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'

Denise Hulme

Full name:

Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School

School or Organisation:

Teacher

Role:

Written evidence:

Parliamentary Oracy Inquiry

- Oracy is a life skill
- High quality Oracy education should be prevalent across all subjects and embedded throughout the curriculum.
- Children who do not receive an adequate Oracy education may possibly appear lacking in confidence with an unwillingness to participate in group activities
- The key principles of a dialogic classroom are many and underpinned by the Oracy Framework.
- The Oracy skills framework is divided into four categories:

1. Oracy is the confidence to express oneself in speech using physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional skills. Research stresses the reciprocal nature of Oracy and therefore the important role adults such as teachers play in supporting Oracy.

2. Oracy is argued to reduce the attainment gap of those most disadvantaged pupils (Alexander 2017) and is defined as:

    …a fundamental form of expression for each individual located 'between' persons as conversation. It is the basic vehicle for personal engagement with others and serves to develop thought and identity. (Doddington 2001, p273)

3. Key research in this area stresses the importance of Oracy for learning, reflecting an understanding of the social nature of learning (Vygotsky 1962). Vygotsky stressed the links between language and thought, interaction and development and argued that the use of language to communicate is key to the development of new ways of thinking.

4. Pupils need for both learning and life to provide relevant and focused answers and to learn how to pose their own questions, how to use talk to narrate, explain, discuss, reason and justify.

5. Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School has recognised and identified the importance of a Oracy rich curriculum, which affords children a range of varied opportunities with which to engage in activities to embed, enrich and extend Oracy skills.

6. What is Oracy and why should we teach it? This was the initial question we asked at the beginning of our project. It was understood that Oracy is the responsibility of every teacher and the entitlement of every child and with this in mind a member of staff was designated Oracy Lead and during the academic year 2018 – 2019 completed a Voice 21 Oracy Pioneers

Programme. The training was shared with colleagues and cascaded through staff meetings and Inset days.

7. The outline of the programme was to enable schools to confidently identify and introduce opportunities for Oracy, develop a deeper understanding of the Oracy Framework and Toolkit and create a culture of talk in the classroom. Teachers would understand and appreciate the importance of planning for talk outcomes and would work to design an appropriate curriculum that embeds and extends Oracy through differentiation and formative and summative assessment and to be able to competently capture progress in Oracy.

8. The school identified areas for development and a preliminary draft Oracy Action plan was implemented to judge the readiness of the school to deliver the plan and prepare staff and resources. Frequency of opportunities and quality of directed talk time and vocabulary limitation were identified as initial issues as were learner behaviours. Children's lack of understanding of focussed structure and or confidence to talk for varied purposes and contexts were possible barriers to becoming effective communicators.

9. The short term implementation outcomes were to review the pupil's needs and progress against the Oracy framework and to then trial with individual year groups using appropriate Oracy strategies from the Teacher Toolkit. Teachers would inspire pupils to engage in successful discussion, inspiring effective speech and communication.

10. The long term implementation outcomes would involve planning for a future whole school approach to Oracy, including targeted vocabulary enhancement opportunities. Oracy opportunities are to be embedded within the curriculum and a calendar of collaborative Oracy events to be planned. Holy Rosary are enthusiastic to work in collaboration with other schools to share good practice and outcomes.

11. The Oracy Framework is a skills framework designed to organise teaching and learning, rather than to fully describe the phenomenon of speech. Some of its distinctions are artificial; it is not the whole story; like all tools it will be improved as people use it.

The Oracy skills framework is divided into four categories:
Cognitive – The deliberate application of thought to what you are saying.
Linguistic – Knowing which words and phrases to use and using them.
Physical – Making yourself heard, using your voice and body as an instrument.
Social – Engaging with the people around you; knowing you have the right to speak.

12. At Holy Rosary we now place an emphasis on the importance of children's talk and believe it to be at the centre of everything we do. As a staff team we have engaged in collaborative action research to identify how to

develop a learning environment that actively values and promotes children's talk. This approach known as dialogic teaching impacts positively on all children, however it can have a significant effect on low attaining children who have limited confidence and or vocabulary.

