

## 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](mailto:inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk) with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

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Full name:

School or Organisation:

Role:

Written evidence:

## **About us and our expertise**

*We are an independent charity that combines the journalistic know-how of The Economist newspaper with teaching expertise to develop young people's news literacy.*

*Most of the young people we work with are 9 to 14 years old. Around 50% of those involved with our core programme are from low-income backgrounds, and we work with schools in a diverse range of communities across the UK. As well as working directly with young people, we work in close partnership with teachers in state schools.*

## **Summary**

- Our news literacy programme, the Burnet News Club (BNC), is an example of a teaching approach with oracy at its heart which effectively develops wider cross-curricular knowledge and skills, including reasoning, open-mindedness and knowledge of current affairs.
- Sharing opinions about current affairs requires particularly strong oracy skills, meaning that if young people do not develop strong oracy skills they are unlikely to be able to make their voices heard on current issues affecting their lives and participate as engaged citizens.
- Oracy skills are not only needed to speak up about topical issues, they are also important for establishing the truth about them.
- High-quality oracy education should be student-led, cognitively challenging and robustly measured.

## **Our evidence**

### 1. How oracy can help deliver the wider curriculum at school (our answer to question 4).

1.1. Our flagship news literacy programme, the Burnet News Club (BNC), is an example of a teaching approach with oracy at its heart which effectively develops cross-curricular knowledge and skills. The BNC gives teachers educational news content, teacher training and resources to enable them to have high-quality discussions about current affairs with their students. Students discuss and debate global news stories and are supported to reason, explain and justify their opinions on the issues.

1.2. As well as improving their communication skills, participating young people make accelerated progress in a range of other skills which are important across the curriculum. Compared to a control group over one year, they make 136% more progress in reasoning ability, 168% more progress in healthy scepticism and 142% more progress in open-mindedness. You can see how we define and measure these skills in our most recent impact report, here:

<https://burnetnewsclub.com/about/impact/>

1.3. The oracy-led approach that is fundamental to the Burnet News Club is also effective in building knowledge of current affairs. 100% of participating teachers say that students are more knowledgeable about current affairs because of the programme, and 85% of teachers say they have noticed students having more conversations about the news outside of the weekly BNC sessions.

### 2. How the ability to communicate effectively can contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults (our answer to question 8).

2.1. In our experience, sharing opinions about current affairs requires particularly strong oracy skills, due to the complex, sometimes technical and sensitive nature of topical issues. This means that if young people do not develop strong oracy skills they are unlikely to be able to make their voices heard on current issues affecting their lives.

2.2. Oracy skills are not only needed to communicate opinions about topical issues, they are also important for establishing the truth about them. In Burnet News Club sessions, we see young people more effectively assessing the truth of information and arguments about the news when they engage with these in a dialogue compared to simply reading them. Engaging with information in a conversation allows them to ask questions, pose challenges and expose weaknesses. Plus it's harder for young people to challenge arguments that they hear if they aren't able to clearly express their own.

### 3. What high-quality oracy education should look like (our answer to question 9).

3.1. Over the past six years of developing the Burnet News Club programme in response to impact measurement findings and significant input from teachers, we have found the following principles to be important:

- It should be student-led. Young people should do most of the talking, and they should talk to each other directly rather than speaking mainly to a teacher.
- Students should be presented with cognitively-challenging questions and a range of different perspectives, and supported to reason, explain and justify their responses.
- Giving students a real audience is an effective way to build their confidence.

3.2. High-quality oracy education should be robustly measured. It's important to define specifically what success looks like, and what it looks like for a young person to progress. Skills build gradually, so in order to measure the development of oracy skills it's necessary to know a student's starting point and track how they improve over time.

## 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?