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'

Emma Barker

Full name:

St Anne's Church Academy

School or Organisation:

Teacher and oracy lead

Role:

Written evidence:

In line with our school improvement plan we wanted to accelerate progress for PPG children in oracy, consequently raising standards in both writing, mathematical reasoning and across learning theme. We achieved this by a small acrtion resaech project.

Issues

- Accelerate the progress for PPG children in oracy
- Lack of oracy skills for PPG children
- Low self confidence in voicing opinions and knowlegde
- Limited range of vocabulary in which to expresss opinions and knowledge

Impact

- Raise standard in both writing, mathematical reasoning and (in time) across learning theme.
- Growth in self-confiendence and skills to talk and listen effectively to a wide-range of audiences

1. For convenience and practicalities, we decided to carry out the project across the three key stage 2 (KS2) year groups. We felt that the children would benefit from receiving the oracy training in a mixed age group environment; consequently we delivered the oracy training to the group of 17 children as a whole. As well as delivering the programme in a whole class context, our research project group also received additional interventions twice a week for approximately 12 weeks. These interventions were delivered as a rolling programme, on a rota basis, led by teachers and a trained learning support assistant. As oracy lead, I undertook the 12-month oracy leadership training provided by Voice21 and have a deep (and growing) knowledge of how to develop oracy skills in children; this therefore provided an ideal opportunity to assess the impact on a small focus group.

2. We currently assess speaking and listening skills across the school on an annual basis at the end of term six. Last year was our first year at trialling a new assessment system for this area and whilst collating the data for our project it became clear that the criteria to assess against were vague and unhelpful. The seventeen children that were part of the project all performed at a variety of levels, ranging from developing to mastery (although, once analysed we felt that there were real discrepancies in this data). Irrespective of the impact of the project on the identified group, we have already edited and improved the criteria that we will use this year to assess speaking and listening skills in the school and have ensured that there is much more clarity in expectations therefore having an instant impact on a whole school level.

3. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) were fully supportive and encouraging of the project and agreed that improving oracy in less confident children was a worthy project research topic that would have an instant and positive impact. We gathered data from teaching staff who know the children well and also attempted to gather data from parents and carers in respect of their judgements of their own children's skills in speaking and listening, prior to the project starting, in the form of an online and written questionnaire. The comments that we did receive back from parents did not however correlate with statutory assessment data nor the teacher

responses. These factors indicate that the children present themselves very differently at home and that parents have a different set of expectations in the home environment.

4. During term five, our whole school Christian value was peace and we decided to take advantage of this focus and choose it as the premise for the topic. The teaching staff involved created a medium term overview based on this value and used a weekly plan, assess and review approach to deliver short term objectives. We had to adapt several sessions and ensure a flexible approach that suited the development and progress of the children as the project evolved.

5. We used the following resources to implement our project:
● Oracy grouping and technique guidelines and strategies
● Sentence stems
● Visual story maps
● World-wide symbols of peace and the corresponding facts
● iPads

6. We started the project with seventeen children and finished with fifteen, due to circumstances beyond our control. Despite some extreme absences, the levels of engagement that we have seen in this group of children have been remarkable and they have really risen to the challenge that we have set them. We put this enthusiasm down to the novelty of working with different children from different year groups, exposure to different teachers and support staff and the feeling of being 'special' and 'chosen'. We have seen a marked improvement, both in the classroom and in the wider school environment, in the children's confidence and also in the way that the children articulate and consider their responses in discussion. The children are getting better at self-regulating in discussion, beginning to listen with respect and attention and choosing when to contribute appropriately. In respect of the topic of peace, the children have developed a wider range of vocabulary from which to select in order to communicate more effectively.

7. Most noticeably, one girl from the year five and another from the year four classes, have even changed their body language, both in and out of the classroom, and are happily maintaining eye contact with both adults and children when conversing with them. This is a huge development in their particular circumstances. We have seen a dramatic impact in their learning and the level of challenges that they choose as a result of increased confidence and self-belief. Similarly, those children who had less concerns about confidence and joining in and needed to develop their listening skills, have also demonstrated an improved self-awareness back in the classroom and have clearly taken on board feedback and skills taught to them. Both of these improvements have been noticed by the wider school community as a whole, including the head teacher, and were demonstrated in their celebration event at the end of the research project.

