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'

Stephen Parsons

Full name:

NAPLIC – professionals supporting language and communication development

School or Organisation:

Chair

Role:

Written evidence:

NAPLIC is a national organisation of teachers, speech and language therapists and other professionals across the children's workforce who are involved with children and young people (CYP) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Developmental Language Disorders (DLD) and related communication problems.

SLCN is an umbrella term for all children that have speech, language or communication difficulties, for any reason.
DLD is identified when a child has problems with language development that continue into school age and beyond. The language problems have a significant impact on everyday social interactions or educational progress, and occur in the absence of autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability or a known biomedical condition.

This submission is based on a collation of views from the volunteer committee and a sample of members. We have addressed the breadth of oracy and oracy education as defined in the terms of reference but also highlight the particular challenges for children and young people with SEN in general and SLCN/DLD in particular.

Summary

- Spoken language or oracy must have at least the same status as reading and writing in our education system.
- Effective speech and language skills underpins all aspects of learning and access to the curriculum i.e. it is the essential foundation skill for reading and writing
- The speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum are not sufficient to deliver high quality oracy education and focus primarily on the early years
- Poor spoken language is linked to poor educational outcomes
- A recognition is needed that oracy is important in its own right and not just as a gateway to literacy or the wider curriculum
- Oracy must be given a priority in the curriculum and in the school day
- Oracy needs to be high profile and schools need to know they can prioritise it
- 'Speaking and Listening'/Oracy should become an assessed aspect of the English curriculum throughout the key stages and in final exams, and is explicitly included in schemes of work.
- Children and young people with SEN/SLCN/DLD may not be at a level to benefit from existing oracy education which is targeted broadly at typically developing CYP. There is therefore a danger that these CYP will not be at the level to access oracy education and so as with other areas of the curriculum a differentiated approach may be needed.
- The overarching barrier to oracy education is the lack of incentives and expectations from government and the consequent lack of any accountability processes as to the existence or quality of oracy education across the country.
- Oracy needs to be central to the curriculum, as a subject and also cross-curricular
- Oracy/speech and language assessment should be re-established as part of GCSE English and by doing this reinforce its importance in the curriculum.
- Ofsted should be required to report on oracy as part of school inspection across the phases
- Ensure oracy and speech language and communication are central to ITT, whichever training route a student takes, including how to incorporate it across the curriculum
- Accountability through assessment and inspection may be the key way to ensure provision of oracy teaching.

● Spoken Language/Oracy teaching should be seen as a vital element of investing for the future.

1. Value & Impact

1.1 Spoken language or Oracy must have at least the same status as reading and writing in our education system.
There was a 100% agreement for this position from our sample of NAPLIC members.

1.2 It doesn't at the moment because:
- There is a lack of prominence of speech and language in the curriculum
- There is a lack of knowledge in schools about typical language development and consequences of poor language
- There is no requirement to report against it – therefore priority is given to literacy and numeracy which must be reported against
- There is an underlying assumption that spoken language will just develop and not need to be taught – that assumption is not made about literacy and numeracy
- There is limited understanding of the connections between spoken language and literacy

1.3 Spoken Language or Oracy should have at least the same status as reading and writing because:
- Effective speech and language skills underpins all aspects of learning and access to the curriculum i.e. it is the essential foundation skill for reading and writing; verbal reasoning is key to problem solving
- We know that poor spoken language is linked to poor educational outcomes, but we know that oracy skills can be taught
- The ability to order thoughts using language and express those thoughts through speech (or other forms) is a pre-requisite of learning to read and write, it enables children to organise their ideas prior to writing them down.
- Without the skills to verbalise thoughts effectively, literacy will be significantly impacted
- Strong speech and language skills lead to a wider range of occupational opportunities and stronger social relationships and underpins the ability to access learning throughout life.
- A higher profile of oracy teaching and learning is an investment for the future

