

## 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](mailto:inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk) with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

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**Role:** Head of Engagement

## LKMco oracy APPG evidence submission

### **Value and impact**

*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?*

1. LKMco and Voice 21's 2016 report 'The State of Speaking'<sup>1</sup> showed that oracy does not have the same status as reading, writing and maths. The report shows that this is largely because of the accountability and assessment systems, which experts and practitioners said prioritise written forms of communication over and above verbal communication.
2. The report found that teachers value oracy highly, as something both they and their pupils should develop and use. Polling data for the report indicates more teachers feel it is 'very important' they develop their pupils' oracy (68%) than numeracy (63%).
3. Contributors to our research, and the wider evidence-base, indicates oracy should have the same status as reading, writing and maths because of its crucial role in supporting children and young people's cognitive, social and emotional development, as well as their civic engagement and empowerment.

*What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?*

4. The State of Speaking report emphasises how oracy – the ability to speak confidently, knowledgably and appropriately – can affect young people's outcomes in school and later in life. *Not* possessing strong oracy skills can act as a barrier in a number of respects.
5. Teachers polled for this research highlighted how oracy boosts pupils' linguistic, academic and social and emotional development. Practitioners told us that pupils who could not express themselves well verbally faced significant challenges at school, struggling to keep up with their peers academically, as well as in terms of their social and emotional development. This is explored more in paragraph 19.
6. Oracy affects access to careers. In its qualitative evaluation of non-educational barriers to elite professions the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission found that elite firms define 'talent' according to a number of factors including strong communication and debating skills, confidence and 'polish'.<sup>2</sup> Lacking oracy could therefore serve as a barrier to young people's entrance to the jobs market. This is explored more in paragraphs 16 and 17.
7. Oracy enables children and young people to literally and figuratively 'find their voice'. Contributors to our 2016 report emphasised how important oracy is for empowering young people, enabling them to express themselves and get involved in discussion and debate. Not developing these skills could stymie young people's democratic participation throughout school and into adult life. This is explored more in paragraphs 20 and 21.
8. Worryingly the children and young people most in need of a quality oracy education, including quieter and shy pupils, and/or pupils with forms of special educational need, may be the least likely to receive it. This is because teachers can be nervous about putting these pupils on the spot in lessons, and embarrassing them.

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<sup>1</sup> Millard, W. and Menzies, L. (2016) *The State of Speaking in Our Schools*, London: Voice 21/LKMco.

<sup>2</sup> Ashley, L., Duberley, J., Sommerlad, H. and Scholarios, D. (2015) *A Qualitative Evaluation of Non-Educational Barriers to the Elite Professions*, London: Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

*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)?*

9. Oracy is important throughout children and young people's lives. In the Early Years and start of primary school, oracy – the ability to communicate verbally – is the gateway to wider learning and development. Practitioners contributing to our 'State of Speaking' research said that children lagging behind in terms of linguistic and spoken development find it difficult making headway elsewhere in their educations.
10. Throughout school oracy is important, and remains a 'gateway' to education more broadly. As pupils grow older their ability to express complex subject-specific knowledge verbally becomes increasingly important. Irrespective of age and phase, children and young people's ability to express themselves emotionally and communicate socially invariably hinges on oracy (although it is important to recognise that non-verbal forms of communication are also vital and valid).
11. There is an active debate around whether or not a 'word gap' exists between pupils from richer and poorer backgrounds. It is vital all young people develop a wide vocabulary that enables them to access learning and life more generally.
12. For the reasons mentioned in paragraph 6, possessing (or not possessing) quality oracy skills can affect young people's study and employment pathways post-16.

