Identifying and tracking speech, language and communication skills

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www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
We will look at:

• A little bit of context
• A bit of the journey
• A process
• Tools we developed
• A focus on children who struggle

• Q&A
2011 Hello and Talk of the Town

The national year of communication

An integrated, community led approach to supporting speech, language and communication in children and young people

- a sustainable approach
- early identification
- positive outcomes for children
- joint working
## ToTT context analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>How?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff confidence</td>
<td>SLCF survey monkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Communication supportive classrooms</td>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
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<td>3. Children’s Communication / identification</td>
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<td>• RAG rating</td>
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<td>• Progression Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Current practice</td>
<td>Semi structured interviews</td>
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### RAG rating:
- **R**: Red = child requires specialist support
- **A**: Amber = child needs targeted support
- **G**: Green = child’s skills are age appropriate
How easy was it for teachers to identify children’s language levels?

• Teachers were asked to “RAG rate” the students according to their language ability.
  – **Red** students with speech, language or communication needs who needed specialist support.
  – **Amber** students whose language skills were considered to be delayed who needed a targeted intervention to support them to catch up.
  – **Green** students whose language skills were considered to be within normal limits for their age who did not need any additional support.

• Once RAG rating was completed, 3 x Green, 3 x Amber, 1 x Red were randomly selected in each year group across the primary and within each class in Year 8 at NGHS.

• These students, around 150, were assessed on formal language assessments.
What did we find...?

Despite a highly committed school staff, SLCN was under identified throughout the schools and key stages.

Staff were mostly accurate with children they identified as Red on RAG rating.

Overall around **40%** of the children struggling were not being accurately identified.

- **Harder to spot**
  - older students
  - difficulties with vocabulary (45%)
  - formulating sentences (52%) and
  - understanding (29% primary, 48% KS3)

- **Easier to spot**
  - Younger children, though nursery children difficult
  - Areas of language already focused on, e.g. inferencing (17%)
WHAT DID WE DO?

Action plan
**Strategic approach**

**Senior leaders**

Consider national prevalence and school context; do the two marry up?

Strategies if not...
- Policies and practice in place to support early identification
- Professional development
- Embed into cpd / performance management
- Embed into data analysis with class teachers
- Interrogate data for SLCN – red flags
- Careful monitoring

**Class teachers**

Consider whether knowledge of pupils’ language and other levels are matched?

Strategies if not...
- Professional development
- Direct links between SLCN and other areas; Red flags
- Process for highlighting concerns
- Careful monitoring
Training for class teachers

- Understand component elements of language
- Know what is typical at what age
- Look beneath the surface
- Embed 3 step approach to identification
- Use tools and techniques provided
- Careful monitoring
Leadership interrogation of data - red flags

- **Literacy** – poor literacy and language are very closely linked.
- **Behaviour**: they may mask their communication difficulties by poor behaviour.
- **Social interaction**: communication needs impact on ability to interact effectively with others.
- **Self esteem**: difficulties with communication impact on self-esteem; consider poor attenders, school refusal and disaffected youngsters.
# Graduated approach in the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>How?</th>
<th>Next steps</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Look at all the pupils</td>
<td>Top tips for spotting SLCN</td>
<td>Identify the pupils you are worried about</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Look at these pupils in a bit more detail</td>
<td>Use universally speaking booklet</td>
<td>Try some ways to check it out in class</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are they doing what they should be</td>
<td>Try out some classroom approaches to support SLC</td>
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<td>3. Look at pupils still causing concern</td>
<td>Use the progression tool</td>
<td>This will tell you wave 2 or wave 3</td>
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<td>Discuss with SEN dept if needed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Step 1 – watch out for children who...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talking</th>
<th>Listening and understanding</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are difficult to understand</td>
<td>Struggle to listen</td>
<td>Are isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are very quiet</td>
<td>Are slow or last to respond</td>
<td>Do not play or interact well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use single words / short sentences</td>
<td>Don’t respond at all</td>
<td>Have poor listening, turn taking, eye contact, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2. Universally speaking

Universally speaking

Whole class

• Information on what is typical across the age groups
• How to check out these skills in the classroom
• What to do to support communication in the classroom

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/universallyspeaking
Universally speaking, example

By age 9...

