, which could also explain the findings, and as such the results should be treated with caution (Wigelsworth et al., 2010).

Contrasting these findings of positive impact based on child-rated measures, Georgina's pre- and post-measures indicate a non-significant negative impact of the ELSA intervention. This result reflects a limited impact of the intervention when ascertained from pupil-reported measures, and is consistent with the findings of Mann and Russell (2011). Several factors may have contributed to this result. For example, emotional literacy awareness may have been limited prior to ELSA sessions and as such, variation in pre- and post-measures are not reflective of actual change. Furthermore, feeling more comfortable with the ELSA following sessions may have contributed to more honest answers being provided within the post-measure than before the start of the intervention within the pre-measure (Mann & Russell, 2011).

For Jessica and Joseph, additional pre- and post-measures were used to indicate change more specific to the child's ELSA target. In both cases, significant improvements were found, contrasting the results of all EL checklist measures for Joseph, and teacher-rated responses for Jessica. This suggests that the specificity of measures could be a factor contributing to ascertaining change (Wigelsworth et al., 2010), and that the EL checklist may lack sensitivity in establishing more specific emotional literacy progress.

## 6.3 Research Question Two: Summary of Findings

*In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?*

### 6.3.1 Case Study One: Johnny

Several changes were perceived for Johnny since the start of the ELSA intervention. An improvement in his emotional regulation was indicated, as he reported as more able to understand his emotions as well as manage them effectively since received ELSA support. Subsequently, Johnny's behaviour in the classroom had also improved, where he was now more able to concentrate. Changes had been observed in Johnny's level of independence in applying strategies to control his emotions and in his attitude to manage his needs himself. Positive changes had been observed with peer relations; previous friendships were stronger and new friendships with additional children who had worked with the ELSA were reported, creating a network of support outside of sessions. In addition, changes had been recognised for those who Johnny encountered within school. The staff who worked with Johnny, as well as his peers, appeared to demonstrate an increased awareness of his emotional needs and were reported to be more proactive in supporting him to apply his strategies.

### 6.3.2 Case Study Two: Oscar

Changes were perceived in Oscar's behaviour relating to peers. While his preference to interact with adults remained, he appeared happier during break times and had formed a new peer friendship. An improved awareness of how to overcome peer difficulties was acknowledged. Furthermore, the development of a positive relationship with the ELSA was described as a change for Oscar, and that his honest and open communication within sessions appeared to have developed.

Challenges in identifying changes for Oscar were also described. Physical distance between the ELSA and Oscar outside of ELSA sessions, as well as limited communication between the ELSA and staff who saw Oscar regularly, appeared to contribute to barriers in observing him and gauging progress directly, but also in establishing the views of others on improvements. Furthermore, Oscar's openness in sessions was questioned, causing additional difficulties to ascertaining genuine change. Finally, difficulties were expressed in directly attributing the observed positive changes to the ELSA sessions due to changes for Oscar external to the intervention.

### 6.3.3 Case Study Three: Jessica

Improvements were perceived in Jessica's ability to regulate her emotions. She was observed to be less anxious and tearful, particularly with regard to transitions into school. Having been reluctant to speak openly initially, Jessica's engagement within ELSA sessions was also considered to have improved. While Jessica viewed that the intervention had helped her to not fight with her sister, the ELSA shared that reports from home indicated this may not have been the case.

Challenges in identifying changes were described. A contributing factor in this regard were difficulties in establishing consistent communication, and a differing presentation of Jessica's behaviours in school to at home. Furthermore, Jessica's cautious engagement within sessions and desire to give the 'right' answer were also shared as potential barriers to gaining a true view of progress.

### 6.3.4 Case Study Four: Georgina

Improvements in Georgina's ability to regulate her emotions were perceived. While difficulties in peer relations remained, her tolerance of others had improved and attending ELSA sessions had enabled new friendships to form. Georgina's behaviour within the classroom was reported to have improved,

as it was felt that she was more able to productively engage with others in lessons. Furthermore, transitions into school were acknowledged as improving, with Georgina feeling happier to attend.

Positive changes to Georgina's ability to communicate openly about her feelings were perceived. This change was primarily seen within ELSA sessions, but was also observed with her class teacher. However, these improvements were not reported within Georgina's communication with her parents, where she had indicated a preference to speak with a 'professional'. Additionally, a reduction and change in the purpose of Georgina's communication with the ELSA outside sessions had been noted. She was viewed as calmer and would seek the ELSA to 'check in', rather than to share her anger as had previously been the case.

#### 6.3.5 Case Study Five: Joseph

Joseph's understanding of friendship skills was viewed as having improved, as well as his ability to reflect on the impact on his own behaviour and problem-solve. While Joseph's knowledge of skills was considered to be improved, applying this understanding in context remained a difficulty for him. Some improvements in Joseph's peer relationships were described; however, these were not consistently reported. In particular, while Joseph felt he had made some friends since receiving ELSA support, according to the ELSA, his class teacher had not perceived an intervention effect.

#### 6.3.6 Discussion of findings related to existing literature

Consistent with the perceived positive impact of ELSA support described within the literature (Burton, 2008), within all cases, improvements for the children as a result of the ELSA intervention were viewed. For two cases, Johnny and Georgina, a bigger impact than initially anticipated was described.

For a number of the cases, the observed positive impact of the ELSA intervention included improved emotional understanding and regulation (Johnny, Jessica, Georgina). Furthermore, for these cases, development in their ability to articulate and discuss their emotions within ELSA sessions was reported. These findings are in line with those of Barker (2017) and Burton (2008), who identified that the ELSA intervention improved children's emotional understanding, expression and regulation. For Johnny, the positive differences observed within school were also reported to have been apparent in his behaviour at home, which is consistent with the outcomes of Wilding and Claridge (2016). However, parent reports gathered through ELSAs for Jessica and Georgina did not consistently report seeing change at home, contrasting this finding.

Improvements in confidence were identified as an outcome of the ELSA intervention within two of the cases. For Johnny, it was established that he felt able to manage his difficulties with increasing independence; while for Georgina a reduction in seeking the ELSA out of sessions and an increase in accessing support from her teacher had been observed, indicating progress in building her independence beyond ELSA support was being made. These findings are supportive of the previous research identifying that work with an ELSA can contribute to improved self-efficacy (Grahamslaw, 2010), as well as increased levels of confidence and self-esteem (Barker, 2017; Hills, 2016; Burton, 2008).

For several cases, as found by Hills (2016) and Burton (2008), the ELSA intervention was viewed as having supported the building of friendships. The positive impact of the ELSA sessions was described as helping to overcome peer difficulties (Oscar, Georgina), and strengthening previous friendships (Johnny), as well as forming new friendships (Joseph), including with other children working with the ELSA (Johnny, Georgina). Notably, for Oscar, Georgina and Joseph, where overcoming peer difficulties was a target for the ELSA intervention, difficulties with navigating peer interactions remained. However, in these cases, an improved awareness and understanding of

friendship skills was described, but applying these skills for more observable change was shared as a longer-term goal.

In addition to the improvements reported in emotional literacy following support from an ELSA, changes were perceived within the environments of two cases. It was felt that class teachers had an increased awareness of the social and emotional difficulties experienced by Johnny and Georgina, and were able to direct and support them in a way that had not previously been apparent. This outcome could indicate that the ELSA intervention contributes to improving the limited confidence of teachers in supporting social and emotional needs (Rothi, Leavey & Best, 2008). An increased understanding and awareness of support was also reported for Johnny's peers, further indicating the positive impact of ELSA support on those not experiencing the intervention directly.

Difficulties in establishing the impact of the ELSA intervention were reported in two cases. Notably, communication emerged as a key factor contributing to these challenges. A reluctance to communicate openly and honestly within ELSA sessions had been perceived as contributing to challenges for identifying child progress towards their targets (Oscar, Jessica). Furthermore, difficulties in liaising regularly with class teachers and parents were described as impacting upon the ability to ascertain change. This finding is consistent with that of Bravery and Harris (2009), who identified good school communication as a factor underpinning effective ELSA practice. Furthermore, Barker (2017) found that for parents, gaining the views of others was key to determining the impact of the intervention, highlighting the importance of gaining feedback from a range of sources to ascertain progress. Additional factors viewed as contributing to challenges were physical distance, which led to not seeing the child in the context of their difficulties between sessions, as well as factors external to the intervention, resulting in the clear impact of the ELSA intervention being difficult to establish.

## 6.4 Research Question Three: Summary of Findings

*Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

### 6.4.1 Case Study One: Johnny

Establishing a shared view of the purpose of the ELSA intervention was considered to be important to its success for Johnny. His positive engagement with the programme was viewed as fundamental, and a close working partnership between the ELSA and home, as well as his class teacher, was identified as key. Furthermore, a mutual understanding of the overarching aim of the ELSA programme for Johnny, that he would become independent in managing his difficulties effectively, emerged as a further factor.

The content of sessions was also considered important for Johnny. The activities undertaken as well as the strategies taught were viewed as key to progress. Moreover, the pupil-centred nature of the intervention, that it had been individualised, both in terms of content and delivery, to focus on Johnny's areas of strength and need, was perceived as contributory. The time ELSA sessions created to spend away from the classroom was also viewed as valuable.

The positive relationship between the ELSA and Johnny was identified as essential to the improvements reported. The nurturing nature of this relationship was described, along with the impact that this had on the calm atmosphere of the ELSA sessions. Furthermore, the ELSA being non-judgemental and providing a safe space to talk and be listened to was important. Finally, the availability of the ELSA both outside of sessions but also beyond the intervention period was perceived to have contributed to the success of the ELSA programme.

#### 6.4.2 Case Study Two: Oscar

ELSA session content and delivery was considered to be important for Oscar's progress. Gathering Oscar's views and ensuring that he was invested in the focus of the intervention were considered to be of particular importance to his engagement and progress. Additionally, the teaching methods utilised, specifically creative activities, and the strategies taught were perceived as key.

The relationship developed between Oscar and the ELSA was viewed as contributory to the intervention success. Oscar was reported to have enjoyed the time spent working one to one with an adult. However, whether the ELSA relationship provided Oscar with anything additional to other adults in school was questioned, and a lack of time to build the ELSA-child relationship was perceived as a potential barrier to his progress.

#### 6.4.3 Case Study Three: Jessica

The partnership between home and school was considered to be particularly important to Jessica's engagement in the ELSA intervention and therefore the progress that she had made. Furthermore, Jessica's engagement with the ELSA sessions and investment in its aims were perceived as being contributing factors to the improvements observed.

The content of the ELSA sessions, such as the practical activities and teaching strategies to support Jessica out of sessions, was viewed as important. Additionally, the flexible nature of ELSA session delivery was reported as particularly key to its positive impact. Finally, the safe space that the ELSA sessions created for Jessica to share her emotions and views was noted as helpful.

#### 6.4.4 Case Study Four: Georgina

ELSA session content and delivery were deemed to make an important contribution to Georgina's progress. In particular, the taught strategies and activities undertaken were identified as central due to the impact these had on normalising her emotions and difficulties. The pupil-centred nature of the ELSA intervention was also considered to be helpful, specifically that the content of sessions was adjusted to meet emerging needs. Having a protected time with the ELSA each week was viewed as positive, as was the comfortable, informal environment created within the ELSA room.

The ELSA-child relationship emerged as crucial to the success of the ELSA sessions. It was shared that feeling supported and understood by a member of staff helped Georgina to feel safe at school. Furthermore, having someone who was consistently available and able to advocate for her was also described as an important factor of the ELSA intervention. Finally, the active listening of the ELSA was identified as important to establishing a positive relationship and supporting Georgina's progress.

Georgina's view of the ELSA role and the purpose of the intervention was considered to impact upon her progress within sessions. Importantly, her acknowledgment of difficulties and subsequent investment in the process were viewed as essential, as well as her proactive engagement within sessions. However, Georgina's concerns of how she would cope without the 'professional' support of the ELSA emerged, and currently appeared to be a barrier to building her independence and withdrawing ELSA support.

