



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
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AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Targets From Previous Assignment	How I Have Addressed These Targets Within This Assignment
1. Reading less from cue cards would aid the engagement with the audience.	N/A
2. Continue to develop a critical approach, offering the opposing view when relevant.	Within this assignment I have ensured to be critical and offer opposing views when considering theories, opinions and sources.

ECAD5011 – The Learner: Who am I teaching?

Choose an intervention that supports the learning and development of a pupil/group of pupils. Reflect critically on its potential and the possible challenges that may arise.

Appendix A presents the pupil profile of Idris, a 9-year-old student in a Year 4 classroom in Wales. His pupil profile provides an overview of the key characteristics that have emerged throughout his school life so far, offering insight into his physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social development. The profile indicates that Idris struggles with academic tasks, particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics, but engages well with physical activities and practical tasks. He enjoys independent play and assisting adults and peers with hands-on classroom responsibilities. However, his academic performance does not meet the standard of his peers. Notably, Idris often prefers working on a computer or spending quiet time outside the classroom when faced with challenging tasks, as he tends to experience 'bad moods' in response to difficulty.

In terms of physical development, Idris is well-advanced, particularly in gross motor skills, allowing him to engage in activities like jumping and turning. He is independent in self-care routines, such as dressing himself after swimming and sports lessons. However, his fine motor skills are less developed, as he continues to print rather than use joined-up handwriting, possibly indicating a preference for simpler techniques or a need for further development. Cognitively, Idris can recognise time on an analogue clock at key intervals, such as the hour, quarter past, and half past, demonstrating a growing understanding of numerical and time-related concepts. However, he struggles with sustained concentration, which may affect his ability to engage in and complete academic tasks effectively. Emotionally, Idris is sensitive to his own performance and often becomes disappointed when he is unable to complete tasks successfully or provides incorrect answers. This suggests self-awareness and a desire to succeed but also indicates a need for support in building resilience. Despite that, he is highly motivated by adult approval, making positive reinforcement an effective strategy for encouraging engagement and perseverance. Linguistically, Idris has a wide spoken vocabulary and communicates effectively. Conversely, he struggles to maintain focus during reading and writing tasks, which may present challenges in literacy development. Despite

this, he understands humor in verbal communication and can express his opinions on personal preferences, indicating strong oral communication skills. Socially, Idris is respectful toward adults and peers but prefers working independently rather than in groups. Encouraging structured peer interactions could help him develop teamwork skills. Overall, Idris has strengths in physical activity, spoken language, and social respect but faces challenges with concentration, emotional resilience, and collaboration. Providing tailored support in these areas through targeted interventions could help him further develop his academic and social skills, ensuring a more well-rounded and holistic learning experience across the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022).

Reflecting on the challenges related to emotional resilience outlined in Idris' pupil profile, it can be argued that the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) intervention may be beneficial in supporting his emotional development. The ELSA intervention, developed by educational psychologist Sheila Burton (Burton, 2008), aims to help children develop emotional resilience, self-regulation, and social skills. Additionally, it provides learners with strategies to cope with anxiety, bereavement, and self-esteem issues, which may contribute to long-term emotional well-being and academic engagement (Butcher et al., 2013, p. 24). Given Idris' tendency to become disheartened by mistakes and his strong desire for adult approval, it is possible that ELSA could offer a structured approach to building emotional resilience and managing frustration effectively. Research suggests that emotional literacy interventions can enhance children's ability to cope with setbacks, fostering a more positive learning mindset (Parker et al., 2016, p. 214). By participating in ELSA sessions, Idris may develop a growth mindset, potentially allowing him to reframe mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures. Furthermore, these sessions incorporate positive reinforcement, which could help shift his motivation from seeking external validation to developing intrinsic self-confidence (Qualter et al., 2009, p. 312). It is also possible that Idris' difficulties with concentration exacerbate his emotional challenges. Studies indicate that self-regulation strategies, a key component of ELSA, may enhance focus and reduce anxiety in pupils who experience attention-related difficulties (Davis and Levine, 2013, p. 78). Even so, it is important to acknowledge that while research indicates positive outcomes associated with ELSA, some studies have identified limitations in measuring its effectiveness. For instance, Butcher, Cook, and Holder-Spriggs (2013) noted that existing measures of emotional literacy may lack sensitivity, making it challenging to assess the true impact of the intervention. Throughout this work, I will critically evaluate a range of arguments and sources to assess the effectiveness of the ELSA intervention in supporting Idris' emotional well-being and academic engagement. Additionally, I will examine its role in promoting emotional literacy, which has been linked to academic success and social integration (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406).

