

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'

Amelia Foster

Full name:

SAPERRE

School or Organisation:

Chief Executive

Role:

Written evidence:

This submission is made on behalf of **SAPERRE**, the UK's national charity supporting Philosophy for Children (P4C).

Summary

1. Introduction

1.1. SAPERRE is the national charity that supports Philosophy for Children (P4C) in the UK. P4C is an oracy based pedagogy and practice in which teachers facilitate children to participate in a community of enquiry. During an enquiry, children discuss questions that have significance for them, and which they have developed and selected themselves.

1.2 Research¹ has shown that P4C improves educational outcomes, particularly for less advantaged children.

¹ Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., See, B.H. (2015) 'Philosophy for Children: evaluation report and executive summary' (2015) for the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) and Siddiqui, N., Gorard, S., See, B.H. (2017) 'Non-cognitive impacts of philosophy for children' for the [Nuffield Foundation](#), Project Report.

1.3 We believe that the purpose of education is to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and dispositions that will allow them to flourish in all spheres of their life. Oracy is central to that vision of education and should therefore have equal weight with literacy and numeracy in the curriculum.

1.4 Despite this, in the current educational climate it is difficult to find the space for – and to demonstrate the value of – oracy teaching and skills development.

1.5 Oracy based pedagogies and, in particular, SAPERE P4C, support the development of critical thinking, social and communication skills, and help children access the wider curriculum. They complement and boost literacy and numeracy. They support young people to feel valued, to express themselves, to listen to and engage with others, and to navigate the world around them.

2 SAPERE

2.1 SAPERE is the national charity² supporting Philosophy for Children, or P4C, in the UK. We work with schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), universities³, colleges and communities to provide training and support in P4C.

2.2 SAPERE has a twenty-five year record of success in improving educational outcomes, particularly those of children from more deprived backgrounds⁴. We work with a range of partners (including the Education Endowment Foundation, the Nuffield Foundation and the School of Education at Durham University) to promote research into the effects of P4C.

2.3 SAPERE trains 5,000 teachers a year and has growing network of almost 200 Award Schools across the country who are working to embed and sustain high-quality P4C. Increasingly, we work with multi-academy trusts and with school hubs, partnering both secondary schools and their feeder primaries.

3 SAPERE P4C

3.1 SAPERE P4C is a powerful pedagogy that has a positive impact on children, teachers and schools. It can be used across the curriculum and at all key stages.

3.2 SAPERE P4C is an oracy-based approach centred on philosophical enquiry. In a P4C session, a teacher trained in facilitating P4C supports children to engage in a dialogue with each other about a question that has significance for them, and which they have developed and selected themselves.

3.3 SAPERE P4C places particular emphasis on forming and asking more and better questions, listening well, and developing the language to disagree agreeably. Children learn how to become active listeners, give and weigh evidence, build an argument, challenge viewpoints, and change their thinking. To support this, SAPERE P4C values, teaches and models '4C thinking' – critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking. By making explicit what these kinds of thinking sound like, and by encouraging children to use these thinking skills, the children learn to think better and to articulate those thoughts more clearly. In [this](#)

² A charity registered in England and Wales, registered charity number 1144595

³ We teach P4C to trainee teachers at the following partner institutions: University of Cumbria, University of Gloucester, Keele University, Institute of Education (UCL), Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool John Moores University, Newcastle University, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Winchester, York St John University.

⁴ Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., See, B.H. (2015) 'Philosophy for Children: evaluation report and executive summary' (2015) for the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) and Siddiqui, N., Gorard, S., See, B.H. (2017) 'Non-cognitive impacts of philosophy for children' for the [Nuffield Foundation](#), Project Report.

[video](#)⁵ made by Year 6 children at Sandringham Primary School in Newham, East London, the students themselves explain what we mean by '4C thinking'.

3.4 These links illustrate the impact P4C has on the development of oracy:

- [Thinking Allowed Through P4C](#)
- [Sharon Phillips, Year 3 teacher at Deri View Primary in Abergavenny, shares her action research findings on the impact of P4C on oracy skills and learners' confidence](#)

3.5 As referenced above, research by the Education Endowment Foundation and the Nuffield Foundation has shown that participating in SAPERE P4C improves outcomes. The benefits of P4C include improvements in literacy and numeracy, as measured in Key Stage 2 SATs, as well as in listening and speaking, thinking skills, and self-reported social skills such as teamwork and resilience. These are some of the key life skills needed for successful employment. In addition, these benefits are seen more markedly in more disadvantaged pupils.