1.4 The potential consequences for children/young people (CYP) **not** receiving spoken language/oracy teaching and consequently having poor communication skills include:
- Poor educational outcomes i.e. less likely to develop age appropriate reading and writing and less likely to get good grades across many aspects of the curriculum. The entire curriculum is developed via spoken language, there is no subject that does not require a good grasp of spoken language
- CYP being unable to adequately explain and show what they know
- Not developing the necessary higher level language skills such as verbal reasoning, inferencing skills, the ability to question effectively, develop a reasoned answer to a question; which enables active engagement with learning and access to the wider curriculum.
- A greater likelihood of negative outcomes in terms of developing appropriate social skills, relationships and behaviour and in their emotional well-being and mental health. There are strong links between poor communication skills and behaviour and mental health i.e. not being

able to use language to regulate and communicate feelings/thoughts or not being able to access 'talking therapies' through having inadequate communication skills.
- A higher risk of being involved within the criminal justice system – it is known that up to 60% of young people in the secure estate have speech, language and communication needs.
- Limited opportunities in the workplace as employers rate good communication skills as one of their top requirements regarding employability i.e. they value oracy above literacy/numeracy/ICT.
- Limiting social mobility - there are close links between social deprivation and spoken language. Closing the gap between children from areas of deprivation and their more well off peers in terms of language and oracy will have a positive impact on social mobility, better communication skills will result in improved employability, contributing to social mobility and enable children and young people to coherently express their views, their needs and their choices.

1.5 To enter employment, benefit from social mobility and maintain good emotional well-being and mental health children and young people need to develop the following skills and abilities:
- Good vocabulary skills, conversational skills, social skills and emotional literacy.
- The ability to negotiate, debate, discuss and express emotions - to express their ideas, knowledge and feelings clearly and in an appropriate way, and discuss different points of view
- To be able to explain and express themselves, to problem solve and collaborate with others and to use verbal language effectively to share and process their own narratives and experiences effectively and coherently.
- Being able to work as a team and ask for help
- To understand and make themselves understood
- To be able to feel comfortable with the uncomfortable e.g. standing up in front of people and giving a presentation, speaking out in discussions/meetings, offering ideas, negotiating and managing difficult scenario's

1.6 Spoken Language/Oracy teaching should be seen as a vital element of investing for the future.

2. Provision and Access

2.1 From our sample of NAPLIC members the view about the current provision of Oracy education in known schools/settings was broadly 40% universally poor and 60% variable from outstanding to poor.

2.2 High quality Oracy education should include:
- A recognition that oracy is important in its own right and not just as a gateway to literacy or the wider curriculum
- Oracy given a priority in the curriculum and in the school day
- Lessons which allow talk throughout in a variety of ways – pairs, group and whole class discussion, debating etc
- Teaching staff knowledgeable about the importance of talk
- Teaching staff knowledgeable about typical spoken language development and what poor spoken language looks like
- A culture of talk around the school
- Vocabulary development, including pre-teaching prior to a lesson
- Structured talk time to ensure that CYP have the opportunity to practise skills e.g. verbal discussion, argument forming, verbal reflection and verbal narrative

- A range of programmes appropriate for the level of ability of the CYP
- Storytelling and narrative approaches
- Opportunities for CYP to not only form their own oral skills but also listen and reflect on others oral skills too
- Where possible speech and language therapists can provide support in implementing class wide approaches such as shape coding, colourful semantics, visuals, AAC systems to promote oracy as integral to each lesson
- Emphasis on the development of Phonological Awareness skills
- For EYFS / KS1: time in the day for adult led talking / listening e.g. show and tell; role play; time to learn meaning of relevant vocabulary.

2.3 A number of programmes/approaches were suggested by members, these include:
Word Aware; Talkboost (ICAN); Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning; Time to Talk; Let's Talk; Secondary Language Link; Philosophy for Children (P4C); Communication Skills for Life (BT); ASDAN Communication and Employability modules; No Pens Day Wednesday (The Communication Trust); Nuffield Early Language Intervention; Specialist language and communication teaching assistants and teachers running personalised / individualised interventions; Communication Friendly School status.

2.4 There is currently unequal access to oracy education, the following factors would support a more universal and consistent approach:
- 'Speaking and Listening'/Oracy becomes an assessed aspect of the English curriculum throughout the key stages and in final exams, and is explicitly included in schemes of work.
- Early years and primary school teachers given the authority to focus on spoken language/oracy for as long as necessary as the foundation for developing reading and writing.
- Less emphasis is put on SATs and Phonics Screening particularly in the EYFS and KS1.
- Speech, language and communication/oracy as a key part of initial teaching training, whichever route is undertaken
- Oracy should be included in all areas of the curriculum in terms of utilising skills and approaches to learning that support CYP as they progress through school into the world of work or academia and in becoming fully engaged with society.

2.5 SEN, SLCN & Oracy
2.5.1 Most children with SEN have some kind of communication difficulty and many children from disadvantaged backgrounds will have poorer communication skills.