Holistic development in children refers to integrated growth across multiple domains—physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic—ensuring a well-rounded education (Lindon, 2012, p. 45). This comprehensive approach enables children to acquire essential skills, knowledge, and emotional resilience necessary to navigate an increasingly complex world. Central to this framework is emotional development, encompassing a child's ability to comprehend, express, and regulate emotions, thereby influencing their capacity to form relationships and navigate social contexts (Dowling, 2014, p. 87). Emotional literacy, defined as the ability to recognise, understand, and articulate emotions, is fundamental for effective communication, empathy, and conflict resolution among children and later in life (Keenan and Evans, 2009, p. 102). The significance of emotional development in holistic learning is well-established in developmental psychology. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that emotional security and belonging are essential for developing higher-order cognitive and self-actualisation processes (Maslow, 1943, p. 372). Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory demonstrates that early developmental stages, such as trust versus mistrust and autonomy versus shame, are directly linked to emotional experiences and secure attachments (Erikson, 1950, p. 219). Similarly, John Bowlby's attachment theory highlights the formative role of early caregiver relationships in shaping emotional resilience and social competence (Bowlby, 1969, p. 140). Deficiencies in emotional literacy have been associated with behavioral issues, social withdrawal, and academic

underperformance (Roffey, 2008, p. 33). These perspectives align with Maslow's assertion that fulfilling emotional and psychological needs is essential before children can engage effectively in learning and self-improvement (Maslow, 1943, p. 372). Supporting this, Rose, Gilbert, and Richards (2016, p. 52) emphasize that developing emotional literacy in early childhood is fundamental to children's overall well-being, enabling them to build resilience, form secure relationships, and effectively manage their emotions in various social contexts. The Curriculum for Wales underscores the importance of developing emotional intelligence through its Health and Well-being Area of Learning, promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and positive relationships as fundamental skills for lifelong learning (Welsh Government, 2020, p. 12). Research suggests that children with strong emotional literacy are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, concentration, and problem-solving skills, all of which contribute to their ability to access and engage with the broader curriculum (Roffey, 2008, p. 33). Furthermore, Estyn's thematic report on 'Support for learners' mental health and emotional wellbeing' highlights the critical role of educational settings in fostering emotional development, noting that effective support mechanisms can lead to improved academic outcomes and social integration (Estyn, 2021, p. 48). This aligns with the broader educational emphasis on nurturing emotional literacy to facilitate holistic child development. This emphasis on emotional literacy and well-being is particularly relevant to Idris, as his difficulties in managing frustration and his tendency to become disheartened by mistakes highlight the need for targeted support in developing emotional resilience and self-regulation.

The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) intervention was developed to address deficits in emotional literacy within educational settings for children and young people (ages 0–25). ELSA is a school-based programme designed to equip schools with the capacity to support students' emotional well-being using internal resources (Burton, 2008, p. 50). The intervention focuses on training teaching assistants—aiming for at least one trained ELSA in each school in Wales—to deliver targeted support to students experiencing emotional challenges, with a focus on self-esteem, anxiety, bereavement, social skills, and emotional regulation (Burton et al., 2010, p. 89). Research indicates that ELSA contributes to significant improvements in students' emotional literacy, resilience, and overall mental health (Butcher et al., 2013, p. 22). It can be argued that this evidence-based approach would help ensure that Idris receives the targeted emotional support he needs, enabling him to develop resilience and essential emotional literacy skills that are crucial for his well-being and success in academic tasks. This, in turn, directly addresses the concerns raised in his pupil profile regarding his emotional development.

