



Using Research Tools to Improve Language in the Early Years



University of Oxford

A+ Education Ltd

Characteristics of effective professional development

Professional development opportunities for
[practitioners] in England:

- “are insufficiently evidence-based”
- “do not focus sufficiently on specific *[child]* needs”
- “are too inconsistent in quality”
- “lag behind those experienced by colleagues elsewhere internationally”

(Cordingley, Higgins et al., 2015)

What does effective professional development look like?



Effective professional development involves..

1. specific and articulated objectives (e.g. child and/or practice outcomes)
2. an explicit focus on practice, and on linking knowledge/theory to practice
3. intensity and duration matched to the content being conveyed (2 terms + for significant organisational and cultural change)
4. support for practitioners in conducting child assessments and interpreting their results as a tool for ongoing monitoring of the effects of professional development.
5. approaches which are appropriate for the organisational contexts of participating schools/settings and are aligned with standards for practice
6. active rather than passive learning approaches
7. collective participation of teachers from the same classrooms or schools
8. access to expert knowledge

Zaslow et al. (2010), Cordingley et al. (2015), Timperley et al., (2007)



Department
for Education

Standard for teachers' professional development

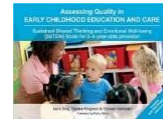
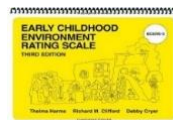
**Implementation guidance for school
leaders, teachers, and organisations that
offer professional development for
teachers**

July 2016

How to decide whether CPD is of high quality?

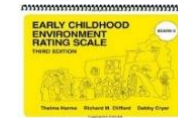
- No commonly used system of QA for professional development
- New project, led by the Chartered College of Teaching, to design and test a system to quality assure teacher CPD (funded by Wellcome/EEF)
 - aims to provide school leaders/teachers with an easy-to-use system for finding high-quality, impactful CPD & encourage a wide range of providers to participate
- Consultation currently open

Using validated research tools to support improvement



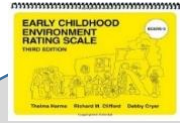
Using validated research tools to support improvement

- We know that tools like the ERS capture practices which are important for children's later development
- This should mean that using them to guide quality improvement should lead improve practice....right?
- It ain't what you do it's the way that you do it



What do we know?

- many ways the ERS can be used but not all equally effective
- using rating scales for high-stakes purposes such as inspection not effective in encouraging improvement (Gitomer, 2009; Sabol et al., 2013, Coe et al., 2014)
 - no single measure can capture all aspects of quality,
 - encourages shallow improvement efforts focused *only* on those behaviours in an effort to 'pass the test'
- better evidence for formative use with an emphasis on professional learning and a cycle of evaluation, dialogue, support, challenge and re-evaluation



Selected observable
'indicators' of quality

Deep knowledge and
understanding of how children
learn, and of effective pedagogy,
leading to high-quality practice in
the round

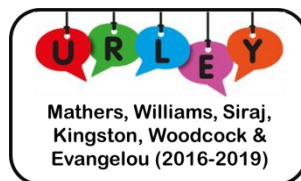
The URLEY Programme





The URLEY programme was developed by Sandra Mathers (University of Oxford), Clare Williams (A+ Education Ltd), Iram Siraj (UCL), Denise Kingston (Birth to Seven Matters), Janice Woodcock (A+ Education Ltd) and Maria Evangelou (University of Oxford).

It is currently being evaluated as part of a research study funded by the Education Endowment Foundation.



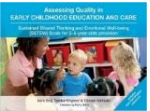
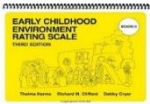
A+ Education
Raising quality in the early years



Education
Endowment
Foundation

The URLEY approach

Research tools



Practice
and
reflection

Support practitioners to improving children’s language skills and personal, social and emotional development by using research-validated tools:

- to gain a deeper understanding of how children learn and how to support that learning through evidence-based practice
- to tune in to children and to yourselves, acting on that evidence to improve the effectiveness of practice
- to work as a team within your class/rooms to develop the approach
- to develop an effective self-evaluation and improvement cycle and improve your confidence to articulate shared pedagogy to others
- to build capacity for sustained improvement beyond the end of the programme.

