

Talking Still Matters

A training package for professionals working with children in primary schools.



Objectives

- Understand the importance of Speech, Language and Communication (SLC).
- Explore the terminology: what do we mean by SLC and SLCN?
- Understand how we might identify SLCN in the classroom.
- Consider Communication friendly environments – how to audit.
- Learn strategies to support SLC in relation to:
 - the environment
 - the opportunities
 - the interactions
- Explore some useful resources.
- Develop personal plans to take away.

Why is SLC so important?

- Watch Lily Farrington's animation.
- What does it tell us about speech, language and communication?
- Let's try "catching the words in a sentence"



SLCN impacts on



Educational achievement:

SATS and GCSE results
Vocab at school entry age is strong predictor of GCSE results



Behaviour/vulnerability:

More likely to be bullied
Links to emotion and behaviour
Ongoing difficulties with social relationships



Mental health:

Social withdrawal and anxiety
Higher risk of mental health problems as teens and adults



Employability:

Poor vocabulary at 5 = twice as likely to be unemployed as adults
Non-professional occupations



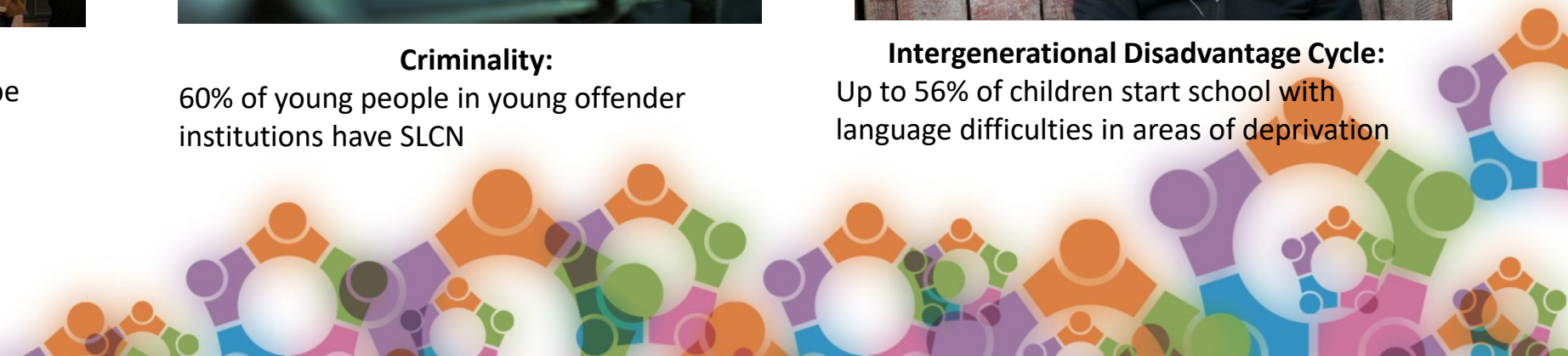
Criminality:

60% of young people in young offender institutions have SLCN



Intergenerational Disadvantage Cycle:

Up to 56% of children start school with language difficulties in areas of deprivation



James' story

0-2



James is bright and sociable but doesn't have many words

3-5



James is putting words together but they are very unclear

In one to one situations with adults he is interactive and well behaved

In nursery and at school he bites and kicks the other children

6-11



James is really struggling with all aspects of school work

He is always in trouble; anything from leaving the taps on in the school toilets to stealing

His mum finds it hard to get him to school. Mondays are a nightmare

11-14



James avoids school; he stays in his local area

His speech is clear but he has limited vocabulary and poor language. He struggles to read or write

He messes about in class until they send him out - he is known at school as 'difficult'

14-16



James had a night in a police cell - he wasn't really sure why him and not the other people he was with

In school, no-one messes with him, but he has no friends

Teachers say he's not trying - he finds everything very hard

Leaving school



James knows he won't get a job

He loves motorbikes but apprenticeships go to the smarter kids

He spends most of his days sleeping and his nights out in his area

SLCN Prevalence



In some areas of deprivation, more than 50% of children start school with SLCN



10% of all children have long-term SLCN.



7.56% of all children have a Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)



1% of all children have severe and complex SLCN



Bercow 2008 and 2018



- **Communication is crucial**



- **Strategic system-wide approaches to supporting SLCN are rare**



- **Services are inaccessible and inequitable**



- **Support that makes an difference**



- **Too many children with SLCN are being missed**

<https://www.bercow10yearson.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Bercow-Ten-Years-On-Summary-Report-.pdf>



What is SLC?

- Speech
- Language
- Communication



SLC Definitions:

Speech

Speaking with a clear voice.

Being able to make sounds like 'k' and 't' clearly so people can understand what you say.

Speaking without hesitating or repeating words / sounds.

Language

Understanding what people say.

Vocabulary.

Choosing the right words to explain what you mean.

Joining words together into sentences, stories and conversations.

Communication

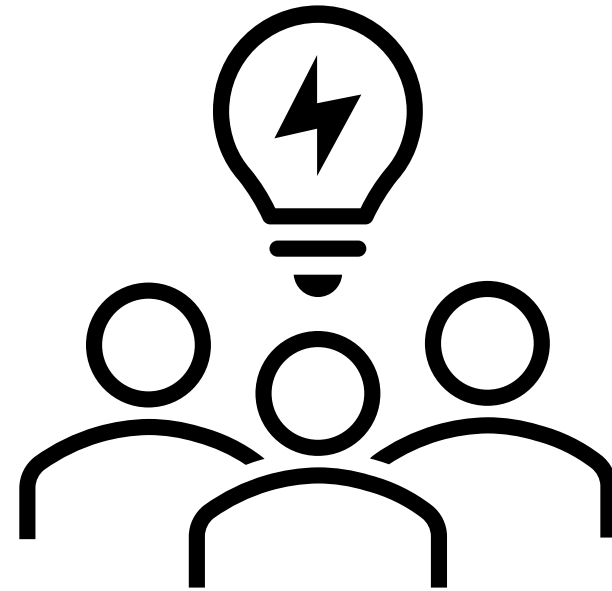
Using language or gestures in a variety of ways.

Being able to consider other people's point of view

Using and understanding body language, facial expressions, turn taking, eye contact, cues.

Small Group Activity

- Look through the 15 statements
- Decide if they are describing:
 - Speech
 - Language
 - Communication



Speech	Language	Communication
Frankie finds words beginning with the c/k sound tricky i.e. “tar” for car	Tommy does not respond to his name.	Muhammad does not notice that there are other children in the room.
Roman misses ‘s’ from the beginning of words such as star, swim and school (e.g. dar, wim and gool)	Myla is not able to point to body parts.	Olivia does not like to give eye contact.
Cole stammers when he is telling Mum about his day at nursery.	Safiya cannot follow instructions that contain lots of words.	Izzadin brings his Mum his cup when he wants a drink.
	Jonah uses 3 words: mama, no and ball.	Amelia pulls her Dad to the kitchen when she wants a bag of crisps.
	Javel refers to himself as “me”, for example: “me like train”.	Stanley points to the bus outside and looks at his Mum.
	Marley mixes up the order of words, for example: “Josh me kicked”.	
	Riley does not link 2 words together.	

