

## **Oracy APPG**

**Submitting evidence      Carol Everingham, Governor,  
Hatchlands Primary School, Redhill, Surrey**

The Oracy APPG welcomes submissions of evidence from as wide a range of organisations and respondents as possible. Submissions should address some or all of the following questions:

### *Value and impact*

1. Given many teachers recognise the important 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?

**The dictionary definition of Oracy is, “The ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech.”**

**My professional experience was as a speech and language therapist and I worked with students with speech, language and communication needs. This included working with children who had problems with using fluent communication, some of whom had difficulties with using the correct grammatical forms.**

**Schools have processes for assessing progress in literacy and these measures contribute to assessing the effectiveness of the schools. Oracy development has no reliable standardised measures used by schools.**

**Written language is the recording of spoken language and oracy should have the same status as literacy. “It is well established that language skills are amongst the best predictors of educational success.” (Better Communication Research programme DfE 2010)**

**“Language is fundamental to thinking and learning and so, is integral to every subject and the whole curriculum.” (AFASIC Conference. Wales 2013)**

2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive Oracy education?

**The foundations of vocabulary knowledge are established in the pre school years through stimulation and experiences at home. If children do not receive vocabulary learning in school through Oracy training, they will be disadvantaged with their academic learning. Communication skills are essential for social development and interaction with peers.**

**“Poor language is associated with misbehaviour, disengagement and underachievement.” (ICAN Secondary Talk Programme)**

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)?

**“Early Years Foundation scales, the best predictors of educational success, are measures of communication, language and literacy” (Better Communication Research Programme. DfE )**

**Oracy education impacts on educational attainment, employability and mental health.**

**“Communication is crucial to children’s life chances” ( Bercow - 10 Years on )**

**Support for oracy skills improves social mobility and employment ( Bercow review )**

**Social economic status affects language development.**

**Special Educational Needs in England January 2019. School Census “The most common primary type of need in 2019 is Speech, Language and Communication needs 23% “**

**“Oracy across the curriculum strand and the progressive Aspect Statements will support assessment and help identify pupils with speech, language and communication needs.” (AFASIC Conference Wales 2013)**

4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?

**A language based curriculum provides well planned content for lessons and it facilitates learning. It is important to extend language instruction through all classroom lessons.**

**“OFSTED should review the extent to which the teaching and monitoring of spoken language is taken into account in its framework for inspection, when next revised in 2019.” (Bercow - 10 Years on 2018)**

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?

**Employers value competent oral communication.**

**“Employers now rating communication skills as their highest priority” (English Speaking Union)**

**Oracy education impacts on future life chances through boosting social, emotional and inter personal skills and self confidence.**

**Effective communication is required for interviews and meetings.**

**“The Department for Education should ensure that communication skills, specifically those identified as needed for the workplace, are appropriately recognised in the criteria for the Functional skills qualifications.” (Bercow - 10 Years on 2018)**

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?

**“Communication is one of 5 top young professional skills” ([youthemployment.org.uk](http://youthemployment.org.uk))**

**Children and young people want to be able to express their needs and expectations to access opportunities.**

**A CV is a communication tool.**

7. What is the value and impact of Oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?

**Effective social interaction is based on competent communication skills. Friendships are essential for general wellbeing.**

**“Reading, writing, expressing yourself well and listening carefully are four of the most important communication skills you can learn while you are in school.” ([youthemployment.org.uk](http://youthemployment.org.uk))**

**“Communication is a key ingredient in mental health recovery.” (Mental Health Today 2018 Moi Ali )**

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

**“Effective communication is essential in building rapport.” (Mental Health Today )**

**Human communication is a form of social action. Social interaction requires good Oracy skills.**

## Provision and access

9. What should high quality Oracy education look like?

**The school or educational establishment should have Oracy education as an objective within their Mission Statement and the Strategic Plan.**

**Schools should have a focus on developing language understanding and promoting speaking skills. There is a need to develop pupils' ability to reflect and orally explain their learning. Schools should encourage communication friendly spaces.**

**“The Department for Education should strengthen the place of communication and language in its strategy to improve social mobility. ( Bercow - 10 Years on 2018 )**

10. 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?