2.5.2 Children and young people with SEN/SLCN/DLD may not be at a level to benefit from existing oracy education which is targeted broadly at typically developing CYP. There is therefore a danger that these CYP will not be at the level to access oracy education and so as with other areas of the curriculum a differentiated approach may be needed.

2.5.3 All the above ideas that would enhance universal high quality whole class teaching will need to be built on to offer more bespoke targeted oracy approaches and programmes for these CYP to develop their skills from the level they are at i.e. a range of 'ladders' that provide extra support for those with higher need to participate. Oracy education must be inclusive, and provide ways for the less verbal to engage.

3. Barriers
3.1 The barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education include:

- Oracy is not high profile
- Pressure to teach subjects that are tested
- The over testing of 'written' skills
- Lack of priority in the curriculum given to spoken language
- Lack of training on how to focus on oracy in the curriculum
- Lack of knowledge of oracy and its development
- Lack of time to develop skills
- Not being allowed to value talk as part of assessment
- The pressures of a too packed and fast paced curriculum
- Less staffing in classrooms as a result of persistent under funding i.e. many primary teachers do not have teaching assistants
- Lack of knowledge and training in SLCN/DLD
- There is less research into Oracy compared to literacy or numeracy

3.2 The support they need to overcome these barriers is broadly the reverse of the above:
- Oracy needs to be high profile and school's need to know they can prioritise it
- Reduce the pressure to teach subjects that are tested to the detriment of oracy
- Reduce the testing regime around 'written' skills
- Give spoken language an equal footing in the curriculum
- Improve ITT around oracy, typical speech and language development, SLCN/DLD and how to implement that knowledge in the curriculum
- Giving oracy a higher profile in ongoing CPD
- Valuing talk as part of assessment
- Reduce the pressure of a packed and fast paced curriculum
- Fund sufficient staff to be able to deliver an oracy education to all pupils.
- Exemplars of good practice
- Teachers having the opportunity to share good practice
- Opportunities to work collaboratively with specialist teachers and Speech and Language therapists (SLT) when developing schemes of work and planning to meet oracy needs across all pupils.

3.3 The overarching barrier to oracy education is the lack of incentives and expectations from government and the consequent lack of any accountability processes as to the existence or quality of oracy education across the country. Some initiatives are being supported, such as the Opportunity Areas which involve projects focussed on speech language and communication at the universal level, but the overall picture is one where oracy, spoken language, speaking and listening has been undermined by changes to curriculum and an obsessive focus on literacy without understanding, supporting or prioritising the pre-requisite skills around speech and language. Government also signalled that lack of support for oracy and those with SLCN by stopping all funding of The Communication Trust in 2018.

3.4 Government should consider the following in reducing the barriers to effective oracy education:
- Make oracy central to the curriculum, as a subject and also cross-curricular
- Promote the role of Oracy Co-ordinator to lead on getting oracy integral to each lesson in the school
- Re-establish an oracy/speech and language assessment as part of GCSE English and by doing this reinforce its importance in the curriculum.

- Require Ofsted to report on oracy as part of school inspection across the phases
- Shift the emphasis for early years settings and primary schools from measuring reading and written skills to speaking and listening skills.
- Ensure oracy and speech language and communication are central to ITT, whichever training route a student takes, including how to incorporate it across the curriculum
- Ensure a high priority is assigned to CPD for serving teachers on oracy/SLCN
- Fund research into oracy education

3.5 Curriculum, assessment and accountability
- The speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum are not sufficient to deliver high quality oracy education and focus primarily on the early years. There needs to be more focus on communication skills throughout the key stages and through whichever means the child uses best.
- The assessment in schools of oracy/speech and language skills needs to be more robust - there should be a more comprehensive assessment in terms of vocabulary knowledge, social communication and spoken language. This requires more precise criteria than the current vague descriptors.
- Methods of assessment for oracy skills must be more widely understood and utilised e.g. observing oral presentations, oral debates, oral paired work and oral group working tasks, with a set of guidance for skills that are required.
- If staff are given more time and incentives to deliver oracy education then there are resources and approaches to support this e.g. Talking Partners, Circle Time activities, Philosophy questions etc.
- There needs to be a balance between prescription and flexibility/autonomy in delivering oracy education – some prescription is needed as many staff do not have adequate skills and knowledge in oracy and developmental norms in speech and language but too much prescription does not allow for individual differences in pupils skills & knowledge
- Accountability through assessment and inspection may be the key way to ensure provision of oracy teaching.

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?