Why early language development?



Improving early child development with words TEDx Talk 2014



Atlanta
organized TED event

DR. BRENDA FITZGERALD



Speech or
language
impairment

In later life more likely
to be unemployed,
have health issues,
criminality

Weaker literacy
skills

**“Children who find
communication hard find
life hard”**

Fewer
GCSEs and
A-levels

Jean Gross (2016)

Emotional and
behavioural
difficulties

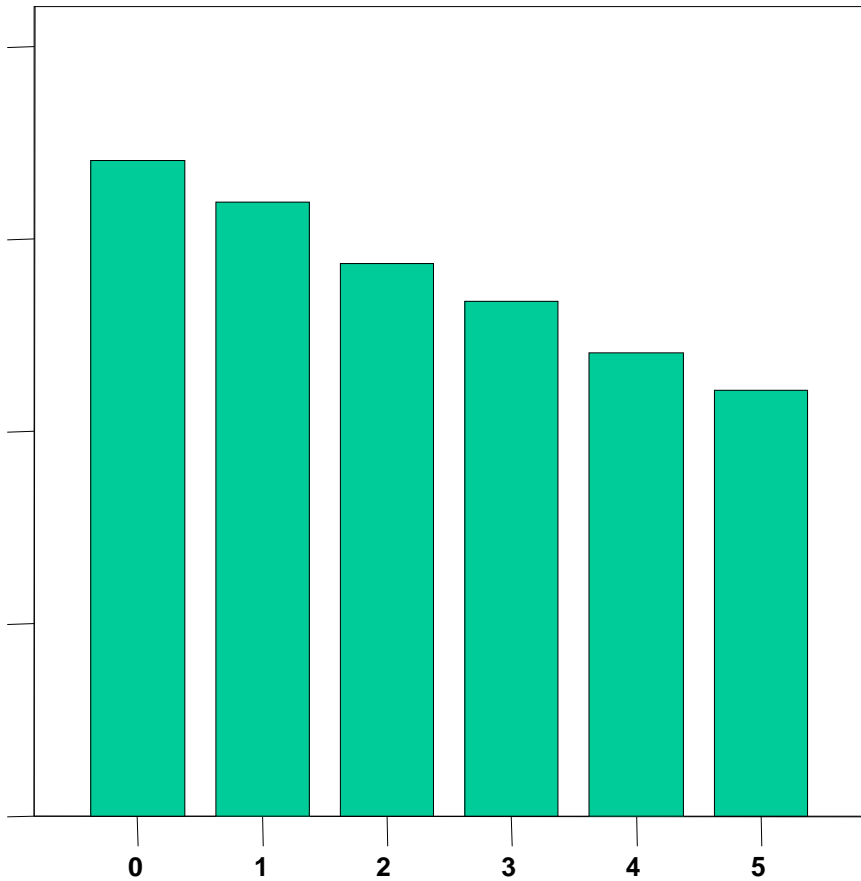
Fewer
friendships

Poorer mental
health

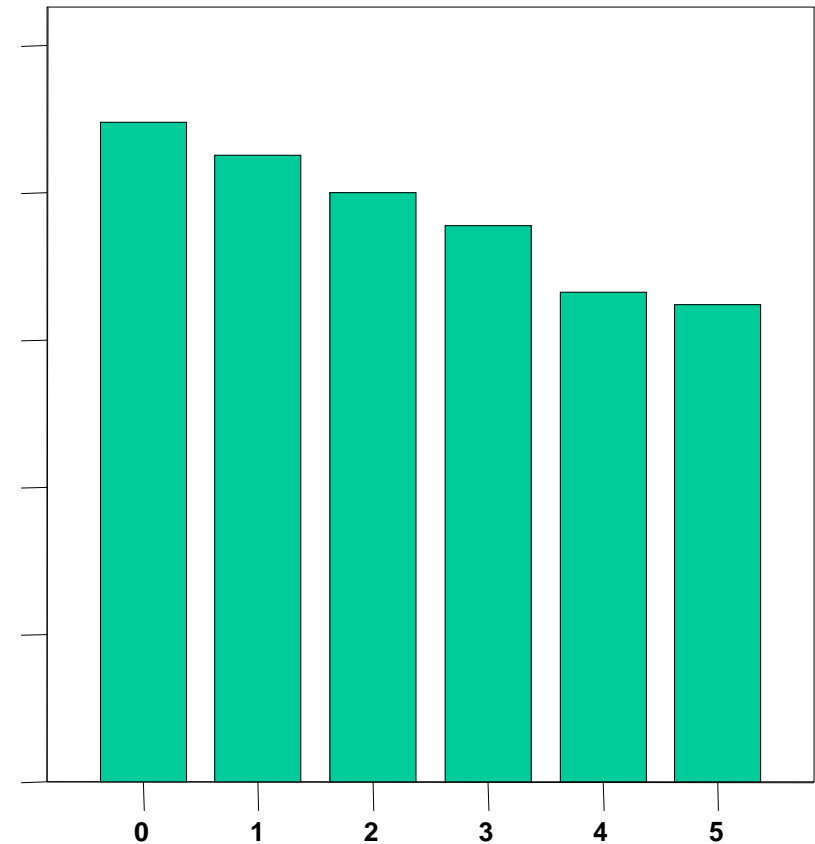
Who are the children at risk of delayed language development?

The effects of multiple risk factors in age 5 outcomes

Language and literacy



Independence, concentration, self-regulation



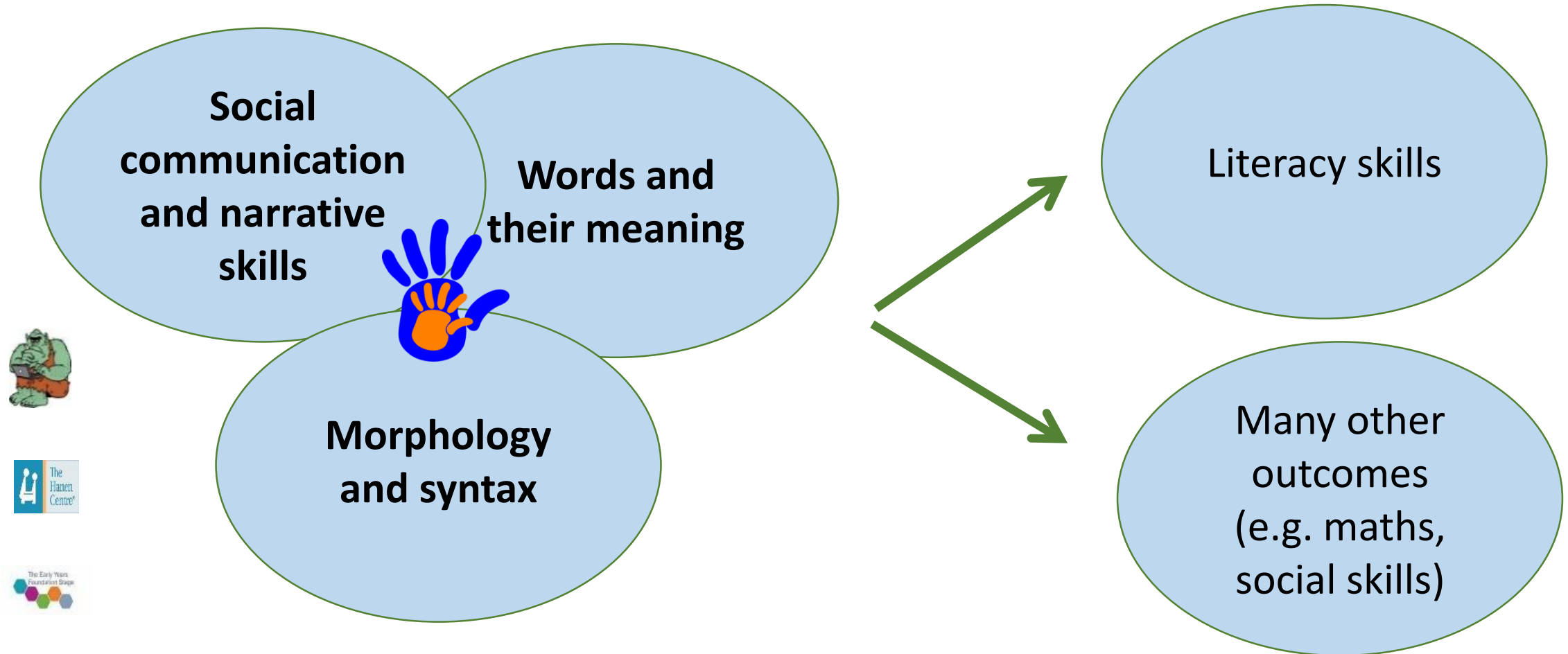
Early years provision can help narrow the gap