*How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?*

13. Ours and other research<sup>3</sup> indicates that there are important generic and subject-specific elements to oracy. There are 'generic' aspects of verbal communication such as tone and body language that are important and relevant across the curriculum as a whole. There are also subject-specific components including the ability to verbally express knowledge that have less cross-curricular relevance.
14. Irrespective of their subject area and phase, teachers can benefit from thinking about the balance between teacher and pupil talk, and the sorts of talk used in their lessons. There is good evidence that varied styles of teacher and pupil talk including discussion and dialogue boost academic and wider outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

*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?*

15. As was outlined in paragraph 6, oracy can boost young people's access to post-school pathways insofar as it contributes to their 'polish', and appeal to people making recruitment decisions who themselves possess these skills.
16. LKMco's 2019 research into careers education highlighted a perceived disconnect between schooling and the world of work,<sup>5</sup> with survey data indicating employers struggle to find young people with the right sets of skills.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, while teachers generally feel young people develop work-relevant skills,<sup>7</sup> young people themselves do not feel so confident of this.<sup>8</sup> Written and verbal communication

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see: Quigley, A. (2018) *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*, London: Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Jay, T., Willis, B., Thomas, P., Taylor, R., Moore, N., Burnett, C., Merchant, G. and Stevens, A. (2017) *Dialogic Teaching: Evaluation report and executive summary*, London: Education Endowment Foundation.

<sup>5</sup> Millard, W., Bowen-Viner, K., Baars, S. and Menzies, L. (2019) *More Than A Job's Worth: Making Careers Education Age-Appropriate*, London: LKMco/Founders4Schools.

<sup>6</sup> CBI/Pearson (2017) *Helping The UK Thrive: CBI/Pearson Education And Skills Survey 2017*, London: CBI.

<sup>7</sup> Kashefpakdel, E. T., Newton, O. and Clark, J. (2018a) *Joint Dialogue: How Are Schools Developing Real Employability Skills?*, London: Education and Employers.

<sup>8</sup> Mourshed, M., Farrell, D. and Barton, D. (2013) *Education to Employment: Designing a System that Works*.

skills are repeatedly emphasised as lacking in the workforce.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, it is plausible that equipping young people with high quality oracy could smooth their transition into the workplace.

*What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills to they want to leave school with?*

17. LKMco's 2019 report 'More Than A Job's Worth' highlights that young people's hopes and aspirations for their futures are shifting. Increasingly young people's job-related hopes extend beyond job titles, occupational status and remuneration. While these are important, young people tend to rank having interesting jobs, a positive work/life balance, and helping others as more important to them than pay.<sup>10</sup> Young people's contributions to LKMco's ongoing Making Waves project correlate with this, insofar as they highlight how they want their educations to provide them with the experiences and skills that will enable them to thrive throughout life, and not simply teach them how to pass exams (although that is important too). An ability to communicate confidently and appropriately clearly underpins this.

*What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?*

18. As the 'State of Speaking' highlights, oracy plays a vital role in supporting social mobility. By helping children and young people develop strong linguistic skills and through supporting their wider academic achievement, oracy can bolster the progress of pupils entering school with lower levels of language development and/or prior attainment.

19. Teachers polled for the 'State of Speaking' emphasised the vital role oracy plays in supporting children and young people's social and emotional development and wellbeing, enabling pupils to understand their own emotions, and empathise with other people. Two thirds (64%) of teachers said oracy is very important in developing pupils' confidence and independence; nearly half (48%) said oracy is very important in supporting young people's ability to understand their feelings and empathise with others. This is reflected in the existing evidence base, which indicates discussion-based lesson activities can be beneficial for young people's confidence, self-esteem and sense of connectedness.<sup>11</sup>

*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?*

20. LKMco's 'State of Speaking' report highlights how oracy can boost pupils' civic and democratic awareness and engagement. For example, a body of qualitative evidence shows structured and purposeful classroom dialogue between pupils and with teachers can help broaden students' awareness of social issues and differences between social groups.<sup>12</sup>

21. Oracy can also help empower students to interact with society. For example, skills such as negotiating, constructing arguments, debating, and listening to and building on the ideas of others play a fundamental role in citizenship education and, therefore, in teaching young people how to be active citizens.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> CBI/Pearson (2018) *Educating For The Modern World* Cbi/Pearson Education And Skills Annual Report, London: CBI.

