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'

Wendy Colebourne

Full name:

Harrington Nursery School/ Derby Early Years Teaching School

School or Organisation:

Headteacher / Co-Director

Role:

Written evidence:

Numerous organisations will be voicing concerns about the impact of lower levels of Oracy, citing wellbeing, social integration and literacy acquisition amongst others. Research on these are also well documented and in the public domain.

With that in mind, we would like to focus on the 'Barriers to Improving Oracy Education' within this report and, hopefully, to offer some solutions and considerations we have experience of within Derby City.

Firstly, issues with Oracy skills arise as a result of a number of educational and cultural issues:

- Pupil Premium children are, statistically, more likely to present with speech and language skill gaps.
- The number of children presenting with delayed or disordered speech and language development is increasing.
- Many children with specific developmental/educational needs will have delayed or disordered language development as part of their developmental profile.
- Children who speak another language at home and are newer to English will have vocabulary and language skill gaps with English.
- Technological changes in society result in lower levels of interaction and talk across society, with these issues not isolated to the above vulnerable groups.
- Services from Outside Agencies who can offer assessment and advice have reduced as they have refocused on 'core caseloads.'

It is essential to understand that one, two or three of these issues can impact on the skill profile of an individual child. These educational, cultural and, therefore, political issues cannot be considered and tackled separately. Ultimately, they all impact on different children in different ways.

Currently, most people are aware of these issues but are treating them as 'blanket' issues, looking for single, 'blanket' solutions to fill the gap. Unfortunately, the issues are more complex. We feel that, before solutions can be chosen and implemented, we must look more closely at the developmental profile of each child. What impact has one or more of these issues had on an individual child at a developmental level? If there are speech and language concerns, what exactly does that look and sound like? Where are the skill gaps? Fundamentally, also establish what a child CAN do, not just what they cannot.

In our opinion it is very difficult to make choices and put things in place in order to close a gap if the developmental gap/gaps have not first been located and clarified. If this is done, informed choices about strategies, enhancements and interventions can then be made, as opposed to using generic solutions in the hope that they will work.

Although Oracy must remain a priority throughout Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, this is essentially an Early Years issue. Developmental gaps must, where possible, be closed in the early years before they have chance to widen and become learning, literacy and social engagement gaps.

Due to the level of concern, Oracy within the EYFS should be an intrinsic part of provision and practice. Interventions should be embedded in to Quality First Teaching rather than being treated as a separate entity. The more, schools and settings 'know' their children from a developmental skill point of view, the easier this becomes. Advice from outside agencies should also be embedded wherever possible.

There is a strong desire to tackle these issues within the Early Years and the flexibility to do so. However, from the age of 3+, especially within the school system, there is a lot of pressure to make children 'Phonic Ready' and to improve standards with literacy. For many, this means that language gaps are unaddressed as the focus is too heavily and too soon on Systematic Phonics. Unfortunately, the more societal and educational issues a school faces, the drive to improve Phonic outcomes can be greater, narrowing the skill focus and, as a consequence, not addressing the fundamental gaps with understanding, vocabulary or sentence skills. This is perpetuated by Phase One focussing on a narrow set of high-level pre-phonic skills, assuming that language for future reading comprehension and writing are in place.

Within Derby, we have used the Launchpad for Literacy Approach to give schools and nurseries a cohesive approach to literacy readiness and speech and language support. Pre-phonic skills have continued to be facilitated alongside vocabulary and language skills. This also means that Oracy is not separated from literacy in people's thinking at this crucial stage. More fundamentally, this gives our children a broader-base of skill readiness to underpin reading comprehension and writing in addition to phonics, as advocated by the EEF's Early Years' Guidance. The Skills Framework within the Approach also allows language and literacy readiness gaps to be identified and clarified. Incremental, developmental steps of progression can then be targeted through interactions and Quality First Teaching.

Despite broadening our skill focus, Phonic skills across the authority have dramatically improved, with Derby City moving from 150th in relation to the Phonics Screen in 2014 to 76th in 2018, reaching National for the first time. Of course, we have also addressed the consistency and quality of phonic teaching in Reception and beyond, but making our children have better developmental levels of readiness and have language gaps more specifically targeted is a huge factor.

Within Primary Schools, where lower levels of Oracy result in attainment gaps at the end of KS2, there is often top-down pressure for more formal teaching within the Early Years. We have found that this is false economy as gaps are ignored. The issues with progression and attainment actually result from these skill gaps. Our approach to literacy readiness using the Launchpad for Literacy Approach, has made the connection between developmental gaps, literacy acquisition and lack of progression clearer to Senior Leadership Teams. This enables, a bottom-up, cohesive approach to tackling the Oracy and literacy readiness skill gaps. Skill-gaps and, therefore, solutions can also be found for older children, enabling a higher level of progression in vulnerable groups.

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?