- Many of the risk factors for these children are not within our power to change....
- **...but we have access to one of the most powerful tools available to narrow the gap – children’s early years experiences in school**
- Pre-school improves outcomes for all children but it makes *most* difference for children from disadvantaged homes

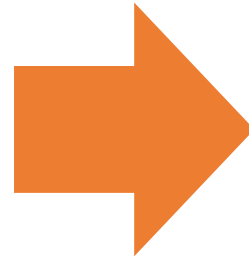
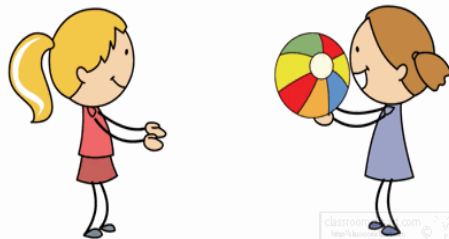
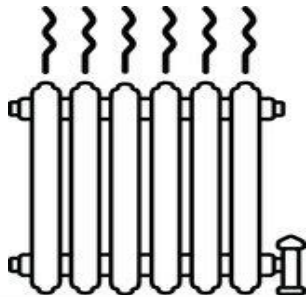
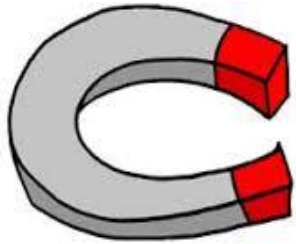
Intentional teaching does not happen by chance. It is planful, thoughtful and purposeful. It requires:

- a wide-ranging knowledge about how children typically develop and learn
- good knowledge of individual children, where they are at and how they learn
- a repertoire of instructional strategies
- knowledge about when to use a given strategy to accommodate the different ways children learn and the specific content they are learning

...a good knowledge of individual children, where they are at and how they learn



....a repertoire of instructional strategies and knowledge about when to use a given strategy to accommodate different children/content

