

# Programmes and Interventions at Medshamstede Academy

Interventions and programmes which inform our teaching strategies are research, theory and evidenced based. We work in collaboration with other professionals, such as Occupational Therapists and Speech Language Therapists who may recommend and review programmes. The following programmes may be delivered:

## Communication and Interaction

### Attention Autism

#### Aims

- To engage attention
- To improve joint attention
- To develop shared enjoyment in group activities
- To increase attention in adult-led activities
- To encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting
- To increase non-verbal and verbal communication through commenting
- To build a wealth and depth of vocabulary
- To have fun!

**Attention Autism** is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. Gina's primary objective is that the sessions are fun and "*offer an irresistible invitation to learn*"!

#### ▪ **Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention**

A bucket is filled with visually engaging objects and toys, aiming to gain the shared attention of the group. The adult leader shows each item to the group and uses simple repetitive vocabulary to comment on the various objects.

#### ▪ **Stage 2: The Attention Builder**

Visually stimulating activities are shown to the group by the adult leader, aiming to sustain attention for a longer period. The activities are fun, visually engaging and can often involve delightful mess!

#### ▪ **Stage 3: Turn taking & Re-engaging Attention**

The adult leader demonstrates a simple activity, often modelled with another adult in the group. Some children are then invited to have a turn but only if they are comfortable to do so. Not every child in the group will get a turn, which then teaches important emotional regulation skills, as well as the essential skills of waiting, turn-taking and learning through modelling.

#### ▪ **Stage 4: Shifting & Re-engaging Attention**

The adult leader demonstrates a simple creative task, and then gives each child an individual kit to copy the task. The children take their kits to a table, complete the task independently, and then everyone returns to the group to show their completed tasks.

More complex skills can be introduced as confidence and social skills develop e.g. sharing materials, working with a partner, problem solving.

Attention Autism principles can then be generalised to curriculum activities (e.g. literacy and numeracy) to facilitate learning and skill development.



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## Intensive Interaction

### Aims:

- To develop the fundamentals of communication based on the principals of parent-child interaction in the first years of life

**Intensive interaction** is a practical approach that can help children who are in the early stages of communication development or who have complex communication needs to relate, interact and share experiences with others on their terms.

The approach can be used if someone is reluctant to, or disinterested in, interacting with other people.

Techniques such as turn taking, mirroring, rhythm and repetition, and sharing personal space can be used to support communication exchange that is initiated and led by the child, and in turn promotes a positive interaction.

[www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk](http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk)



## PECS

### Aims

- To help individuals who have no, or limited functional communication skills in a systematic and evidenced based manner
- If taught properly the use of PECS has been shown to lead to rapidly acquired basic communication skills, and also helps with the development of speech, and often a reduction in behaviour management issues

**The PECS training program** was developed by Lori Frost and Andy Bondy at the Delaware Autistic Program. The Picture Exchange Communication System or PECS approach is a modified applied behaviour analysis (ABA) programme designed for early nonverbal symbolic communication training. It is not designed to teach speech, although the latter is encouraged indirectly and some children begin to spontaneously use speech. PECS training occurs during typical activities within the natural settings of the classroom and the home. The communication training occurs within a broader positive behavioural support context entitled the Pyramid Approach. Training techniques include strategies such as chaining, prompting/cuing, modelling, and environmental engineering. Professional training regarding PECS is required. There are 7 phases of PECS and PECS can be used across all ages to teach functional communication.



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## Colourful Semantics

### Aims

- Understand information and produce sentences.
- Follow discussions and to communicate their own ideas effectively
- Develop competent use of simple and complex sentence structure
- Develop a concept of narrative (e.g. what makes up a 'story')
- Produce grammatically correct sentences in speaking and writing (through modelling)

**Colourful Semantics** is based on independent research carried out in the UK by Alison Bryan. What is unique about this approach is that children learn to associate different 'types' of words with particular colours whereby:

- Level 1 – Who? "the man" (Subject – Orange)
- Level 2 – What doing? "is eating" (Verb – Yellow)
- Level 3 – What? "the sandwich" (Object – Green)
- Level 4 – Where? "in the kitchen" (Location – Blue)
- Level 5 – Describe? "big" (Adjective – Purple)

<http://integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/our-approaches/speech-therapy-approaches/colourful-semantics-2/>



## Social Stories

### Aims:

- To share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience.
- To explain social situations in terms of what another person might be thinking and/or why they may behave in certain ways; reducing or removing confusion and unpredictability

**A Social Story** can be a written or visual guide describing various social interactions, situations, behaviours, skills or concepts and were introduced and described by Gray and Garand (1993).