4. Reason for submission

4.1 SAPERE welcomes the APPG's enquiry into oracy. We believe that the purpose of education is to inculcate a balance of the skills, knowledge and dispositions that will allow all children to flourish in the current and future spheres of their life: personally, socially, morally, culturally, professionally, economically, and as citizens.

4.2 We believe that oracy is key to this vision of education. High quality teaching of oracy skills and the placing of a higher value on oracy in education will support young people to develop their fundamental skills, to become active citizens, and to benefit from improved life chances. In order to encourage children to become lifelong learners who are socially engaged, responsible and thoughtful citizens, we believe it is vital that oracy should have equal standing with numeracy and literacy.

4.3 Our society needs young people who can listen, think and express themselves well and engage in meaningful conversations with others. We need a society where people are open to new and differing ideas, and are able to articulate and evidence *their* viewpoints, as well as respecting and/or assimilating *others'* viewpoints. Teaching oracy skills and, in particular, using the SAPERE P4C pedagogy, is critical to achieving these outcomes.

5. Oracy – Value and impact

5.1 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?

5.1.i Oracy-based approaches, such as SAPERE's dialogical, communal, democratic, concept-focused and reflective practice, can be difficult to introduce in the current educational framework. This is because the current focus on knowledge acquisition, together with an accountability regime often perceived by educators as restrictive, can work against an intervention such as P4C that is predominantly oracy based. Indeed, we have received anecdotal evidence about Ofsted not valuing oracy interventions because the students have not written anything down. It seems that, in the current education culture, if it cannot be read, it cannot be measured.

⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pBkCGdVLyEd3jKpcmw0tRcpgyIphClz/view?ts=5b4f548f>

5.1.ii As we state above, we believe that developing oracy is an essential basic skill that is central to both becoming an active citizen and to having a good quality of life.

5.2 What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?

5.2.i Two key reasons for focus on oracy education are its impact on:

- Children's cognitive development and learning in school
- Children's preparation for participation in the wider world

See:

[*The Development of Oracy Skills in School-Aged Learners*](#)⁶ Cambridge Papers 2018
[*Speaking Up: The Importance of Oracy in Teaching And Learning*](#)⁷ in Impact, Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching, 2018

5.2.ii If young people do not learn oracy skills this will have an impact on their education, their access to the curriculum and their well-being. Oracy is particularly vital in the early years, to give children from all backgrounds equal access to the curriculum, and to build relationships and confidence. There is a known and well-evidenced link between the development of oracy in the early years and later literacy development and attainment⁸.

5.3 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)?

5.3.i Anecdotal evidence from our work in PRUs and a hospital school suggests that children in these settings are impacted significantly by participating in P4C. The hospital school, for example, noted that children's self-reported pain scores were lower after participating in P4C, while PRUs are reporting fewer incidents and a greater ability of their students to understand other people's viewpoints. Given the sensitive nature of these settings, we have chosen not to include evidence here, but we can provide case studies and quotes on request.

5.3.ii Anecdotal evidence from SEND schools indicates that SAPERE P4C has an extremely positive effect on children with special needs. For example, a teacher at a secondary school for students with a diagnosis of ASD and/or complex needs in northern England told us she had witnessed 'an increase in self-confidence and an improvement in speaking and listening skills. [Students] are more willing to take risks when sharing their opinions and are more able to see things from a different perspective. Seeing them articulating their thoughts and feelings and considering other people's viewpoints is extremely powerful and has been commented on by a number of outside agencies; including the Speaking and Listening Moderator for GCSE English and the accreditors for NAS who observed a P4C session. Working in this way has led to a number of our students becoming involved with The Shakespeare Schools Festival and National Theatre Connections.' A student at the school said, 'When I first started here, I was very quiet and wouldn't say what I thought and whether I agreed or disagreed with people. P4C has helped shape my opinions. I no longer just accept things – I challenge and have learnt to say why I think things.'

⁶https://languageresearch.cambridge.org/images/Language_Research/CambridgePapers/CambridgePapersInELT_Oracy_2018.pdf

⁷ <https://impact.chartered.college/article/millard-importance-of-oracy-in-teaching-learning/>

⁸ An extensive body of research can be found on the website of the National Literacy Trust at

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/>, including an [evaluation of their Early Words Together programme](#)

5.3.iii As outlined above, EEF research into the use of SAPERE P4C in schools showed that the practice had a greater impact on the attainment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.4 How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?

