

The Speak for Change Inquiry will explore the following questions:

i) Value and impact: *What is the impact of oracy education at different life stages from Early years through to employment, and how can the delivery of effective oracy education contribute to individuals and societal outcomes?*

Oracy is instrumental in removing social, economical and emotional barriers for today's youth. It closes the gap between the elite and the common and is playing a vital role in the current political scenario. Teaching children oracy skills from early years provides them opportunities to observe more keenly, process their thoughts and then share their viewpoints or opinions without hesitation. Learning to verbalise their emotions decreases emotional anxiety and aggression as children become better equipped at analysing and justifying their own and others' actions and reactions. Encouraging children to question and challenge what they experience allows them to reflect on differing opinions and build on their own. As children develop their listening and speaking skills, they begin to demonstrate maturity and resilience when facing new situations. They leave primary school with an analytical mind set, eager to discuss and debate situations that stimulate their minds. They enter secondary school and adult life well equipped with rational thinking and swift decision making abilities.

ii) Provision and access: *What is the current state of provision of oracy education across the UK, who is missing out and what factors create unequal access to oracy education?*

Inculcating speaking and listening skills in primary school children is mandatory in the new national curriculum published in 2014. More and more teaching professionals are realising that 'TALK FOR LEARNING' must take priority over reading, writing, maths and scientific skills. Teaching of rhetoric is being treated as curriculum and not just pedagogy. Oracy is considered the string connecting all other areas of learning. It is being implemented to enhance children's critical thinking in science, providing reasoning and justifications in maths and discussing relevant albeit difficult topics such as 'knife crimes' and 'internet safety' in PSHEC or P4C.

By making our classrooms, 'Talking Classrooms' and making our school a 'Telling School', we are ensuring a safe and secure environment for children to raise questions that puzzle them and through philosophical conversations, we are allowing them to explore and discover their own answers to these. Making oracy non-negotiable in our English planning has raised the profile of 'teaching' oracy as opposed to 'using' oracy. Teachers are carefully planning opportunities for children to participate in 'parliamentary' style debates from as young as 6 years old. Children are being taught how to analyse characters and their actions through 'opinion meters', 'conscience alleys' and PEEL (point, explain, evidence and link) strategies. They are encouraged to make presentations bearing in mind their audience and purpose. Every week, an oracy task is set for children to have open and honest conversations at home about religion, philosophy, British Values and humanity. Setting high expectations with the 'spoken' English and correct use of grammar is in turn ensuring children are using correct grammar and language for effect in their written English. Increasing number of our pupils are aspiring to become authors, journalist and politicians.

iii) Barriers to improving oracy education: *What are the barriers to provision for a quality oracy education for all, and what is the role of government and other bodies in incentivising provision?*

The challenge that teachers face in this field are the number of children starting school without any spoken language (English or otherwise) in the early years has been declining every year. Unfortunately electronic gadgets have taken over quality family times and children are being deprived of listening to or partaking in conversations. These in turn are impacting their social skills as studies in the past have proven that communication is 10% spoken language and 90% non-verbal cues and gestures. Some of our most deprived children are starting education already a year or more behind their counterparts coming from 'talking' families.

Another barrier is 'cultural beliefs', in some societies children are only meant to be 'seen' and not 'heard'. Challenging adults is considered rude and impolite with dire consequences. Children arrive in schools scared to ask questions and content to be passive observers. 'Doing as they are told' is considered a quality and 'working quietly' is encouraged. As educationalists, it is our duty to teach children to be 'active' members of our society, if these skills are not imparted, the future citizens of the world will be meek followers and there will be far fewer leaders.

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