



Eton End

# ELSA Policy (Including EYFS)

ETON END SCHOOL  
35 Eton Road, Datchet



## Induction Policy and Procedures (Including EYFS)

<b>Relevant Statutory Regulations:</b>	Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 Prevent Duty guidance 2023 Early Years Foundation Stage 2025
<b>Nominated member of SLT responsible for the policy:</b>	Zoe Logan
<b>Updated:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2025
<b>Date of next review:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2027

### Introduction

An Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) is a specialist teaching assistant(s) who has been trained by an educational psychologist to support children experiencing emotional or social difficulties. The ELSA programme recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. ELSAs can help children learn to understand their emotions better and respect the feelings of those around them. They can provide time and space for children to think about the challenges they face and how they might manage them.

At Eton End Dawn Clark is our ELSA. She has been trained through RBWM.

### Who is ELSA for?

ELSA is for child who may have temporary or longer-term emotional needs. These could be related to:

- Recognising their own emotions
- Anxiety and worries
- Anger management
- Conflict
- Self-esteem, confidence, positive thinking
- Feelings and emotions
- Social skills, friendships and relationships
- Understanding and regulating emotions

- Loss, bereavement and family separation
- Changes in their life
- Anything that is having a detrimental effect on their ability to learn and/or function within school



## How does ELSA work?

Children are usually referred for ELSA support by their Form Teacher, SENDCo or sometimes Social Services. Parents are consulted as part of this process. The referral will identify a key area to focus on and one or two realistic targets for the child to work towards.

When a slot becomes available, children will meet with our ELSA for 30 - 45 minutes each week.

*It is important to note that ELSA is not an ongoing programme of support although there may be occasions when we are able to offer more than one programme to a child.*

Sessions are designed to be enjoyable and fun and may take the form of games, craft, role-play, cartoon strips, videos and puppets depending on the child's preferences. Some programmes are delivered individually and some in a small group where children can learn from each other's experiences.

## What happens in an ELSA session?

Most ELSA programmes will last for 6 weeks. The child will learn some specific new skills or coping strategies to help them through a situation in order that they can deal with their emotions. Clear programme aims (SMART targets) will be set early on and each session has an objective - something the pupil can understand or achieve.

The ELSA is not there to 'fix' the child. For children with complex or long-term needs, it's unrealistic to expect that ELSA support will resolve all their difficulties. Change is a long-term process that needs everyone's help.

A typical session will allow time to:

- check how the child is feeling;
- review what was done last time to find out what the child has remembered or what may need to be revisited;
- to focus on the new session objective using interesting games or activities;
- have a rounded ending that prepares the child for their return to class.

## Communicating with parents

At Eton End we discuss ELSA as an option with parents. If parents are keen to pursue ELSA, they are written to parents to, explaining the process and cost implications. Parents may contact the ELSA if there is anything about their child they would like to discuss (see 'Respecting privacy' below).

Leaflets about the work of ELSAs are available from the ELSA.



## Individual needs

All children should be nurtured in accordance with their individual needs. There will always be children in schools facing life challenges that detract from their ability to engage with learning, and some will require greater support to increase their emotional literacy than others. 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. The majority of ELSA work is expected to be delivered on an individual basis, but sometimes small group work will be appropriate, especially in the areas of social and friendship skills.

## Prioritising pupils

At Eton End the ELSA in consultation with Form Teachers, and/or SENDCo/ Social Services, prioritises pupils who may benefit from support.

Sometimes ELSA support is not the appropriate form of support. In these instances, the SENDCo will discuss other support/interventions which might be considered with staff/parents.

At Eton End, our policy is not to automatically continue ELSA support for a child who may have been receiving it at a different school. We believe in a period of settling and adjustment for new children of at least half a term, to monitor and observe the child in their new setting.

## Prioritising aims ('Smart' targets)

The priorities for an individual pupil will be identified in discussion with other staff in the school. These priorities will inform the setting of aims for the programme. Where possible it is also helpful to have pupil input on target setting. Working on what is important to them is likely to increase the impact of the support. With the programme aims in mind the ELSA will plan support sessions to facilitate the pupil in developing new skills and coping strategies that allow them to manage social and emotional demands more effectively.

## Planned programmes of support

ELSA support is much more than having a friendly chat with an anxious pupil. It is also much more than problem-solving some difficulties a young person is having. ELSA support is about developing a respectful relationship in which the young person is enabled to think about their situation without feeling judged or criticised. It is intended to be short-term purposeful support, usually to help develop new skills or coping strategies that enable the pupil to experience greater success. In order to know when an intervention should end,

ELSAs need to work to specific programme aims that are realistic. These need to be stated clearly enough to know whether or not they have been achieved. Ideally they should be achievable within a school term. Sessions are planned with activities that support the programme aims.



## Having a consistent time and place to work

We all like some consistency of routine. Most of us are more comfortable in a familiar environment. Familiarity helps us to relax. By providing a regular time and place for a pupil to meet with the ELSA, the pupil receives the message that they are important. If contact is irregular and in different places, the pupil is likely to feel that they are being fitted in rather than prioritised.

## Frequency and duration of support

A good starting point is to think of a programme lasting for between half a term to a term. This will encourage the work to have a clear focus. There will be some variation depending upon the needs and circumstances of the pupils. Generally, ELSAs deliver support programmes on a weekly basis. Regularity is important as it provides consistency and gives pupils a clear message that they matter. How long each session should last should depend upon the developmental needs of each pupil, not on convenience of school timetables. Younger children usually have more limited attention span and some may engage well for only twenty minutes. Often half an hour may be a good length of time for individual work and up to an hour for a group.