Difficulties with speech:

Speech which is difficult to understand. This might include difficulty in making certain sounds.

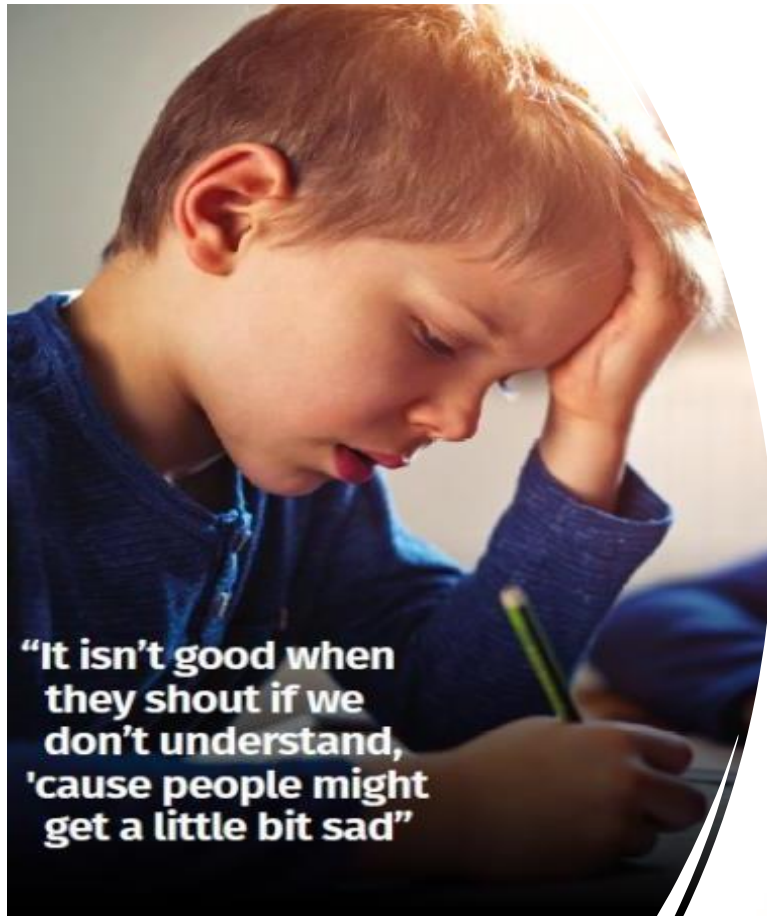
Problems hearing the difference between speech sounds.

Stammering or stuttering.

An unusual or persistently harsh voice quality.




Difficulties with language:




- Difficulty understanding or retaining what is said.
- Problems learning new words.
- Difficulty finding the right words at the right time
- Using sentence structure more appropriate for someone younger
- Difficulty sequencing sentences to make a meaningful narrative such as explanations and stories.
- Problems with higher level language skills i.e. making predictions, inferring meaning, explaining, talking about similarities / differences.
- Difficulties understanding non-literal language i.e. idioms


Difficulties with communication:

 Difficulty taking turns in conversation (e.g. interrupting, dominating)

 Difficulty starting and ending interactions

 Difficulty staying on topic

 Problems getting the conversation back on track after a misunderstanding

 Difficulty understanding other's feelings or point of view

 Unusual eye contact

Bilingualism / Multilingualism

- Being able to speak more than one language is an asset.
- Bilingualism / Multilingualism does not cause SLCN.
- Home language is really important = rich in vocabulary, concepts, grammar.
- Important to find out child's skills in their home language.
- Silent phase is normal when learning a new language.
- It is important not to confuse EAL and SLCN.



Coat Peg Analogy for Multilingualism



Coat Peg Analogy

"If fixed securely you can hang as many coats/other languages as you like...it won't fall off!"



"If wobbly or insecure the whole lot could come crashing down!"



Bilingualism / Multilingualism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrC6y1fntvE>

