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 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'

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School or Organisation:

Lecturer in Psychology in Education
Role:

Written evidence:

Main points:

- *Poorer outcomes are consistently reported in research for children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs who are often at a double disadvantage as research suggests school staff do not feel adequately skilled in supporting language needs.*
- *Significant variability exists between geographical areas and within schools as to how children with language needs are supported.*
- *There is a lack of evidence-based approaches to supporting language at a universal level and although there is evidence to support that universal interventions are an effective means of intervention, for that to be effective, it is imperative that staff are highly trained and well supported.*
- *Supporting Spoken Language in the Classroom (SSLiC) is a knowledge exchange programme aimed to support school professionals to embed oracy education in their school's policy and practice by fostering a good language learning environment and so providing support for literacy, support for learning and ultimately promote positive academic outcomes for all children in a primary setting.*
- *Key learning points from the SSLiC pilot 2017-2018 in 10 primary schools in London and South East are reported here as a means of providing an example of what should high quality oracy education look like arguing that this needs to be linked to whole-school development initiatives.*

Introduction

1. There continues to be a significant amount of research highlighting the poorer outcomes, both in terms of academic attainment and socio-emotional functioning, associated with low language levels, with difficulties persisting throughout primary and secondary school. Furthermore, there is a significant amount of research highlighting the links between socio-economic deprivation and poorer language skills. Alongside these difficulties, children with language difficulties are often at a double disadvantage as research suggests school staff do not feel adequately skilled in supporting language needs. This is further worrying considering that Speech, language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are the most prevalent area of educational need in mainstream primary schools.

Current context

2. Children experiencing language difficulties are not a homogenous group. Needs can vary widely and can be considered as transient needs, primary needs or secondary language needs. Within the UK, the majority of these children are educated in mainstream schools supported by school staff, with additional support provided by Speech and Language Therapists for those children with more complex needs. However, there exists significant variability between geographical areas and within schools as to how children with language needs are supported. The Bercow report highlighted this variability and inconsistency in support, however 10 years on from the publication, problems continue to permeate the system.

3. Whilst there has been significant interest in aiming to understand and enhance provision for children with language needs, for example through the development of evidence-based tools for evaluating language interventions, there continues to be a lack of evidenced-based approaches to supporting language at a **universal level**. For example, Law et al. identified that out of a wide range of interventions identified for review, only a small number were designed to be implemented at a universal level. Furthermore, interventions tend to address specific needs once identified and therefore the emphasis lies on support of identified needs rather than being preventative and universal. However, there is evidence to suggest that universal support of language difficulties is an effective means of improving language for children. However, Ebbels et al. (2019) argued that whilst there is evidence to suggest interventions can be successfully implemented at a universal level, for them to be effective, it is <u>imperative that staff are highly trained and well-supported</u>.

4. Despite the identification of the need for a workforce which are highly skilled, research highlights that there is a variability amongst practitioners as to their awareness of terminology and understanding of language needs. Furthermore, there are few measures that educational practitioners might use to identify language difficulties. An answer to this has been the call for more training however, there are a number of complex factors as to how to translate training into more effective practice.

Developing educational practitioner's practice

5. Professional development (PD) for educational staff can consist of a number of approaches including taught courses, attendance at conferencing etc and there is significant variability in terms of duration, intensity and participation. However, there is limited evidence as to the effectiveness of some PD.

6. Research has focused on identifying those factors which are considered to attribute to more effective outcomes with a number of studies highlighting the important role of coaching. Nueman and Cunningham (2009) identified that the inclusion of a coaching element to PD resulted in improved language and literacy practices for teachers.

7. Furthermore, whilst a number of factors needed for effective PD have been identified there continues to be limited evidence as to how PD may support educational practitioner's knowledge (Markussen-Brown et al, 2017) despite the correlation between knowledge and practice. Arguably, whilst challenges exist in how knowledge is measured, it is possible that researchers do not know the type of knowledge which is valued by educational practitioners. Indeed, despite the wealth of research in the area of language needs, gaps exist in our understanding of how to apply research findings in schools in a meaningful way and there continues to be a chasm between researchers' knowledge and educational staff knowledge.

Going beyond the narrowing of the research-practice gap

8. The gap which exists between research and practice has long been established and there has been a number of emerging methods aimed at developing more successful means of implementing research findings. For example, Graham et al (2006) identifies terms such as knowledge translation, knowledge transfer and implementation. Of note however, is the emergence within the UK of a method of knowledge mobilization referred to as Knowledge Exchange (KE). Based on a social constructionist model, KE can be described as the way by which knowledge and research findings move between the knowledge source and the potential users of that knowledge. It differs from other forms of knowledge mobilization in that the

emphasis is on the collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and the iterative process that occurs from the original exchange and beyond.

The Supporting Spoken Language in the Classroom (SSLiC) Programme

9. Embedded within a KE framework, the Supporting Spoken Language in the Classroom Programme (SSLiC) aimed for researchers and educational practitioners to work collaboratively over a sustained period of time, to investigate how the evidence base related to communication and oral language that does exist might be applied to individual school's particular setting and then how this collective knowledge might be used to inform the wider community of 'what works' in schools for children. The SSLiC programme was developed by researchers at UCL Centre for Inclusive Education (Dr Ioanna Bakopoulou and Dr Joanna Vivash with the collaboration of Professor Julie Dockrell, Mrs Gill Brackenbury and Dr Karl Wall) and sought to provide a forum for knowledge exchange between practitioners and researchers by introducing practitioners to the evidence base available for supporting spoken language for all children in primary schools and providing evidence-informed tools to audit the practitioner school's current strengths and areas for development. In turn, the SSLiC Programme aimed to utilise the educational practitioners' knowledge to inform future research and further development of the SSLiC Programme.