## Communicating unavoidable change

There will be times when plans have to be changed. If an ELSA cannot meet a pupil at the arranged time, it is important for that to be communicated to the pupil in advance. Turning up to be told the ELSA isn't there, or waiting to be collected by an ELSA who doesn't turn up, is very undervaluing for the pupil. If the ELSA phones in sick it is helpful to ask someone to specifically give a message of apology to any pupils he/she was planning to see. This helps to reduce any disappointment for those pupils.

## Respecting privacy

***The following guidance does not apply to safeguarding issues, where the ELSA is obliged to share information out of concern for either the pupil's safety or the safety of others.***

In their work ELSAs need to respect the privacy of pupils and their families. With the development of a trusting relationship an ELSA may find that a pupil talks freely and in detail about incidents or situations that are troubling them. There may be times when the ELSA thinks it would be helpful for other members of staff to be aware of a child's concerns or a family situation. Sharing information should be done with sensitivity to the youngsters and their families. For example, to say that a young person is anxious because of some current parental conflict in the home is respectful. To divulge personal details of who said or did what to whom verges on gossip and should be avoided. It may sometimes be appropriate for an ELSA to talk with the pupil about what they would like to share and to secure their agreement so that their trust is maintained. The key guideline is for ELSAs to ask themselves who needs to know and how much they need to know, always keeping the best interests of the pupil in

mind. It is not always in the best interests of a pupil for an ELSA to observe the strict code of confidentiality that applies to counselling or psychotherapy.



## **Ongoing support of pupils**

It is not intended that an ELSA work indefinitely with a pupil. If realistic intervention outcomes are identified at the start of the programme, it should be clear when those outcomes have been achieved. At this point the normal sessions should end. In some cases, however, a different kind of work may continue more informally, involving a lower level of contact. Some pupils may need to regularly 'touch base' with the ELSA to review their progress. They may need the opportunity to talk about difficulties as they learn to apply with greater consistency the new coping strategies they have developed. New learning will rarely follow an even path. It is helpful however to gradually reduce contact as time goes on. This will avoid over-dependence and encourage the pupil to develop supportive relationships with other adults in school, especially classroom support assistants.

## **ELSA as a time limited intervention**

Rather than using an ELSA as part of a pupil's permanent support structure, it is better to see the intervention as time-limited to assist the development of specific skills, usually up to a term. Once new skills are acquired, time needs to be allowed for consolidation. Further intervention towards additional aims could be considered later if desired. As an ELSA is part of the permanent staff within school, informal contact can be maintained.

## **Change as a result of ELSA intervention**

It needs to be appreciated that change cannot necessarily be achieved rapidly and is dependent upon the context and complexity of the presenting issues. For pupils with complex or long-term needs it is unrealistic to expect ELSA intervention to resolve all their difficulties.

## **Supporting - not fixing**

It is important to remember, ELSAs are not there to fix children's problems. They provide emotional support and equip children with some skills to manage social and emotional demands more effectively.

Our ELSA establishes a warm, respectful relationship with a pupil and provides a reflective space where they can share their thoughts and feelings honestly.

The ELSA uses basic counselling skills (including active listening, problem clarification, open questions, thinking aloud, verbal and non-verbal prompts) to guide helping conversations. It is important to understand that change cannot be achieved rapidly and is dependent on the context and complexity of a child's issues. Some concerns may require more specialist support.



## Keeping psychological needs in mind

It is easy to become focused on trying to change unhelpful behaviours without thinking sufficiently about the psychological need the behaviour might be expressing. Behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. It is helpful to think that children are not setting out to be difficult, but are trying to solve a problem they perceive. Their perceptions may need to alter through a process of reflection.

## The ELSA role should not be confused with behaviour management

ELSA time is not meant for sorting out incidents or telling children off. ELSA work should be fun - that's what makes the difference. It isn't a reward for bad behaviour. By building a positive relationship with challenging children, the ELSA may be able to help them think about and reduce their troublesome behaviour.

### ELSAs can make a difference in school when:

- Staff understand and support ELSA work.
- Pupils are released from lessons regularly to enable continuity of support.
- There is a consistent, private space in which to work, free from interruptions.
- They have relevant background information on the child.
- They have regular time for planning and delivering programmes.
- They aren't given too many children to work with at one time.
- They liaise regularly with teachers to discuss progress.
- They attend supervision regularly to get new ideas and develop their skills

## Cost implications

Parents are not charged for ELSA sessions.

## School Procedures

The process follows:

- Need identified by a member of staff / Social Services
- Discussion with ELSA and SENDCo
- Discussion with parents
- Timetable slot agreed by ELSA and Form Teacher
- 6-week sessions begin – 30-40 minute session per week
- 6-week review with parents
- Sessions finish or the cycle begins again

## Monitoring, Evaluation & Review:

The ELSA initiative was set up with recognition from the outset that ELSAs should receive regular professional supervision from an educational psychologist. At Eton End school, our ELSA receives regular supervision with an educational psychologist at their supervision group, which is held twice a term. In the group are ELSAs from other schools in the local area.

Our ELSA also meets with the Deputy Head Pastoral for supervision meetings on a weekly basis.

The training and development of ELSAs is an ongoing process and wisdom is required to recognise when issues are beyond the level of expertise that could reasonably be expected of an ELSA. The supervising psychologist will be able to offer advice on suitability or nature of ELSA involvement in complex cases.