#### 6.4.5 Case Study Five: Joseph

For Joseph, the session content and delivery emerged as important to his progress. Joseph's investment in the targets and willingness to engage in the ELSA support were identified as contributory factors. Additionally, the understanding and skills that Joseph had been taught and practiced within

the ELSA sessions were key, as well as the opportunity to build confidence and create space to reflect on his behaviour.

The relationship between the ELSA and child was acknowledged as essential to Joseph's progress, notably, the trusting relationship and unconditional positive regard he received. The availability of the ELSA outside of sessions and beyond the end of the intervention was considered a supportive factor.

#### 6.4.6 Discussion of findings related to existing literature

Consistent with previous ELSA research, the crucial contribution of the ELSA-child relationship to pupil progress was recognised across all case studies (McEwen, 2019; Barker, 2017; Hills, 2016; Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013). Miles (2015) identified that respect and understanding had been critical to developing a positive relationship between the ELSA and child. This appeared to be particularly apparent for Georgina, for whom feeling understood emerged within the subtheme of 'supporter'. In line with the findings of McEwen (2019), ELSA attributes were recognised as important to the development of this relationship: within the case of Johnny, the nurturing atmosphere of sessions and nature of the ELSA were described; while feeling listened to was identified for both Johnny and Georgina. For Georgina in particular, the ELSA was considered distinct from other adults in the school, providing her with the time and support that she did not view as available elsewhere. However, the unique contribution of the ELSA-child relationship for Oscar, compared to the other adult relationships he already had, was questioned by the ELSA, indicating that the nature of this relationship may be dependent on the child's perceived needs.

Further supporting the findings of McEwen (2019), the availability of ELSAs was viewed as key within three of the cases, namely for Johnny, Georgina and Joseph. Having protected time for support within sessions, but also access to the ELSA outside of sessions and ongoing support once direct

work had ended were described. Notably, for Oscar, where the ELSA-child relationship was not viewed as unique, the availability of the ELSA was less apparent due to physical distance between ELSA and child within the school environment. This finding potentially highlights the importance of access to ELSAs in the development of a secure ELSA-child relationship.

Child understanding of the purpose of the intervention has also been identified as fundamental within previous ELSA research (Barker, 2017; Hill, O'Hare & Weidberg, 2013). This finding was illustrated across four of the case studies, which highlighted that having a shared view of the purpose of the ELSA intervention and pupil investment in their targets were supportive of engagement and progress (Johnny, Jessica, Georgina, Joseph). Notably, for one case study (Oscar), where the child's views and the initial intervention purpose were not perceived as aligned, the importance of adjusting the intervention focus to ensure needs were met was highlighted .

The critical contribution of flexibility has emerged within previous research, wherein adaptability was shown to play an important role in establishing the ELSA-child relationship (Miles, 2015). This factor was described for all of the case studies, where adapting session content to build on strengths and meet the needs of the children as they arose was reported as key. Flexibility to continue sessions beyond the planned intervention period was also noted (Georgina). The importance of a pupil-centred, flexible approach highlights the need for understanding of the individual context of difficulties. This emphasises the benefit of ELSAs delivering the intervention internally, as professionals with a thorough understanding of a child, their strengths and needs, and the context of their difficulties (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014).

Session delivery was recognised within all cases as essential to the success of the ELSA intervention. Enjoyable and fun sessions, particularly creative and practical activities were indicated as important within three of the cases (Johnny, Joseph, Oscar), which is consistent with the findings of McEwen (2019) and Barker (2017). Furthermore, the teaching of specific coping strategies and skills was expressed within four of the cases as important

(Johnny, Oscar, Jessica, Georgina), as identified previously by Hills (2016) and Hill, O'Hare and Weidberg (2013). Additionally, the creation of space to talk, problem-solve and reflect was identified as important to progress for Johnny, Jessica and Joseph, as has been found within previous research (Barker, 2017; Wilding & Claridge, 2016; Hills, 2016).

A further contributory factor for the positive impact of the ELSA intervention was the development of a partnership between home and school. This was reported within two of the cases (Johnny, Jessica). The support of parents appeared to impact on child engagement with the ELSA sessions (Jessica), as well as ensuring the application of strategies could be encouraged consistently outside of school (Johnny). The importance of parental involvement has been identified within school intervention research (Zins et al., 2007), as well as being recognised within previous ELSA research (Wilding & Claridge, 2016).

## 6.5 Evaluation of Methodology

Within the current research, efforts were made to establish trustworthy data and minimise the effects of methodological limitations (see Section 4.6). The following section will provide a critical evaluation of the research methodology employed within the current study, identifying strengths and limitations of the research to guide judgements and inform the strength of conclusions formed.

Notably, the current research was undertaken within a pragmatic paradigm. Therefore, while several limitations are acknowledged, it remains that the approach undertaken was that viewed as enabling the researcher to best answer the research questions posed, within the complex real-world context of the study (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

### 6.5.1 Case Studies

Multiple case studies were presented within the current research, each highlighting the differences in ELSA intervention targets and contexts, and therefore emphasising the importance of considering each of the cases individually. However, a key limitation of case study research is the lack of generalisability of the results generated (Yin, 2014; Punch, 2009).

Importantly, due to its exploratory, small-scale nature, the aim of the current study was to establish the impact of the ELSA intervention for each participant involved, rather than to generalise findings for a wider population, and therefore conclusions have been reported with appropriate caution.

### 6.5.2 Quantitative Strand

#### 6.5.2.1 SCED data

There are limitations to the strength of causal relationships that can be drawn from an AB SCED design, as utilised within the current research. Alternative SCED designs may be better able to establish causal relationships due to their ability to evidence repeated demonstrations of an intervention effect (Kratochwill et al., 2013). However, alternative designs were deemed inappropriate due to the timescale of the current research, as well as the ethical implications of withdrawing a potentially beneficial intervention from the participants.

Direct observation measures have been suggested as increasing the validity of SCED data (Kratochwill et al., 2013). However, due to the need for pragmatic decisions within real-world research, child self-report measures provided the SCED data in four of the five cases. While these measures enabled valuable insights of the children to be obtained into progress towards social and emotional targets (Wigelsworth et al., 2010), the risk of data being influenced by social desirability bias must be acknowledged. Furthermore, self-report measures were completed with ELSAs with whom

the participants had built a positive relationship, with the assumption that this would contribute towards open and honest responses. A fidelity check of repeated measures was carried out in all but one of the cases. While steps were taken to gather this information in as standardised a way as possible (i.e. same time each week, consistent presentation of measure), it remains that these measures were susceptible to additional influencing factors that could not be controlled for.

Threats to internal validity within the current study were described in Section 4.6.1.1 and difficulties in addressing some factors remained. In particular, 'maturation' remained challenging to address within the real-world research setting of the current study. External influencing factors were present within the cases described which were unable to be controlled for. For example, time had lapsed for Jessica and Joseph to adjust to their new family and school situations, while significant events occurring for Oscar could have led to a shift in his perceptions and priorities. Furthermore, it was hoped that by generating stable baselines for each participant, some factors influencing maturation could be addressed. However, due to ethical and practical reasons, the baselines for all participants were fewer than the recommended five data points (Kratochwill et al., 2013), and in some cases were considered unstable. Therefore, difficulties in conclusively identifying changes as a result of the intervention remain.

Visual analysis was applied to SCED data to determine the presence of an intervention effect. An important limitation of visual analysis is its subjective nature (Kazdin, 2003). Therefore, to strengthen the reliability of analysis within the current research, an inter-rater reliability judgement was obtained (Brossart et al., 2006). A 'very good' judgement was established. Notably, it is widely recommended for effect size to be calculated within SCED, particularly in those where an intervention effect is considered present within visual analysis. However, due to a lack of consensus regarding which tests to apply (Kratochwill et al., 2013), effect sizes were not calculated for the data generated within the current study, and therefore, the findings may remain open to Type 1 and 2 errors.

#### 6.5.2.2 *Pre- and Post-measures*

Pre- and post-intervention measures were collected within the current research. However, a key limitation of this approach is that it is unable to account for external influencing factors. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain a true intervention effect from this data alone. Importantly, within the current research this data was used to triangulate the information gathered from the SCED measures, as well as to provide an indication of the impact of ELSA support on wider emotional literacy rather than to draw conclusions in isolation.

The measures used for pre- and post-data collection were pupil-, parent- and teacher-versions of the EL checklist (Faupel, 2003), which enabled a range of views for the wider impact of ELSA support to be considered across the cases. Within the current research, the child's class teacher was asked to complete the teacher-version of the checklist, anticipating that a more neutral response would be provided compared to the ELSA who is potentially invested in the intervention and research process. However, on reflection, the valuable contribution of the ELSA could also have been considered within these measures, as the ELSAs may have been more able to identify subtle changes in the participants, such as appreciating a shift in understanding rather than observable application of skills.

#### 6.5.3 *Qualitative Strand*

Semi-structured interviews were utilised within the current research to capture the lived experience of those involved in the ELSA intervention; gathering information from children, ELSAs, and in one case, a parent, to establish perceived impact of the intervention, and contributory factors for positive outcomes. However, their use within the current context may have contributed to several methodological limitations.

While the use of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to have flexibility in terms of the emphasis placed on certain subject areas, using a schedule to guide questions may have restricted the information shared, and subsequently prevented information from being gathered that would have been relevant and valuable (Patton, 1990).

Importantly, the use of child interviews allowed for invaluable insights into the views of those directly affected by the intervention to be gained. However, children have been identified as a challenging group to interview effectively (Breakwell et al., 2006), and difficulties in line with those identified within the literature were encountered within the current research. Children are particularly susceptible to social desirability bias (Breakwell et al., 2006), and it was hoped that building rapport and using open, non-leading questions would help to address this issue (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Arksey & Knight, 1999). Nevertheless, during some of the child interviews with the younger participants, it was challenging for the researcher to elicit their views using broad, open questions. To support their input and engagement, some closed questions were used, which may consequently have restricted the answers they provided (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Furthermore, it has been identified that self-awareness develops with age, and therefore older children may be more able to provide more accurate responses than younger children (Wigelsworth et al., 2010). While the current research hoped to address this difficulty by including only children within Key Stage Two, it remained that within the child interviews, certain participants appeared to struggle in sharing their views openly, which could have impacted upon obtaining a true reflection of all the children's perceptions.

An additional limitation relates to the ELSA interviews undertaken. ELSAs were considered well positioned in their ability to provide important insights relating to child progress as well as information regarding intervention content and delivery. However, their investment in the intervention may have impacted upon their interview responses, and potentially increased their

likelihood of perceiving positive change. Importantly, the themes generated in some cases have primarily been achieved through the interpretation of ELSA interview data, and therefore may not be representative of wider perspectives. Triangulating ELSA interviews with parents and teachers across the cases may have been helpful in addressing this issue and gaining a broader understanding of intervention perceptions, as currently this information was primarily gathered indirectly through the ELSA.

Thematic analysis was utilised to interpret interview data. It had initially been hoped that the researcher would check conclusions of interviews with a subset of interviewees to “authenticate interpretations” (Breakwell et al., 2006, p.252). However, due to time constraints, this was not possible, and as such the accuracy of researcher interpretations could be questioned. Furthermore, while a clear audit trail of the thematic analysis undertaken evidences the conclusions drawn, the data was analysed by a single researcher. Thus, the interpretations made are subjective and confirmability bias of the researcher remains a possible threat to the validity of findings. To address this difficulty, several researchers undertaking thematic analysis to explore consistently emergent themes would have improved the validity of the interpretation of results (Breakwell et al., 2006).

## 6.6 Implications for Future Research

Due to the research design employed within the current study, a key limitation of the results is their lack of generalisability, impacting upon the strength of findings and conclusions drawn. To further establish the impact of the ELSA intervention and contributory factors, it will be necessary for these findings to be replicated across a wider range of participants and intervention contexts (Horner et al., 2005).

