

Written evidence

Members of the Oracy APPG will consider written, verbal and audio-visual evidence and oversee oral evidence sessions. All evidence will inform the final report.

The extended deadline for submitting written evidence is 20th September 2019. We would appreciate if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

- Be in a Word format
- No longer than 3000 words
- State clearly who the submission is from, and whether it is sent in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation
- Begin with a short summary in bullet point form
- Have numbered paragraphs
- Where appropriate, provide references

Please write your evidence below and email the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Amber-Page Moss

Full name:

Peterhouse (University of Cambridge)

School or Organisation:

Schools Liaison Officer (but sent in a personal capacity based on observation – not officially reflecting the views of my institution).

Role:

Written evidence:

Summary of written evidence:

- Good oracy skills will aid pupils in admission to and study at university, particularly Oxbridge
- Access to oracy provision can be limited by socio-economic context, but also by the approaches that schools take towards their pupils and school culture
- High quality oracy provision will require changes in school culture, in the nature of exams, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers

1. Value and Impact

In my role of Schools Liaison Officer for a Cambridge college, I frequently see concrete examples of how well-developed speaking and listening skills can lead to success. Children who have already developed these skills, and who have been instilled with the confidence to use them, are more able to succeed at interview, and in our supervision-based teaching system. Learning through conversation allows pupils to become reflective, critical thinkers, and to transfer the resulting, more mature, outlook to their written work. I have lead CPD sessions with teachers based in schools with low rates of admission to Oxbridge, who believe that their pupils are severely disadvantaged by their lack of confidence and oracy skills, particularly since Independent school candidates are more likely to have been given opportunities to develop these skills. Having recognised the importance of oracy, Peterhouse has established a number of projects to boost skills in this academic year, including a Public Speaking Competition and free public speaking workshops for Year 9s, and Socratic Seminar sessions for Year 13s intending to apply to Oxbridge.

2. Provision and Access

2.i. Unequal access to oracy education can be a result of differing cultures across schools, to some extent the result of socio-economic factors, but also of the approach taken by Senior Leadership. In my previous role as an English Teacher in an Academy in a disadvantaged area, which is now rated 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted, I felt that there was a deep mistrust of the pupils themselves. Behaviour management was very strict, with the expectation that pupils would line-up in silence before lessons and be lead to their classrooms. This meant that they never developed the ability to monitor their own behaviour, and consequently misbehaved, thus apparently confirming the school's approach. There was also the belief that talk in lessons was unproductive, and that pupils would learn best by sitting in silence and copying dictated notes from teachers. The school could not risk giving the pupils the freedom to learn for themselves *how to learn*, because this might affect their grade, which would reflect badly on the school.

Conversely, in my role as Schools Liaison Officer in Cambridge, I have worked in schools in more affluent areas and with a more positive approach to oracy. Teachers here are more willing to give up lesson time and to relinquish control of their pupils' behaviour, trusting the pupils to make positive decisions for themselves. For instance, at one Cambridge school, as part of the English Department's Year 8 topic on spoken word and slam poetry, I was able to run multiple spoken word workshops.

2.ii. Oracy provision across different regions must take into account the linguistic barriers, but also the linguistic *wealth*, of each area. In areas that experience high rates of immigration, or in areas with strong regional accents and dialects, provision may need to include extra linguistic support or sensitivity so as not to be alienating. Oracy provision should not mean enforcing a white, middle class, southern English style of speaking on the entire country. It can also capitalise on the oral history and styles of different cultures and regions, and the empowering sense of identity that comes with them.

3. Barriers

In my role as Schools Liaison Officer, when discussing the importance of oracy at interview, teachers have expressed that they do not have the time, resources or knowledge to encourage speaking and listening in the classroom. They also feel that confidence and oracy is something that their pupils, largely from disadvantaged backgrounds, will never be able to aspire to. High-quality oracy provision will require cultural change in schools, to believe in the abilities of their pupils, to trust them to make mistakes and give them the opportunity to learn from them. This change must occur in tandem with a national recognition in the importance of speaking and listening in life beyond the classroom, which should be reflected in the exam requirements and in the ways in which schools are assessed. Finally, teachers must receive CPD to understand the positive impact of oracy on behaviour, exam performance, and careers, and to provide teachers with easy strategies that can be embedded in their classroom practice.

Additional guidance:

Value and impact

1. Given many teachers recognise the importance of oracy, why does spoken language not have the same status as reading and writing in our education system? Should it have the same status, and if so why?
2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?

3. What is the value and impact of quality oracy education at i) different life stages, ii) in different settings, and iii) on different types of pupils (for instance pupils from varied socioeconomic backgrounds or with special educational needs)?
4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?
5. What is the impact of quality oracy education on future life chances? Specifically, how does it affect employment and what value do businesses give oracy?
6. What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills do they want to leave school with?
7. What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?
8. How can the ability to communicate effectively contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults

Provision and access

1. What should high quality oracy education look like?
2. Can you provide evidence of how oracy education is being provided in different areas/education settings/extra-curricular provision, by teachers but also other practitioners that work with children?
3. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?
4. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?
5. What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?
6. Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?
2. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?
3. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?
4. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?
5. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?
6. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?
7. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?
8. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?