<sup>10</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018) *Young people's career aspirations versus reality*, London: ONS.

<sup>11</sup> Trickey, S., and Topping, K. J. (2006) 'Collaborative Philosophical Enquiry for School Children: Socioemotional Effects at 11–12 Years', *School Psychology International*, 27, 599–614; Howe, C. and Mercer, N. (2007) 'Children's Social Development, Peer Interaction and Classroom Learning' (Primary Review Research Survey 2/1b), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education (1).

<sup>12</sup> Nagda, B. A., and Gurin, P. (2007) 'Intergroup Dialogue: A Critical-Dialogic Approach to Learning About Difference, Inequality and Social Justice', *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 111, 35- 45; Zuniga, X. (2003) 'Bridging Differences through Dialogue', *About Campus*, 7 (6), 8-16.

<sup>13</sup> Deakin Crick, R., Coates, M., Taylor, M. and Ritchie, S. (2004) 'A Systematic Review of the Impact of Citizenship Education on the Provision of Schooling', *Research Evidence in Education Library*, London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.

## **Provision and access**

*What should high quality oracy education look like?*

23. As the 'State of Speaking' report sets out, a high quality oracy education will involve:

- All teachers taking responsibility for their pupils' oracy education, irrespective of phase and subject;
- Developing pupils' 'generic' oracy including their tone and body language, and subject-specific oracy so that pupils can speak confidently and appropriately about what they are learning;
- Teachers thinking carefully about their own talk, modelling high quality oracy, and scaffolding their pupils' oracy;
- Ensuring all pupils participate, including those who are shy or quiet, and;
- Ensuring opportunities are embedded and repeated. 'One-off' events such as presenting in assemblies or participating in debates are valuable, but pupils must also be able to practise speaking during lessons.

*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?*

24. LKMco's research regularly brings us into contact with a wide range of practitioners working with children and young people, in a range of settings inside and outside school. For example, our 'Boys on Track' report highlights how important it is for all practitioners working with young people including teachers, youth workers, the police and health practitioners to communicate effectively.<sup>14</sup> This is especially important when working with young people who have experienced hardship or trauma. In turn, these young people are more likely to be from poor backgrounds, care-experienced, or involved in the youth offending system.

*What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?*

25. Generally teachers believe oracy is important, but something they cannot devote enough time to it within the confines of the curriculum and accountability system.

26. The 'State of Speaking' report shows that a wide range of academics and practitioners from across the UK emphasise the importance of oracy for young people's prospects.

*Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?*

27. The 'State of Speaking' report outlines a number of case studies of how schools have developed their oracy provision. For example, Green Lane Primary School in Bradford uses Makaton sign language to augment young children's spoken communication, giving the pupils confidence that they will be understood and, in turn, building their linguistic competence. In Eastwood Primary School in Keighley, teachers co-construct ground rules for talk with their pupils, and pupils watch back video footage of their classes to self- and peer-assess their spoken language. Limpsfield Grange School in Surrey is a special school for girls with autism, and uses oracy to build the girls' social and emotional confidence, and civic engagement. For example, the headteacher delivers presentations at conferences with her pupils, to give them opportunities to practise their public speaking.

*What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?*

28. Subject area is a crucial factor determining access to quality opportunities to develop oracy. The 'State of Speaking' report highlights how teachers of English, history and drama are much more likely to see oracy as an integral part of their work than maths and science teachers.

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<sup>14</sup> Millard, W., Bowen-Viner, K., Baars, S., Trethewey, A. and Menzies, L. (2018) 'Boys on Track': Improving support for Black Caribbean and Free School Meal Eligible White Boys in London, London: LKMco/GLA.