Importantly, the multiple case studies in the current research have identified key differences in contexts, targets, and delivery present within the ELSA intervention. This finding highlights the difficulties in employing alternative

experimental designs such as RCTs, and emphasises that acknowledgement of differing ELSA interventions within further research will be necessary to enable a clearer indication of the impact of the intervention to be obtained. Furthermore, differences in information gained from quantitative and qualitative strands of research demonstrate the important contribution of both approaches, and subsequently emphasises mixed methods as a valuable approach to ELSA project research.

Notably, while utilising SCEDs within the current study enabled individual ELSA contexts to be accounted for, the researcher recommends that future research employing a similar SCED design should aim to address several limiting factors, including:

- Achieving consistent baselines across participants;
- Utilising repeated measures of observable behaviours rather than self-report measures;
- Calculating effect size for repeated measures.

Additionally, due to time constraints within the current research, it was not possible to collect follow-up measures. Therefore, the researcher is unable to ascertain if any intervention effects are sustained. To explore the longevity of impact of the ELSA intervention, future research could address this issue by employing follow-up measures to gather information beyond the end of the intervention period.

Difficulties in gathering accurate and detailed qualitative information from children were highlighted in the current research. In particular, susceptibility to social desirability remained a threat to validity, as well as challenges for younger children in openly expressing their views. Therefore, methods for ensuring that children of all ages are able to share their perceptions in richer detail should be explored and applied within future research. One suggestion may be to consider the use of group interviews, which encourage interaction

and may be less intimidating than individual interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

In addition to methodological implications, the current study has identified several initial findings which would benefit from exploration in greater depth in further research. Notably, ascertaining the impact of ELSA support for participants emerged as a complex task, with a range of contradictory findings within the quantitative strand. Consequently, it is challenging to establish a clear indication of the measurable impact of the ELSA intervention, perhaps due to the multifaceted nature of the concept of emotional literacy, lack of clear definition and broad range of current measures (Wigelsworth et al., 2010). Therefore, future research should prioritise establishing a consistent approach to measuring emotional literacy.

Importantly, qualitative outcomes of the current research consistently identified a perceived positive impact of the ELSA intervention as acknowledged by both the views of the ELSAs, as well as the children who have received support. Improvements in a range of skills and attributes were reported, as well as external behaviours. While a number of factors have been established as contributing to these findings, many of which appear distinct to ELSA support, such as understanding of behaviour and strategies, it would be beneficial for future research to explore the impact of support from ELSA compared to alternative 1:1 adult support in order to consider the unique contribution of the ELSA role.

The current research identified key factors which were perceived as contributory to the positive impact of ELSA support. An overarching finding appeared to be the fundamental role of the ELSA-child relationship. Future research could explore the contribution of this finding further, considering whether the impact of ELSA support might be enhanced by there being dedicated time for the ELSA to develop a positive rapport with the focus child.

Furthermore, child investment and engagement with the intervention and their targets emerged within the current study as a key influencing factor for the positive impact of ELSA support. Therefore, research exploring the role of this factor further could be helpful, as well as research focusing specifically on whether increased motivation for change could enhance the impact of the ELSA intervention. One suggestion for future research would be to compare the impact of ELSA support in isolation with its impact when paired with a motivational interview intervention (see Miller & Rollnick (2002) for summary).

## 6.7 Implications for Practice

The findings of the current research are based on a small sample of cases, impacting on the generalisations that can be made from findings. Methodological limitations further confound the strength of conclusions that can be drawn. Implications for practice should therefore be considered with caution; however, several of the key findings from the current research can be highlighted as being potentially beneficial for the practice of stakeholders.

### 6.7.1 Schools

The current research identified that the ELSA intervention was perceived positively by each of the child participants, as well as each of the ELSAs. Specifically, children enjoyed the ELSA sessions and felt that working with an ELSA had helped them by fostering skills and teaching strategies that were previously unknown. These findings highlight that within the cases of the current research, ELSA support was viewed as helping children to make progress towards their emotional literacy targets, and therefore, the important contribution that the ELSA intervention can make within schools is illustrated.

Factors which appear to contribute to the effective implementation of the ELSA intervention have been identified within the current research, many of

which are consistent with existing ELSA project literature (McEwen, 2019; Barker, 2017; Wilding and Claridge, 2016; Hills, 2016; Hill, O'Hare and Weidberg, 2013). These findings would be helpful for schools delivering the ELSA project to be aware of to ensure that an optimal implementation of the intervention is achieved. Notably, the importance of achieving a shared view of the hopes for the ELSA intervention across all involved was emphasised. In particular, children being aware of their targets within the ELSA intervention and feeling invested in achieving these were identified as central for cases within the current research and previous literature. Furthermore, transparency in the role of the ELSA intervention as a platform for building children's independence was felt to be beneficial. Each of these findings highlights the importance of the development of a partnership between child, home and school, as well as staff within school, in order to enable a consistency of message and approach. Schools should therefore prioritise regular home-school liaison, particularly during the initial stages of the intervention, as well as throughout the ELSA support period.

For schools within which the ELSA intervention is not currently in place, several findings remain relevant. For example, the value of the ELSA-child relationship has been highlighted as fundamental to the impact of the intervention within previous research (McEwen, 2019; Barker, 2017; Hills, 2016; Wilding and Claridge, 2016; Hill, O'Hare and Weidberg, 2013) as well as the current study. In particular, time with a trusted adult to share their concerns and to feel understood were key. Therefore, it may be beneficial to provide teaching and support staff with training in the development of active listening skills, as well as raising awareness of the underlying causes of a child's behaviour difficulties to aid understanding of their needs.

#### 6.7.2 Policy makers

The current research indicates that flexibility is an important contributory factor for the positive impact of the ELSA intervention, highlighting the benefits of the ELSA having a wider understanding of the school context

within which the intervention is taking place. The invaluable position of internal school staff to deliver targeted interventions for children is emphasised. This finding provides support for previous research identifying the key role of school staff in providing effective, sustainable and cost-effective provision for children with additional needs (Collins, Woolfson & Durkin, 2014). Thus, the implementation of additional schemes to support children and schools by utilising a similar delivery model to the ELSA project should be explored and evaluated.

### 6.7.3 Educational Psychologists

The ELSA project is an EP led initiative and therefore EPs are central to its development. Importantly, the current research emphasises that enabling children to feel understood, as well as providing them with the strategies to assist them in managing their difficulties, are perceived as key factors to creating positive change. These findings indicate important areas of focus when developing training programmes for ELSAs.

The current research illustrates several factors which could also contribute to the role of EPs within their casework. For example, within the ELSA sessions it was highlighted that children felt more able to share their views through undertaking creative, practical activities, within an informal environment. This could have implications for EP practice when gathering pupil views within casework, where there may be a place for utilising more creative techniques to enable children to share this information in a more open and honest way.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Main Findings

The current research conducted an exploratory evaluation of the ELSA intervention for five participants, considering both its measurable and perceived impact, as well as factors which are viewed as contributory to an intervention effect.

*Research Question One: Does the ELSA intervention lead to a measurable improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy target area?*

Outcomes from the SCED data indicated that for three of the five cases, the ELSA intervention had a positive impact on individual emotional literacy targets. For the remaining two participants, there was limited evidence for an intervention effect. However, methodological limitations as well as difficulties in triangulating these outcomes with pre- and post-intervention measures were encountered, and as such, causal relationships cannot be established from these data sets. Implications for future SCED research evaluating the impact of ELSA support have been described.

*Research Question Two: In what ways does the ELSA intervention lead to a perceived improvement in primary aged children's emotional literacy?*

Analysis of interview data established that ELSA support was viewed as beneficial to the children receiving the intervention. A number of themes emerged relating to perceived improvements. The main findings identified a positive impact on emotional understanding, regulation, and communication, as well as improved confidence and friendships. Additionally, increased awareness and support for emotional literacy needs from teachers and peers were acknowledged. Perceived barriers to establishing the impact of the intervention were also reported by ELSAs, specifically, the cautious

communication of children within sessions, and challenges to regular liaison with class teachers and parents.

*Research Question Three: Where an improvement is observed, what factors were viewed as contributory to the perceived positive outcome of the ELSA intervention?*

Interview data indicated that several factors of the ELSA sessions were perceived as contributory to children's progress. The relationship between ELSA and child was identified as fundamental. Children were viewed as benefiting from the nurturing environment and understanding of the ELSA. ELSA availability, in terms of being able to provide protected session times, as well as support outside of sessions and beyond the intervention period, was identified as important. Furthermore, child investment in the purpose of the intervention and engagement in sessions was viewed as key. The need for flexibility to adapt intervention content based on child need, and creative, fun ELSA sessions was recognised, and also the positive contribution of a shared view and supportive partnership between home and school.

## 7.2 Unique Contribution

The current study has added to the research into targeted interventions to support children's social and emotional development delivered within schools, as well as contributing to the limited evidence-base around the ELSA intervention. Importantly, the existing research into the ELSA project predominately utilises qualitative methods to explore perceptions of intervention effects. The quantitative evaluation research undertaken thus far into the ELSA intervention captures impact primarily through the use of pre- and post-measures, and therefore the ability to draw causal relationships is limited. Furthermore, to date, evaluation research provides limited accounts of the individual ELSA contexts, which should be highlighted given the adaptable nature of the ELSA intervention (Pickering et al., 2019). The current research takes a significant step towards addressing these difficulties

and extends the ELSA project evidence-base by using mixed methods to consider its measurable and perceived impact, whilst also accounting for differing intervention contexts.

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## 9 Appendices

## 9.1 Appendix 1: Eligibility of SLR studies

Studies included in the systematic literature review are presented in bold

|                 | Authors               | Date        | Title                                                                                                                                        | Pub. Type        | Initial screening   | Eligible?                                 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| SCOPUS/PsycINFO |                       |             |                                                                                                                                              |                  |                     |                                           |
| 1               | Hills                 | 2016        | An evaluation of the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) project from the perspectives of primary school children                    | Published        | Included            | No – Qualitative data only                |
| 2               | Wilding and Claridge  | 2016        | The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme: parental perceptions of its impact in school and at home                          | Published        | Included            | No – Qualitative data only                |
| 3               | Osborne and Burton    | 2014        | Emotional Literacy Support Assistants' views on supervision provided by educational psychologists: what EPs can learn from group supervision | Published        | Included            | No – Focus on supervision not ELSA impact |
| 4               | <b>Burton</b>         | <b>2008</b> | <b>Empowering learning support assistants to enhance the emotional wellbeing of children in schools.</b>                                     | <b>Published</b> | <b>Included</b>     | <b>Yes</b>                                |
| 5               | Wedlock and Turner    | 2017        | 'You kind of pull back the layers': The experience of inter-professional supervision with educational psychologists.                         | Published        | Excluded – Not ELSA | -                                         |
| 6               | Rae, Cowell and Field | 2017        | Supporting teachers' well-being in the context of schools for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.                  | Published        | Excluded – Not ELSA | -                                         |

| EThOS |           |      |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                           |                     |                                                     |
|-------|-----------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 7     | Barker    | 2017 | The emotional literacy support assistant intervention: an exploration from the perspectives of pupils and parents                                                                             | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No – Qualitative data only                          |
| 8     | Leighton  | 2015 | ELSA: accounts from Emotional Literacy Support Assistants                                                                                                                                     | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No – focus on ELSA training not impact              |
| 9     | McEwen    | 2015 | A qualitative study of ELSAs' and children's experiences of the ELSA programme                                                                                                                | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No – focus on contributing factors for ELSA impact  |
| 10    | Mann      | 2014 | <b>A mixed methods evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project</b>                                                                                                 | <b>Unpublished Thesis</b> | <b>Included</b>     | <b>Yes</b>                                          |
| 11    | Garwood   | 2012 | Becoming an emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA): exploring the relationship between training, supervision and self-efficacy                                                           | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No – focus on ELSA training not impact              |
| 12    | Miles     | 2015 | An exploration of the perceptions of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-pupil relationship                                                                             | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No – focus on ELSA-pupil relationship not on impact |
| 13    | Rees      | 2016 | The impact of emotional literacy support assistant training on teaching assistants' own trait-emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and their perceptions in relation to their future role | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No – focus on impact on ELSA not child              |
| 14    | Patterson | 2014 | Exploring the experiences of participants involved in a hypnosis intervention for test-anxious school students                                                                                | Unpublished Thesis        | Excluded – Not ELSA | -                                                   |