5.4.i In order to access the curriculum, children need to be able to listen well, be able to ask relevant questions and have the confidence to ask them. Children need to be able to express themselves clearly to their teachers and their peers.

5.4.ii Furthermore, we know from our experience of introducing P4C to UK schools that oracy has an impact on reading and writing, as evidenced by our EEF research⁹. Children who can articulate and rehearse ideas verbally can usually translate this to their writing. Thinking and talking about a text in a group dialogue, and seeing things from other perspectives helps children with reading comprehension.

5.5 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? 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?

5.5.i Good oracy and communication skills are essential in the work place and in further and higher education: this is a fundamental requirement of colleges, universities and employers.

5.5.ii Organisations need people who are not afraid to speak to others, who can look up from a phone or computer screen and engage with their peers, customers, lecturers, clients, patients and so on.

5.5.iii In all areas of employment, from social care to hospitality, from call centres to medicine, and from technology to design, staff need to be able to ask the right questions, to listen to what they are being told, to probe, question and rephrase.

5.5.iv There seems to be an assumption that the oracy skills so desperately needed for life and for employment will somehow automatically be picked up in school. However, without the right support, this cannot always be the case, particularly for young people experiencing disadvantage, with SEN or EAL. Even the most articulate children may lack confidence to speak in a range of settings, and those with confidence may need to improve their listening skills.

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

5.6.i Children and young people who are able to articulate what they are thinking and how they are feeling, and who have those thoughts and feelings valued, are likely to report a greater sense of well-being. It follows also that if you are able to speak up for yourself and to explain your needs (for example, to a friend, family member or medical professional), you are likely to experience a greater feeling of agency and control and are more likely to be able to access the services and support that you need.

⁹ Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., See, B.H. (2015) 'Philosophy for Children: evaluation report and executive summary' (2015) for the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) and Siddiqui, N., Gorard, S., See, B.H. (2017) 'Non-cognitive impacts of philosophy for children' for the [Nuffield Foundation](#), Project Report.

5.6.ii Though our evidence for this assertion is currently anecdotal, this is an area into which we would like to do more research and for which we are seeking funding.

5.6.iii A significant body of evidence¹⁰ suggests that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds hear fewer words in number and in range in their homes, and it is therefore critical that this is addressed in educational settings if we are to address this imbalance.

5.7 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?

We have answered this above.

6 Provision and access

6.1 What should high quality oracy education look like?

6.1.i We understand oracy to be the ability to communicate effectively using spoken language. This means supporting children to develop skills to

- express themselves effectively and with confidence
- speak eloquently, articulate ideas and thoughts
- influence through talking and to listen/respond to others
- have the vocabulary to say what they want to say
- structure their thoughts so that they make sense to others

6.1.ii These are all skills that we teach explicitly and practise in SAPERE P4C. SAPERE P4C creates an opportunity for teachers to engage with pupils and develop a whole-school culture of thinking, listening, speaking, and engaging in dialogue.

6.2 Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?

We believe that SAPERE P4C constitutes excellent oracy practice and have over 200 schools across the UK that are practising P4C to a high standard. We have a growing number of case studies which we would be pleased to submit as additional evidence. Please get in touch with us if these are required. We can also facilitate visits to our Award schools.

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

We believe that the way in which schools are funded and the prevailing education culture in the UK creates unnecessary barriers to accessing oracy interventions. In particular, pupils in more disadvantaged areas may not have access to oracy interventions because the current accountability and examination regime – which prioritises exam results, that which can be measured (as noted above in 5.1.i) and league tables – means that schools may favour more traditional teaching methodologies for fear of letting down their students.

Barriers

7.1 What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond? What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?

Teachers undoubtedly recognise the importance of oracy but they lack the time and skills to give it the same status as reading and writing, and have no incentive to do so due to the accountability culture mentioned above. With a lack of training in oracy, many teachers may

¹⁰ See <https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/mind-the-word-gap-the-difference-in-poor-childrens-language-skills/55066/> for a summary from the charity I CAN, with links to research

not feel they know how to teach it explicitly. Teachers may also feel restricted by time and assessment pressures and therefore unable to give oracy the focus it needs.

See also 5.1.i and 6.3 above