To support Idris's emotional development and help him manage his disappointment when he struggles with tasks or gets answers wrong, I suggest that the ELSA intervention be implemented using a trained Learning Support Assistant (LSA). The LSA could deliver structured one-to-one sessions focused on developing Idris's emotional resilience, self-regulation, and coping strategies for managing frustration (Burton, 2008, p. 52). These sessions could take place in the school's community room, providing a quiet and supportive environment away from the classroom to help Idris feel comfortable and engaged. To ensure that Idris does not miss any teaching time, I suggest scheduling each session during registration time. The intervention could run for six weeks, with one 30-minute session per week, allowing time for gradual progress while ensuring consistency in support. Each session could include activities such as identifying emotions, where Idris would use emotion cards or a feelings thermometer to recognize and label his emotions, helping him articulate his disappointment more effectively. He could also engage in growth mindset exercises, such as discussing real-life stories of individuals who overcame challenges, to reframe failure as part of the learning process. To build self-regulation skills, Idris might practice breathing techniques and mindfulness activities, such as guided relaxation or sensory breaks, to help him calm down when feeling frustrated. Additionally, he could take part in problem-solving tasks, where he reflects on difficult situations and explores alternative responses, fostering a sense of control over his emotions (Butcher et al., 2013, p. 24). A key focus could be on self-talk strategies, encouraging Idris to replace negative thoughts ("I can't

do this”) with positive affirmations (“I am learning and improving”). I suggest that the classroom teacher collaborate with the LSA to reinforce these strategies within daily lessons by setting small, achievable goals for Idris and praising his efforts rather than just results and successes. Parents could also be involved, using similar language and strategies at home to promote consistency. This holistic approach would ensure that Idris receives comprehensive support, both in and outside of school, to help him build emotional resilience and enhance his learning experience.

The ELSA intervention offers several strengths that make it an appealing option for supporting pupils like Idris, who face significant emotional and social challenges. One key strength is the personalised approach it offers, tailoring sessions to meet the specific emotional and social needs of each pupil. This individualised support allows for targeted intervention that addresses particular difficulties, which I suggest is crucial for Idris, who struggles with emotional regulation and resilience. By focusing on Idris’ specific needs, the ELSA intervention increases the likelihood of meaningful progression in learning across the Curriculum for Wales (Powell et al., 2020). However, it is important to note that this personalised approach requires a high level of staff expertise. If ELSA assistants are not sufficiently trained or lack the experience to handle complex emotional issues amongst school children, the intervention may not achieve its intended outcomes and may cause undue detriment to the learner (Merrell et al., 2011). Although research generally supports the effectiveness of personalised interventions, the effectiveness of the ELSA intervention hinges on the quality of the training provided to the staff, meaning schools must carefully manage this aspect to ensure it delivers optimal benefits for pupils like Idris. An example of effective personalisation practice that I have observed during my PTE2 experience was an ELSA session where the assistant, aware of the learner’s grief, tailored the intervention to address emotional processing. By incorporating relevant emotion-focused activities and guided discussions, the assistant facilitated the expression of grief, fostering emotional resilience and providing the learner with coping strategies specific to their needs.

Another strength of the ELSA program is its focus on social and emotional learning (SEL), which has been shown to improve both emotional well-being and academic outcomes. According to the Education Endowment Foundation (2020), SEL interventions can lead to up to four months of additional progress in academic performance, as well as improvements in behaviour and emotional regulation. I believe that by improving Idris’s ability to manage his emotions and build stronger social skills, ELSA can help him engage more meaningfully in classroom activities and academic tasks, ultimately benefiting his performance and progression. The evidence supporting SEL is robust, with studies consistently showing that programs like ELSA positively impact both emotional and academic development (Estyn, 2021). However, while the theoretical benefits of SEL are clear, it is important to question how effectively the SEL principles are integrated into the everyday school environment, including within the classroom. If SEL strategies are not reinforced consistently across all areas of school life, their impact may be limited. As noted by Powell et al. (2020), SEL interventions are most effective when they are part of a whole-school approach, and their benefits can diminish if they are isolated to specific sessions or not embedded in the broader curriculum. Therefore, a recommendation to Idris’ class teacher could be to introduce emotional literacy micro-lessons twice weekly to compliment learners’ ELSA intervention effectiveness. Examples of this could be seen in School X during my PTE1 placement, where learners, in both Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, would complete a daily ‘check-in’ against an emotion chart, encouraging learners to recognise emotions pictorially.