Attention, listening and understanding

Understanding skills are becoming more sophisticated. Children understand inferred meaning as well as information that is explicitly presented.

Children at 9 should be able to...

- Listen to information, work out which elements are key and make relevant, related comments. E.g. “So, we need to go home and ask people of different ages what jelly was like when they were young and work out how things have changed. I can ask my granny, my dad and my big sister.”
- Identify clearly when they haven’t understood and be specific about what additional information they need. E.g. “What do we use to measure liquid again? Is it millimetres or millilitres?”
- Infer meanings, reasons and make predictions. E.g. “Now, class 4, I’m going to count to 10!” (Mrs Jones is getting cross, if we don’t stop messing around, someone will end up having to go and see the head teacher).

Sentence building and grammar

Children speak clearly, fluently and accurately about past, present and future events. Grammar is complex and can be used for different purposes.

Children at 9 should be able to...

- Use a wide range of regular and unusual word endings, with few errors being made. E.g. Fought, felt, brought, goosed, fished.
- Use complex grammar and sentences effectively to communicate in different ways to clarify, summarise, explain choices and plan. E.g. “We decided that Jenny would go first because she’s the fastest and would get us a good start, me and Jack will go in the middle and Wallace will go at the end because he does loads of sport and is really fit.”
- Use intonation linked to grammar to help make sense of information. E.g. “Helpful!”, she cried, “you must be joking!”

Vocabulary

Vocabulary continues to grow - not only related specifically to topics, but also general vocabulary needed for thinking and learning.

Children at 9 should be able to...

- Use a range of words related to time and measurement. E.g. “Next Friday we’re going on our school trip. Mrs MacKay says we’ll be on an hour on the coach – that’s not too bad is it mum?”
- Use a wide range of verbs to express their thoughts, or about cause and effect. E.g. “I think that’s a great idea,” or “If you hold the bowl still, I’ll be able to pour the mixture in.”
- Join in discussions about a visit or activity using topic vocabulary. E.g. “Pumarihena was about the same age as me when he became a pharaoh. He was buried in the valley of the kings with loads of treasure. Do you believe the mummy’s curse?”
Universally speaking

**Storytelling and narrative**

Children tell stories that have a good structure with a distinct plot. They usually include an exciting event with a clear resolution and end point. This is reflected in their writing.

**Children at 9 should be able to...**
- Put interest into their voices to make storytelling exciting and come to life
- Add detail or leave information out according to how much is already known by the listener
- Understand the interests of the listener, *e.g.* “Guess who I saw yesterday...”

**Conversations and social interaction**

Children understand conversation rules—when to talk and when to listen. They also understand when people may need more or fewer details, depending on the situation.

**Children at 9 should be able to...**
- Use formal language when appropriate in some familiar situations; *e.g.* showing a visitor around school
- Keep conversations going with a range of people in different situations, by making relevant comments or by asking questions
- Use language for a range of different reasons. This is important for building friendships; *e.g.* complimenting or criticising, clarifying and negotiating

**How to check it out....**

**Check out how children can talk**

- Listen out for children’s language. Watch out for those that struggle
  - Can they use complex grammar and sentences effectively to plan, summarise and explain how they did it? Ask the child to explain to planning for a group of 3 year olds—encourage them to think of where it might be, what children might do and eat. Get them to summarise their plans and explain why they’ve made decisions around games, food and the venue.
  - Can they discuss visits or activities including topic vocabulary? Give children group talks to discuss a visit or topic.

**Check out how children can listen**

- Can children talk to you when they haven’t understood and be reasonably clear about what elements they’re struggling with?
- Give children instructions that contain vocabulary you know they won’t understand. How do they respond?
- Can they make inferences? Tell the children you’re going to do a quiz, say different statements where they have to infer meaning, *e.g.* “Today I need my umbrella—who do you know that I am not telling you?”
- Can they pick out key pieces of information? At the end of a lesson, get the children to tell you the most important points.