|                 |                                    |             |                                                                                                                                               |                           |                     |                                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 15              | Hosie                              | 2013        | An evaluation of the impact of nurture provision upon young children, including their language and their literacy skills                      | Unpublished Thesis        | Excluded – Not ELSA | -                                                  |
| 16              | Snape                              | 2011        | An evaluation into how the introduction of Secondary SEAL has impact upon school climate and pupils' emotional literacy and resiliency levels | Unpublished Thesis        | Excluded - Not ELSA | -                                                  |
| 17              | Zolnowska                          | 2016        | An analysis of the COMET project and an assessment of the COMET intervention approach                                                         | Unpublished Thesis        | Excluded – Not ELSA | -                                                  |
| Reference Lists |                                    |             |                                                                                                                                               |                           |                     |                                                    |
| 18              | Bravery and Harris                 | 2009        | Emotional Literacy support assistants in Bournemouth: Impact and outcomes                                                                     | LA Research Report        | Included            | No – Impact gaged through survey/ interview        |
| 19              | <b>Burton, Trail and Norgate</b>   | <b>2009</b> | <b>An evaluation of the emotional literacy support programme</b>                                                                              | <b>LA Research Report</b> | <b>Included</b>     | <b>Yes</b>                                         |
| 20              | Hill, O'Hare and Weidberg          | 2013        | 'He's always there when I need him': Exploring the perceived positive impact of the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) programme     | LA Research Report        | Included            | No – focus on contributing factors for ELSA impact |
| 21              | <b>Burton, Osborne and Norgate</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>An evaluation of the emotional literacy support assistant project on pupils attending schools in Bridgend</b>                              | <b>LA Research Report</b> | <b>Included</b>     | <b>Yes</b>                                         |
| 22              | Murray                             | 2010        | An evaluation of emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) training and impact upon pupils' progress                                        | Unpublished Thesis        | Included            | No - Unable to access text                         |

| ELSANetwork.org |                                  |      |                                                                                                                                                                      |                           |                 |                                             |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 23              | Grahamslaw                       | 2010 | An evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project: What is the impact of an ELSA on support assistants' and children's self-efficacy beliefs? | Unpublished Thesis        | Included        | No – Impact gaged through survey            |
| 24              | Dodds, Blake and Garland         | 2015 | Investigation into the effectiveness of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) in schools                                                                     | LA Research Report        | Included        | No - Impact gaged through survey/ interview |
| 25              | Butcher, Cook and Holder-Spriggs | 2013 | <b>Exploring the Impact of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Intervention on Primary School Children Using Single-Case Design</b>                      | <b>LA Research Report</b> | <b>Included</b> | <b>Yes</b>                                  |
| 26              | Mann and Russell                 | 2011 | <b>The Impact of ELSA Interventions on Children and Young People</b>                                                                                                 | <b>LA Research Report</b> | <b>Included</b> | <b>Yes</b>                                  |

## 9.2 Appendix 2: Description of Key Components of SLR ELSA interventions using TiDieR Checklist (Hoffman et al., 2014)

| Author Year                             | Brief Name   | Why                                                                             | What: Materials         | What: Procedures                                                        | Who Provided | How                                                     | Where                     | When & How much                                                                            | Tailoring                                                                                                                | Modifications | How well: Planned | How well: Actual |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Burton (2008)                           | ELSA project | Improve social skills, anxiety and low self-esteem                              | ELSA training programme | playing games, discussion, craft activities, cognitive behavioural work | ELSA         | Face to face: small group (5 pupils) or individual work | School during school time | Not described                                                                              | Not described however it is implicit within ELSA intervention that targets and planning are tailored to individual needs | Not described | Not described     | Not described    |
| Burton, Trail and Norgate (2009)        | ELSA project | Improve behaviour and emotional wellbeing                                       | ELSA training programme | Not described                                                           | ELSA         | Face to face: individual or group                       | School during school time | Not described                                                                              | Not described – see above                                                                                                | Not described | Not described     | Not described    |
| Burton, Osborne and Norgate (2010)      | ELSA project | Wide spectrum of emotional needs                                                | ELSA training programme | Not described                                                           | ELSA         | Face to face                                            | School during school time | At least half a term, for weekly sessions although length and frequency of sessions varied | Not described – see above                                                                                                | Not described | Not described     | Not described    |
| Mann and Russell (2011)                 | ELSA project | Emotional literacy                                                              | ELSA training programme | Not described                                                           | ELSA         | Face to face                                            | School during school time | Not described                                                                              | Not described – see above                                                                                                | Not described | Not described     | Not described    |
| Butcher, Cook and Holder-Spriggs (2013) | ELSA project | Improve: attention, social skills, self help skills, behaviour, problem-solving | ELSA training programme | Not described                                                           | ELSA         | Face to face                                            | School during school time | 6 weeks although frequency and duration not described                                      | Not described – see above                                                                                                | Not described | Not described     | Not described    |
| Mann (2014)                             | ELSA project | Support social, emotional and behavioural development                           | ELSA training programme | Not described                                                           | ELSA         | Face to face: individual or group                       | School during school time | 6-8 weeks                                                                                  | Not described – see above                                                                                                | Not described | Not described     | Not described    |

### 9.3 Appendix 3: Quality Indicators for Quantitative Research (Gerstein et al., 2005, p152)

#### **Essential Quality Indicators**

##### **Quality Indicators for Describing Participants**

1. Was sufficient information provided to determine/confirm whether the participants demonstrated the disability(ies) or difficulties presented?
2. Were appropriate procedures used to increase the likelihood that relevant characteristics of participants in the sample were comparable across conditions?
3. Was sufficient information given characterizing the interventionists or teachers provided? Did it indicate whether they were comparable across conditions?

##### **Quality Indicators for Implementation of the Intervention and Description of Comparison Conditions**

1. Was the intervention clearly described and specified?
2. Was the fidelity of implementation described and assessed?
3. Was the nature of services provided in comparison conditions described?

##### **Quality Indicators for Outcome Measures**

1. Were multiple measures used to provide an appropriate balance between measures closely aligned with the interventions and measures of generalized performance?
2. Were outcomes for capturing the intervention's effect measured at the appropriate times?

##### **Quality Indicators for Data Analysis**

1. Were the data analysis techniques appropriately linked to key research questions and hypotheses? Were they appropriately linked to the unit of analysis in the study?
2. Did the research report include not only inferential statistics but also effect size calculations?

##### **Desirable Quality Indicators**

1. Was data available on attrition rates among intervention samples? Was severe overall attrition documented? If so, is attrition comparable across samples? Is overall attrition less than 30%?
2. Did the study provide not only internal consistency reliability but also test-retest reliability and interrater reliability (when appropriate) for outcome measures? Were data collectors and/or scorers blind to study conditions and equally (un)familiar to examinees across study conditions?
3. Were outcomes for capturing the intervention's effect measured beyond an immediate posttest?
4. Was evidence of the criterion-related validity and construct validity of the measures provided?
5. Did the research team assess not only surface features of fidelity implementation (e.g., number of minutes allocated to the intervention or teacher/interventionist following procedures specified), but also examine quality of implementation?
6. Was any documentation of the nature of instruction or series provided in comparison conditions?
7. Did the research report include actual audio or videotape excerpts that capture the nature of the intervention?
8. Were results presented in a clear, coherent fashion?

## 9.4 Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – Child

### Introduction

- Introduce self
- Explain purpose of research - investigation to find out if working with an ELSA makes a difference for children.
- Explain purpose of interview – to find out your thoughts and ideas about ELSA now you have had some ELSA sessions.
- Ethical considerations
  - Our interview, and everything that you have said, will be kept confidential and only used for my research. I will store it safely and only I will listen to what has been said.
  - The only time that I might have to tell someone in school what you have said, is if you tell me something that makes me think that you, or someone you know might be at risk of harm. I will then have to inform a member of staff at the school who can make sure that you are safe.
  - You can stop the interview at any time and can ask not to be part of the investigation. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with.
  - Are you happy for me to record our interview?

### Interview questions

1. Tell me about your ELSA sessions
2. What was it like when you went to ELSA?
  - Room?
  - Others?
  - Activities?
3. Do you have a favourite part of an ELSA session? Why?
4. Do you think working your ELSA teacher has made a difference for you?
  - How are things different?
  - How do you think they have helped you?
  - How is school different since starting ELSA?
5. What was it about the ELSA sessions that made those changes? Why do you think that is?
6. Is your ELSA different to the other teachers and adults in school? How?
7. What did you like about ELSA sessions?
  - Any sessions or activities that stand out?
  - Why were those particularly helpful?
8. Was there anything you did not like about ELSA sessions?
  - Why did you not like these things?

9. If you could improve ELSA, what would you change or add?
  - Why would you change those things?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about ELSA sessions?

#### Cool off

- Stop recording – discussion of next lesson, after school etc

#### Closure

- I would like to thank you for taking part in this interview.
- The audio-recorder has been switched off.
- If you have changed your mind about taking part, you can say so now and the recording will be deleted. Would you be happy for me to keep the voice recording until I have finished finding out about the ELSA project?
- Our interview, and everything that you have said, will be kept confidential and only used for my research. I will store it safely and only I will listen to what has been said.
- If you have any questions or worries, \*identified member of school staff\* is available for you to talk to.
- I will be writing you a letter once I have finished finding out about the ELSA project – this will tell you what I found out about how ELSAs can be used most effectively in primary schools. I will send this to your SENCo to share with you.
- Thank you for contribution and sharing thoughts

## 9.5 Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – ELSA

### Introduction

- Introduce self
- Explain purpose of research - investigation to find out if working with an ELSA makes a difference for children.
- Explain purpose of interview – to find out your thoughts and ideas about ELSA now you have had some ELSA sessions.
- Ethical considerations
  - Our interview, and everything that you have said, will be kept confidential and only used for my research. I will store it safely and only I will listen to what has been said.
  - You can stop the interview at any time and can ask not to be part of the investigation. You do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with.
- Are you happy for me to record our interview?

### Interview questions

1. What were the initial hopes for the ELSA intervention for \*name\*?
2. Did these aims remain the same throughout? What were the changes? Why?
3. Do you think ELSA has made a difference for \*name\*?
  - a. What differences can you see? How do you think it has helped?
  - b. Where do you see those differences?
  - c. Has anyone else noticed? How do you know that?
4. What factors of the ELSA intervention do you think contributed to that change?
  - a. Anything else? Anything else?
  - b. Which do you think has been the most important factor? Why?
5. Did it make any differences for \*name\* that you weren't expecting?
6. What do you think \*name\* liked about the ELSA sessions?
  - a. Why do you think this?
7. Was there anything you think \*name\* did not like about ELSA sessions? Or found difficult?
  - a. Why do you think this?
8. What did you like about ELSA sessions?
  - a. Any sessions or activities that stand out?
  - b. Why were those particularly helpful?
9. If you could improve ELSA, what would you change or add?
  - a. Why would you change those things?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about ELSA sessions?

#### Cool off

- Stop recording – discussion of rest of day etc

#### Closure

- I would like to thank you for taking part in this interview.
- The audio-recorder has been switched off.
- If you have changed your mind about taking part, you can say so now and the recording will be deleted. Would you be happy for me to keep the voice recording until I have finished finding out about the ELSA project?
- Our interview, and everything that you have said, will be kept confidential and only used for my research. I will store it safely and only I will listen to what has been said.
- I will be writing you a letter once I have finished finding out about the ELSA project – this will tell you what I found out about how ELSAs can be used most effectively in primary schools. I will send this to your SENCo to share with you.
- Thank you for contribution and sharing thoughts

## 9.6 Appendix 6: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – Parent

### Introduction

- Introduce self
- Explain purpose of research - investigation to find out if working with an ELSA makes a difference for children.
- Explain purpose of interview – to find out your thoughts and ideas about ELSA now you have had some ELSA sessions.
- Ethical considerations
  - Our interview, and everything that you have said, will be kept confidential and only used for my research. I will store it safely and only I will listen to what has been said.
  - You can stop the interview at any time and can ask not to be part of the investigation. You do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with.
- Are you happy for me to record our interview?