The potential for early intervention is another strength of the ELSA intervention. Addressing emotional difficulties and areas for development at a young age, as ELSA does, can help prevent more serious mental health problems later in childhood and adolescence. The Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition (2017) emphasises the significance of early emotional support in preventing future mental health issues. By providing Idris with the tools to manage his feelings of disappointment, ELSA could help build resilience, ultimately benefiting his social

and academic development in the long term. Even so, it is important to consider that while early intervention is beneficial, it requires ongoing support to be effective. I suggest that Idris's emotional skills need to be continually reinforced within the classroom and throughout his school life to ensure long-lasting effects. Research by Durlak et al. (2011) suggests that while early interventions can lead to short-term improvements, sustained positive outcomes, as mentioned previously, require ongoing support and integration into the wider school culture.

Despite these strengths, the ELSA intervention presents certain challenges that must be critically considered. One of the most significant challenges is the financial cost of implementation. Training staff to become certified ELSAs requires a considerable investment, which could be a barrier for schools, particularly those with limited budgets (Barker & Jones, 2016). The cost of training, combined with the resources needed for sessions, such as flashcards, visual aids, and structured activities, makes the intervention less accessible for schools unable to allocate sufficient funds (DfE, 2019). In some cases, schools may need to rely on existing staff, which could limit the number of pupils receiving support or compromise the quality of the intervention. While evidence suggests that investment in staff training can lead to long-term benefits, including improved emotional well-being and academic engagement (Adams & Lenz, 2014), financial constraints remain a critical challenge that must be acknowledged when considering the scalability and sustainability of ELSA interventions.

The time commitment required to deliver ELSA sessions presents a significant challenge, as pupils like Idris may miss valuable academic instruction. Research highlights that while emotional support is crucial for well-being and learning readiness (Durlak et al., 2011), missing core lessons can hinder academic progress, particularly for pupils who require additional support in key subjects (EEF, 2021). This raises a critical concern about balancing pastoral interventions with curriculum demands. Although ELSA aims to enhance emotional resilience, there is a risk that withdrawing pupils from lessons may inadvertently widen attainment gaps, particularly for disadvantaged learners (DfE, 2019). Furthermore, research suggests that interventions must be carefully structured to avoid disengagement or stigma, as pupils may feel singled out if they regularly leave lessons for support (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2013). Estyn (2021) emphasises that pastoral interventions should complement rather than conflict with academic learning, reinforcing the need for strategic timetabling. To mitigate this, I propose integrating ELSA sessions into non-core teaching and learning time such as registration time or assemblies, ensuring pupils receive essential emotional support without compromising their academic attainment.

Finally, the effectiveness of the ELSA intervention is highly dependent on the quality, training, and consistency of staff delivering the sessions. A strong, trusting relationship between the learner and the assistant is essential for fostering emotional resilience and engagement (Perry, McIntyre & O'Donnell, 2016). To ensure a high standard of training, the *Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Network*, developed by educational psychologists, provides a structured training programme to equip staff with the necessary skills to support pupils effectively (ELSA Network, 2024). Research suggests that well-trained ELSAs can significantly enhance emotional literacy interventions, improving pupil outcomes and overall well-being (Merrell et al., 2011). However, challenges remain. Schools with limited budgets may struggle to fund ongoing training, potentially leading to inconsistencies in intervention quality (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2013). Additionally, staff turnover can disrupt the continuity of support, reducing the effectiveness of the intervention if new staff are not promptly trained (DfE, 2019). Some critics argue that while ELSA offers valuable targeted support, without a whole-school approach to emotional literacy, it risks being a short-term solution rather than a sustainable strategy (Weare & Nind, 2011). To mitigate these challenges, I suggest that Idris' school ensure that all ELSAs receive ongoing professional development and consider embedding emotional literacy principles into the broader curriculum (EEF, 2021). This would help create a school-wide culture of emotional well-being, enhancing the long-term impact of the intervention.

