



## Shottermill Junior School

### ELSA Policy

<b>Governors Responsible:</b>	<b>Jack Robson</b>
<b>Nominated Lead Members of Staff:</b>	<b>SENCO Mrs Z Jones</b>
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	<b>Spring 2028 (Every 2 years)</b>

Our ELSA Policy builds on key safeguarding documentation including the latest versions of DfE statutory guidance: **Keeping Children Safe in Education** and **Working Together to Keep Children Safe**. This policy has been developed by our school in conjunction with input from Surrey ELSA expert practitioners and through guidance available through two helpful information websites for professionals and parents:

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk>

<https://www.elsanetwork.org>

#### **What is ELSA?**

ELSAs are Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. They are usually Teaching Assistants who have received specific additional training from Educational Psychologists (from whom they receive ongoing supervision following training). Their role is to support children and young people in school to understand and regulate their own emotions whilst also respecting the feelings of those around them. We recognise that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed.

#### **'Supervision' for ELSAs**

The ELSA initiative was set up with recognition from the outset that ELSAs should receive regular professional supervision from an Educational Psychologist. There is an expectation within the caring professions that practitioners receive supervision from other qualified and experienced practitioners. At Shottermill Junior Schools, our ELSAs receive regular supervision with an Educational Psychologist at their supervision group, which is held at regular points throughout the year. In the group are ELSAs from other schools in the local area. Information shared within these meetings is always confidential and no names are shared to protect identities.

#### **Individual needs**

All children should be nurtured in accordance with their individual needs. There will always be children and young people 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 Shottermill Junior School, the SENCO and ELSA staff work in consultation with Class Teachers to identify and prioritise pupils who may benefit from support. A record of the pupils receiving support is retained and the impact of the intervention is tracked using our electronic provision management system, to ensure we can monitor how impactful sessions are and how this resource is being used for the benefit of a wide group of children.

By tracking the intervention, the SENCO and ELSAs can then set realistic 'Smart' targets and evaluate how the child has progressed when the sessions come to an end. ELSA is a short-term intervention and sessions generally run weekly, for a term, with review at the end. Sometimes, if a child is identified as having a serious need, they be prioritised earlier, if resources allow.

At Shottermill Junior School, 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.

Whilst we may receive and act on requests from Parents or other professionals to provide ELSA to a child, the school will determine whether this is the most appropriate intervention to support them. It may be that other strategies, therapeutic work or interventions are more appropriate. The pastoral team at Shottermill are committed to supporting the needs of pupils and working in partnership with Parents for the benefit of all its pupils.

### **Communicating with parents**

At Shottermill Junior School, we write to parents to let them know their child is going to have some ELSA sessions (see Appendix 1) and the Class Teacher will have a conversation with the parent to determine how we feel this support could be of benefit. ELSA support is regularly available to pupils, so there is no need for parents to anxiously interpret this as an indication that there is something seriously wrong with their child. Parents may contact the Class Teacher or ELSA if there is anything about their child they would like to discuss (see 'Respecting privacy' below). In addition, Designated Safeguarding Leads are a further point of contact. Information leaflets about the work of ELSAs are also available from the School Office and are on our website (see Appendix 2).

Please note that the parent will be required to sign and return the permission slip before ELSA sessions can commence.

### **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. In school we have a dedicated ELSA room, however due to timetabling, sessions may take place in the Nurture Room.

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.

Occasionally, ELSA sessions may be postponed (e.g. for special school events). ELSAs will communicate with the child when their next session will take place.

### **Respecting privacy**

ELSAs take care to handle information that is shared by children in the sessions with the upmost sensitivity and confidentiality. With the development of a trusting relationship an ELSA may find that a child talks freely and in detail about incidents or situations that are troubling them. They may share information about their family, their home life, friendships and situations that have taken place. ELSAs will work hard to respect the privacy of children and their families but also have a duty of care to pass on any safeguarding concerns raised in sessions, to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

ELSAs will remind children about the Designated Safeguarding Leads who work in the school and how sometimes, when children share information which causes us concern, we have to pass this on to these trained professionals, whose role it is to keep children safe. This means that in the first session, ELSAs will explore the Confidentiality Agreement with the pupil they are working with (see Appendix 3) to remind children that if ever they share anything that would indicate they are at risk of abuse or harm, they are obliged to pass these concerns on, to protect the child. This will help to build a trusting relationship with the ELSA with clear expectations of roles and responsibilities from the outset.

### **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 draw to an end. In some cases however, a different kind of work may continue more informally, involving a lower level of contact (e.g. 'check-ins' from time to time). 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.

### **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. The training and development of ELSAs is an ongoing process and professionalism is required to recognise when issues are beyond the level of expertise that could reasonably be expected of an ELSA. Cases will be reviewed in school with DSL team as well as the supervising Psychologist, who will be able to offer advice on next steps.

### **Supporting - not fixing**

Remember, ELSAs are not there to fix children's problems. In most cases they can't. What ELSAs are able to do is provide emotional support. As they establish a warm, respectful relationship with a pupil they provide a reflective space where the pupil is able to share honestly their thoughts and feelings. The ELSA uses basic counselling skills (including active listening, problem clarification, open questions, thinking aloud, verbal and non-verbal prompts) to guide conversations.

ELSAs will refer to the Zones of Regulation to remind children of strategies they can apply to help them regulate their emotions. This is a whole school approach.