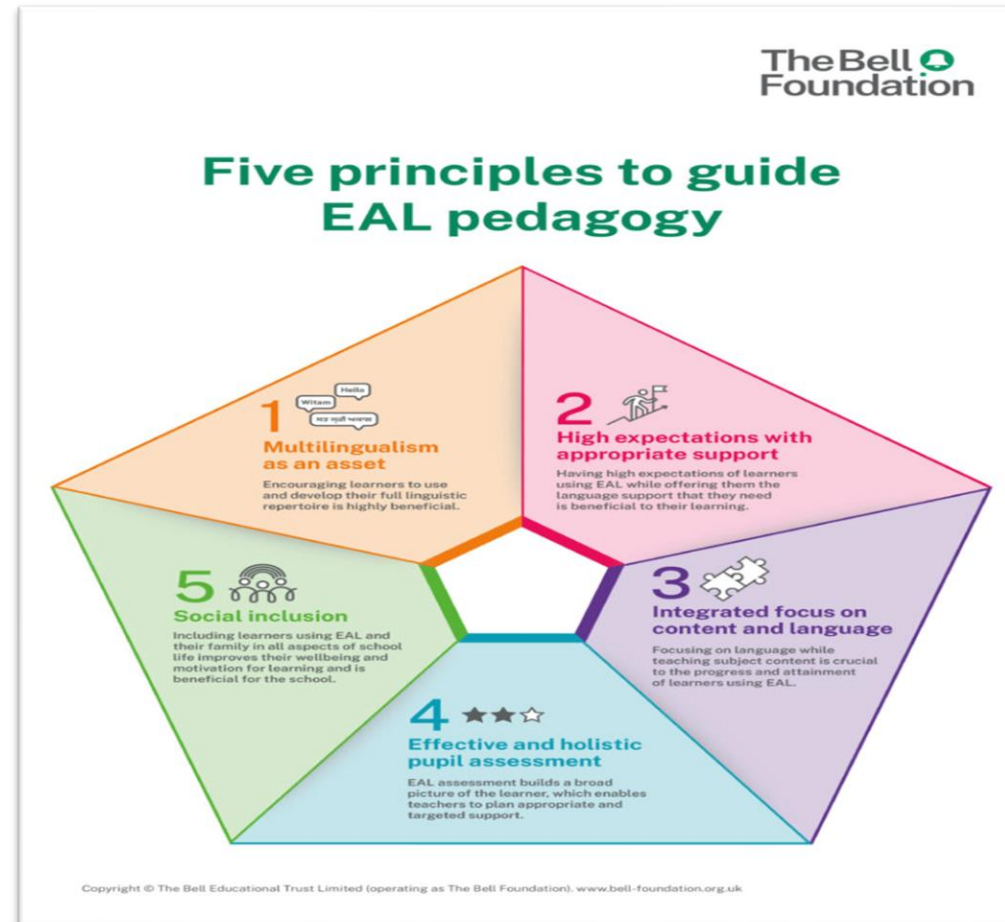
**South Tees NHS Speech
Therapy**



Multilingualism advice for teachers

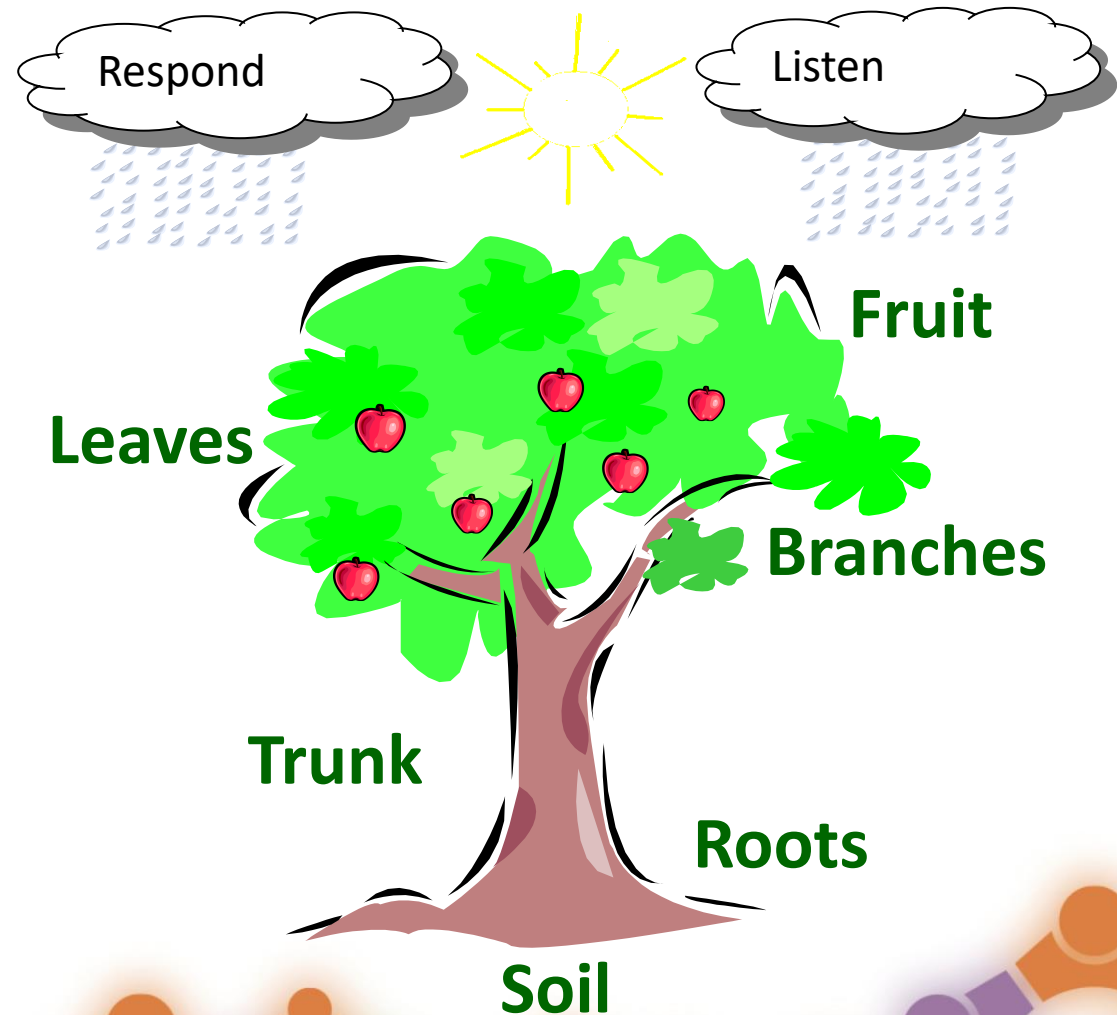
The Bell Foundation

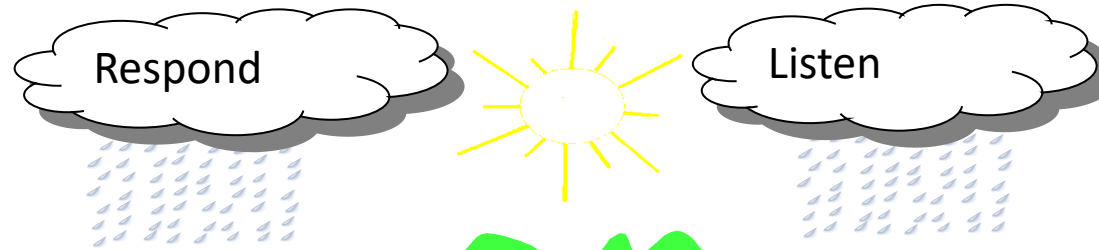
<https://youtu.be/veA7IEuBoQI>



Tree of Language

- Understanding
- Play and Interaction
- Saying words clearly
- Using words and sentences
- Literacy
- Listening and attention





**Saying words
clearly**

Leaves

Fruit

Literacy

Branches

**Using words and
sentences**

Understanding

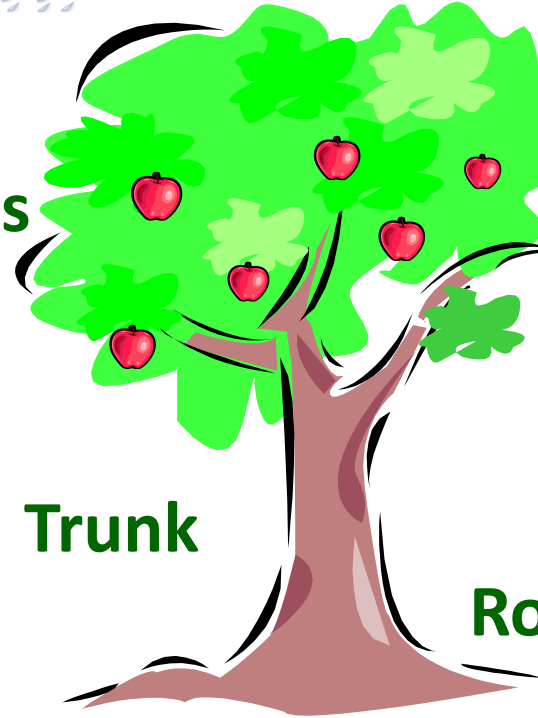
Trunk

Roots

Listening and attention

Play and Interaction

Soil



How will a child with SLCN present in the classroom

Any examples from your own experiences / classrooms.



