Oracy APPG

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 it if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

● Be in a Word format
● Be 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 return the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Rebecca Raybould (on behalf of the organisation)
Full name:

Centre for the Use of Research and
Evidence in Education
School or Organisation:

Associate
Role:

Written evidence:

Summary
- CUREE support the inquiry
- Our work with schools using research-based interventions to develop KS2/KS3 pupils' literacy has given us a valuable insight into oracy
- Our evidence demonstrates that without oracy skills pupils struggle to develop the reading skills needed to access the curriculum at KS3
- With appropriate intervention pupils can develop specific oracy skills needed to access the curriculum
- A key barrier for many children and teachers is the disparity between the language spoken at home and the language that they encounter in school and written texts

Introduction to the submission

1. CUREE fully support the inquiry into oracy education. We are aware that there are several large-scale reviews of evidence (such as those carried out by the Education Endowment Foundation) which will be relevant to the inquiry, but believe that you will be consulting these directly. We therefore have focused our submission on our experiences of working directly with schools to support them in using research-based approaches to develop pupils' literacy skills including oracy. This work has given us a valuable insight into oracy needs and education, particularly in schools serving children experiencing disadvantage.

The scope of the work

2. We have worked with over 102 schools in Blackpool, Sandwell, Staffordshire, Walsall, Hereford and across the country in an EEF trial. The focus has been on supporting children (around the KS2/KS3 transition) who are struggling to access the curriculum because of barriers to literacy. Through CUREE-led training and extensive, teacher friendly, research-based resources, schools identify target pupils, carry out forensic identification of their literacy needs, select research-based interventions (from a menu) to use with pupils, carefully identify the intensity of intervention required and monitor the impact on the children's learning. As part of this process, schools have used GL reading assessment tests pre- and post- the interventions to gain a picture of their starting points and the progress made.

Key Points relating to the Change Inquiry questions

Value and Impact

3. The evidence from the schools involved in our work demonstrates the consequences of children not receiving oracy education. Without an emphasis on developing oracy skills, pupils can struggle to gain key reading skills, which in turn leads to them finding it difficult to access the curriculum as they enter secondary school. This can lead to a vicious cycle of frustration and behavioural issues that impact on their engagement in learning. Our experience supports the wider evidence that oral skills are a crucial foundation for moving beyond simple decoding to continuing and increasingly sophisticated engagement, with the meaning of text as a reader and/or as a writer. We have found that oral language, alongside linked social/cultural deprivation (such as opportunities to be prompted and supported to formulate ideas and opinions and to express and test these tested in a range of contexts) is a significant barrier to progress for vulnerable pupils.

4. For example, in the Blackpool area, approx. 20% of children were entering KS3 with KS1 reading levels. The children were sufficiently 'streetwise' and 'classroom wise' to have masked the issues. Often these children were seen to misbehave in class. When teachers analysed the pupils' needs, they found that many of the underpinning barriers to reading related to poor oracy and linked poor literacy skills. The cognitive demands being made by what they were reading in different subjects was high because there was such a disparity between the text and the spoken language that they were used to. Targeted interventions that included listening to the teacher modelling aspects of language use, along with structured opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas/use language orally before moving onto analysing text and or written exercises, were beneficial for the children.

Provision and access

5. Our work with schools indicates that there is insufficient emphasis given to developing basic oracy skills in order to access literacy across the curriculum. With appropriate intervention we have found that children can gain specific oracy skills needed to access the curriculum. For example, schools in the Black Country SSIF project used the interventions in the last weeks of the summer term. This resulted in an effect size of 0.45 pre-/post-test (47 Y7 pupils across 14 secondary schools) - (GL NRGT test data, matched pre- and post-test scores) (Chrysalis Research, 2019). In this project many of the schools used a vocabulary intervention, where teachers introduced valuable vocabulary, modelled usage and gave children opportunities to discuss the word meaning and read the words aloud prior to completing writing activities exercises. This indicates that a very targeted approach can be beneficial for pupils.

Barriers

6. As outlined earlier, a barrier for many children is the disparity between the language spoken at home and the language they encounter in school, especially in less familiar subjects in secondary school and in written texts. This is particularly true when local dialects differ very significantly in their grammatical structure from the language used in education texts and assessments as is the case in, for example, The Black Country. Many teachers serving areas experiencing disadvantage have been recruited as parent helpers, then teaching assistants and then trained as teachers, so they are likely to use the local dialect with their pupils. This makes it difficult for children to hear/become familiar with oral standard English. We would argue that pupils and their teachers should be enabled to value the local dialect but be helped quite explicitly to understand the differences between structure and vocabulary and that of standard English, so they can make choices about when to use which register. Such choices and learning opportunities depend in turn on an emphasis on oracy within both the curriculum and the pedagogy used to bring it alive. There should be opportunities for both the local dialect and standard English to be used orally, thus helping pupils to recognise and narrow the gap between their spoken language and written texts.

7. Our experiences from the project highlight the benefits of teachers using very targeted, ongoing assessments to monitor pupils' progress and inform future teaching. We would argue that training and tools which enable teachers to carry out an assessment of oral skills and align this with the wider curriculum would be helpful.

Its 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 to 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?