29. Because of the subject-specific nature of teachers' beliefs, pupils in secondary schools and post-16 settings can have less access to oracy than pupils attending primary or special settings. Our 'State of Speaking' report found that primary school teachers tend to view oracy more positively, seeing it as a gateway for pupils' wider learning. Because teachers teach a wide range of subjects, embedding oracy across subjects can be more straightforward in primary settings. Special schools also emphasise the value of oracy, again because it is a gateway for their pupils' learning and development.
30. The 'State of Speaking' also revealed that teachers in independent and grammar schools give oracy greater priority than their colleagues in mainstream state schools. This may reflect independent and grammar school teachers' and parents' recognition that oracy is crucial for success later in life.

*Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?*

31. Oracy should empower pupils, not alienate them. Consequently, oracy is not about teaching pupils to speak 'correctly'; schools should seize opportunities to celebrate local speech patterns. This could involve celebrating local dialects, accents, or additional languages. This presents clear opportunity for schools to collaborate with parents and wider communities.

## **Barriers**

*What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?*

32. The 'State of Speaking' report highlighted the following barriers to quality oracy education:

- Lack of time
- Fear of negative effects for pupils
- Fear about relinquishing control resulting in poor pupil behaviour
- The prioritisation of written work
- The fact there is nothing to show for these activities
- Subject relevance (or perceived lack thereof)

*What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?*

33. The 'State of Speaking' shows that many teachers do not have access to oracy training of any kind, let alone repeated and embedded opportunities to develop their pedagogy in this respect. Consequently the improved availability of information, advice and guidance for teachers would be valuable.

34. Some schools nominate oracy 'champions'. While this can be seen as tokenistic, schools contributing to the 'State of Speaking' report said it can be a valuable way to get the ball rolling, raising the profile of oracy and providing a support mechanism for teachers seeking to develop their practice.

*What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?*

35. Teachers should be incentivised to deliver more oracy because they observe, hear about or experience its value.

36. Ofsted should not be used as a means of forcing teachers to adopt oracy. To do so could breed resentment and mistrust, and undermine oracy's liberating potential. Furthermore, it could encourage 'box ticking' behaviour as described in paragraph 39.

37. Professional networks including the Chartered College of Teaching and teaching unions have an important role to play in sharing oracy success stories and resources. So too do grassroots and national networks, such as those established by Voice 21.

*What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?*

38. As is explained in paragraph 36, teachers should not be forced to adopt oracy in their teaching. This means that government and Ofsted should have a minimal-at-most involvement in incentivising teachers. This could include publishing guidance on building high quality classroom talk, or signposting quality resources and case studies.

*What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?*

39. The 'State of Speaking' report shows that the formal assessment or tracking of oracy by teachers and schools is unusual. Furthermore, as LKMco's report 'Testing the Water' demonstrates:<sup>15</sup>

- Teacher assessment is a vital source of information for pupils, but can be unreliable and subject to prejudice, especially when used for high stakes purposes.
- The different functions of assessments can become conflated and muddled, which often means teachers undertake assessments for tracking and reporting purposes, rather than to provide formative feedback to pupils.

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<sup>15</sup> Millard, W., Small, I. and Menzies, L. (2017) *Testing the Water: How assessment can underpin, not undermine, great teaching*, London: LKMco/Pearson.

Training, information, advice and guidance should be available to encourage teachers to assess their pupils' oracy, so that they can extend and develop pupils' spoken communication skills. However, schools should be at pains to emphasise the formative function of these assessments, or else the activity is at risk of becoming a box-ticking exercise with no impact on learning.

*Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?*

40. Schools should be free to design curricula and select qualifications that they feel best meet their pupils' needs, and this extends to the inclusion of oracy in lessons or use of speech-based assessments such as LAMDA exams.

41. The teacher-assessed Speaking and Listening component of the previous English GCSEs was open to gaming,<sup>16</sup> and any move towards new high stakes assessment of pupils' spoken communication should be treated with extreme caution.

*What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?*

42. As is explained in paragraphs 35 to 38, an approach that emphasises teacher choice and which celebrates success is by far preferable to one that emphasises compliance and uniformity.

*Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?*

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<sup>16</sup> Ofqual (2013) *Our announcement on speaking and listening assessments*. Available at: <https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2013/09/04/our-announcement-on-speaking-and-listening-assessments/>