**Appendix 16: Sheila Burton’s letter to headteachers, July 2013 (adapted for my LA)**

[On LA letterhead]

September, 2013

Dear Headteacher/ELSA Line Manager

**ELSA Programme Planning**

In a recent meeting of the ELSA Working Party we discussed the expectation of ELSAs in planning their work and identifying specific outcome targets for the children they work with. It would appear during the course of our supervision of ELSAs there is significant variations in practice. We are also aware that not all line managers have been able to attend an ELSA launch meeting or the final afternoon of the initial training where expectations of ELSA practice are made more explicit. We thought it would, therefore, be helpful if we summarised some of the key responsibilities that line managers need to consider in overseeing the implementation of ELSA work in their school.

Before an ELSA is trained the head teacher signs an agreement that explicitly notes the expectation that ELSAs will be allocated the equivalent of a day a week to carry out the role (or half a day in small village schools of approximately 100 pupils or less). This is to ensure that the ELSAs have adequate opportunity to develop their skills in the role. The expectation is that some of this time is to be used for planning. We hope that line managers will enable ELSAs to have sufficient time to fulfil the expectations of the role and support them to maintain a realistic workload at any one time.

The ELSA model has been designed as a proactive intervention whereby those in the role help children and young people to understand, develop and reflect on the way they manage their feelings, behaviour and relationships. In this way pupils are helped to develop coping strategies and make positive choices about how they manage challenges. In order to do this ELSAs need support to identify SMART programme aims that could be considered achievable within 6 -12 weeks. They then have the responsibility to write session plans week by week that build towards the identified programme aims. Just as teachers couldn’t be expected to teach effectively without any lesson planning, neither can ELSAs work to best effect in an ad hoc, unplanned way. Since ELSAs are not qualified teachers they are likely to need support to identify appropriate programme aims. Educational psychologists can offer some guidance through supervision but it is the teaching staff in schools that are best placed to help ELSAs identify realistic programme aims when they begin working with a new pupil. Further guidance is available on the ELSA website ([www.elsanetwork.org](http://www.elsanetwork.org)) in the ‘Good Practice’ section.

When programme aims have been achieved it is sometimes appropriate for an ELSA to continue seeing a pupil for a reduced amount of time or with reducing frequency to help them consolidate and apply new skills. This aspect of the work should take only a small part of the ELSA’s time and would not require specific planning.

Sorting out incidents or applying disciplinary action does not fall within the parameters of the ELSA role and is not, therefore, something to be done within ELSA sessions. Other members of staff do not always understand this and, therefore, ELSAs will need the support of their line manager to help colleagues appreciate the nature of the work they do. To help with this we enclosed a leaflet produced by Hampshire ELSA Steering Group where ELSA originated entitled ‘Tips for Schools’. This lists ways in which schools can get the best out of their investment in ELSAs.

We are always happy to be contacted by phone or email if there is anything about the ELSA role that you would find it helpful to discuss with us. Thank you for taking the time to read and consider the points raised.

With best wishes

Mary Leighton, Alison Shirley and Bronwen Ozanne

ELSA Working Party