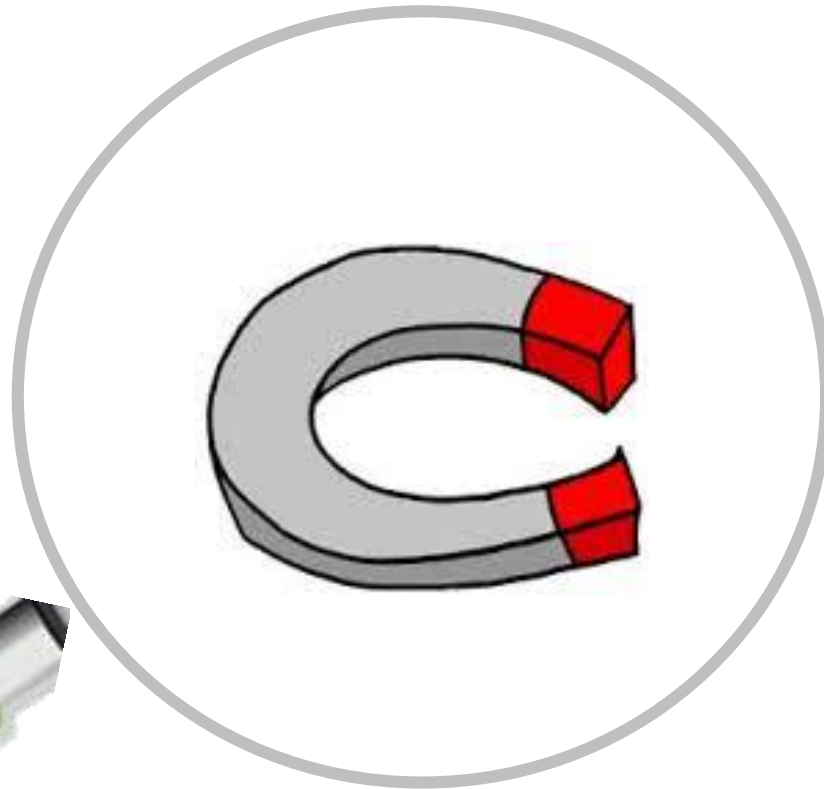


**Social
communication
and narrative
skills**

**Words and
their meaning**

**Morphology
and syntax**

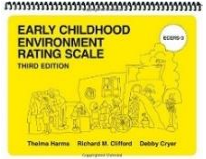



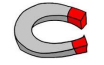












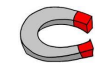



How effective are we as language magnets?



The ERS help us to tune in to each LLP in more detail:

- What should I see in my class/room if I am to put this LLP into action?
- Am I doing it now?
- Which strategies do I need to develop?

Our 'core' items for evaluating the adult role in supporting language

	12 Helping children expand vocabulary	
	13 Encouraging children to use language	 
	30 Staff-child interactions	
	3 Adults reading with children	 
	6 Talking and listening	 
	5 Encouraging children to talk with others	  
	6 Staff actively listening to children and encourage children to listen	 
	7 Staff support children's language use	
	8 Sensitive responsiveness	
	10 Encouraging sustained shared thinking through storytelling, books, singing, rhymes	  

ECERS-3 Item 30 Staff-child interaction

1	3	5	7
<p>1.1 Staff are not responsive to or involved with the children.*</p> <p>1.2 Interactions with children are often unpleasant.*</p> <p>1.3 Physical contact is often negative.</p> <p>1.4 The majority of interactions are with large group, rather than with individual children or small groups.</p>	<p>3.1 Some positive interactions with individual children observed.*</p> <p>3.2 No negative physical contact is observed.</p> <p>3.3 Staff seem to enjoy being with the children.</p>	<p>5.1 Frequent positive staff child interaction observed throughout the observation, with no long periods of no interaction</p> <p>5.2 There is usually a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere in the group</p> <p>5.3 Staff generally give children a message of warmth through appropriate physical contact</p>	<p>7.1 Staff are respectful to children and guide them positively.*</p> <p>7.2 Staff are supportive and comforting when children are anxious, angry, fearful, or hurt.</p> <p>7.3 Staff are sensitive to children's nonverbal cues, and respond appropriately</p>