### Interview questions

1. What were your initial hopes for the ELSA intervention for \*name\*?
2. What were things like for \*name\* prior to starting the ELSA intervention?
3. Do you think ELSA has made a difference for \*name\*?
  - a. What differences can you see? How do you think it has helped?
  - b. Where do you see those differences?
  - c. Has anyone else noticed? How do you know that?
4. What factors of the ELSA intervention do you think contributed to that change?
  - a. Anything else? Anything else?
  - b. Which do you think has been the most important factor? Why?
5. Did it make any differences for \*name\* that you weren't expecting?
6. What do you think \*name\* liked about the ELSA sessions?
  - a. Why do you think this?
7. Was there anything you think \*name\* did not like about ELSA sessions? Or found difficult?
  - a. Why do you think this?
8. What do you like about ELSA?
9. If you could improve ELSA, what would you change or add?
  - a. Why would you change those things?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about ELSA?

### Cool off

- Stop recording – discussion of rest of day etc

## Closure

- Debrief:
- I would like to thank you for taking part in this interview.
- The audio-recorder has been switched off.
- If you have changed your mind about taking part, you can say so now and the recording will be deleted. Would you be happy for me to keep the voice recording until I have finished finding out about the ELSA project?
- Our interview, and everything that you have said, will be kept confidential and only used for my research. I will store it safely and only I will listen to what has been said.
- I will be writing you a letter once I have finished finding out about the ELSA project – this will tell you what I found out about how ELSAs can be used most effectively in primary schools. I will send this to your SENCo to share with you.
- Thank you for contribution and sharing thoughts

## 9.7 Appendix 7: Repeated Measure Fidelity Check

Case 1

|                                        | Yes/No | Additional Notes                                    |
|----------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Administration script read             | Y      | Brief overview given – familiar with task (week 10) |
| Appropriate time given                 | Y      |                                                     |
| Answers independently                  | Y      |                                                     |
| Completed in quiet environment         | Y      |                                                     |
| Clarification provided where necessary | Y      |                                                     |
| Questions read aloud where necessary   | Y      |                                                     |

Case 3

|                                        | Yes/No | Additional Notes |
|----------------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| Administration script read             | Y      |                  |
| Appropriate time given                 | Y      |                  |
| Answers independently                  | Y      |                  |
| Completed in quiet environment         | Y      |                  |
| Clarification provided where necessary | Y      |                  |
| Questions read aloud where necessary   | Y      |                  |

Case 4

|                                        | Yes/No | Additional Notes                                 |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Administration script read             | Y      | Options for each answer read aloud at start      |
| Appropriate time given                 | Y      |                                                  |
| Answers independently                  | Y      |                                                  |
| Completed in quiet environment         | Y      |                                                  |
| Clarification provided where necessary | N/A    |                                                  |
| Questions read aloud where necessary   | N/A    | ELSA asked if G wants questions to be read aloud |

Case 5

|                                        | Yes/No | Additional Notes                  |
|----------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| Administration script read             | Y      |                                   |
| Appropriate time given                 | Y      |                                   |
| Answers independently                  | Y      |                                   |
| Completed in quiet environment         | Y      |                                   |
| Clarification provided where necessary | N/A    |                                   |
| Questions read aloud where necessary   | Y      | Option given to read aloud or not |

## 9.8 Appendix 8: NGT - Focus Group Outcomes

*What factors contribute to effective ELSA practice?*

| <b>Factor Identified</b>                                                        | <b>Vote</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Protected time to prepare and deliver sessions                                  | 20          |
| Other staff recognising and valuing the ELSA role                               | 20          |
| Commitment to the role of ELSA and genuine care about the wellbeing of children | 11          |
| Understanding of the role and purpose of ELSA from the wider school community   | 8           |
| Commitment of SLT                                                               | 8           |
| Resourceful and creative, able to access and adapt resources                    | 6           |
| Ongoing willingness to learn and engage in self-reflection                      | 5           |
| Dedicated physical space for ELSA sessions                                      | 4           |
| High quality training from EPS                                                  | 4           |
| Organised and a good record keeper                                              | 2           |
| 'Right' person selected by school in terms of time and availability             | 1           |
| Flexible within sessions – adapting to changing needs of child                  | 1           |
| Whole school ethos around promoting wellbeing                                   |             |
| Engages in supportive peer supervision and understanding of supervision process |             |
| Accessing respectful supervision                                                |             |
| Understanding of emotional literacy and ELSA course content                     |             |
| Confident in knowledge                                                          |             |
| Recognition of when support is needed                                           |             |
| Generalises skills and shares ELSA knowledge across school                      |             |
| Enthusiasm                                                                      |             |
| Communication with parents - approachable                                       |             |

## 9.9 Appendix 9: Table of key characteristics of utilised measures

| Measure and Author                                                    | Domain                                                                               | Age range  | Internal Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)      | Test-Re-test Reliability | Validity – Comparison with similar measures                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003)                           | Emotional Intelligence                                                               | 7-11 years | .76 (Pupil)<br>.87 (Parent)<br>.94 (Teacher) | Not reported             | Comparisons with similar measures not reported.<br>Comparisons between each of the EL scales:<br>Student and parent scale $r = .29$<br>Student and teacher $r = .42$<br>Teacher and parent scale $r = .43$ |
| Emotion Expression Scale for Children (Penza-Clyne & Zeman, 2002)     | Emotional Intelligence                                                               | 9-12 years | .81-.83                                      | $r = .56-.59$            | $r = [-.23, .53]$ with Children's Sadness Management Scale; $r = [-.32, .40]$ with Children's Anger Management Scale; $r = [.03, .30]$ with Affect Regulation Interview                                    |
| The School Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007)                          | Mental health and wellbeing, Perceptions of Self                                     | 8-15 years | .86-.92                                      | $r = .72$                | Self-esteem (Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory), $r = .49$ ; Depression (Children's Depression Inventory, Short Form), $r = -.55$ ; Affect (Positive and Negative Affect Scale: Children ), $r = .71$     |
| Coping Efficacy Scale (Sandler et al., 2000)                          | Perceptions of Self                                                                  | 9-12 years | .82-.91                                      | $r = .75$                | Not reported                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Children's Self-Report Social Skills Scale (Danielson & Phelps, 2003) | Emotional Intelligence, Mental health and wellbeing, Social and emotional competence | 9-12 years | .84-.90                                      | $r = .74$                | CS4 subscales and peer nominations, $r = [-.26, .30]$                                                                                                                                                      |

## 9.10 Appendix 10: Inter-Rater Reliability Information Sheet

### Inter-Rater Questionnaire: Information Sheet

A description of each feature considered in the visual analysis of the graphs is presented in the table below:

| Feature             | Definition of the Feature                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level               | <p>The overall average (mean) of the measures within a phase.</p> <p><i>For Johnny and Jessica, a decrease in mean level is indicative of a desirable intervention effect.</i></p> <p><i>For all other participants, an increase in mean level is indicative of a desirable intervention effect.</i></p> |
| Trend               | <p>The slope of the best-fitting straight line for the measures within a phase</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Variability         | <p>The range, variance or standard deviation of the measures about the best-fitting line.</p> <p><i>Low levels of variability are indicative of a more stable and reliable data set.</i></p>                                                                                                             |
| Immediacy of effect | <p>The change in level between the last three data points in one phase and the first three data points of the next</p> <p><i>The more rapid the effect, the more convincing the inference that change can be attributed to the introduction of the independent variable.</i></p>                         |
| Overlap             | <p>The proportion of data from one phase that overlaps with data from the previous phase.</p> <p><i>The smaller the proportion of overlap, the more convincing the demonstration of an effect.</i></p>                                                                                                   |

Please look at each of the graphs provided for each participant along with the corresponding descriptive summary table of the visual analysis.

Then, consider the following question and record your responses with a tick on the recording sheet:

How certain or convinced are you that there was a practical, significant improvement in the participant's behaviour between the baseline and intervention phase?

## 9.11 Appendix 11: Inter-Rater Reliability Record Sheet

How certain or convinced are you that there was a practical, significant improvement in the participant's behaviour between the baseline and intervention phase?

Case 1: Johnny

*N.B an improvement would be demonstrated by a decrease in ratings*

| 1:<br>Not at all<br>certain | 2:<br>Uncertain | 3:<br>It is possible | 4:<br>Reasonably<br>certain | 5:<br>Very certain |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
|                             |                 |                      |                             |                    |

Case 2: Oscar

*N.B an improvement would be demonstrated by an increase in ratings*

| 1:<br>Not at all<br>certain | 2:<br>Uncertain | 3:<br>It is possible | 4:<br>Reasonably<br>certain | 5:<br>Very certain |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
|                             |                 |                      |                             |                    |

Case 3: Jessica

*N.B an improvement would be demonstrated by a decrease in behaviour frequency*

| 1:<br>Not at all<br>certain | 2:<br>Uncertain | 3:<br>It is possible | 4:<br>Reasonably<br>certain | 5:<br>Very certain |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
|                             |                 |                      |                             |                    |

Case 4: Georgina

*N.B an improvement would be demonstrated by an increase in ratings*

| 1:<br>Not at all<br>certain | 2:<br>Uncertain | 3:<br>It is possible | 4:<br>Reasonably<br>certain | 5:<br>Very certain |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
|                             |                 |                      |                             |                    |

Case 5: Joseph

*N.B an improvement would be demonstrated by an increase in ratings*

| 1:<br>Not at all<br>certain | 2:<br>Uncertain | 3:<br>It is possible | 4:<br>Reasonably<br>certain | 5:<br>Very certain |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
|                             |                 |                      |                             |                    |

## 9.12 Appendix 12: Georgina's Interview Transcript

1. **Can you tell me a bit about your ELSA sessions and what they normally look like and what you'll be doing them?**
2. Well normally I talk about what's happened and what's happened at home and what's happened at school that annoys me and when I get annoyed. And sometimes at school I have a lot big breakdowns and it really affects the other kids and stuff and then I started a friendship group to build my friendships with people.
3. **So is that part of your ELSA sessions that you've done that?**
4. Well, I do a Friendship group on Wednesday and then I see Miss \* on Monday Tuesday and Friday.
5. **Okay, and what do you, what might you do when you're with Miss \*?**
6. Normally, we study some of the books. Normally, we just chat and normally I am, I do like the anxiety gremlin. Sometimes I get to play with the Lego whilst doing it or going on the iPad whilst doing it or something.
7. **Ah okay, is it different each week what you do?**
8. Oh well, normally, if there's a topic that I keep bringing up then we'll do more stuff on that and like at the moment I'm finding strategies to stop me having great outbursts.
9. **Okay, so that's something that you keep coming back to each week. Have you enjoyed your ELSA sessions?**
10. Yeah
11. **What is it about them that you've enjoyed?**
12. Well, I think it's because before I'd get really annoyed at home and mum and dad wouldn't know what to do and I found it really hard and inside I'd feel really alone and I get annoyed with my friends and I'd end up being alone a lot and getting really depressed and feeling angry at people. But like getting to, when you tell somebody about it really helps you because it means that it's not all bottled up inside. That's why I used to really get angry outbursts because I used to bottle it all up and then one thing would drive me the edge and I'd go 'arghh'
13. **Ah and so talking about is something that you've enjoyed this thing part of our sessions?**
14. Yeah.
15. **Is there anything else in ELSA sessions that you've enjoyed?**
16. Well, it helps me because also Miss \* can chat to the teachers about where I sit on my tables and stuff. So if something's really bothering then she can sort out and that really helps because sometimes as stuff like, once I had a big outburst in Enterprise and I like screamed at my friend because she was really annoying me, and I went in

the loos and its really helpful because then she comes back and chat to you about that and it's easier to chat to her because she doesn't have, because the problem with at home when you try to chat to your mum, I always think that she's doing it in the wrong way like looking at me in the wrong way or something, but it seems to go right at school

**17. I was going to ask, is Mrs. \* similar to your other teachers in school or is there part of her that you think is a different about your ELSA?**

18. Well she's nicer. And I do like the other teachers, the person with most relate to Miss \* would be Miss \* who I had in year three, I mean year four. But the thing is, is that with she's nice because she listens and she's not like she does, she is really busy, but she always has time for you and she doesn't like go 'Oh I'm too busy' but she always like be there for you and she won't like leave you or something.

