

*** PRESS RELEASE ***

New Toolkit to Tackle Speech and Language Issues in the Under Sixes

GL Assessment has launched WellComm, a speech and language screening tool and intervention programme designed specifically for use in the Early Years.

Developed by Sandwell Primary Care Trust, the toolkit can help non-specialist staff working in schools, nurseries, children's centres and other pre-school settings identify issues with language and communications skills in children from as young as six months to six years of age.

The launch comes at a time when it has been reported that one in 10 children do not possess good communication skills. This figure rises to one in two in the most deprived areas. Both the Bercow Report and the Children's Plan have highlighted the potential detrimental consequences for children with delayed language abilities, including poor attainment – as without the necessary communication skills, children struggle to access learning.

Lynsey Lacey, foundation stage manager at The Priory Primary School in Wednesbury, says: "Many children start school here with low language levels and we needed more insight into how we can best help them. Now we screen all pupils with WellComm and then use the results as a basis for planning lessons that will directly improve their language and communication skills. The kids love all the variety of ideas – they really pay attention when we use games and puppets in daily lessons."

Screening is undertaken using a combination of observation, discussion with parents and carers and direct assessment. This ensures a higher level of accuracy than using one method alone and also helps keep children engaged and motivated throughout the process.

WellComm uses a traffic light system of green, amber and red to identify the child's needs. Green suggests no cause for concern, those in amber need a little extra help to develop age appropriate skills and a red score flags up the potential need for specialist referral.

The Big Book of Ideas, which accompanies the toolkit, offers a comprehensive range of activities that teachers and parents can use to support the development of children's speech and language. If a child does have an issue that requires specialist intervention, the activities enable specific areas to be addressed quickly, so that children get the help they need whilst awaiting referral.

Tracey Riseborough, publisher at GL Assessment explains: "With as many as 10 per cent of children struggling with their speech, it is vital to monitor children's language skills in the early years. Early intervention is consistently shown to bring the best results so screening with WellComm ensures no child is left behind. At one end of the spectrum, WellComm can further stretch and improve the communication skills of more able children and, at the other end, it can provide an interim solution for children waiting to see a language therapist. Most importantly, it brings the welfare of an individual child to the fore, with teachers and parents better able to work together for the benefit of the child."

For further information on WellComm, visit www.gl-assessment.co.uk/wellcomm. The toolkit can be purchased online via the website for just £250.

Ends

About GL Assessment

GL Assessment is the UK's leading independent provider of tests and assessment services for education. It publishes across the 4 -19 age range, with the majority of its assessments designed for 5-14 year-olds.

GL Assessment has an extensive portfolio of print and digital tests for education which assess children's progress in literacy, ability and numeracy and identify a broad spectrum of special educational needs. It offers tests and programmes that support the development of emotional literacy and thinking skills. GL Assessment also provides assessments for use in the Health and Psychology service by clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists and paediatricians.

www.gl-assessment.co.uk

For further information, please contact:

Rebecca Bremner, Catherine Lane PR, 25 Freman Drive, Buntingford, Herts, SG9 9TD

Tel: 07092 872 720 Mobile: 07787 155 882

Email: rebecca@catherinelane.com