A Social Story describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format.

Social stories may help children with autism because of the hypothesis that individuals with autism lack a **'theory of mind.'** Having a theory of mind allows us to understand another person's perspectives, desires and beliefs, you're able to "put yourself in another person's shoes".

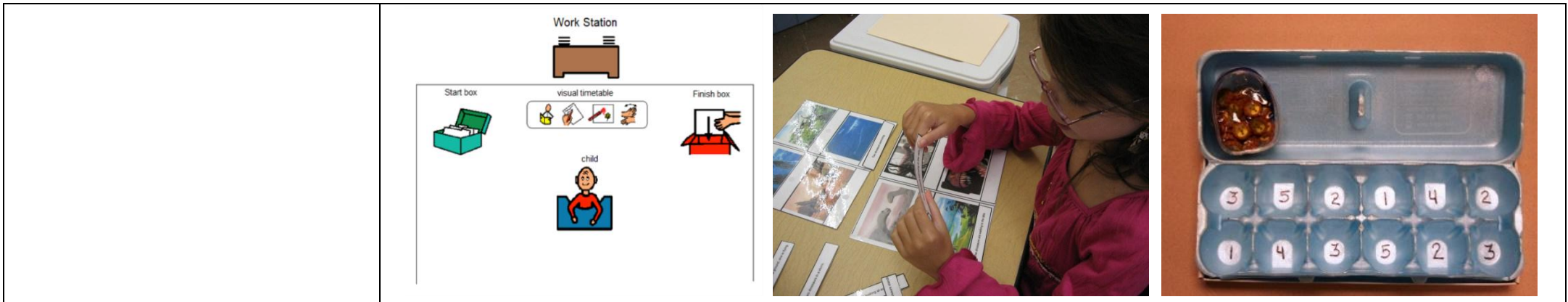
Another reason social stories may work for children with autism is **weak Central Coherence**; the tendency to integrate information in context for higher level meaning. We typically take information in as a whole without focusing on each and every specific detail eg: when we look at a car we tend to take in the fact that it is a car first before even considering any specific details about it (e.g. model/make, alloys, tinted windows, badge etc.). Having a "weak" central coherence suggests that instead of understanding the 'whole' pupils with ASD focus on the details and have more difficulty processing the whole. Relating this to social situations some individuals with ASD may pay attention to irrelevant details and fail to understand the meaning of those situations.

Four basic sentence types are used within Social Story construction. These include:

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Descriptive Sentences:</b> these are truthful, opinion-and-assumption-free statements of fact...e.g. “most children go to the park to play”.</li> <li>2. <b>Perspective Sentences:</b> these are statements that refer to or describe an individual’s internal state, their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, or physical condition...e.g. “my teacher likes maths”.</li> <li>3. <b>Directive Sentences:</b> these describe desired responses to social situations.</li> <li>4. <b>Affirmative Sentences:</b> these often express a commonly shared value or opinion within a given culture...e.g. “I will try to keep my seatbelt on (this is very important)”.</li> </ol>
<h2>Cognition and Learning</h2>	
<h3>TEACCH</h3> <p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To structure teaching to fit the ‘culture of autism’ through:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ organising the physical environment</li> <li>❖ developing schedules and work systems</li> <li>❖ making expectations clear and explicit</li> <li>❖ using visual materials to develop skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ To allow individuals with autism to use these skills independently of adult directing and cueing.</li> </ul>	<p>Structured teaching via the <b>TEACCH method</b> was developed by Professor Eric Schopler and colleagues at the University of North Carolina. The TEACCH method is not considered an actual therapy but rather a therapeutic tool to help individuals with ASD understand their surroundings and associated difficulties with receptive and expressive language, sequential memory and handling changes in their environment. The TEACCH method provides the individual with structure and organisation and relies on five basic principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Physical structure</b> refers to the actual layout or surroundings of a person's environment, such as a classroom, home, or group home. The physical boundaries are clearly defined and usually include activities like: work, play, snack, music, and transitioning.</li> <li>2. <b>Scheduling.</b> A visual schedule through words, photographs, drawings, or objects of reference is set up which indicates what the person will do, when and what happens next.</li> <li>3. <b>Work system</b> tells the person what is expected of him/her during an activity, how much is supposed to be accomplished, and what happens after the activity is completed. The goal is to teach the person to work independently. The work system is also organised in such a way that the person has little or no difficulty figuring out what to do. For example, the activity or task should be performed from top to bottom and from left to right.</li> <li>4. <b>Routine.</b> According to the TEACCH method, the most functional skill for autistic individuals is a routine which involves checking one's schedule and following the established work system. This routine can then be used throughout the person's lifetime and in multiple situations.</li> <li>5. <b>Visual structure</b> refers to visually-based cues regarding organisation, clarification, and instructions to assist the person in understanding what is expected of him/her. For example, a visual structure may involve using coloured containers to assist the person in sorting coloured materials into various groups or displaying an example of a stamped envelope when the person is asked to place stamps on envelopes.</li> </ol> <p>The TEACCH method is primarily used to assist the individual in better understanding his/her environment. The techniques described above are not faded out over time; but rather, they are to be consistently used across a variety of environments.</p>