**19. Ah okay so is that helpful that you kind of you know that she's always there?**

20. Yeah.

**21. Do you have a favourite kind of activity that you've done in an Elsa session or favourite part of the sessions?**

22. Well, I like doing drawing and I like reading the books and I like, I really like chatting and then like doing stuff and helping and making like strategies and stuff like that.

**23. Okay. What is it that you've liked about the books that you've looked at?**

24. Well, it really shows you different, it shows you, because I used to think I was the only that felt this way and it shows that of people actually do and that helps because you feel like you're not alone.

**25. So you've said you like the books as part of your sessions and that you like that you felt very listened to..**

26. And also the room is really nice it's not like a, because in those rooms is most like all classroom-y, but it's all colourful and messy like a normal room would be. It's like more relaxed and I was like blankets and teddy bears and everything that just makes you makes you want to open up a bit more because you're not in like a grey room.

**27. Yeah. Yeah. Do you think the work that you've done with Mrs. \* has made a difference for you?**

28. Yeah definitely, because I found it really hard in the past, like really hard, and I used to take it out on people at home and all my friends and I've stopped and it means I have more friends and I'm happier at school and home and it doesn't mean I don't want to go to school and stuff. So it does really help.

**29. What do you think is about ELSA that has helped you both at home and at school as well?**

30. Well, it helps how we have someone to chat to as I said because instead of bottom of all up until the last minute, and also Miss \* tells you strategies of how to deal with it. So if I have something, because there's this person in my year who is kind of my friend, but she really annoys me and I have to like think of strategies and I always like had a go at her a lot because she really annoys me. I have go by accident. But yeah, so and it really helped because she tells you like 'don't do that, try this' and she's let me come in her room at lunch time if I'm getting stressed and then L is here and he normally wants to play hide-and-seek so I just go on play with him.

**31. That's good. So some of the strategies that you've learned in here are they things that you knew about before or have you learned them since coming to ELSA?**

32. I've learnt them because I didn't really know what to do. I used to think that like screaming at people would like make them understand, but it doesn't. But I don't swear at people.

33. So you've now got some strategies in place that mean that you don't get to that point where you feel like you need to shout out to people it helps you beforehand?

34. Sometimes I do, so like in Enterprise this girl was really annoying me so I just like screamed at her and ran away.

35. Oh also, I've met loads of new people.

**36. Have you? How has that happened?**

37. Because I wouldn't really talk to people with autism, like because I know people have large things of autism as soon as I came in this room because they're there because I would have never decided. But we're friends now and there's this little kid called \* and he counts his fingers and he doesn't speak and these two girls they go and help him out. And it's really nice because I've met new people and made new friends from collecting them and seeing them and stuff.

**38. So is that because they come into ELSA sessions kind of before or after you or because they're in the room as well?**

39. Well before and after, if the person is there are in the room and you want them to be then that's fine, but normally we have our own time so I know that I come at half one today, three on Monday and one on Tuesday.

**40. Okay. And is that helpful that you know when your next ELSA session is as well?**

41. Yeah because otherwise I get really stressed out and annoyed and I get really like because when I don't um, I'm one of those people who likes to know before time, so if I don't know I start getting really worked up about stuff

**42. Yeah. So, how do you said a bit about how ELSA has helped, so how are things different for you at school since ELSA?**

43. Well I'm happier, and it doesn't, well I don't always want to come to school, but it means normally I do want to come to school. Yeah, so and it makes me feel happier in the classroom and it doesn't and it makes me feel more like confident to go tell teachers like talk to teachers about stuff when Miss \*'s not here. So it really does help and also she can and also within school, she can help sort out secondary schools things.

**44. Do you think it's made any difference is at home as well that you can think of?**

45. Well I'm less angry with mum and dad and they're understanding more and they know what I'm going through and that's always good and then they know how it, when to leave me alone and when to come and stuff like that.

**46. Ah okay, so how has that happened?**

47. Because as Miss \* has told me things I could say to them or be with them at points and stuff.

**48. Okay, so she's taught you strategies not only for in school and helping you in school, but also things that home as well. What is it about ELSA that you think has helped to make those changes happen? You said a bit about strategies already, are there any other ways how ELSA has helped those things?**

49. Well how it's helped it's kind of its made me...what does that mean?

**50. So what is it about ELSA that has helped to make those differences?**

51. Well especially because I said bottling things up was really bad to do that and I've learnt that because then there's that one day where you just can't hold it in. And stuff like being happier, it's, with ELSA you know that there's a teacher who's going to be there with you, for you, if you getting stressed in the day, so you feel safer at school and you feel happier and you don't like to get annoyed with people as much because you know that you can talk to her.

**52. I've asked you already about what you've liked about ELSA sessions, was there anything that you didn't like about ELSA?**

53. No. Not really at all

**54. Is there anything that you would like to change or add to them that would make them even better than they are?**

55. Not really

**56. Have you got a favourite ELSA session that you've done?**

57. Well normally my favourite ELSA session is when L is in here because he's always like friendly and a bit like yeah, and he always asks me what the colour is and stuff but it is really nice when he's like when it's nice when you like because we're making trees at the moment about our families and this one is my tree and we're like colouring them in and everything and it's nice to be like just to kind of get it down on

paper and it's really relaxing to just kind of be in the room for that to get away from lessons for a bit and like do stuff to help you.

**58. Mm, do you think that other people have noticed the kind of the changes in a difference that ELSA is made for you?**

59. Most people don't know I come, most people just think that leave because I don't really like tell them what I have and stuff and because they wouldn't like because that people who are really like like cocky and stuff and they don't really believe anything but they notice that I'm more happy and that I play with them more and stuff. But I do disappear a lot into this room because if I can't stop if I start and they found that when I disappear it's easier for them to I think it's easier for them because we're getting less arguments

**60. Do you think any of your teachers have noticed or at home have they noticed any changes?**

61. I don't really know, at home I'm happier too and then at school I'm more like, I put my hand up a bit more and I'm more interactive with other kids and I help other kids more and stuff.

**62. Yeah, so you've noticed those differences in how you feel and what's going on. But also, it sounds like some of your friends might have noticed and also some of your teachers might have noticed that difference as well. Is there anything else that you want to talk to tell me about ELSA sessions that you've noticed or that you think has been particularly good that I've not asked about?**

63. Well as I said the room is really nice and it's nice because also Miss \* like always says stuff like she always says the right things but she makes it feel really relaxed and like kind of just it's like you're at home and stuff you and there's like pillows everywhere and people sometimes go 'oh it's messy', but it's really relaxing and it makes you feel really like happy and it's nicer when you do stuff and it's like and I used to see someone call Miss \*, but then she had to work with somebody else. So then I work with Miss \*, I first met her when I did my dyslexia test, and then mum asked if I could work with her for a bit and then it kind of just carried on because I've needed that extra help and it has helped in the playground and getting away from people I don't like and stuff.

**64. So it's sometimes it's there the work that you've done that's been really helpful. But sometimes it's just having that place to be able to go to in school?**

65. Yeah

## 9.13 Appendix 13: Ethical Approval Letter



School of Psychology

The University of Nottingham  
University Park  
Nottingham  
NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

SJ/tp

Ref: S1067R

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Dear Nathan and Holly,

### **Ethics Committee Review**

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research "An exploratory evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants".

That proposal has now been reviewed and we are pleased to tell you it has met with the Committee's approval.

### **However:**

**Please note the following comments from our reviewers;**

#### **Reviewer One:**

- Accepted.

#### **Reviewer Two:**

- I found one minor typo in the amendment on page 10 when "as" instead of "ask" but I don't think this has transferred on to any of the research instruments. The researcher may just wish to check this.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice. The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely



*Professor Stephen Jackson  
Chair, Ethics Committee*

## 9.14 Appendix 14: School Information Sheet

*An exploratory evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants*

*Ethics Approval Number: S1067R*

*Researcher: Holly Haigh*

*Supervisor: Nathan Lambert*

*Contact Details: [holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk) / [nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk)*

Dear Head Teacher,

My name is Holly Haigh and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently on placement with Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS). As part of my doctoral training, I will be carrying out some research to explore the impact of the ELSA intervention and I would like to invite your school to take part in this study. Before you decide, you should understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for your school and the pupils.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask at any time if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study is designed to find out whether the ELSA project has an impact on children who are receiving this intervention at primary school.

Why has your school been asked to take part in this study?

Your school has been asked to take part because you have an experienced ELSA in place, who regularly attends supervision and has been identified as a positive example of ELSA practice by the Educational Psychology Service.

Does the school have to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your school is under no obligation to take part. If you decide not to take part, this does not impact upon on the ELSA intervention taking place within your school or on the supervision your ELSA receives. If you do agree to take part, your school is free to withdraw at any point before or during the study.

What will taking part in this study mean for the child, their parents and your school?

If your school participates, a Key Stage Two pupil due to start the ELSA programme will be asked to complete the Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003) before starting the intervention. This is a short questionnaire designed to identify strengths and needs in the area of emotional literacy.

It comprises of 25 statements, which the child will be asked to rate on a scale from 'Very like me' to 'Not like me at all'. The child's parents or carers will also be asked to complete a parent version of the questionnaire, and the child's class teacher will complete a teacher version. The child, their parent/carer, and their class teacher will be asked to complete the questionnaire again after 6-8 weeks of the ELSA intervention.

For this research, the ELSA will also be asked to gather information each week regarding the child's progress towards specific ELSA targets, both prior to starting the ELSA project, and as the intervention continues. This information will be dependent on the child's individual targets and will be established alongside the school and ELSA prior to the research starting. This information will be gathered during ELSA sessions or be based on the child's behaviour in class or on the playground. The researcher will provide the ELSA with support and guidance as to how to gather this information, and it will take approximately 2-5 minutes each week. An observation will also be undertaken by the researcher of the ELSA intervention session.

After approximately 6-8 weeks of the intervention, I would also like to undertake an interview with the pupil and your school ELSA. These interviews will be completed 1:1 within school time, in school. The pupil and ELSA will each be asked about their thoughts and experiences of the ELSA intervention, and whether they think it has helped and how. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes. To make sure that no important information is missed, these interviews will be audio-recorded.

What if there is a problem during the research?

I hope that the child will enjoy taking part in the study and speaking about their experiences of ELSA. However, if there is a problem at any point during the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on [holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk). You could also ask my supervisor for further information on: [nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk).

What if there is a problem during the interview with the researcher?

Prior to the interview with the researcher, the school SENCo and ELSA, and the child's parents, will be notified of the date that this will be taking place to ensure that the child is aware of this change to routine. The child will be informed that they can stop the interview at any time and that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with. During the interview, if a child indicates that they are uncomfortable, the researcher will act as if they would prefer not to answer or if they would like the interview to stop. They will be made aware following the interview that if they have any questions or need further support, then there is a member of staff in school are available to help them.

In the event that a child becomes upset during the interview, an identified member of staff, such as the SENCo or ELSA, will be notified to enable them to offer appropriate support to the child.

The SENCo will also be asked to inform the child's parent. The child's parents will also be informed within a debrief letter that if they have any questions or need further support, then there is a member of staff in school are available to help them and contact details of the researcher will be provided.

Will the school and child's participation in this study be confidential?