Identifying SLCN in the classroom:

- Frustration
- Challenging behaviour
- Not meeting age expectations in other areas
- Poor attention and listening skills
- Friendship difficulties
- Difficulty understanding words for feelings
- Difficulty with pre-literacy skills (syllable clapping, rhyming words)
- Difficulty understanding early concepts (in/on/under)
- Difficulties adjusting to changes in routine
- Difficulties explaining what they want or need

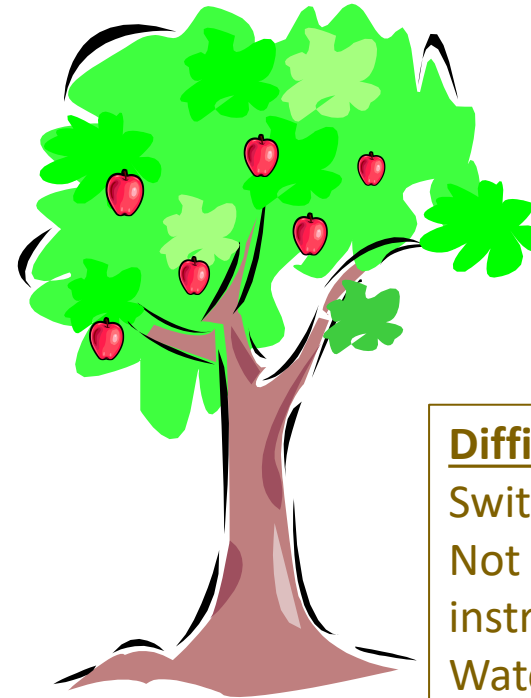


Unclear speech:
Unmet needs = frustration

Literacy:
Finds rhymes, syllable clapping,
identifying sounds difficult
Avoids books

Difficulties with Understanding:
Doesn't understand change
Doesn't understand stories, concepts,
instructions, emotions
Takes longer to process information
Misses or misinterprets information
Relies on context / observing others
Cannot infer / think outside of the here and now

Spoken language difficulties:
Small vocab, not putting words together
Mixes up words
Unusual word order i.e. SOV (if not EAL)
Empty language i.e. that/this/thing
Avoids speaking / acts silly when asked a question

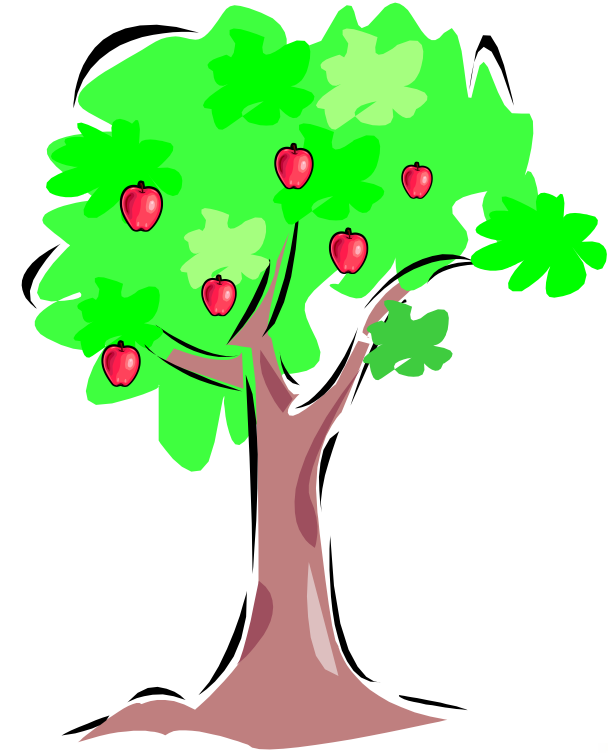


Difficulties with play/interaction:
Reduced friendships / isolation
Poor social communication i.e. turn taking
Struggles to alter register i.e. inappropriate comments to adults
Reduced play experiences
Likes play that doesn't involve talking i.e. chasing/running

Difficulties with Listening and Attention:
Switching off / poor concentration
Not being able to follow some instructions
Watching and copying others

Flourishing Communicators

What do you already do to help communication to flourish in your setting?



Communication Supporting Classrooms

2012 BETTER COMMUNICATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Developed by CsC Team:
Dockrell, J. E., Bakopoulou, I., Law, J., Spencer, S. & Lindsay, G.

Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool



The Better Communication Research Programme was commissioned as an action following on from Bercow Review.

One project within this looked at developing an evidence based tool so teachers can audit their classrooms.

Research showed that communication friendly spaces need the following:

1. Environment
2. Opportunities
3. Interactions

Language Learning Environment

Language Learning Environment

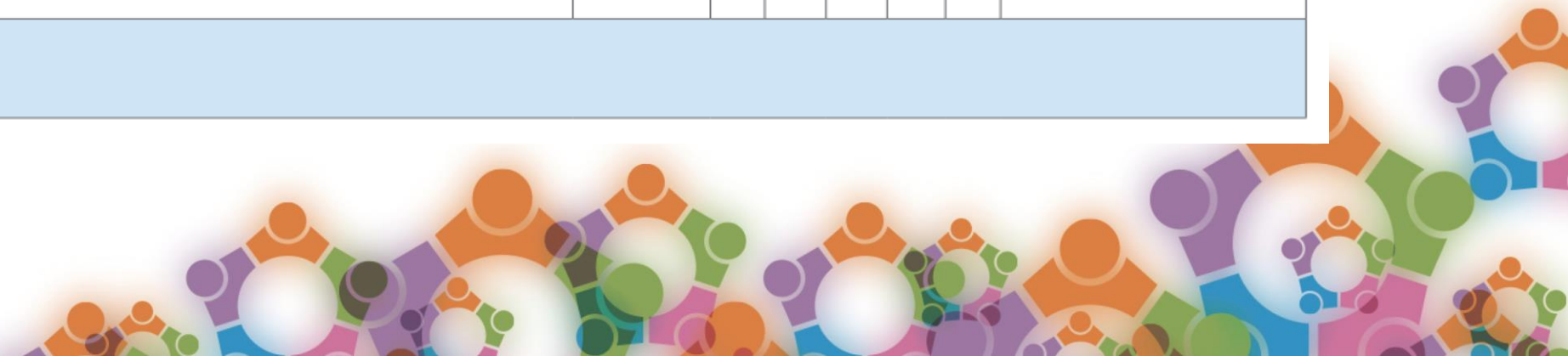
This dimension involves the physical environment and learning context

		Not Seen	Observed	Comments
1	The classroom is organised to emphasise open space.			
2	Learning areas are clearly defined throughout the classroom.			
3	Learning areas are clearly labelled with pictures/words throughout the classroom.			
4	Space for privacy/quiet areas where children can retreat to have 'down time' or engage in smaller group activities. These areas are less visually distracting.			
5	Children's own work is displayed and labelled appropriately.			
6	Some classroom displays include items that invite comments from children.			