13. The key principles of a dialogic classroom are many and underpinned by the Oracy Framework. It is essential that teachers and other adults act as role models demonstrating critical thinking and effective use of language. It is crucial to give children confidence and opportunities to ask questions and teachers should ask open ended questions that have more than one answer to enable them to reflect and formulate an answer. By engaging pupils in dialogue teachers can help children to think and to think in different ways. Providing children with the opportunity to participate in pair and group talk can support and enable 'mini dialogues' and build individuals confidence.

14. Poetry has its own set of rules away from storytelling but can provide children with the ability and confidence to explore and play with language and the assurance to create their own voice. Studying poetry at primary school also allows children to learn how words sound and helps them to think how words can be presented and performed. Poetry allows children to explore how sentences are constructed and think about what the poet might be trying to convey to his audience.

15. At Holy Rosary, as part of our Oracy project implementation Years 1 and 6 worked in a collaborative poetry study with the intention of performing a poem to different audiences. Year 1 studied 'Rumble in the Jungle' by Giles Andreae which is a wonderful poem about animals in the jungle and their daily exploits. The children worked in small groups to learn each animal part and all children were able to confidently perform the poem to an audience of parents and carers, to Year 6 and to the local Senior Citizens Community Club who thoroughly enjoyed the performance and commented on how articulate such young children were and the confidence and assurance they demonstrated.

16. Year 6 studied the poem 'Caged Bird' by Maya Angelou and performed their representation to Year 1. Both year groups were confident and able to discuss their thoughts and feelings about this quite complex poem. The children were able to demonstrate many of the Oracy skills formulated in the Framework and this is a project we will definitely repeat this academic year.

17. A whole school Oracy, liteOracy and history project was initiated where each year group was given a 'The Greatest Invention' to research. The inventions included the telephone, the internet, penicillin, the steam train, the printing press, vaccination, wheel, light bulb and computer. Children carried out independent research on their specified invention and presented their findings to their key stage. A detailed debate was then undertaken.

Teachers were able to facilitate the children to develop the skills to debate a topic effectively. Organisation of a child's thoughts is important to forming a convincing argument and having and understanding facts to support that argument is paramount. This cross curricular approach enables teachers to help a child to produce a confident and persuasive presentation of their ideas and research. The winning invention was the Internet. The debate was won by a child in Year 3. The little girl was able to give relevant and appropriate reasons why she felt the internet was the greatest invention. She had conducted detailed research on the subject and was able to support her argument with articulate evidence and facts.

18. As Holy Rosary has worked collaboratively with other schools on the Oracy Pioneers Programme a link was formed with a local High School who enabled two groups of pupils from Year 9 to perform a presentation of 'An Inspirational Person' in which each group offered a detailed account of why their chosen person (Rosa Parks and John Lennon) should be classed as the most inspirational. The pupils presented to Year 4 who listened carefully to both arguments and asked pertinent and appropriate questions. All pupils benefitted greatly from working with different year groups and new learning and ownership of learning was hugely evident. John Lennon was the winning entrant and the children in Year 4 could explain the reasons for their choices. As a pupil outcome for these activities we hear children using structured talk for varying purposes, without prompt and for curriculum and leisure time. Children were able to see the importance of finding their voice and giving a valued opinion and disadvantaged pupils were given the opportunity to do well in Oracy related teams and activities. The children across the year groups and key stages were inspired to engage in successful discussion and develop effective speech and communication.

19. As a long term outcome Holy Rosary Primary School understands the importance of careful planning for a future whole school approach to Oracy and to promote a dialogic environment to develop a sense of self confidence and enhance quality talk time and opportunities.

Value and impact

20. Spoken language does not hold the same status as reading and writing in our education system but this is something that needs to be urgently addressed. It should in fact be an integral part of and indeed pervade the curriculum. Children and young people should become agile communicators who learn to navigate the expectations for Oracy in different contexts through the provision of a wide and varied curriculum (Voice21)

21. Clearly Oracy is a life skill and as Voice21 (2018) states 'Employers rank verbal communication as the most important skill for employees, leaving education without adequate speaking and listening skills could present as problematic when looking for employment.'

