

# Look who's talking! Improving Primary 1 children's Listening and Talking skills

Tracy Mutch, Principal Teacher  
Stephanie McGlinchey, Teacher  
Evelyn Hardy, Pupil Support Assistant  
Gemma Wilson, Operation Lead Speech & Language Therapy Service



**Stretch Aim: By June 2019 88% (8/9) pupils will have achieved Early Level Listening and Talking Outcomes (Baseline: 0%).**

**Aim 1: By February 2019 100% of P1 children will be consistently using 2 or more sophisticated\* conjunctions in their talking during 5 minute conversations (Baseline: 67%).**

\*Operational Definition: Sophisticated conjunctions...Words used to connect clauses or sentences other than and, but and so.

## Rationale

Many children who grow up in poverty in Scotland are starting school at a serious disadvantage to their classmates. Children in areas SIMD 1& 2 are twice as likely as other children to face difficulties with their communication development<sup>1</sup>. In St Serf's R C Primary School 90% of pupils are living within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 or 2. Baseline and e-LIPS (Early Language in Play Settings) assessments indicated gaps in learning for 67% (6/9) P1 pupils in the essential indicators for aspects of good talking and listening.

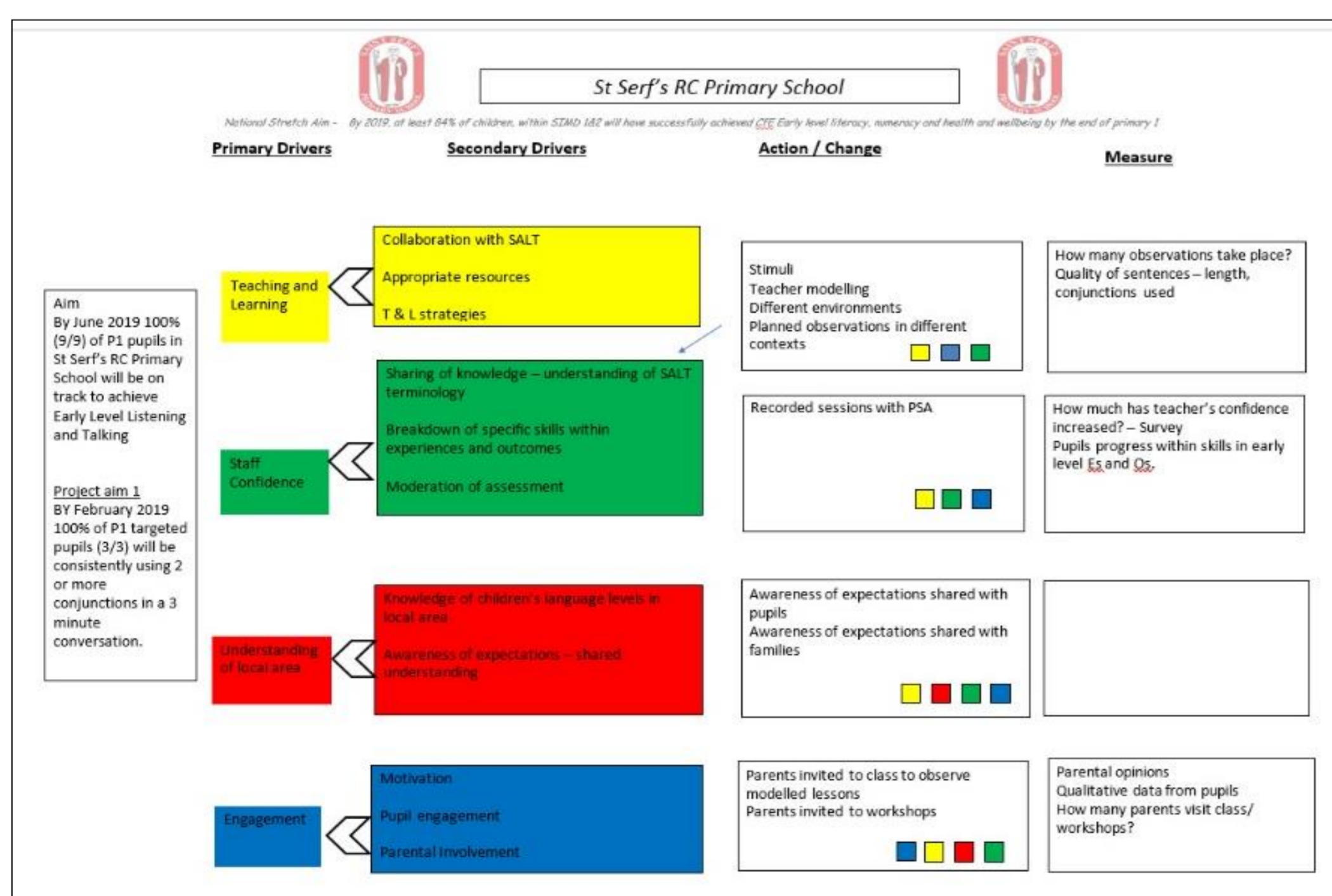


Using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) St Serfs employed a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) to help close the poverty related attainment gap by working in collaboration to improve children's language development and literacy attainment.