**Schools promoting language rich environments.**

**Schools following the principles of School 21.**

**Specialist schools for children with speech, language and communication needs.**

**Speech and language therapy input and advice.**

**“Maths for Mastery” approach. The use of stem sentences to structure oral language .**

**“Talk for Writing” and using oral storytelling.**

**Using restorative conversations to solve any behavioural incidents.**

**Parent workshops on developing communication skills.**

11. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of Oracy education?

**There is a general lack of understanding about Oracy education.**

**SATs and examinations measure written English language skills.**

12. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?

**There are mainstream schools with a recognised focus on Oracy. This is often because the Headteacher and staff have a special interest in communication skills. Academy Trusts need to support this focus.**

**Example : Everychild Trust schools - Hatchlands Primary School, Redhill, and Sandcross Primary School, Reigate**

**Special schools for children with speech, language and communication needs, including Moor House School, Oxted, where I worked as Head of Therapy.**

13. What factors create unequal access to Oracy education, (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?

**There is a lack of knowledge in schools about the value of Oracy education. A National training initiative to schools on the value of Oracy is required. Teacher training programmes should have a greater focus on the importance of Oracy and should increase the understanding about children with communication difficulties.**

**“Funding a national programme of roadshows on how to teach language for Reception and Key Stage 1 teachers, similar to the previous phonics roadshows.” ( Bercow - 10 Years on 2018)**

14. Relating to region more specifically, how should an Oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

## **National training programmes**

### **Government directives**

**Increased funding for areas where EYF levels show a high level of delayed language skills across the population for that area.**

**“High incidence of poor language skills in areas of social disadvantage.” ( ICAN Secondary talk programme )**

**A project in Surrey to identify, “How many children start school with a language disorder ?” ( SCALES ) This study found that 1% of children had ‘no phrase speech’ at the end of their Reception year. Two children in every Year 1 classroom had an unexplained language disorder. Sandcross Primary School, Reigate, contributed to this project.**

**The study states, “Our findings emphasise the importance of oral language for children starting school.” The feedback from many teachers was that oral language needs should have the same status, and protected teaching time, that literacy and numeracy do. ( Surrey Communication and Language in Education Study, SCALES 2015 )**

## Barriers

15. What are the barriers that teachers face to providing quality Oracy education, within the education system and beyond?

### **Demands of the National Curriculum**

**Standardised assessments, such as SATs measuring written language.**

**Lack of training and knowledge**

16. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of Oracy education?

**Improved training, including Teacher Training programmes.**

**Support from managers in valuing Oracy education.**

**Recognised measurement levels for competency in Oracy**

**Advice from experts, such as speech and language therapists, specialist teachers.**

17. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more Oracy education to children and young people?

**There is limited accountability for Oracy education. In my role as a School Governor, I have developed a Special Interest Group covering speech, language and communication, for the schools within the Everychild Trust, to recognise good practice within the schools, to share knowledge and to develop projects.**

18. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?

**Schools are required to reduce the gender gap between the performances of girls and boys at primary level. “More boys than girls have poor early language skills and attention at age 5.”**  
Reference : **Understanding the Gender Gap in Literacy and Language Development. University of Bristol 2016.**  
Funder - **Save the Children**

**The recent results from SATs tests at Year 6 show that girls have moved even further ahead of boys in the exams. ( Reference : Department of Education 2019 ) In reading, 78% of girls reached the expected standard, compared with 69% of boys.**

**A greater focus on Oracy in the curriculum would contribute to reducing this gender gap. It is an issue which is frequently discussed at Governors’ meetings.**

19. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of Oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of Oracy skills?

**Many of the formal language assessments require professional qualifications to administer them. The assessment of vocabulary understanding is considered to be a reliable predictor of future academic success.**

20. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to delivery high quality Oracy education?

**There seems to have been a reduced focus since the 1987-1993 National Oracy Project trialled extensive materials to support the then speaking and listening section of the National Curriculum English. This focus needs to be reintroduced.**

21. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?

**More accountability within the system.**

22. Are there example of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?

**Voice 21. Oracy. The Four Strands.**