

## 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:

The written evidence to the Oracy APPG inquiry is submitted from [New Schools Network](#) (NSN). New Schools Network is an independent charity improving the life chances of young people by supporting the creation and long-term success of new schools. NSN finds talented people and organisations, supports them to establish new free schools across the country and, through the Academy Ambassadors Programme, places high calibre business people as non-executive directors on boards of multi-academy trusts.

The evidence below shows that:

- Past free school waves have encouraged innovative free school proposals, encouraging new approaches to oracy education designed to best support a school's pupil cohort.
- The criteria for the most recent waves (13 & 14) are more stringent and have been restricting the ability for curriculum innovation, reducing the number of innovative free school proposals.
- Oracy education often supports pupils with special educational needs, particularly those affected by language and communication difficulties or an inability to express themselves.
- Oracy education can improve pupil progress in a wide range of subjects as well as personal and social development such as pupil confidence and leadership.
- Oracy education can work towards closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils as reflected in the performance results of schools such as School 21 and Harris Westminster Sixth Form.

### **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)?**

3.1 Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) can face a variety of challenges to communication linked to their SEN. Pupils with SEN can often be affected by language and communication difficulties or an inability to express themselves. This can lead to social isolation, frustration and behaviour difficulties. Oracy education can help develop their communication skills, which are vital for independence in adult life. The following special free schools have used oracy education to great effect:

3.2 [Churchill Special Free School](#) is an 8 to 18 Outstanding special free school that opened in 2013. It caters for pupils with speech, language and communication needs and autistic spectrum disorder. The school believes communication is a fundamental human right and is a key life skill which underpins a pupil's social, emotional and educational development.

The school uses a number of approaches to encourage oracy in the classroom. This includes programmes to assess and develop students' communication, interpersonal and social skills such as Socially Speaking and The Social Use of Language Programme.

3.3 [The Rise Free School](#) in Feltham specialises in pupils with autism aged 4 to 18. They use the Ruth Miskin Literacy and Language programme to develop pupils' comprehension, writing and spoken language. The programme encourages pupils to discuss texts and builds their confidence and comprehension both in reading, writing and oracy. This approach is designed to encourage pupils' communication skills. 'The Rise Way' is a unique method staff and students follow to monitor teaching and learning. It outlines ten elements of great teaching, including teacher talk, a hook for the lesson followed by a discussion and feedback. This is broken down into 'The Rise Teacher', 'The Rise teaching assistance' and 'The Rise student'. This is part of the development of all staff and students, giving a shared understanding of what teaching and learning looks like.

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

4.1 An oracy education can be delivered across the curriculum in all subjects. Some evidence suggests that an oracy approach can raise pupil progress in subjects such as maths and science. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) research of dialogic teaching across the curriculum has shown that a dialogic pedagogy can help to improve pupil progress in a wide range of subjects.<sup>1</sup> Their research examined the impact of dialogic teaching at key stage 2 across 76 mainstream schools. It showed that pupils made 1-2 months' additional progress in English, science and maths.

4.2 [Europa School UK](#) is a Good (Ofsted, 2018) all-through (4 to 19) free school in Oxfordshire that opened in 2012. The school has a multi-lingual curriculum which aims to develop pupils' communication skills in a new language and apply them to learning across the curriculum. This gives context and motivation for pupils' language acquisition. The benefits of a multilingual approach are reflected in all areas of learning as the school boasts above average results in reading and maths at key stage 2.

#### **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?**

5.1 Oracy education can help prepare pupils for employment and university. As highlighted in LKMco's report *Oracy: The State of Speaking in Our Schools*, one of the most commonly required skills in job applications is good communication.<sup>2</sup> An oracy education can help to prepare pupils for adulthood and higher education by developing their communication and speaking skills.

5.2 [Harris Westminster Sixth Form](#) opened in 2014 in Westminster as a mainstream 16-19 provision as part of the Harris Federation. It was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted in 2016.

<sup>1</sup> <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/dialogic-teaching> - Education Endowment Foundation, Dialogic Teaching, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lkmco.org/oracy-state-speaking-schools/> - LKMco, *Oracy: The State of Speaking in Our Schools*.

Ofsted has highlighted the subject-based societies, or debate lessons, students participate in every Wednesday which are designed to increase confidence, leadership, oracy skills, and positive interaction with the curriculum. As a sixth form, a significant proportion of the curriculum is designed to prepare pupils for higher education and employment and an oracy education fits within that model. 90% of pupils either stay in education or go into employment once leaving the school which is higher than the national and local averages.

**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?**

7.1 The latest two rounds of free school applications (waves 13 and 14) have focussed on schools closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils. The criteria specifies new schools must be targeted in areas of low standards.

7.2 Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative curriculum practices that close the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils and work towards enhancing their school's local community. To that end, free schools are experienced in developing curricula to respond to the specific needs of their communities.

