

Dear Sir Madam,

**RE: "Speak for Change" Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry**

My name is Lawrence Hepner and I am an Assistant Headteacher at Swakeleys School for Girls in Hillingdon, Middlesex. In response to your inquiry, I am delighted to inform you that oracy skills play a significant role in our curriculum at Swakeleys School for Girls. In my role as Assistant Headteacher I have responsibility to ensure that oracy is prevalent across our curriculum. Below, I will briefly explain how oracy is integrated into our curriculum and the impact it is having on pupils' oracy skills.

**School Council**

We believe in giving pupils a platform to use their voices before they put these skills into practice. Our school council encourages all pupils to have an opportunity to voice their opinions. Such prestigious roles as Senators, Form Councillors and Subcommittee chairpersons are just a few opportunities given to pupils to actively use their oracy skills in a variety of scenarios. In addition, the whole school timetable is suspended for one hour four times a year to enable the whole school to partake in a debate. The oracy subcommittee linked to school council has also contributed to driving change in this field of work.

**Debates Club**

On a weekly basis we offer an open door policy for students of all ages to come and share their views on debate topics chosen by themselves. Debating techniques are shared in order to develop specific oracy skills. Debaters have entered several competitions including the ESU London debating competition and the national PiXL Up for Debate competition. More recently, our year 8 debaters won the national Up for Debate competition fending off over 200 schools and reached the London final of the ESU London debating competition.

**Raising the Profile of Oracy Skills**

In order to raise the profile of oracy across the curriculum, pupils' oracy skills are commented upon across all of their subjects in their school reports. Parents are therefore well informed of their child's capabilities in oracy across all subjects.

**Assessment of Oracy (stickers)**

More recently we have introduced "What type of speaker am I?" This has enabled pupils and teachers to assess pupils' oracy ability on a scale. The scale consists of 4 stages: Apprentice Speaker, Developing Speaker, Excellent Speaker and Expert Speaker. This is displayed on stickers on the front of all pupils' books/folders, raising the profile of oracy. Pupils have also completed an oracy self-assessment in order to focus on developing specific elements of oracy. Form tutors have driven this process.

**Active Oracy Learning**

One element of our "Character and Culture" programme offers training and support to all students in the area of oracy. For example, year learning coordinators deliver a programme of oracy assemblies. We are focusing our attention to the 4 key areas of oracy: Physical, cognitive, emotional and linguistic. Year 11 students receive specific oracy training on "How to approach a 6<sup>th</sup> Form/College interview" while Senator nominees receive expert advice how to write and deliver a hustings speech. In addition, we have used extended form time (30 mins) for teachers to deliver quality oracy sessions using PiXL Orate resources as a framework whereby every pupil in the school is involved.

### **Supporting Weaker Orators**

We understand that oracy is not everybody's strength. The oracy lead works alongside departments to identify pupils requiring extra support. We have built a strong relationship with the Jack Petchey Foundation who deliver annual speaker training to our weaker orators. It has been staggering to see these students flourish at the end of their training sessions being able to deliver speeches unaided by notes. Furthermore, our talented speakers enter the Jack Petchey Speak Out competitions which are hosted regionally.

### **We make Oracy fun!**

Our House competition supports the development of oracy. We offer TED talk competitions in addition to a "House Debating" competition! This has really inspired pupils to deliver their passions in life in an oracy setting.

"No Pens Day" is calendared annually where pens are abandoned and replaced with oracy! Teachers are encouraged to be creative with their planning. It has been a huge success over the years and pupils of the oracy subcommittee support in the planning of the sessions.

### **Using our expertise in the community**

Our success is now spreading to our partner feeder primary schools. Our lead in oracy trains colleagues in debating skills and we have hosted the Hillingdon Primary School debating competition for the last 4 years. We are proud to say that a primary school we have trained has won the "Noisy Classroom" London Primary Debating Competition.

### **Our Success – Keep it simple!**

Pupils comment on our oracy focus being a strong reason for them developing into confident individuals. Our success has been built on keeping all processes very simple. Employing a senior leader to lead on oracy has given this area of the curriculum considerable kudos. Oracy should be something to be enjoyed and not feared and this basic mantra has empowered our students to achieve, aspire, enjoy and succeed in oracy.

If you would like to discuss any of the items above or have any further questions regarding our oracy provision, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Lawrence Hepner

Assistant Headteacher