### **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 isn't meant for sorting out incidents or telling children off. ELSA work should be fun - that's what makes the difference.

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.

Appendix 1 – Template letter to parent



Shottermill Junior School  
Lion Lane  
Haslemere  
Surrey  
GU27 1JF

Tel: 01428 642096  
Fax: 01428 644823  
Email: office@shottermill-jun.surrey.sch.uk  
Twitter: @ShottermillJrs  
www.shottermill-jun.surrey.sch.uk

Dear Parent / Carer of .....

We have noticed in school that *[insert name of child]* is having difficulty with *(specify areas of concern, e.g. making friends, initiating conversations with others, playing with others at playtime, managing angry feelings, in class etc).*

Or

Further to our discussions with you, we have identified that *[insert name of child]* is having difficulty with *(specify areas of concern, e.g. making friends, initiating conversations with others, playing with others at playtime, managing angry feelings, in class etc).*

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss ..... (our Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) has had training to help children with these kinds of difficulties. We would like your child to spend some time each week working with our ELSA to help your child to make progress in the areas identified.

We hope you are in agreement with this support. If you have any questions or you think there is anything it would be helpful for us to know before starting this work, please come and talk to me or email the School Office so I can arrange a convenient time to speak to you.

Please may I ask you to sign and return the slip below in order that we may begin the intervention with your child.

Kind regards,

Class teacher

.....  
ELSA Confirmation Slip – please return to the School Office

Child's name: .....

Class: .....

I give permission for my child to receive ELSA to support their emotional wellbeing – please tick

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Print Name: .....



## Who to contact



If you think your child could benefit from ELSA sessions then please contact:

SENCO – Mrs Z Jones

senco@shottermill-jun.surrey.sch.uk

Home School Link Worker – Mrs K Bourne

hslw@shottermill-jun.surrey.sch.uk

In our school, we have 3 members of staff trained as Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA):

- Miss Carey
- Mrs Ransom
- Mrs Bourne



## ELSAs can help with



- Loss and bereavement
- Emotional literacy
- Self esteem
- Social skills
- Friendship issues
- Relationships
- Managing strong feelings
- Anxiety
- Bullying
- Conflict
- Emotional regulation
- Growth mindset
- Social stories



For resources go to  
[www.elsa-support.co.uk](http://www.elsa-support.co.uk)



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L iteracy

S upport

A ssistant



## What is an ELSA?



ELSAs are Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. They are a specialist teaching assistant with a wealth of experience of working with children. ELSAs are trained and regularly supervised by the Educational Psychologists.

An ELSA is a warm and caring person who wants to help your child feel happy in school and to reach their potential educationally.

Their aim is to build your child's emotional development and help them cope with life's challenges.

The ELSA will help your child to find solutions to any problems they may have.

Please do talk to the ELSA in your school if you have any concerns about your child.



## Individual Session



Your child will be offered 6 to 12 sessions initially and they can vary in time, according to the age of your child

The ELSA will plan their sessions for your child very carefully. The session consists of several parts.

### Example lesson

#### Emotional check in

This is an opportunity to talk about feelings,

#### Main activity

The ELSA will plan the activity to a learning objective. Something your child will be able to do at the end of the session that they cannot do now. For example your child might have low self esteem so the ELSA will work on your child's strengths. The ELSA will encourage your child to talk about their talents or personal characteristics such as 'kind', 'caring', 'helpful' or 'brave'. The child may then make something to reinforce those strengths.

#### Relaxation

Your child will be taught a relaxation exercise to help get them ready to go back to class.

#### Review

Your child will be able to reflect on the session and realise they have lots of strengths and talents which will boost their self esteem.

## Group Session



Your child will be offered 6 to 12 sessions initially and they can vary in time according to the age of your child

The ELSA will plan the group sessions for your child very carefully.

### Emotional check in

This is an opportunity to talk about feelings,

### Warm up activity

A fun game or activity to help relax the children.

### Main activity

This is similar to the individual session but your child will be encouraged to work with other children. This helps with co-operation, social skills, friendship and gives a sense of belonging. A learning objective will be set for the group of children which they will all be able to answer at the end of the session.

### Relaxation

Your child will be taught a relaxation exercise to help get them ready to go back to class

### Review

Your child will be able to reflect on the session and talk about what they have learnt.



**ELSA/Pupil confidentiality agreement**

**Pupil Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ELSA Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

We will be having a series of sessions over the next few weeks. I am here to help and support you with...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Our working relationship**

**What I expect from you:**

- You always try your best.
- You turn up on time or come straight away when asked.
- You treat me with respect.

**What you can expect from me:**

- I will respect you, your views and feelings.
- I will always listen to you.
- I will help and support you to the best of my ability.
- I will try and make our sessions fun and enable you to learn something new.
- I will share all the wonderful things you have done with your parents/carers/teachers with your agreement.

**Confidentiality**

**What I expect from you:**

- You can choose to talk about our sessions with others outside of the room.
- In a small group you can only talk about what you have done or learned in the sessions. It is not your responsibility to discuss other pupil's experiences.

**What you can expect from me:**

What is said between you and me is confidential. I will not tell anyone else about what you have said to me **unless** I am worried that:

- You might hurt yourself
- You might hurt someone else
- You are in any danger physically or emotionally
- You tell me of anything that is unlawful

I will then speak to \_\_\_\_\_ and we will try and work out the best way of helping or protecting you.

We will both sign this form to show that we both understand what is expected in our sessions.

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_

My signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_