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## Numicon

### Aims

- To develop fluency by using a visual, practical base to develop conceptual understanding and fluent recall.
- To develop mathematical reasoning through the use of concrete objects and spoken language to explain and justify.
- To develop children into confident problem-solvers.

**Numicon** is a multi-sensory mathematics teaching programme using visual Numicon images in a series of practical teaching activities currently comprising three stages – Foundation, Stage 1 and Stage 2. When Numicon patterns are arranged in order, pupils begin to notice important connections between numbers for instance that each number is one more than the last and one fewer than the next, odd and even numbers and place value. Numicon illustrates number bonds, addition and subtraction, place value, doubling and halving, estimation, division and multiplication. For more details visit [www.numicon.com](http://www.numicon.com)



## Sensory and Physical

### Zones of Regulation

#### Aims

'Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it (Charles Swindoll).

**Zones of Regulation** was created by Leah M. Kuypers.

The Zones is a systematic, cognitive behavioural approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete coloured zones. The Zones framework provides strategies to teach students to become more aware of and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their ability to problem solve conflicts.

By addressing underlying deficits in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition, the framework is designed to help move students toward independent regulation. The Zones of Regulation incorporates Social

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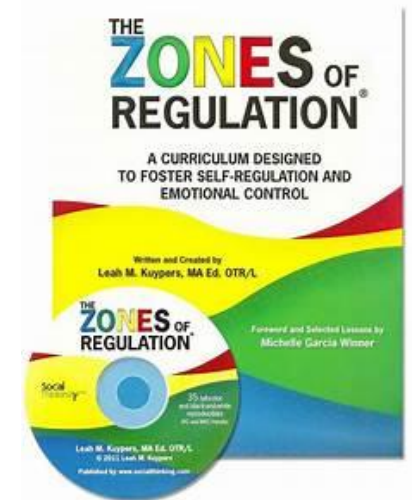
- If we are able to recognize when we are becoming less regulated, we are able to do something about it to manage our feelings and get ourselves to a healthy place. This comes naturally for some, but for others it is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. This is the goal of The Zones of Regulation (or Zones for short).

Thinking® ([www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)) concepts and numerous visuals to teach students to identify their feelings/level of alertness, understand how their behaviour impacts those around them, and learn what tools they can use to manage their feelings and states.

## **THE FOUR ZONES: OUR FEELINGS & STATES DETERMINE OUR ZONE**

- The **Red Zone** is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behaviour, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone.
- The **Yellow Zone** is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions, however one has more control when they are in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone.
- The **Green Zone** is used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the zone where optimal learning occurs.
- The **Blue Zone** is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.

The Zones can be compared to traffic signs. When given a green light or in the Green Zone, one is “good to go”. A yellow sign means be aware or take caution, which applies to the Yellow Zone. A red light or stop sign means stop, and when one is the Red Zone this often is the case. The Blue Zone can be compared to the rest area signs where one goes to rest or re-energize. All of the zones are natural to experience, but the framework focuses on teaching students how to recognize and manage their Zone based on the environment and its demands and the people around them. For example, when playing on the playground or in an active/competitive game, students are often experiencing a heightened internal state such as silliness or excitement and are in the Yellow Zone, but it may not need to be managed. However, if the environment is changed to the library where there are different expectations than the playground, students may still be in the Yellow Zone but have to manage it differently so their behaviour meets the expectations of the library setting.



