

## The purpose of the study

- Poor comprehenders are children who can read words well, but find comprehension challenging
- There are at least two ways in which poor reading comprehension may impact educational attainment:
  - By limiting access to the curriculum in the class or independently
  - By making it difficult to perform well in educational assessments
- As the school curriculum places increasing demands on reading comprehension with age, any educational weaknesses may become more noticeable over time
- However, little is known about the educational progress that poor comprehenders make during childhood and adolescence
- The aim of this study was to investigate educational attainment in poor comprehenders at the end of primary school (age 11) and at the end of full-time compulsory schooling (age 16)

## Participants

- 15 poor comprehenders, 15 typically developing children
- For each poor comprehender taking part in the study there was a typically developing participant that had:
  1. The same sex
  2. An equivalent age
  3. Similar nonverbal reasoning ability and nonword reading skills

## Methods

- Longitudinal data were collected over an 8-year period
- The poor comprehenders were identified at the age of 9
- Educational attainment was taken from age 11 and 16



## Timeline

Age 9

2 years

Age 11  
(SATS)

5 years

Age 16  
(GCSE)

## What we found

- Educational attainment in poor comprehenders was lower than controls at ages 11 and 16 years
- Poor comprehenders' attainment at both time-points was lower than national performance levels
- Differences between poor comprehenders and controls were only observed in English (with poor comprehenders performing worse than controls); there was no difference in Maths or Science

## Conclusion

- Poor reading comprehension is associated with lower educational attainment
- This indicates that reading comprehension difficulties impact educational attainment because:
  - The reading comprehension difficulties in these children were observed before they showed poor attainment at ages 11 and 16
  - We know that poor comprehenders have difficulty accessing the meaning of text, and that accessing text is important for learning and performing assessments
- However, our findings are not conclusive, the association between reading comprehension and educational attainment could be driven by other factors such as poor spoken language
- Future research that intervenes to improve reading comprehension and looks at long-term impacts on education would provide a more robust test of whether poor reading comprehension *causes* poor educational attainment
- Our findings motivate interventions for reading comprehension throughout primary and secondary school