Item 7. Staff support children's language use

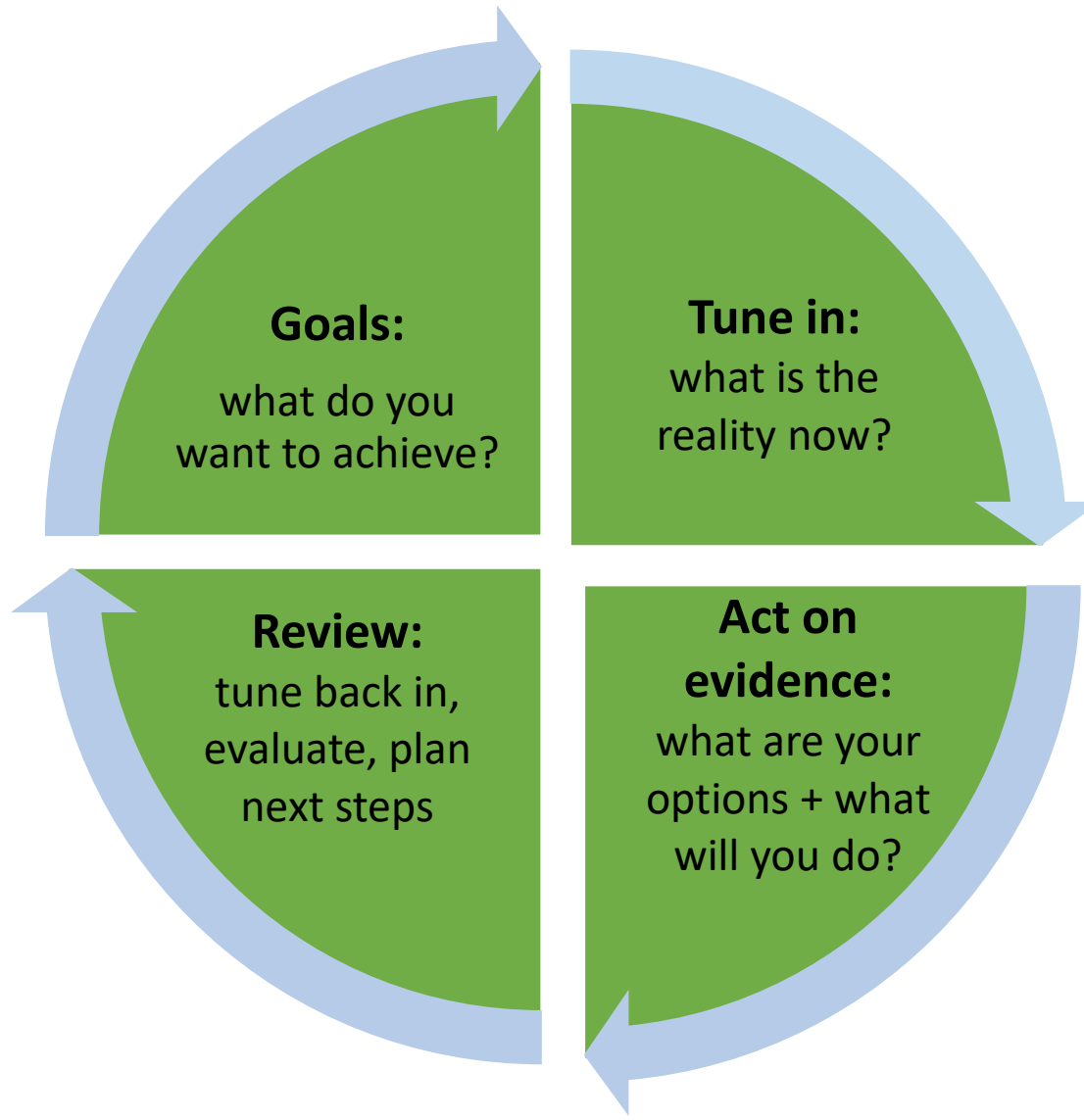
Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<p>1.1 Children are often spoken to in a 'babyish' way (<i>mimicking the way young children speak</i>).</p> <p>1.2 Staff often use poor or inappropriate language.*</p> <p>1.3 Staff often use language that the children do not understand.</p>		<p>3.1 Staff employ simple and correct language with the correct use of grammar and pronunciation.</p> <p>3.2 Staff use a tone of voice appropriate to the need and situation.</p> <p>3.3 The level of language is appropriate to the age and ability of the children.</p>		<p>5.1 Staff show care in the choice of correct and appropriate terms.</p> <p>5.2 Staff use varied tones of voice to support interest, excitement, express emotions, calm children, and support understanding.</p> <p>5.3 Staff provide running commentaries to model vocabulary and to display their own thought processes for children while they play.</p>		<p>7.1 Staff support language development on an individual level by using correct forms of incorrect words, phrases, and grammar during interactions with the children. They do not point out the child's mistake – they just model the correct word, sentence etc.</p> <p>7.2 The staff scaffold and model language with individual children that is slightly above the child's current level.*</p>