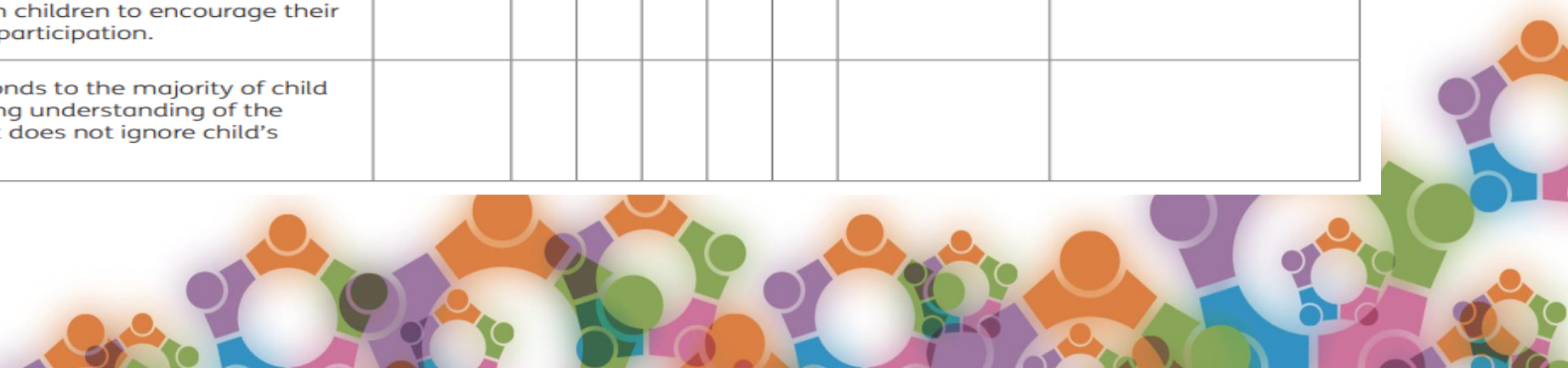
Language Learning Opportunities

Language Learning Opportunities							
This dimension involves the structured opportunities that are present in the classroom to support language development							
		Not Seen	Observed (5 times)				Comments
1	Small group work facilitated by an adult takes place.						
2	Children have opportunities to engage in interactive book reading facilitated by an adult (for example: asking predictive questions, joining in with repetitions, story packs etc.).						
3	Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with teachers and other adults.						
4	Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with peers (Talking partners).						
5	Attempts are made to actively include all children in small group activities.						
Total Score	/25 Notes:						



Language Learning Interactions

Language Learning Interactions								
This dimension involves the ways in which adults in the setting talk with children.								
		Not Seen	Observed				Observed by all staff in classroom	Comments
1	Adults use children's name, draw attention of children.							
2	Adults get down to the child's level when interacting with them.							
3	Natural gestures and some key word signing are used in interactions with children.							
4	Adults use symbols, pictures and props (real objects) to reinforce language.							
5	Pacing: Adult uses a slow pace during conversation; give children plenty of time to respond and take turns in interacting with them.							
6	Pausing: Adult pauses expectantly and frequently during interactions with children to encourage their turn-taking and active participation.							
7	Confirming: Adult responds to the majority of child utterances by confirming understanding of the child's intentions. Adult does not ignore child's communicative bids.							



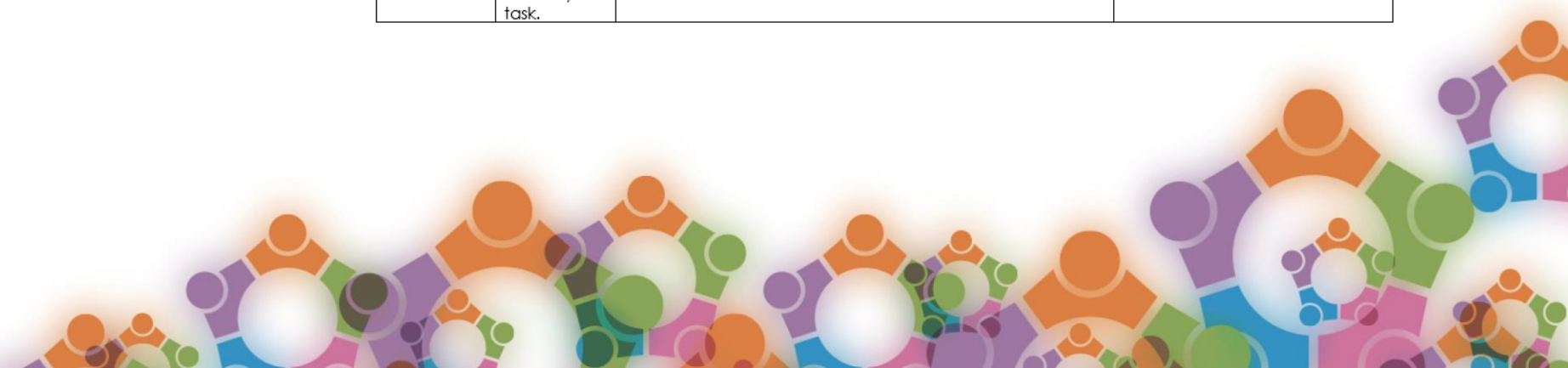
Quick Wins



SLCN Toolkit Quick Wins



Attention and Listening Quick Wins			
Simple strategies to support pupils who struggle to stay focused, filter out distractions, or attend to spoken language.			
Understanding Attention and Listening			
Attention: Taking notice of things around us.			
Listening: Paying particular attention to what people are saying, which is the basis of understanding.			
Integrated Attention: The ability to pay attention to more than one thing at a time, such as listening to the teacher and writing simultaneously.			
Universal and Ordinarily Available Classroom Strategies			
Area	Why it helps	Strategies	Useful Resources
Positioning	Reduces distractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place the pupil where they can see both the speaker and the visuals, minimising auditory and visual distractions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attention and listening General Classroom Strategies
Gain Attention Before You Speak	Pupils cannot process instructions they didn't hear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say the pupil's name before giving the instruction. Use a consistent signal (hand up, chime, clap pattern). Make eye contact at the pupil's level (if comfortable for them). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Keep Instructions Short and Simple	Reduces working memory load.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give one step at a time, or break a task into smaller chunks. Avoid multi-part instructions ("Get your book, turn to page 32, answer 1-10..."). Pair verbal instructions with visuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening and Attention Building
Use Visual Supports	Visual cues help pupils understand expectations and stay on task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual timetables, first-then boards, task lists, or picture cues. Display key instructions on the board. Use timers or countdowns to show how long tasks will last. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">



Language Learning Environment – Quick Wins

Visual Supports (consider symbol selection carefully)

1. Real Object
2. Colour Photograph
3. Colour Pictures
4. Line drawing
5. Words



Banana

Widgit Symbols © Widgit Software Ltd 2002-2024, www.widgit.com

Language Learning Environment – Quick Wins

- Label areas and resources in the environment
- To support with participation in routines:
 - Visual timetables
 - Now / Next
 - Calm, predictable routines feel safe
- To support children to learn new vocabulary
 - Word web / wheels
 - Vocabulary mats

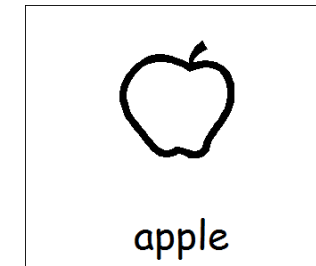


Symbol supported word books can help pupils in their writing.