In conclusion, I believe that the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) intervention offers significant potential to support the learning and development of Idris, particularly in terms of his emotional development. By providing Idris with personalised, professional support, ELSA targets the development of his emotional resilience, self-regulation, and coping strategies, which can positively impact Idris' emotional well-being and academic engagement both in and out of the classroom. Research supports the effectiveness of ELSA in improving emotional literacy, which aligns with the Curriculum for Wales' focus on emotional intelligence as a key skill for lifelong learning. Additionally, early intervention through ELSA can help prevent more serious emotional difficulties later in life, providing long-term benefits to both social and academic development for pupils like Idris. However, there are notable challenges to consider. The financial cost of training staff and providing resources can limit the accessibility of the intervention, particularly in schools with constrained budgets. Time commitments for ELSA sessions may also lead to pupils missing valuable academic content, potentially affecting their overall progression in learning. Furthermore, the success of the intervention relies heavily on the consistency and quality of the staff delivering the sessions. Disruptions in staff continuity or insufficient training may reduce the intervention's effectiveness. To address these challenges and promote the wider benefits of the intervention, schools could consider expanding ELSA across the whole school, as an integral part of the whole-class teaching timetable, ensuring all pupils have access to emotional literacy support and development. Additionally, initiatives to promote parental engagement in emotional literacy development through the process of providing them with strategies to reinforce emotional learning at home would strengthen the intervention's impact. With careful planning, appropriate resources, and ongoing staff development, ELSA can offer valuable support to pupils like Idris. By addressing potential barriers, schools can ensure the intervention effectively promotes emotional literacy and contributes to the holistic development of pupils, enhancing both their emotional well-being and academic success.

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Appendix

- **Appendix A**
Pupil Profile – Idris



Pupil Profile

This is Idris. Idris is 9 years old and is a year 4 pupil. He has one sister called Ella who is in Reception class at the same school.

Idris doesn't enjoy class work, apart from the physical and sports lessons. He hates reading, writing and maths, but is happy to complete activities on a tablet or a computer. If he isn't allowed to do this, Idris sometimes sulks and is in a bad mood. Then, he asks Mrs James, the class teacher, for permission to go out of the classroom to have some quiet time for himself.

Mrs James is concerned that Idris's academic work is not of the same standard as that of his peers. However, he clearly enjoys practical activities, especially if there is an opportunity to go outside. He loves helping Mrs James with tasks such as tidying up the classroom, photocopying work or watering the flowers in the school garden. He is used to helping his mother look after the garden at home.

When Idris refuses to complete his work, he doesn't interrupt the class, he just sits quietly dreaming of his favourite football team. He likes watching football matches on TV at weekends, but prefers kicking a ball alone on the yard rather than playing with someone else or as a member of a team.

While reflecting on how she can support Idris to develop further, Mrs James considers some of his main characteristics which include:

Physical Development

- Well developed gross motor skills e.g. jump, turn, perform tasks in physical lessons
- Prints when writing rather than using joined-up handwriting
- Dresses himself after swimming and sports lessons

Cognitive Development

- Recognizes time on the hour, quarter past and half past on an analogue clock
- Finds it hard to concentrate for long periods of time

Emotional Development

- Shows disappointment if he fails to perform tasks or gets wrong answers
- Is keen to please adults

Language Development

- Has a wide spoken vocabulary but has difficulty concentrating when reading and writing
- Begins to understand and use humour orally
- Expresses opinions on likes and dislikes

Social Development

- Is respectful towards other adults and children
- Enjoys working alone rather than with others