**Check out how children can take part**

- Listen out for children’s listening and understanding. Watch out for children who are slow to respond or rarely ask for clarification
  - Can children tell you when they haven’t understood and be reasonably clear about what elements they’re struggling with?
  - Give children instructions that contain vocabulary you know they won’t understand. How do they respond?
  - Can they make inferences? Tell the children you’re going to do a quiz, say different statements where they have to infer meaning, *e.g.* “Today I need my umbrella—who do you know that I am not telling you?”
  - Can they pick out key pieces of information? At the end of a lesson, get the children to tell you the most important points.

**Watch out for social interaction. Are there some children who seem isolated, find it hard to join in or come across as rude or immature?**

- Do they manage to keep conversations going, ask questions, make comments and show interest in each other?
- Have you noticed children being more aware of the need to talk differently in different situations? *E.g.* with school visitors or speaking in an assembly.

If you’re worried about a child in your care there’s more information at [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk) or talk to the parent about your concerns.

**Top 4 suggestions to support development of language and communication**

1. To develop concept vocabulary, have a box of words related to time/measurement/shape/... encourage children to use the word, say what they know about it, how it can be used. *E.g.* “octagon is a shape with 8 sides, I remember it because it’s like octopus, 8 legs!”
2. Children may need time to think before responding to questions and instructions. Give them time for thinking and processing.
3. Play inferencing games to build these complex language skills – *“What do I mean when I say... you’ll need a warm coat”, “How do you know...?”*
4. Encourage children to comment on their own sentences—do they include a connecting word, do they have lots of descriptive words?

By age 9...
Step 3. Individuals

Progression tools

• Investigate individuals’ speech, language and communication
• 121 investigation for children who may be struggling
• Gives profile of strengths and needs
• Can use to profile and monitor progress over time
• Can be used to determine success of interventions
An example 7-8

Understanding and using vocabulary

1. They should be able to compare words based on the way they look, how they sound and what they mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions to child</th>
<th>“What do you notice about the following words?”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark with a tick for each correct answer. See page 33 for how to score.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Hat, fat, cat (all rhyme)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Small, tiny, little (all mean the same thing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Dog, doll, dive (all start with d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Polar bear, bare arm (sound the same, but mean something different)</td>
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</table>

Mark | 14 / 14

Calculated score (see p33) | 15 / 15

2. They should be able to ‘guess the word’ when provided with clues about its shape, size and function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions to child</th>
<th>“I’m going to describe some words. Can you guess what I’m talking about?”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark with a tick for each correct answer. See page 33 for how to score.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. It’s a wild animal, grey and quite fat, with thick skin. It isn’t an elephant; it likes the mud and water and it has a long name and starts with ‘h’ (hippopotamus)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. It’s a medium-sized and round fruit that can be green or red, grows on trees and has a core (apple)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. It’s often a rectangle, with 4 legs; it’s big and sometimes made of wood and you can put things on it (table)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. It’s a sphere; bouncy and you can kick it or throw it (ball)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mark | 14 / 14

Calculated score (see p33) | 15 / 15

3. They should be able to explain what words mean

Instructions to child - “I’m going to say some words. Can you tell me what they mean? So, if I said, “What does ‘car’ mean?” you could say, “It’s something you can drive and it has wheels”. Let’s try these – tell me 2 things about a...” You can prompt by saying, “Can you give me another example?” or ‘Anything else?’

Write down exactly what they say in the spaces below. Mark with a tick if they are able to give 1 or 2 examples that show they understand the word. See page 33 for how to score.

| a. Coat | Mark correct: For example - “You wear it and it keeps you warm” |
| b. Television | Mark correct: For example - “A television is a big flat thing in the house that you can watch programmes on, like CBBC” |
| c. Aeroplane | Mark correct: For example - “You can go on holiday in an aeroplane... a pilot drives it” |
| d. Run | Mark correct: For example - “You have to run in a race... we run in the playground” |
The Progression tool

Most primary tools have six sections

Sections 1-4 focus on children’s **language skills**
1. Understanding spoken language
2. Understanding and using vocabulary
3. Sentences
4. Storytelling and narrative