7.3 This is one area in which free schools have used their freedoms to innovate and deliver on their respective visions. [School 21](#) is a free school that opened in 2021 by Big Education Trust, a community-led academy trust established to deliver great schools with new models of schooling for all children, particularly those from the most deprived backgrounds. It was established when community members came together with a shared idea of an innovative curriculum to prepare pupils for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The school has a higher than average percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and whose first language is not English. Disadvantaged pupils achieve better attainment than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils, as do EAL pupils.<sup>3</sup>

7.4 Some existing free schools use an oracy education to tackle challenges to social mobility and support their disadvantaged pupils. As described above, Harris Westminster Sixth Form build oracy into their curriculum. The school has a higher than average disadvantaged cohort and a higher than average percentage of pupils remain in education or go into employment once leaving the school. In the year 2013-14, the school brought nine students to Oxbridge interviews, of whom four were offered places. Many students who apply to Russell Group universities are successful.<sup>4</sup>

7.5 NSN surveyed free school senior leaders to find their views on oracy in the curriculum. Some highlighted the skills it develops among pupils including encouraging them to engage in their learning and develop good listening skills. They similarly highlighted the

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<https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/138196/school-21/secondary/results-by-pupil-characteristics?accordionstate=0|2>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.harrissixthform.org.uk/220/harris-experience-advanced?search=destination>

value that good verbal communication supports a variety of future ventures for pupils such as working in groups on projects, working in employment and being an active citizen.

**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?**

2.1 At [King Edward VI Academy](#) (Ofsted Good 2017) an oracy education is delivered as part of the enrichment outside the classroom. Pupils take part in debate and public speaking extra-curricular programmes. In year 8, students have public speaking workshops. In year 9, they learn debating skills, which is added to critical thinking sessions in year 10. This programme concludes in an annual Debating Final at the University of Nottingham. The school has a higher than average percentage of pupils with free school meals.

2.2 As part of the Ark Schools Debating Competition, pupils from [Ark John Keats Academy](#) (Ofsted Outstanding 2015) travel to South London to compete with pupils at [Ark All Saints Academy](#) (Ofsted Good 2018). Enrichment opportunities for years 7 and 8 include visits to the Houses of Parliament to hone their communication skills through roleplaying debates.

**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?**

4.1 Already, several free schools have been referenced for their successful oracy education. Below is additional detail about free schools using an oracy education within their schools:

4.2 [School 21](#) is an all-through mainstream free school that opened in 2013 in Newham. It is part of the Big Education Trust and was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted in 2014. School 21 has an emphasis on oracy in the classroom, using a lesson framework (Oracy 21) developed with Cambridge University. They provide oracy opportunities through IGNITE speeches, which are modelled on TED talks, seminar style discussions, portfolio and exhibition presentations, and interaction with businesses in an 18-week program (Real World Learning) aimed at developing professional communication.

4.3 [Harris Westminster Sixth Form](#) opened in 2014 in Westminster as a mainstream 16-19 provision, part of the Harris Federation. It was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted in 2016. Ofsted was impressed by the subject-based societies, or debate lessons, students participate in every Wednesday. A student will pick a topic of interest relevant to the subject of the society, present on it and respond to a Q&A afterwards. These are meant to increase confidence, leadership, oracy skills, and positive interaction with the curriculum. They are also meant to prepare students for a university seminar.

4.4 [Bilingual Primary School – Brighton and Hove](#) is a primary school in Brighton and Hove that opened in 2012 and achieved a Good Ofsted in 2016. The school immerses pupils in Spanish, alongside English, to promote effective development of communication skills and a global outlook. The school posts impressive results with pupils making well above average progress in reading and maths.

**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?**

5.1 The free schools programme offers schools the opportunity to develop a new curriculum designed specifically for its local community. As described above, several free schools have developed innovative approaches to include oracy education within their schools. Despite the success of free schools, they are too concentrated in narrow pockets across the country. That means too few free schools are being approved in the our most disadvantaged communities

5.2 The criteria for the most recent waves (13 & 14) are the more stringent and have been restricting the ability for curriculum innovation. The criteria allow for innovative providers in principle, but the willingness to seek out and encourage these applicants is limited. It is unlikely that schools such as Europa School and School 21 would get approved now.

5.3 The perception that the free school process has become more onerous and bureaucratic has meant that many potential innovative proposer groups are deterred from applying. Although a rigorous application process is necessary, we believe the DfE have created an unfair process which has actively discouraged competition, leaving the creation of new schools solely to one size fits all multi-academy trusts. Decision makers must show a greater level of ambition when it comes to supporting innovative projects.

5.4 One survey responder highlighted the impact of communication at home. Support for parents to confidently communicate with their child and encourage inquiry can help to develop good oracy education. Areas of disadvantage, where parents may not have the ability to spend time communicating with their child can decrease the number of opportunities a child has to access oracy education.

**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 to providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?**

1.1 The criteria for waves 13 and 14 were more restrictive and burdensome than they have ever been. This became a major barrier for innovative projects. Applicants must demonstrate there is a need for a high proportion of the places the free school will provide which is reliant on inaccurate school capacity data. Free schools have championed curriculum innovation however the criteria is stifling innovation.

1.2 Additionally, the current free school criteria is particularly challenging for new providers and the criteria favours applicants who can demonstrate an existing education track record. This means the policy currently present barriers for new providers entering the system. The policy should be returned to its original purpose, to open innovative, community led and schools with parental support. These providers are able to develop a community centred approach to education. School 21 is one example of these types of free school applicants of which there are now far fewer being approved.

### **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 delivery high quality oracy education?**

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

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

## Additional guidance:

### Value and impact

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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?
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### 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?

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