22. Although teachers have to report at the end of Key Stages, Oracy is not as tangible as other subjects. There may be an English oral exam at GCSE level but again this is less evident. A more concrete and visible status must be specified for Oracy with an agreed assessment criteria framework in place.

23. Children who do not receive an adequate Oracy education may possibly appear lacking in confidence with an unwillingness to participate in group activities. Children with more confidence to express themselves would possibly have a greater inclination to get involved. It is vital that the correct standard of English and grammar is modelled and used by adults on a daily basis to develop an impact on learning and social and communication skills. In later life poor language skills leaves students unprepared for the expectations of Higher Education and the employment sector.

24. Oracy education is imperative throughout all year groups but it is essential in the EYFS. Many children are now starting school with poor speaking and listening skills mainly due to correct language not being modelled at home and a reliance on mobile technology and entertainment. Communication and language has a greater emphasis and focus in the EYFS because children come from families where talk, reading and developing language is not a priority of their day to day family life. It is important that early support is provided for children who are lacking in Oracy development. It can be easy in this instance to begin teaching to meet national targets without addressing underlying Oracy issues first. If pupils receive good quality Oracy education from early years upwards children will be able to represent themselves in most areas regardless of background. Children will have more confidence to present and articulate their ideas.

25. Oracy has a definite place across all curriculum areas and helps to introduce new concepts and ideas for example presentations, debates, discussions, poetry recital and class assemblies. Many career choices now desire candidates to be able to make presentations and other verbal tasks. Being confident and able to represent themselves gives everyone self-esteem, worth and social mobility irrespective of experience. Oracy education is key to children's well-being and communication is key to all relationships.

Provision and Access

26. High quality Oracy education should be prevalent across all subjects and embedded throughout the curriculum. Opportunities must be provided to build a sound foundation for the development of Oracy skills with particular strengths in supporting persuasive, presentational and more formal contexts. Further refinement of the curriculum is required to highlight the role, nature and development of Oracy skills. Opportunities to speak and present across the curriculum should enable children to grow in confidence

and define a high level of engagement. Teachers actively seek out opportunities to develop speaking and listening to improve writing as a key part of the Primary English curriculum.

27. School staff have clearly identified that although Oracy is a definite part of the school curriculum it needs to be given a more central, concrete status that embeds and pervades the whole curriculum. Good practice will show Oracy in every lesson. Developing language through role play and discussions. The commitment to promote Oracy across the curriculum must ensure staff are familiar with a range of approaches for organising, promoting and reviewing talk. High quality modelling of spoken language and exploiting every opportunity in school will address unequal access to Oracy education.

Barriers

28. Time is a great barrier to the better Oracy provision. Teachers can often feel that Oracy based activities can be challenging to manage and therefore not time sufficient. Teachers feel the pressures and restraints of an already overflowing curriculum and may have a fear of feeling pupils' work must be recorded in books or on video. Teachers often prioritise other tasks; writing for example would be particularly likely to take precedence often due to curriculum and exam pressures. School staff may frequently lack confidence and expertise to deliver a curriculum rich in Oracy. Teachers may also worry that Oracy based activities may have a negative impact on noise and behaviour. Progress in Oracy is difficult to assess as there is currently no assessment framework.

29. These issues would need to be addressed by more opportunities for training to help teachers learn about talk's relevance and importance and give them a chance to discuss how it could be applied across curriculum areas. School leaders should ensure all teachers should receive timely and relevant training to help them strengthen and widen their pedagogy.

30. A less prescriptive approach, use of Oracy activities to develop Oracy in other subjects could be seen as good quality first provision with enhanced support for SEN, pupil premium and socio economic children with poor speaking and listening skills.

31. School leaders should ensure Oracy is written into their school's improvement plan, curriculum or teaching and learning policy to position Oracy at the heart of their schools practice and to give it the status it deserves.

Denise Hulme
September 2019
Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School
Liverpool L10 6NJ

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?