All of the information collected as part of this study will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. All identifying information will be anonymised and pseudonyms will be used when transcribing interviews. The audio-recording will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

However, if during the research, for example when conducting interviews, the pupil discloses something to me that indicates they might be at risk of seriously harming themselves or others or are at risk of harm from others, I will inform a member of staff at the school who can follow your safeguarding procedure. The child will also be informed of this.

How will the information be handled and stored safely?

All data collected will be used for research purposes only. All paper copies of information will be stored in a secure and locked office and transferred into electronic copies and shredded within two weeks. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected, encrypted USB drive. Raw data will be destroyed after 2 years.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I will provide you with a detailed summary of the overall findings of the study and will be available to discuss these with you in person. The study will be published as part of a doctoral thesis and may also be used in research journals in the future. None of these will have any your school or the child's personal information on.

It is hoped that the information gathered from the research will help to establish how the ELSA project can be implemented most effectively, and so the research findings will be shared within the Educational Psychology Service.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact Stephen Jackson, Chair of University of Nottingham Ethics Committee: [stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk)

## 9.15 Appendix 15: Parent/Carer Information Sheet

*An exploratory evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants*

*Ethics Approval Number: S1067R*

*Researcher: Holly Haigh*

*Supervisor: Nathan Lambert*

*Contact Details: [holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk) / [nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk)*

Dear Parent/Carer,

My name is Holly Haigh and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently on placement with Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS). As part of my doctoral training, I will be carrying out some research to explore the impact of the ELSA intervention and I would like to invite your child to take part in this study. Before you decide, you should understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for your child.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask at any time if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study is designed to find out whether ELSA has an impact on children who are receiving this intervention in Key Stage Two at primary school.

What is an ELSA?

The ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) project is designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. It recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. ELSA is an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists who apply psychological knowledge of children's social and emotional development.

ELSAs are trained to plan and deliver programmes of support to pupils in their school who are experiencing temporary or longer term additional emotional needs. This support can cover a range of aspects of emotional literacy including emotional awareness and management, self-esteem, social communication and friendship skills.

Why has your child been asked to take part in this study?

Your child has been asked to take part because they are in Key Stage Two and their school has an experienced ELSA, with whom your child is due to start working.

Does my child have to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your child is under no obligation to take part. Your child will receive support for the school ELSA regardless of consenting to the current research. If you do agree for your child to take part, you, and your child, are free to withdraw their involvement at any point before or during the study.

What will happen to the young people if they do take part in this study?

If your child participates, they be asked to complete the Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003) before starting the ELSA intervention. This is a short questionnaire designed to identify strengths and needs in the area of emotional literacy. It comprises of 25 statements, which your child will be asked to rate on a scale from 'Very like me' to 'Not like me at all'. You will also be asked to complete a parent version of the questionnaire, and your child's class teacher will complete a teacher version. You, your child, and their class teacher will be asked to complete the questionnaire again after 6-8 weeks of the ELSA intervention.

For this research, the ELSA will also be asked to gather information each week regarding your child's progress towards specific ELSA targets, both prior to starting the ELSA project, and as the intervention continues. This information will be dependent on your child's individual targets and will be established alongside the school and ELSA prior to the research starting. This information will be gathered during ELSA sessions or be based on your child's behaviour in class or on the playground. The researcher will provide the ELSA with support and guidance as to how to gather this information, and it will take approximately 2-5 minutes each week. An observation will also be undertaken by the researcher of an ELSA intervention session.

After approximately 6 weeks of the intervention, I would also like to interview your child and the school ELSA about their thoughts of the ELSA project. These will be completed separately, and they will each be asked about their experiences of ELSA, and whether they think it has helped and how. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes. To make sure that no important information is missed I would like to audio-record the interviews.

What if there is a problem during the research?

I hope that your child will enjoy taking part in the study and speaking about their experiences of ELSA. However, if there is a problem at any point during the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on [holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk). You could also ask my supervisor for further information on: [nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk).

What if there is a problem during the interview with the researcher?

Prior to the interview with the researcher, you, the school SENCo and ELSA will be notified of the date that this will be taking place to ensure that your child is aware of this change to their typical routine. Your child will be informed that they can stop the interview at any time and that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with. During the interview, if your child indicates that they are uncomfortable, the researcher will act as if they would prefer not to answer or if they would like the interview to stop. Your child will be made aware following the interview that if they have any questions or need further support, then there is a member of staff in school available to help them.

If your child became upset during the interview, an identified member of staff, such as the SENCo or ELSA, will be notified to enable appropriate support to be provided to your child. The SENCo will also be asked to inform you, the child's parent(s). The identified member of staff will also be available to you, if you have any questions or need further support, as well as myself or my supervisor.

Will my child's participation in this study be confidential?

All of the information collected as part of this study will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. All identifying information will be anonymised and pseudonyms will be used when transcribing interviews. The audio-recording will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

However, if during the research, for example when conducting interviews, your child discloses something to me that indicates they might be at risk of seriously harming themselves or others or are at risk of harm from others, I will inform a member of staff at the school who can follow the school's safeguarding procedure. Your child would also be informed of this.

How will the information be handled and stored safely?

All data collected will be used for research purposes only. All paper copies of information will be stored in a secure and locked office and transferred into electronic copies and shredded within two weeks. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected, encrypted USB drive. All identifying information will be anonymised and pseudonyms will be used when transcribing interviews. Raw data will be destroyed after 2 years.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I will provide you with a detailed summary of the overall findings of the study and will be available to discuss these with you in person. The study will be published as part of a doctoral thesis and may also be used in research journals in the future. None of these will have any of your child's personal information on, or any school information included.

It is hoped that the information gathered from the research will help to establish how the ELSA project can be implemented most effectively, and so the research findings will be shared within the Educational Psychology Service.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact Stephen Jackson, Chair of University of Nottingham Ethics Committee: [stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk)

## 9.16 Appendix 16: School Consent Form

*An exploratory evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants  
Ethics Approval Number: S1067R*

*Researcher: Holly Haigh – holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk*

*Supervisor: Nathan Lambert – nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk*

Name of School:

School Address:

Contact telephone number:

The participant should answer these questions independently.

Please circle as necessary:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?  
YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study?  
YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable)?  
YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study?  
(at any time and without giving a reason)  
YES/NO
- I give permission for our school's data from this study to be shared with other  
researchers provided that the school's anonymity is completely protected.  
YES/NO
- Do you agree for your school to take part in the study?  
YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Head Teacher:

Date:

Name (in block capitals)

Signature of the SENCo:

Date:

Name (in block capitals)

Signature of the ELSA:

Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participants and they have given their informed consent for their school to participate in the current research.

Signature of researcher:

Date:

## 9.17 Appendix 17: Parent/Carer Consent Form

*An exploratory evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants  
Ethics Approval Number: S1067R*

*Researcher: Holly Haigh – holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk*

*Supervisor: Nathan Lambert – nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk*

Name of Pupil:

Pupil D.O.B:

Contact telephone number:

The participant should answer these questions independently.

Please circle as necessary:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?  
YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study?  
YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable)?  
YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw your child from the study?  
(at any time and without giving a reason)  
YES/NO
- I give permission for my child's data from this study to be shared with other  
researchers provided that their anonymity is completely protected.  
YES/NO
- Do you agree for your child to take part in this study? YES/NO
- Do you agree to the use of audio-recording of an interview with your child?  
YES/NO
- Does your child agree to take part in this study?  
YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of Parent/Carer:

Date:

Parent/Carer's Name:

*For researcher use only:*

I have explained the study to the above parent/carers and he/she has agreed for their child to take part.

Signature of researcher:

Date:

## 9.18 Appendix 18: Child Consent Form

*An exploratory evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants*

*Ethics Approval Number: S1067R*

*Researcher: Holly Haigh – [holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:holly.haigh@nottingham.ac.uk)*

*Supervisor: Nathan Lambert – [nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.lambert@nottingham.ac.uk)*

To .....

Your school has an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, or an ELSA. Your school ELSA is called ..... ELSAs work with children in schools to help them to learn about and understand emotions. You have been invited to start working with your ELSA next term.

Alongside this work with your ELSA, an investigation is happening to find out if working with an ELSA is helpful or not. You will be asked to fill in a questionnaire before you start seeing your ELSA, and then again after you have started working with your ELSA.

Would you like to be a part of this research?

Yes

No

If you choose to be a part of the research but change your mind, you can tell your ELSA, ..... or ..... (SENCO), or your parents/carers, and you can stop taking part.

The researcher, Holly, would like to come and see one of your ELSA sessions to find out about what these look like. She would also like to meet with you to ask some questions and find out how you feel about the work you do with your ELSA, what you like, and if you have any ideas that could make it better.

Would you be happy for Holly to come to an ELSA session and meet with you to ask you some questions about how you feel about the work you do with your ELSA?

Yes

No

Child's Signature:

Date:

*For staff/researcher use only:*

I have explained the study to ..... and they have given their informed consent to participate.

Signature of Staff:

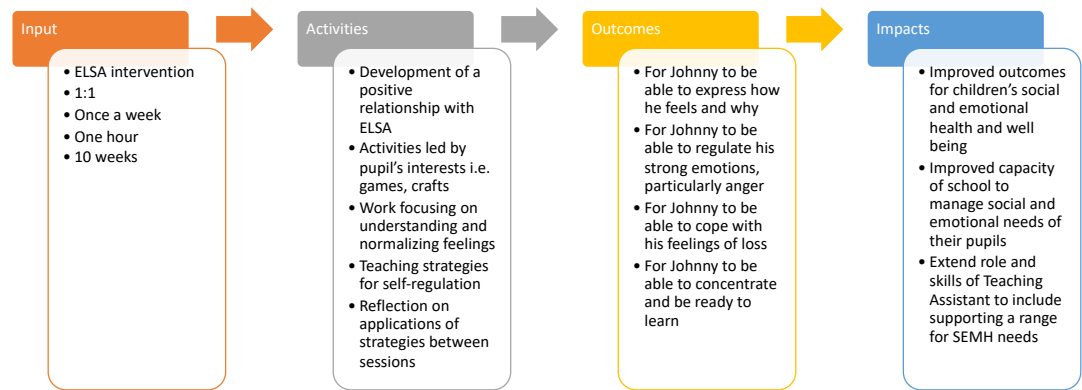
Date:

Signature of Researcher:

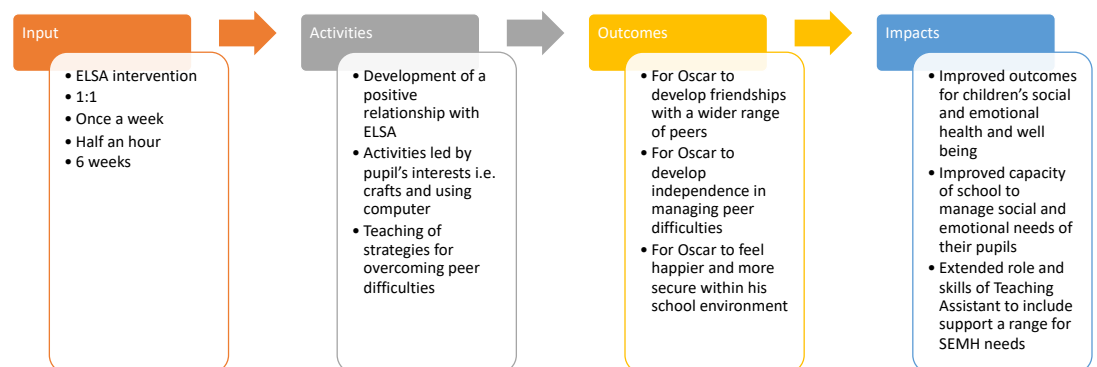
Date:

