ELSA Policy (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)

What is ELSA?
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. ELSA is an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists. It recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed.

We are lucky enough to have two qualified Emotional Literacy Support Assistants at Heswall Primary School. They have been trained by Educational Psychologists to plan and deliver programmes of support to pupils who are experiencing temporary or longer term additional emotional needs. The majority of ELSA work is delivered on an individual basis, but sometimes small group work is more appropriate, especially in the areas of social and friendship skills. Sessions are fun, we use a range of activities such as: games, role-play with puppets or arts and craft. ELSA sessions take place in our very own 'ELSA room' which provides a calm, safe space for the child to feel supported and nurtured.

In ELSA we aim to provide support for a wide range of emotional needs:

Recognising emotions
Self-esteem
Social skills
Friendship skills

Anger management
Loss and bereavement

How does ELSA work?

Children are usually referred for ELSA support by their class teacher, Senior Leaders or on occasion the SENCo. Referral forms are reviewed each half to identify and prioritise which children require a programme for the next 6-8 weeks. With the programme aims in mind, support sessions are planned to facilitate the pupil in developing new skills and coping strategies that allow them to manage social and emotional demands more effectively.

Each session lasts from 30 - 45 minutes once a week and will take place during the school day.

Supporting - not fixing

Remember, ELSAs are not there to fix children's problems. The aim is to provide emotional support.

We aim to establish a warm, respectful relationship with a pupil and to provide a reflective space where they are able to share their thoughts and feelings.

Success of the ELSA sessions cannot necessarily be achieved rapidly and can depend on context and complexity of the presenting issues. ELSA sessions may not be suitable for children with complex or long-term needs and it is not realistic to expect ELSA intervention to resolve all their difficulties but support will be designed to target specific aspects of a child's need.

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 Educational Psychologist that works with our school would be able to offer advice on suitability or nature of ELSA involvement in complex cases. ELSAs receive supervision support from Educational Psychologists and ELSA program leaders.

Parent/Carers - Permissions

Prior to the commencement of any ELSA support, an adult with Parental Responsibility must give written permission for their child to attend ELSA sessions. At the end of a child's block of support, the ELSA may continue to check on the child's progress to see whether any further sessions are appropriate. This can be by an ELSA speaking directly, or by asking the class teacher for feedback as to how the child is getting on. If appropriate, it may be that the child requires a further block of support from the ELSA, and this can be done with the authorisation of the SENCO,

Conversations between the ELSA and the child are treated in the strictest confidence. However, if there is concern for the child's well-being, safeguarding or other information that the ELSA feels should be shred, this will be communicated to the parents and the class teacher or Senior Leadership Team if necessary.

Next review: September 2021