



ELSA - Emotional Literacy Support Assistant

We are very proud to offer an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme across Ashwood Park Primary School as part of our whole-school approach to supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing.

What is ELSA?

ELSA is a nationally recognised initiative developed and supported by Educational Psychologists. It is based on the understanding that children learn most effectively when their emotional needs are also supported, enabling them to feel safe, secure, and ready to learn.

At Ashwood Park Primary School, our ELSAs are fully trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistants who have received specialist training from Educational Psychologists. They plan and deliver structured programmes of support for pupils experiencing temporary or longer-term emotional or social needs.

Support is usually delivered on an individual basis, although small group work may be used where this best meets pupils' needs, particularly to develop social and friendship skills. ELSA sessions take place in our dedicated ELSA room, which provides a calm, safe, and nurturing environment where pupils feel supported.

Our approach

ELSA support forms part of our holistic, graduated approach to meeting pupils' needs. Emotional literacy support is viewed in the same way as an academic intervention: it is carefully planned, delivered, and reviewed to ensure it has a positive impact.

By supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing, ELSA helps to reduce barriers to learning and enables children to engage more positively with school life. We believe that pupils who feel emotionally supported are better able to achieve their full educational potential.

ELSA sessions help children to:

- Understand and recognise their emotions
- Develop self-esteem and confidence
- Build social and friendship skills
- Learn strategies to manage strong or 'big' feelings
- Cope with loss, change, or bereavement

How does ELSA work?

Pupils may be referred for ELSA support by their class teacher, a senior leader, or the SENDCo. Following referral, pupils' needs are identified and prioritised to ensure support is targeted and appropriate.

ELSA programmes are carefully planned to support pupils in developing new emotional skills and coping strategies that help them manage social and emotional challenges more effectively. Sessions typically run for a six-week block, followed by a review to evaluate impact and decide whether further support is required.

Due to demand, there may be a waiting list for ELSA support. This is regularly reviewed, and we work hard to keep waiting times as short as possible.

Supporting – not 'fixing'

The role of an ELSA is to support, not to 'fix' problems. ELSAs build warm, trusting relationships with pupils and provide a reflective space where children can safely explore their thoughts and feelings. Through this process, pupils are supported to develop resilience, self-awareness, and emotional understanding.

What happens next?

Throughout the programme, ELSAs liaise with class teachers and, where appropriate, parents and carers to discuss progress. Once sessions conclude, pupils are encouraged to apply the skills and strategies they have learned within their everyday school routines.

Some pupils may benefit from further ELSA support in the future, either with a similar or different focus. Where appropriate, pupils may be re-referred, or the school may signpost families to other sources of support.