Section 5 focuses on children’s **speech skills**
Section 6 focuses on children’s **social interaction skills**

Older primary – no section on speech

**Secondary – organised into 4 sections**
1. Understanding spoken language and verbal reasoning
2. Understanding and using vocabulary
3. Sentence structure and narrative
4. Social interaction
Question sections

• 3 questions
• Each has a statement about expected language levels at this age.
• Instructions to give to children
• Additional information or guidance for staff administering the tool
Observation sections

• 3 observations
• Each has a statement about expected levels at this age.
• Options for what may be observed
• Additional information or guidance for staff
Scoring

• There is guidance to help judge whether children have made appropriate responses for each question.

• Some questions are simple correct or incorrect responses

• Others require more judgement about level of response

• Guidance is given and a score allocated to each question
Next steps

• Scores can be put onto a score summary and profile

• The **Score Summary** will indicate whether a child currently has:
  – No additional need for support;
  – The need for a **targeted intervention** or
  – Should be seen as needing **further assessment** and / or specialist support.

• The children’s scores can also be plotted on a **profile summary**, which enables the teacher to see at a glance children’s areas of strength and need.
Process...

**Initial Concern**

- **Consider** - are the main difficulties with...
  - speech
  - language - understanding - talking
  - communication

- **Observe** with this in mind

**Check Out Universally Speaking for the Appropriate Age**

- use **universally speaking** to check out your concerns
  - And / or
  - use **checklists** in the booklet to test things out

**Use Progression Tool on Individuals**

- use the **progression tool** to test areas of difficulty
  - in the meantime use suggestions to help children out in the classroom
  - note what does and does not help

**Complete Referral Form**

- attach progression tool

**Take Referral through School System**
How successful?

Under identification fell significantly

- Nursery: 2011: [value], 2012: [value]
- Primary: 2011: [value], 2012: [value]
Children made progress

Comparison of 2011 and 2012 Total Language Standard Scores with UK Standard Sample

- Green line: Total Language 2011
- Red line: Total Language Score July 2012
- Blue line: UK Standard Sample

Scores range from 40 to 145, with a peak around 100 for all three curves.
Key stage 2

Understanding of spoken language

- Significant difficulties
- Delayed
- Average
- Above average
- Significant abilities

2011 vs 2012
Key stage 2

Vocabulary

- significant difficulties
- delayed
- average
- above average
- significant abilities

2011

2012
Issues

School based issues

• Culture shift in thinking about language in such detail
• Language elements mapping onto literacy elements in primary; focus on writing/punctuation
• Resistance in some staff
• Difficulties in secondary for some teaching staff seeing spoken language as important/part of their remit
• Gap between impact on language and impact on attainment for children with SLCN, especially in secondary

Tool based issues

• Time taken to administer progression tools
• Staff remembering about language amongst all other priorities
• Progression tools tested with 100’s of children across many schools by universal and specialist staff
• Tested against standardised language assessments
• However, still subjective, open to interpretation; not standardised
In key stage 3

- The largest improvement was seen in Formulated Sentences with the average scaled score increasing from 6 in 2011 to 9.1 in 2012.
- There was a considerable positive shift between 2011 and 2012 with 40% fewer students scoring in the below average range.
- There has been a corresponding increase of 40% of students scoring in the average range in 2012.
- The average score for Understanding Spoken Paragraphs increased from 6.9 to 9.
- Here has been a 33% increase in the number of students scoring in the average range or above.
Current project; using progression tools

RAG rating – x school reception class

- 1
- 2
- 3

Progression tool data

- children with no difficulties
- children with difficulties in one or more areas

- 57% (Green)
- 23% (Red)
- 20% (Yellow)

- 80% (Yellow)
- 20% (Green)
Areas of difficulty

Where children were experiencing difficulties:

- Social interaction: 8 children
- Understanding: 9 children
- Narrative: 10 children
- Sentences: 6 children
- Vocabulary: 2 children

Total number of children = 20

Numbers of children with an amber score in each of the language areas:
See the website or get in touch...

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