Symbol systems: pros & cons

- **Makaton:** Pros: iconic so easy to recognise. Black and White, cheap to print. Easy to draw.
- **Widgit:** Pros: Many resources freely available for personal use.
- **Twinkle:** Pros: Free and readily available. Cons: Can be over fussy with **too much colour** variation.
- **Consistency** is important to make your symbols accessible.



apple.



In Print 4 Symbol Software

- Need CIP software to create and open symbols – Prices start from £99

<http://www.widgit.com/products/inprint/index.htm>

- ‘Makaton’ signs and symbols wordlist can be bought as an ‘Add On’

<http://www.widgit.com/products/makaton/index.htm>



Language Learning Environment – Quick Wins

Space:

Are your tables set up to promote conversations?

Are you able to provide quiet zones or break out areas?

Clutter / Busy walls/spaces:

Negative impact on the learning environment

- Overwhelm (for child and us adults too)
- Stress (raises cortisol)

Open space

Can be tricky to manage too

1. High ceilings, hard floors (impact acoustics of a room)
2. Lack of visible boundaries or areas (children may avoid certain areas)

Language Learning Environment – Quick Wins

Noise:

- Background noise i.e. music, conversations, workmen = children's brains find it really hard to filter out the irrelevant.
- Lots of evidence that shows background noise at home can impact on language development
- We know TV being on reduces opportunities for interactions (as do mobile devices)

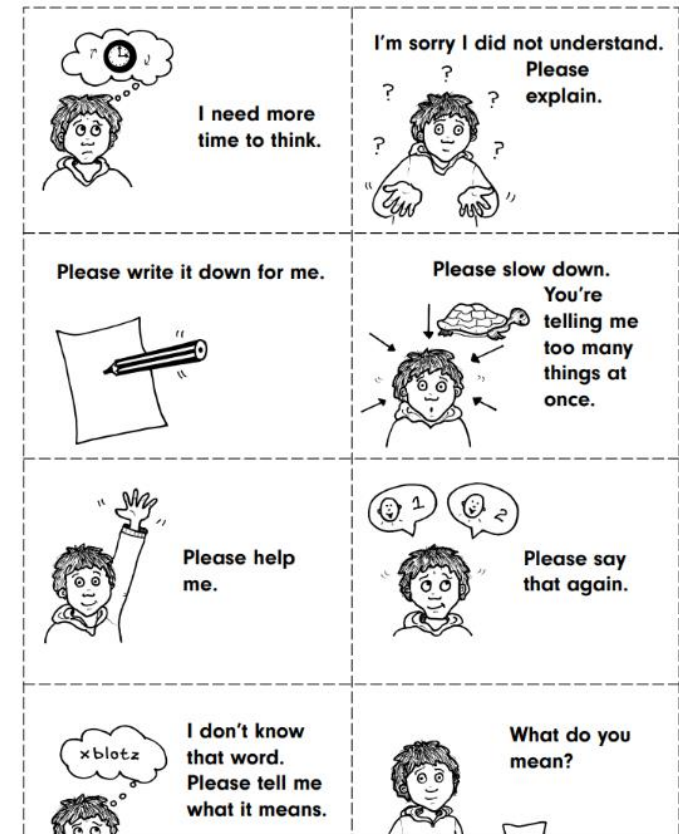


Language Learning Opportunities – Quick wins

- ALL children to be included in small groups.
- Interactive book reading
- Conversations with adults and other peers
- Regular check ins
- Opportunity to ask for help

Group task: How could you increase the opportunity for:

- Group work
- Book sharing
- Conversations with adults
- Conversations with peers




Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

Supporting Understanding

- Time to process
- Visual Support (Signs, Demonstration)
- Slow rate, pause and repeat. Check for understanding
- Instructions to be short and given one at a time - break down longer tasks into smaller chunks
- Use literal language

Figurative language	Literal language
“Well done, You’ve hit the nail on the head”	“Well done, that is the right answer”
“do you need a hand?”	“do you need some help?”













COULD IT BE LANGUAGE?

Key strategies to support language disorders in the classroom

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a hidden but common condition when a child has difficulty using and/or understanding language and is a sub category of SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs)

Support strategies

TIME to process information and instructions	
SIGN IT gesture, facial expressions and body language	
MODIFY YOUR LANGUAGE rate of speech, one instruction at a time, keep it short	
WORDS explicitly teach key vocabulary	
REPEAT IT recap previous learning, do activities more than once	

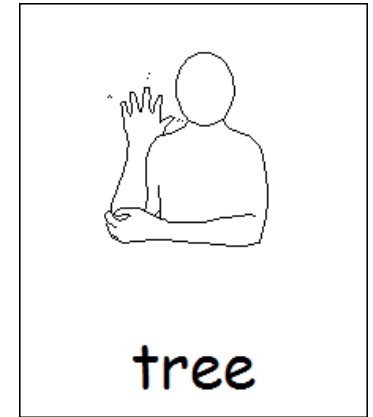
VISUAL SUPPORT visual templates, language rich displays and clear/simple signage	
DO IT multi-sensory teaching approach	
CHUNK INFORMATION pause, repeat, be explicit, use literal language	
SMALL STEPS break down tasks	
MODEL IT whether spoken or written model the language	

Find out more about DLD and training for teachers at:
moorhouseinstitute.co.uk/dld-training

Moor House Research & Training Institute, Mill Lane, Hurst Green, Oxted, RH8 9AQ

Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

Celebrate all forms of communication



Gestures and signing

Notts Healthcare do offer a separate training course called: Communication for All that focuses on using signs and symbols in the classroom

<https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/slt-training/#communication-for-all>

Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

- **Pacing** – slow pace with lots of opportunities for child to process and respond to information / instructions.

10 second rule! It feels like a very long time.

- **Pausing** – is a great strategy for encouraging participation and helps to improve turn taking skills too.

Remember to wait expectantly for child to respond – for some children, you might need to lean forward and change your facial expression to show you are waiting for a response!

- If you do need to repeat, don't increase language demands.

Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

- **Confirming:** builds confidence / positive reinforcement

Child: “my Granny got a new dog at the weekend”

Adult: “I love dogs, what have they called it?”

If it’s not the right time you could say: “oh how lovely, come and tell me all about the dog at break time”.

- **Imitating and modelling** – with correct grammar / speech sounds

Child: “Sophie falled over at lunch time”

Adult: “oh dear, Sophie fell over at lunch time, I hope she is ok”

Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

- **Commenting:** Use opportunities throughout the day to make comments which reinforce the use of any specific language concepts / vocabulary: “Sophia is first in the line” / “oh wow, what a wonderful painting of a drawbridge”.

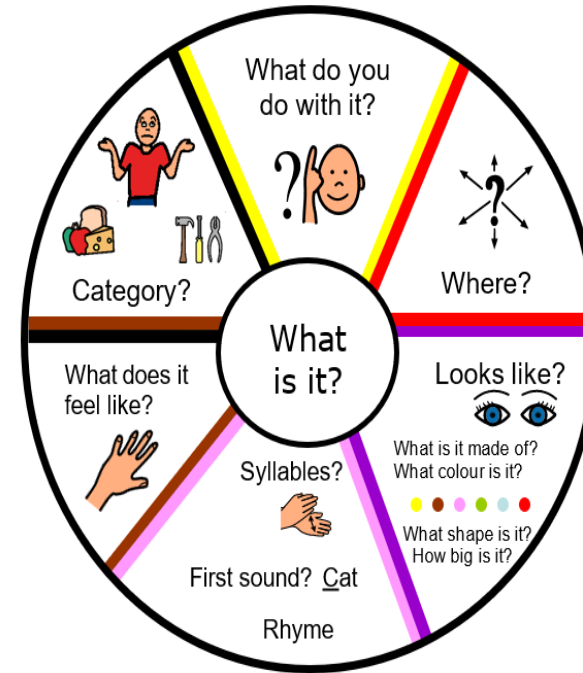
- **Extending:** This means you repeat back what the child has said and add one or two extra words. This strategy reinforces what the child has said and helps to extend their vocabulary too:

Child: “car”

Adult: “a fast car” / “the car is driving” / “a dirty car, it needs a clean”

Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

- Pre-teach **vocabulary** with lots of opportunity to recap word learning
- Word webs / wheels
- Word banks / word wall
- Use the word wheel to explore some 'rainforest' topic vocabulary: sloth, peanuts, tropical, temperature



To help us remember new words we can.....

- What group it's in.
- What subject it's in.
- What does it mean.
- Think of Something that means the same
- Think of an opposite word
- Put it into a sentence

Language Learning Interactions – Quick wins

- Be careful with questions – especially testing questions.

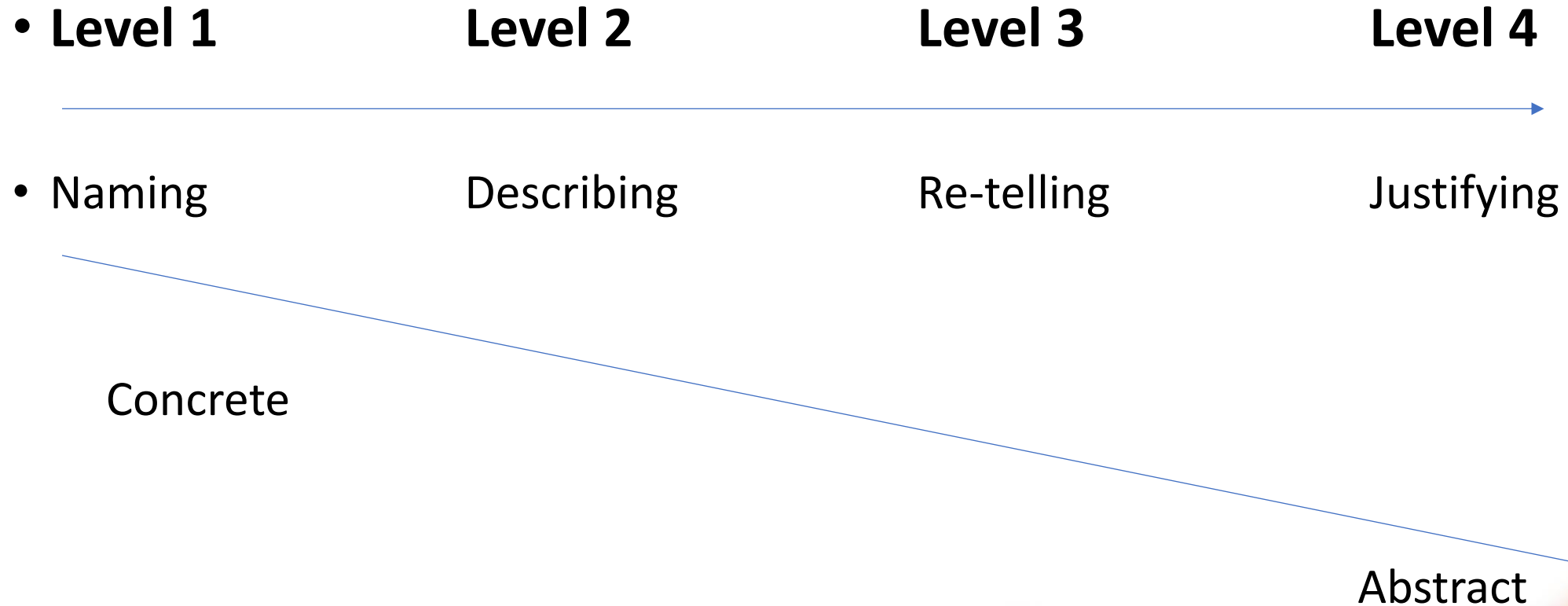


Blank's levels of questioning

- A framework developed by Blank, Rose & Berlin that looks at the language demands placed on a child
- There are four levels of questions (concrete – abstract)
- Blank's questions encourage development of general language and vocabulary as well as skills in comprehension, reasoning, inferencing, predicting and problem solving (Blank, 2000)



Blank language levels



Questions at each level

Level 1

What is this?
Show me ...
Pick up

Level 2

Show me the
yellow fruit.
Find me a fruit
you can peel.
What can you
cut the apple
with?

Level 3

What will
happen next?
What does peel
mean?
How did Alice
feel when you
helped her?

Level 4

Why is it better
to eat an apple
than chocolate?
Two children
want an apple
but only one is
left, what could
they do?