## Method

We established an improvement team consisting of a Class Teacher, Principal Teacher, Pupil Support Assistant and Speech and Language Therapist. We worked collaboratively to agree our improvement focus. In the first instance we broke down skills underpinning the success criteria for Early Level Listening & Talking. A baseline assessment of learner's listening and talking skills was used to create a pareto chart to help us focus on the areas of improvement with greatest potential impact. We focused on sentence length but soon realised this information didn't improve language development and following advice from SaLT we shifted our focus to inclusion of sophisticated conjunctions in conversations.

## Process Change



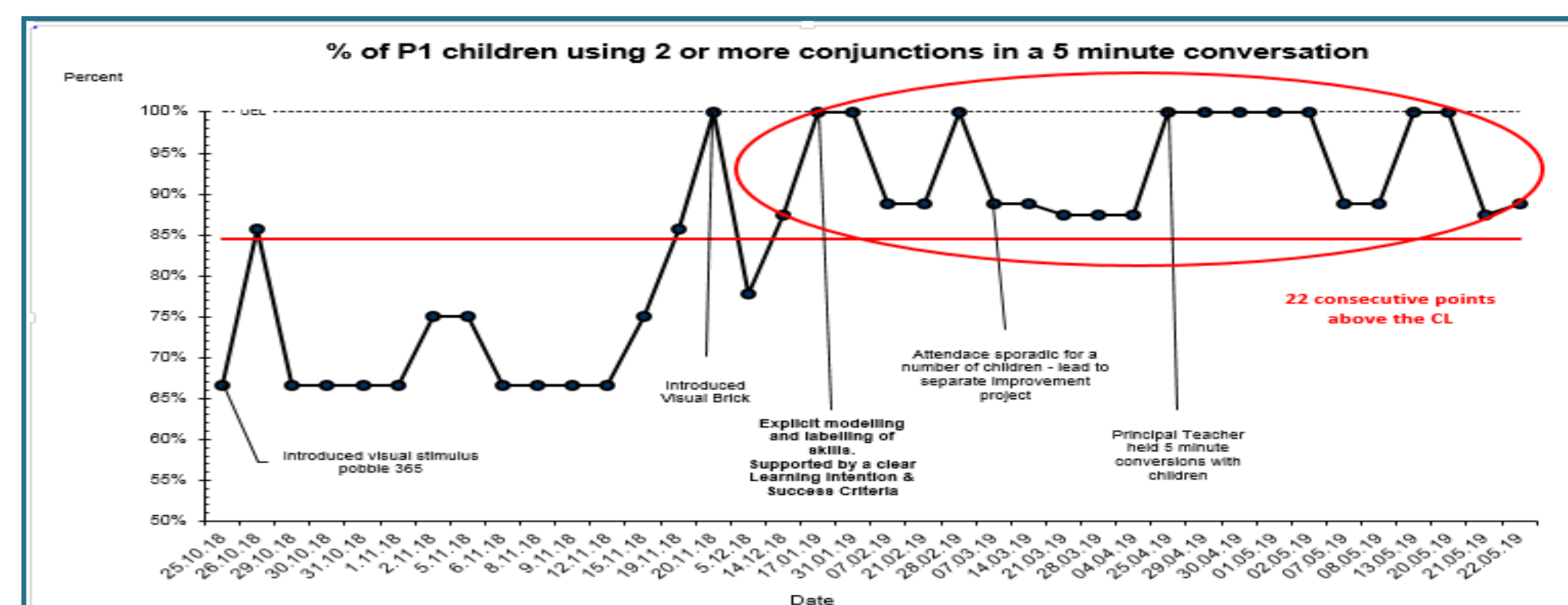
**Change ideas tested:**

- Visual stimuli
- Explicit modelling and labelling of skills
- Clear Learning Intentions and Success Criteria consistently shared

## Reference

<sup>1</sup> Save the Children – Thrive at Five accessed online: [https://www.cypnow.co.uk/digital\\_assets/Thrive\\_at\\_Five\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cypnow.co.uk/digital_assets/Thrive_at_Five_FINAL.pdf)

## Results



"I am much more mindful of the skills that I am teaching." (P1 Teacher)

"I can talk like a big girl now." (P1 pupil)

## Conclusions

Breaking down the skills underpinning the success criteria for Early Level Listening and Talking enabled the class teacher to provide explicit modelling and labelling of skills. This coupled with the provision of clear Learning Intentions and Success Criteria demonstrated improvement. Attendance was highlighted as an area for improvement for particular children.

## Achievements

- **88% of P1 pupils achieved Early Level Listening and Talking.**
- By 14<sup>th</sup> December 88% of children were consistently using 2 or more sophisticated conjunctions within 5 minute conversations.
- Working in collaboration with SaLT has strengthened multiagency relationships, upskilling teaching staff on their knowledge and pedagogic practice to support language development in the classroom.

## Key Learning Points

- This process has increased teachers confidence in tracking and how to effectively integrate assessment into the classroom.
- Data enables practitioners to be clear about which changes led to improvement.
- The team must meet regularly to reflect and analyse data and progress
- Celebrate small wins to maintain momentum.
- Visual stimuli didn't engage all pupils.

## Next Steps

- In collaboration with SaLT provide staff with a breakdown of the specific skills underpinning First & Second Level Listening & Talking.
- Create visual prompt for staff to model skills consistently.
- Establish an improvement project targeting children with poor attendance.