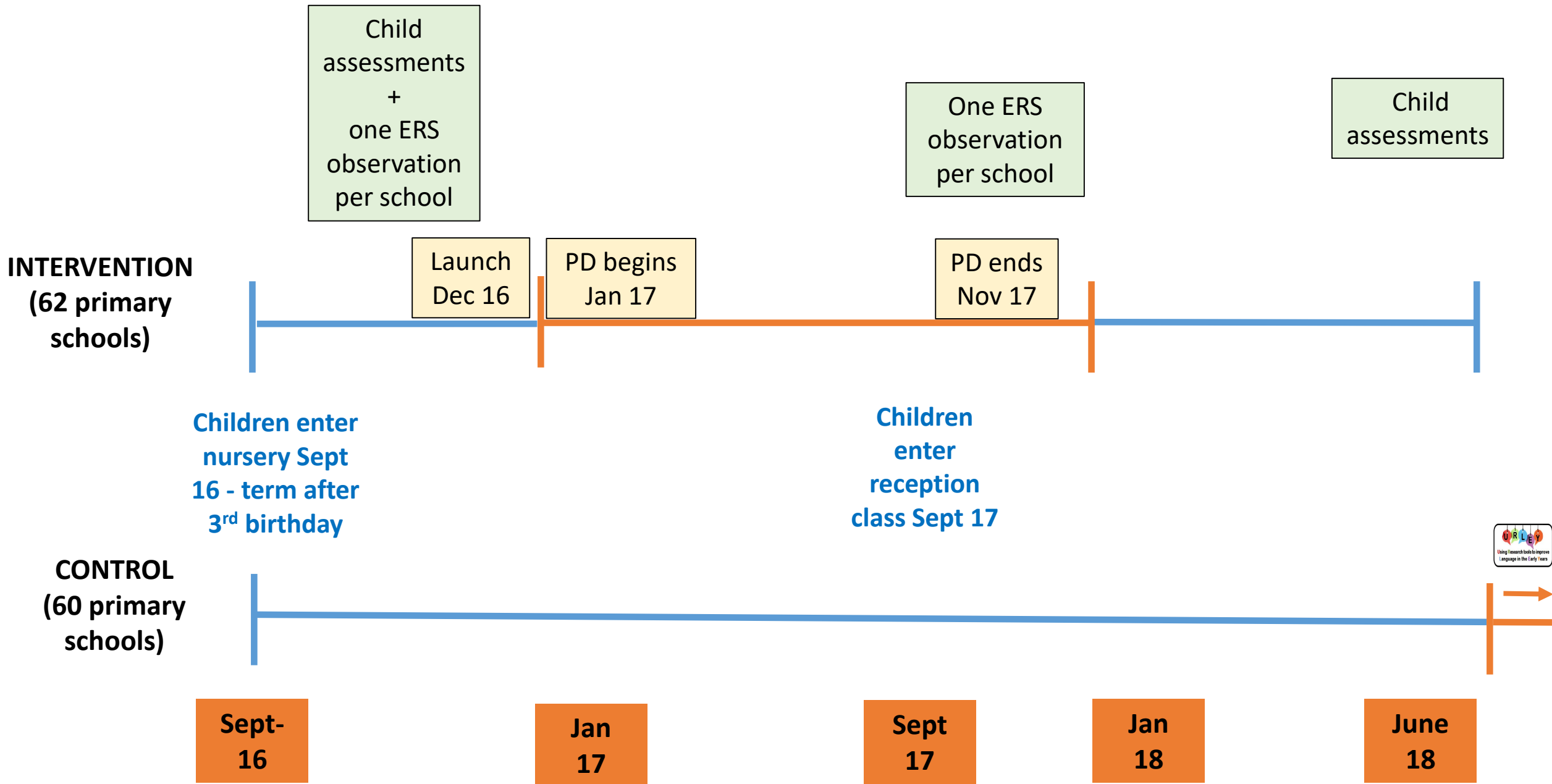
Examples and supplementary information

1.2 Staff may use grammatically incorrect sentences, childish and inappropriate words, and/or slang.

7.2 Examples of typical language development can be found in Table 3 on page 53. This may be useful when making judgements on language that is slightly above the individual child's current level.

The Quality Improvement Cycle





In the words of teachers and head teachers



Useful references

- Cordingley, P., Higgins, S., Greany, T., Buckler, N., Coles-Jordan, D., Crisp, B., Saunders, L. and Coe, R. (2015) *Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from the International Reviews into Effective Professional Development*. London: Teacher Development Trust.
<https://tdtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/DGT-Full-report.pdf>
- Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H. & Fung, I. (2007) *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/1534>.
- Zaslow, M., Tout, K., Halle, T., Whittaker J.V. & Lavelle, B. (2010) *Towards the Identification of Features of Effective Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators: Literature Review*. Child Trends/U.S. Department of Education.
<https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/professional-development/literature-review.pdf>