10. The SSLiC Programme consisted of a number of activities over a sustained period of time (9 months) and is illustrated below:

Structure of the SSLiC Programme Across 9 months

Ongoing support from facilitator via phone/skype/email
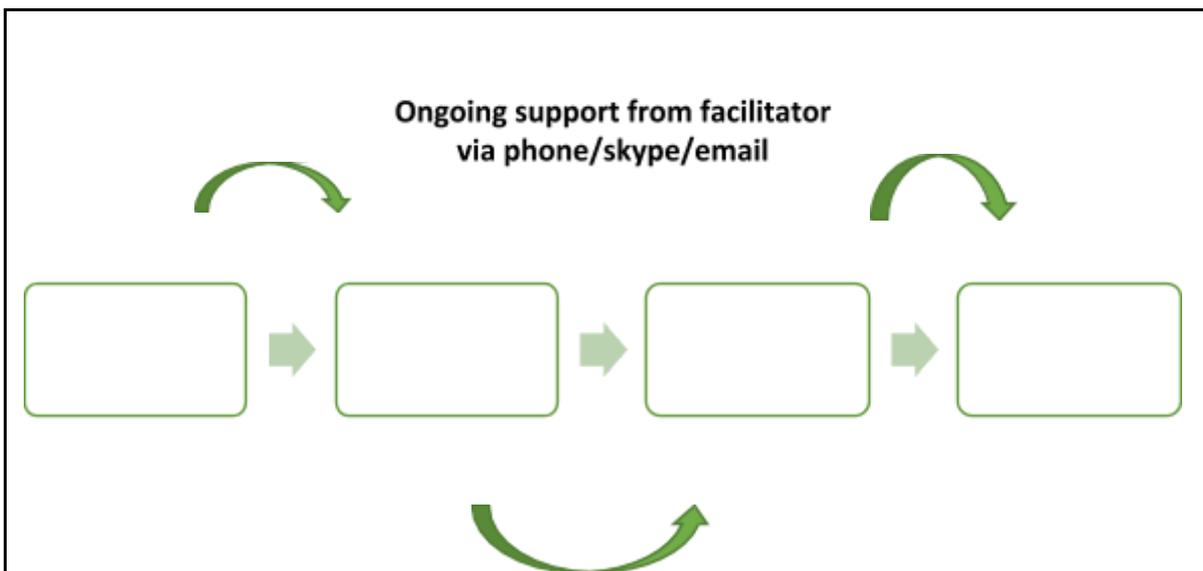
11. To support this process, the SSLiC programme has identified five evidence-informed domains around which schools can focus professional development and learning. These include: a) Language Leadership, b) Staff Professional Development and Learning, c) Communication Supporting Classrooms, d) Identifying and Supporting Speech, Language and Communication Needs, e) Working with parents and external agencies.

12. 10 primary schools across London and the south east participated in the SSLiC programme across the 2017-2018 academic year. Each school had access to the most up to date research findings, a school self-assessment audit tool, an evidence-based classroom observation tool (Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool, BCRP) and received regular support from facilitators with research and school practitioner backgrounds.

Outcomes and Evaluation of SSLiC Programme

13. The participants in the SSLiC programme implemented a variety of changes in their schools at pupil, practitioner and school levels based on an action plan which was tailored to each school's priorities and needs. At the pupil level, initiatives included a more tailored and individualised support of identified SLCN. At practitioner and school levels, some of the participants used the SSLiC programme as a springboard in their school to enhance

staff understanding of language development, further support professional development and effect systemic school changes in assessing and identifying language needs as well as working collaboratively with parents and external professionals. Ultimately, all participants reported that they used the SSLiC programme to raise the profile of the importance of oral language for children's educational attainment.

14. *A number of measures were used to evaluate the SSLiC Programme at the different levels (pupil, practitioner and school levels) and impact case studies were written by the developers of the programme (Bakopoulou & Vivash, 2018) adding to the evidence base of what works for supporting all children's oracy education.

Future Steps

15. One of the aims of the SSLiC programme is to continue to support whole school developments in practice after the programme has ended through ongoing review of the school self-assessment audit and action plan. All ten schools in the SSLiC programme have continued with their focus on the projects described above and in doing so are ensuring that their work contributes to the wider evidence base for supporting pupils with SLCN.

Key publications

Bakopoulou, I., & Vivash, J. (in preparation). Learning from the Supporting Spoken Language in the Classroom Programme pilot: What does it take to achieve whole school impact. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders.*

Bakopoulou, I., & Vivash, J. (2019). *Pilot of Supporting Spoken Language in the Classroom Impact Case Studies 2017-2018.* Centre for Inclusive Education, UCL Institute of Education.

Dockrell, J., Bakopoulou, I., Law, J., Spencer, S., & Lindsay, G. (2015). Capturing communication supporting classrooms: The development of a tool and feasibility study. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 31(3),*

Ebbels, S.H., McCartney, E., Slomins, V., Dockrell, J.E., Frazier Norbury, C. (2019). Evidence-based pathways to intervention for children with language disorders. *International Journal in Language and Communication Disorders, 54 (1),* 3-19.

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?