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## Sensory Motor Circuits

### Aims:

- To implement a programme of physical activities that provide regular and controlled input to specific sensory-motor systems
- To enable pupils to be energised or calmed so that they can get the most out their day
- To alert pupils and focus concentration in readiness for learning
- To link activities/exercises to the Zone of Regulation for individuals

**Sensory Circuits** by Jane Horwood. Children with sensory integration difficulties often struggle to engage effectively with the physical, social, emotional and curricular challenges of the school day. Behavioural clues such as fidgeting, poor concentration, excessive physical contact or overall lethargy can indicate that a child is not fully available for learning.

The OT sets up a daily Sensory Circuits programme and advises on:

- sensory integration theory and the importance of successful sensory integration
- key sensory-motor terminology and provides pupil focused support
- sensory observation detective work to help staff identify when pupils need Sensory Circuits
- how to set up a Sensory Circuit, including issues such as staffing and equipment, and in class/outdoor activity ideas
- the review process to ensure the Sensory Circuit remains fresh, dynamic and fun
- a variety of sensory-motor strategies to use in the classroom and beyond
- the paperwork needed to support the programme and resources such as review questionnaires and a target sheet



## Sensory Play

### Aims:

- To build nerve connections in the brain
- To support the development of motor skills
- To supports language development
- To support 'scientific thinking' and problem solving
- To involve mindful activities which are beneficial for all children

From birth to early childhood, children use their five senses to explore and try to make sense of the world around them.

Opportunities for children to actively use their senses as they explore their world through 'sensory play' is crucial to brain development.

As adults, our senses provide us with vital information that we use to inform decision making thousands of times a day. We may take this ability for granted and barely notice it, but it's for this reason that helping children to learn about their own senses is so important.

### What is sensory play?

Picking things up and feeling their texture is what people often associate with sensory play, but it's about much more than touch.


Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates a child's senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, as well as anything which engages movement and balance.

Sensory play is only really limited by your own imagination, with of course some common sense being used around the materials and types of play appropriate for your child's age and ability.

With sensory play, there's much more going on than meets the eye. Sensory activities encourage children to explore and investigate. Furthermore, these activities support children to use the 'scientific method' of observing, forming a hypothesis,



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	<p>experimenting and making conclusions.</p> <p>Sensory activities also allow children to refine their thresholds for different sensory information, helping their brain to create stronger connections to sensory information and learn which are useful and which can be filtered out.</p> <p>For example, a child may find it difficult to play with other children when there is too much going on in their environment with conflicting noises or sights. Through sensory play, the child can learn to block out the noise which is not important and focus on the play which is occurring with their peer. Another example is a child who is particularly fussy with eating foods with a wet texture such as spaghetti.</p> <p>The use of sensory play can assist the child with touching, smelling and playing with the texture in an environment with little expectation. As the child develops trust and understanding of this texture it helps build positive pathways in the brain to say it is safe to engage with this food.</p>
<h2>Sensory Stories</h2> <p><b>Aims:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To enable enhanced learner comprehension of each aspect of the tale as it unfolds.</li> <li>▪ To bring the story to life.</li> <li>▪ To better enable the learners to play an active role.</li> <li>▪ To be enjoyable for each learner.</li> <li>▪ To provide sensory experiences that relate directly to the narrative.</li> <li>▪ To provide sensory experiences that relate directly to the individual.</li> <li>▪ To help develop the Learner's understanding of his or her world.</li> </ul>	<p>These are stories told through a combination of text and sensory stimuli, eg: a drop of water can be trickled down a pupil's face to give meaning to a piece of text that talks about someone crying.</p>  <p>Sensory stories offer the opportunity to practise interacting with stimuli in the safety of a story. Research has shown that stories hold a special power over us; within a story we are braver and can face topics that in real life we find overwhelming. A child who needs practice at interacting with sensory stimuli may feel more able to do so within the context of a story, and by repeating the story you build security. You can grade stimuli and increase the challenge when you revisit the tale. For example, if a child finds a sticky-touch experience challenging, you can begin with touching water, then gradually make the substance stickier each time you tell the story.</p> <p>Sensory stimulation is a vital part of our cognitive development. The more of our senses we use when we learn, quite literally the more of our brain gets involved in our learning, giving us better odds of understanding and remembering. In sensory stories, meaning is conveyed through language and sensory stimuli which to support spoken communication. Sensory stories can be used to add an extra dimension to creative writing and to stimulate the use of exciting vocabulary.</p>
<h2>Lego Therapy</h2> <p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To develop social competence through the development of social skills.</li> </ul>	<p>LEGO®-based therapy was created by psychologist Daniel LeGoff, who noticed that children with autism were more interested in interacting together when through the medium of LEGO® play materials. LEGO®-based therapy encourages children to interact with each other through collaborative play with construction toys; materials which are often highly motivating to children with ASD. Children are motivated to participate in the group intervention because they are interested in building, and therefore they are more willing to work together as a group. The shared focus on following visual instructions to build a model enables children to learn and practise social skills within a social environment they feel comfortable in.</p>