8. We feel that in this research project the anecdotal evidence that we have gathered is much more powerful than the standardised data. This is partly due to the fact that we as a school staff had not yet received the training in

developing oracy skills in children when we assessed and collated the data at the end of the 2016/17 school year. Thinking retrospectively, and using our new judgement guidelines resource, we no longer feel (even though some of us ourselves made the decisions) that the previous data is an accurate representation of where the children actually were. The children we worked with have clearly made progress and it showed in our end of year data (see attached PDF). We are also confident, that as we go forward with this project, we predict that we will see accelerated progress in speaking and listening for this group of children. We have been enthused by this project and it has reinforced our belief that before we can improve the reading and writing skills in our children, particularly our PPG children, we first need to address and raise their attainment in their speaking and listening skills. We are planning to continue working with this identified group of children in September in order to capitalise on the work done and progress made to date. We will share our findings with all staff at St Anne's and across the trust and have plans to create a workable document to share with and guide our colleagues on their own journeys in administering oracy skills in their classes. We look forward to developing and evolving the oracy project with the children of St Anne's and beyond, building on these initial firm foundations to an enduring legacy for the future.

9. Subsequently I have moved to a different school, with a particular focus on KS2 within our trust and I am developing a bespoke oracy intervention package for the whole school including all staff. The impact of this is forming the basis for my master's degree, I am investing a great deal of my own time (and money) into designing implementing and analysing the impact of the children and adults learning oracy skills as I whole heartedly believe in the positive benefits it offers - a skill and knowledge for life.

10. Sample of the feedback we received from both children, teachers and parents:

"I have noticed that all of the PP children are now much more confident to offer an answer in whole class situations than they were before the oracy intervention took place." Year 1 teacher

"Working on listening skills is helping the children to understand and appreciate other peoples opinions and ideas." Year 4 teacher

"I have noticed a significant improvement of all our children; in their articulation and growth in confidence to speak in front of others." Headteacher St Anne's Church Academy.

"Doing the oracy and vocabulary work has given him a broader understanding of words and he is starting to use different words in his everyday language and writing." Year 5 teacher

"We have had a lot of children (increasing year on year) who enter with language delays and so giving them the tools they need to be effective

speakers is essential and we have built a communication rich learning environment to support them." EYFS Teacher

"I have noticed the PP children in my class are willing to join in discussions as they know how to, that it is ok to disagree with someone. Because they have been taught to share their opinions and think about what to say and how to say it they are so much more confident." Year 3 teacher

"I have never thought about how I use my voice before, now I realise how important it can be for now and my future." Year 5 child
"This is a fabulous initiative and I would like to give it my full support. Their confidence was evident and they articulate and enthusiastic in describing their thoughts." Parent

"(It's) so nice to see him grow in confidence from being there and hearing all about his day." Parent

"I am happier about talking in class now because I know that people are listening to what I have to say." Year 1 child

"I believe doing this project has really helped him to build his confidence; so a massive thank you." parent
"I didn't know that so much of what we 'say' isn't using our voice, it is what we do with our bodies, I am so much more aware of the messages I am giving now." Year 4 child

When asked what has made a real difference to your learning, one KS2 children said: *"Oracy – talking to people more, when I first came here I was very shy and didn't want to talk to anybody, it has helped me because it has boosted my confidence around others. I would describe it as learning to talk to others and we do games like charades to help. We also use talking chips, they are small counters, 2 of them, once you put one in that is your time to talk, once you have used them you have to listen to the others. I stood up in front of my class and did my book review, I watched it back and thought 'I didn't know I could do that' – it was being filmed, usually I am camera shy! I was using my oracy skills and using different language and vocabulary."*

11. One of the key barriers that we as teachers face in providing quality oracy education within our current system is that apart from passionate teachers who go out of their way to learn how best to teach these skills and understand what oracy skills really are the fully appreciate their impact, most are not aware or lack the knowledge or skills to be able to teach it effectually. Apart from a few pockets of teacher training providers (Cambridge I know is one as Neil Mercer has input on the teacher training course) teaching oracy skills do not form part of the initial training. It is therefore not give the same status from the start of many early career

teachers. In addition I believe it is given potentially less status in secondary education as it doesn't form part of any GSCE examination. According to the CBI's annual report in 2016), around half of businesses questioned are not satisfied with school leavers' skills in communication, there should be a focus on developing pupils' core skills such as communication skills (38%) and stated there is room for improvement in essential capabilities such as team working (26%). With this is mind it is even more crucial that oracy skills are taught, I would argue from a young age.

Reference List:
EEF (2018), Oral Language Interventions;
EEF Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2 – Recommendations Summary;
Millard, W and Menzies, L (2016), Oracy: The State of Speaking Our Schools;
Alexander, R (2012)
CBI Annual Report (2016)

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?