## 9.19 Appendix 19: Case Study Theory of Change Frameworks

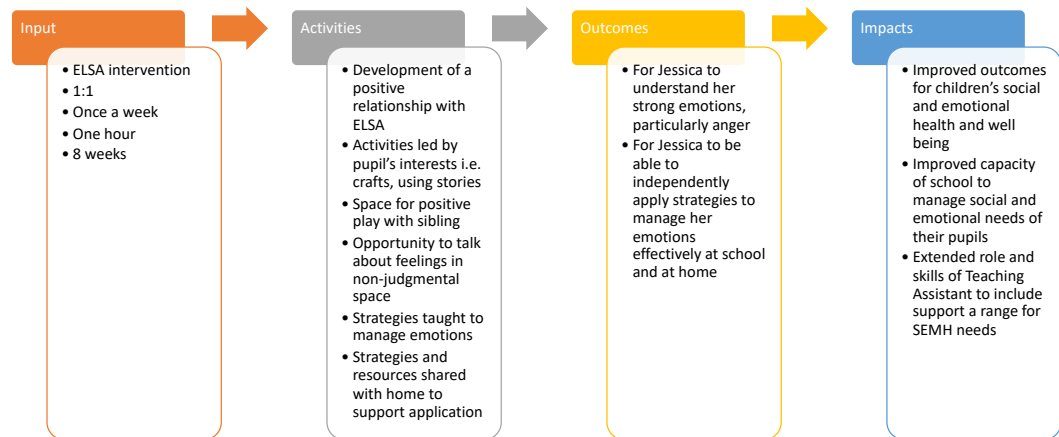
### Theory of Change Framework: Case 1 - Johnny



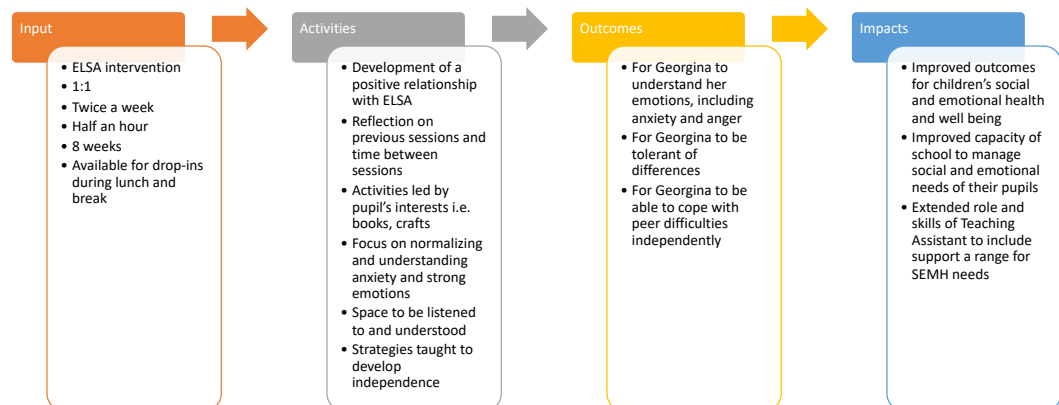
### Theory of Change Framework: Case 2 - Oscar



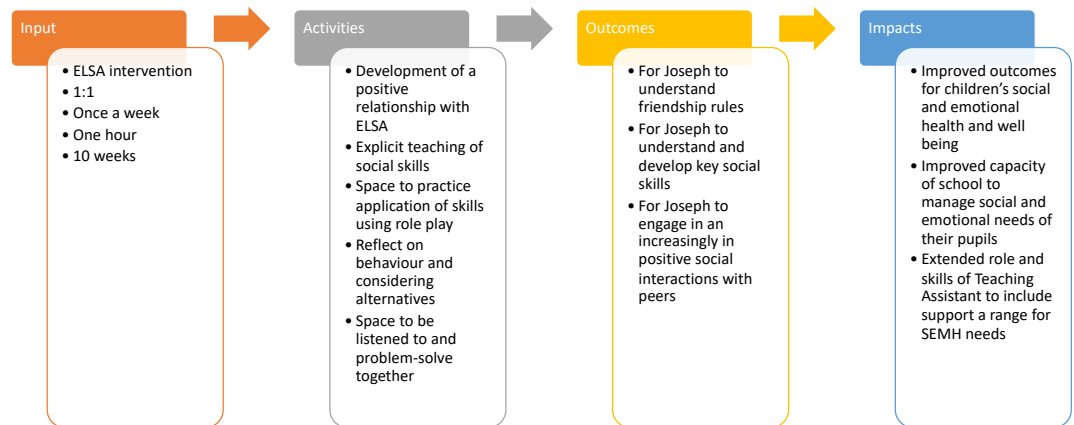
## Theory of Change Framework: Case 3 - Jessica



## Theory of Change Framework: Case 4 - Georgina



# Theory of Change Framework: Case 5 - Joseph



## 9.20 Appendix 20: Timelines of Intervention Evaluation Period

*Timeline of the ELSA intervention evaluation for Johnny*

| Event                                    | Date                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Measures                             | Week 1 Day 2 – Parent-rated<br>Week 1 Day 3 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 2 Day 3 – Pupil-rated          |
| Baseline Phase Repeated Measures         | Week 3 Day 3<br>Week 4 Day 2<br>Week 5 Day 3<br>Week 6 Day 3                                       |
| Intervention Start Date                  | Week 10 Day 2                                                                                      |
| Intervention Phase Repeated Measures     | Week 12 Day 3<br>Week 13 Day 1<br>Week 14 Day 1<br>Week 15 Day 3<br>Week 16 Day 1<br>Week 20 Day 3 |
| ELSA Session Observation                 | Week 16 Day 1                                                                                      |
| Post Intervention Phase ELSA Interview   | Week 21 Day 3                                                                                      |
| Post Intervention Phase Child Interview  | Week 21 Day 3                                                                                      |
| Post-Measures                            | Week 21 Day 2 – Parent-rated<br>Week 21 Day 2 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 21 Day 3 – Pupil-rated       |
| Post Intervention Phase Parent Interview | Week 25 Day 4                                                                                      |

*Timeline of the ELSA intervention evaluation for Oscar*

| <b>Event</b>                            | <b>Date</b>                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Measures                            | Week 1 Day 5 – Parent-rated<br>Week 1 Day 5 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 1 Day 5 – Pupil-rated        |
| Baseline Phase Repeated Measures        | Week 1 Day 5<br>Week 2 Day 5                                                                     |
| Intervention Start Date                 | Week 3 Day 5                                                                                     |
| Intervention Phase Repeated Measures    | Week 3 Day 5,<br>Week 5 Day 5<br>Week 6 Day 5<br>Week 10 Day 5<br>Week 11 Day 5<br>Week 12 Day 5 |
| ELSA Session Observation                | N/A                                                                                              |
| Post Intervention Phase ELSA Interview  | Week 12 Day 5                                                                                    |
| Post Intervention Phase Child Interview | Week 12 Day 5                                                                                    |
| Post-Measures                           | Week 11 Day 5 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 11 Day 5 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 12 Day 5 – Parent-rated     |

*Timeline of the ELSA intervention evaluation for Jessica*

| <b>Event</b>                            | <b>Date</b>                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Measures                            | Week 1 Day 1 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 1 Day 1 – Additional pre-measure<br>Week 3 Day 1 – Parent-rated<br>Week 3 Day 1 – Teacher-rated |
| Baseline Phase Repeated Measures        | Week 2 Day 5<br>Week 3 Day 3<br>Week 3 Day 5<br>Week 4 Day 2                                                                       |
| Intervention Start Date                 | Week 4 Day 4                                                                                                                       |
| Intervention Phase Repeated Measures    | Week 4 Day 5<br>Week 5 Day 3<br>Week 8 Day 3<br>Week 8 Day 5<br>Week 9 Day 5<br>Week 10 Day 3<br>Week 10 Day 5                     |
| ELSA Session Observation                | Week 10 Day 4                                                                                                                      |
| Post Intervention Phase ELSA Interview  | Week 19 Day 4                                                                                                                      |
| Post Intervention Phase Child Interview | Week 19 Day 4                                                                                                                      |
| Post-Measures                           | Week 18 Day 3 – Additional post-measure<br>Week 18 Day 4 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 19 Day 1 – Teacher-rated                            |

*Timeline of the ELSA intervention evaluation for Georgina*

| <b>Event</b>                            | <b>Date</b>                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Measures                            | Week 1 Day 5 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 1 Day 6 – Parent-rated<br>Week 2 Day 2 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 3 Day 5 – Additional pre-measure      |
| Baseline Phase Repeated Measures        | Week 3 Day 5<br>Week 6 Day 5<br>Week 7 Day 5<br>Week 8 Day 5                                                                            |
| Intervention Start Date                 | Week 8 Day 5                                                                                                                            |
| Intervention Phase Repeated Measures    | Week 9 Day 5<br>Week 10 Day 5<br>Week 11 Day 4<br>Week 13 Day 5<br>Week 14 Day 5<br>Week 15 Day 5<br>Week 16 Day 4                      |
| ELSA Session Observation                | Week 13 Day 5                                                                                                                           |
| Post Intervention Phase ELSA Interview  | Week 16 Day 5                                                                                                                           |
| Post Intervention Phase Child Interview | Week 16 Day 5                                                                                                                           |
| Post-Measures                           | Week 16 Day 4 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 16 Day 4 – Additional post-measure<br>Week 16 Day 6 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 17 Day 1 – Parent-rated |

*Timeline of the ELSA intervention evaluation for Joseph*

| <b>Event</b>                            | <b>Date</b>                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Measures                            | Week 1 Day 3 – Parent-rated<br>Week 3 Day 4 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 3 Day 4 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 7 Day 3 – Additional Pre-measure      |
| Baseline Phase Repeated Measures        | Week 4 Day 2<br>Week 7 Day 2<br>Week 9 Day 2<br>Week 10 Day 2                                                                           |
| Intervention Start Date                 | Week 10 Day 2                                                                                                                           |
| Intervention Phase Repeated Measures    | Week 11 Day 2<br>Week 13 Day 2<br>Week 14 Day 2<br>Week 15 Day 2<br>Week 16 Day 2                                                       |
| ELSA Session Observation                | Week 13 Day 2                                                                                                                           |
| Post Intervention Phase ELSA Interview  | Week 17 Day 4                                                                                                                           |
| Post Intervention Phase Child Interview | Week 17 Day 4                                                                                                                           |
| Post-Measures                           | Week 16 Day 3 – Pupil-rated<br>Week 16 Day 4 – Parent-rated<br>Week 16 Day 5 – Teacher-rated<br>Week 17 Day 2 – Additional Post-measure |

## 9.21 Appendix 21: Jessica's Behaviour Record

Target behaviour: Crying

|                                                      |   |                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Intensity level definitions for behaviour of concern | 1 | Only impacts student                  |
|                                                      | 2 | Impacts others in immediate area      |
|                                                      | 3 | Impacts everyone in class             |
|                                                      | 4 | Impacts other classrooms/common areas |
|                                                      | 5 | Impacts whole school                  |

| Date                  | Frequency<br>Number of times the behaviour occurred | Duration<br>Length of time each behaviour lasted | Intensity<br>Rating of 1-5 of each occurrence | Comments |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| 05.11.18<br>(Example) | 11                                                  | 5 mins<br>2 mins                                 | 2<br>1                                        |          |
| Day 1<br>(Baseline)   |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Baseline)            |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Baseline)            |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Baseline)            |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |
| (Intervention)        |                                                     |                                                  |                                               |          |

## 9.22 Appendix 22: ELSA Intervention Fidelity Check

ELSA Observation Record

Date:

School:

| Features of ELSA session                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Notes: |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Personal qualities & Interaction skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality relationship</li> <li>• Personal organisation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |        |
| Working with purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme aims</li> <li>• Session plans and objectives</li> <li>• Pace               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Initial warm up</li> <li>○ Recap</li> <li>○ Learning activity</li> <li>○ Summary</li> <li>○ (Take-away task)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Record keeping</li> </ul> |        |
| Area of focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem/personal identity</li> <li>• Self-regulation</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Feelings</li> <li>• Resolving conflicts</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Change</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Loss</li> </ul>                                                                                               |        |
| Safe space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency – time &amp; space</li> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Comfortable</li> <li>• Time</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |        |
| <b>Additional Notes:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |        |