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Blank Age Norms

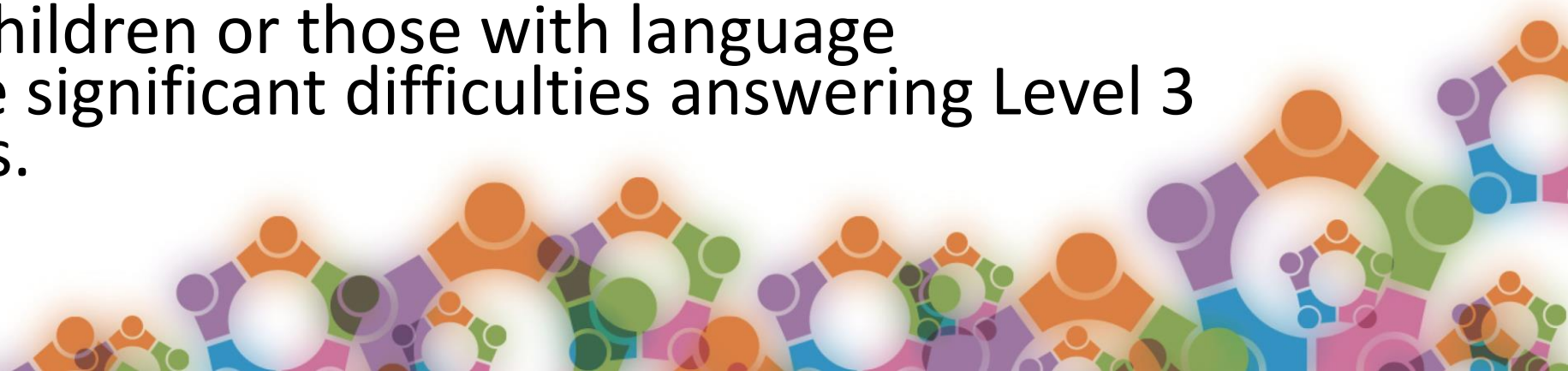
- 60% of 3 year olds understand at level 1 and level 2
- 65% of 5 year olds understand at level 3 and level 4

In areas of disadvantage:

10% of 5 year olds understand at level 3 and level 4

Children with SLCN:

Many autistic children or those with language difficulties have significant difficulties answering Level 3 and 4 questions.



Managing Behaviour

- Think of the types of questions we frequently ask when managing behaviour.
- What are some typical questions we ask?
- Adults often need to use level 3 and 4 questions but if a child doesn't have the language skills at this level, it will have a significant impact on how they respond
- It is therefore essential to consider a child's level of understanding when managing behaviour.



Managing Behaviour

- **At level two**
- Tell the child clearly what happened and how their behaviour affected other people.
- Don't ask questions about why they behaved the way they did.
- Describe appropriate behaviours/reactions in short and simple sentences.
- Avoid negative statements such as 'don't run' as the child may not understand this linguistic concept yet, try 'walk please' instead.

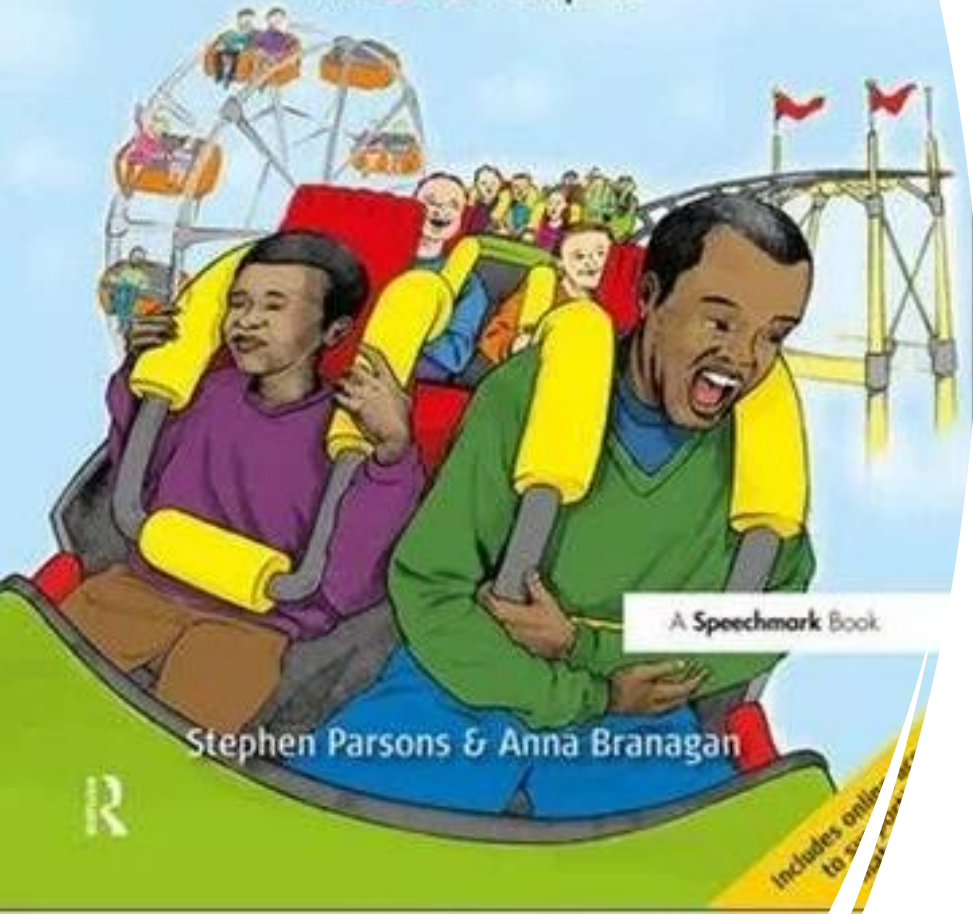
Managing Behaviour

- **At level three:**
 - Ask the child to describe what happened, what people said and how others felt.
 - Don't ask them to justify their behaviour. State the justification, eg why they should not have done something.
- **At level four:**
 - Ask more complex questions, including the 'whys' and 'hows' but, if the child doesn't understand, **repeat the question, simplify the language and model the answer if needed.**

Language for Thinking

A structured approach for young children

The Colour Edition



A Speechmark Book

Stephen Parsons & Anna Branagan

R

Includes online
to

Language for Thinking

Also free resources on Twinkl

AI can help generate Blank Level questions for different activities too

Referring to SLT

<https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/slt-how-to-refer>

All referrals to SLT to be done on the referral form that is on our website

Online referral form (Ms Teams form) for parents and professionals



Advice Line and Drop In Sessions

Advice Line: [03001233387](tel:03001233387)

- **Select option 1:** for advice about your child or young person's talking and communication. Open Tues and Thurs mornings.
- **Select option 2:** for information about your child's appointments or therapy.

Drop ins across the city and county (under 4's):

<https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/slt-drop-in-sessions>

Useful websites

- <https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/specialist-childrens-speech-and-language-therapy/>
- <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk>
- <https://radld.org/>
- <https://www.makaton.org/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>
- <https://www.hanen.org/home>