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- To practise skills such as turn-taking, listening, sharing ideas, communication, compromise, problem solving and shared attention.
- To play the role of an 'engineer', a 'supplier' or a 'builder' and together follow pictorial instructions to build a model.

Sessions are structured and rule governed, and children take it in turns to play one of three roles (the builder, the supplier or the engineer). Sessions consist of two parts; working together to build a set with instructions and 'freestyle' building. Freestyle building provides opportunities for more creative, naturalistic group play. Children have the opportunity to work towards rewards throughout the sessions and an emphasis is placed on promoting positive social behaviour.



## Social, Emotional and Mental Health

### Forest School

#### Aims:

Children learn to

- assess
- appreciate
- take risks
- make sensible, informed decisions about how to tackle the activities and experiences they encounter.

Forest school is outdoor, nature-based learning that focuses on the holistic development of the child. Rather than being adult-led, each child chooses and tailors the activity to suit them, while adults observe their preferences and development. Despite the name, forest school can take place in any natural outdoor environment, which may be on school premises or in the local area. Forest schools work with the resources they've got. Forest school helps children develop many skills that are hard to teach in the classroom. It is physical so it encourages children to be active, with lots of activities to develop both fine and gross motor skills.

Children learn to be self-sufficient and take care of themselves, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem. Through trial and error they learn to deal with failure and develop the resilience to keep trying: a vital skill in the classroom as well as outside. Forest school ties in with many areas of the national curriculum. For example, being outdoors year-round helps children learn about weather and the seasons, which are part of the programme of study in geography, studying mini beasts and plant life relates to the science curriculum, and working on tasks like den building and woodwork links with design and technology.

Research has shown that children benefit from being outdoors and this improves mental and spiritual health, communication skills and social relationships. Connecting with nature helps children feel part of the world and is calming.

Because forest school learning is child-directed, the scope of the activities that can take place is enormous. Typical activities include:

- Sensory walks
- Foraging
- Shelter building
- Mini beast hunts
- Tree climbing



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campfire cooking</li> <li>• Woodwork</li> <li>• Nature art</li> <li>• Games like Hide and Seek</li> <li>• Fire building and lighting</li> <li>• Puddle and mud jumping</li> </ul>
<p><b>ELSA</b></p> <p><b>Aims:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The main goal of ELSA intervention is to support children’s emotional challenges.</li> <li>▪ ELSA helps pupils understand and manage their emotions, develop problem-solving skills, and build resilience.</li> <li>▪ This intervention is particularly beneficial for children experiencing anxiety, bereavement, separation issues, or other emotional difficulties.</li> </ul>	<p>ELSA intervention is a structured emotional support program in schools delivered by trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistants to help children develop emotional skills and cope with challenges.</p> <p>How ELSA Sessions Work</p> <p>ELSA sessions are typically individualized and structured, often lasting six sessions (about half a school term), though this can be extended if necessary. A typical session includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A welcome and emotional check-in to gauge how the child feels.</li> <li>• A warm-up or icebreaker activity to create a relaxed and engaging environment.</li> <li>• The main activity, focusing on the child’s emotional learning target.</li> <li>• Review of previous skills to reinforce learning.</li> <li>• A relaxation exercise and a brief review of the session’s learning.</li> <li>• Homework or practice tasks, such as using breathing techniques to manage anger.</li> </ul> <p>Sessions are designed to be fun, engaging, and supportive, helping children gradually develop independence in managing their emotions.</p> <p>Research and practice have shown that ELSA interventions can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve children’s emotional wellbeing and resilience.</li> <li>• Enhance social skills and problem-solving abilities.</li> <li>• Support children in coping with life challenges and school-related stress.</li> </ul>