

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'

Full name:

School or Organisation:

Role:

Written evidence:

Oracy Evidence of Impact for the Oracy APPG

18TH September 2019

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?

From the research we have done, and linking to learning theory, we understand that language skills are a fundamental component required to be able to learn and reason. We are seeing poor language skills linked to deprivation, and this is the key barrier to learning and progression. Unfortunately, with the pressures on the education system to perform as they are, all too often schools try and 'fix' problems they directly associate with poor measures of performance. For example 'phonics'. However, looking 'beyond headline data' one can see there are significant underlying causes that need to be addressed. Oracy skills are necessary for, and interdependent with, reading and writing, but without the development of language reading and writing are limited.

2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education? 'Oracy education' implies that it is a subject of its own. Children need to be able to learn and develop oracy skills integral to their whole educational experience. As stated, there is a large body of evidence linking oracy to learning. If poor language development is linked to deprivation it compounds the problem the children from poorer backgrounds do not learn so effectively, thus limiting social mobility.

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)?

Dialogic teaching and oracy skills should be part of a whole-school strategy, and therefore all children should experience high-quality oracy provision. However, specifically we have seen the greatest impact and potential from working with early-years, reflected in KS2 and secondary settings, and it can benefit those PP or children from areas of high deprivation the most. Our model has been influenced by specialists who have worked with EAL, and although the context is slightly different, I have no doubt this is an area where oracy can have huge impact too.

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

Should oracy help deliver, or should it be integral to the wider curriculum? If children can access learning, and therefore the curriculum, through greater levels of language skills and literacy, we are likely to see greater levels of engagement. This can counter challenges linked to poor behaviour and exclusions. The wider the curriculum offer the wider the opportunity to practice and develop oracy. There is a strong tradition for debate and public speaking in independent schools, and this is growing in the state sector, but linking to social mobility and skills for the workforce my belief is that this should be encouraged as part of the wider curriculum offer for all schools.

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?

My work has focused on primary and secondary schools, so the following statement is not based on evidence. However, I also work with the Army on their training programmes,

and low levels of literacy, confidence, communication skills, rapport and understanding are barriers to their training programmes. I am confident that developing oracy in schools would be a huge benefit to business as a counter to the above issues. As described, if low levels of language developed are indeed linked to deprivation, then there is a challenge around employment and productivity. The ability to communicate through different media, present, and develop emotional intelligence are crucial skills in the majority of workplaces.

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?

I believe we need to be more explicit about how the education experience can be applied to the working world. In order for secondary education to feel relevant, the curriculum needs to be broad enough for children to access all sectors be that further study, trades, apprenticeships or management programmes. In my capacity as Director for Professional Development for The White Horse Federation I was frustrated at the relative lack of engagement from businesses with schools, I believe clear career guidance linking to effective input from business on curriculum design and offer

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

This is a really good question. In the research conducted to shape the Plymouth Oracy Project, we recognised the potential benefits for children's mental health. I have referred to the greater access to the curriculum, however we also could see how poor language skills can contribute to high levels of anxiety, stress and frustration, culminating in poor behaviour. The ability to communicate and express feelings is crucial in being able to manage challenging circumstances. This combined with low levels of self-esteem, and unstable family environments (that can be associated with, but not exclusively to, deprivation) presents a complex situation for many young people. Oracy skills can be a positive influence on this as described above.

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.

In making the connection between the ability to communicate and active citizenship, the question almost provides the answer. The ability to understand complex situations, develop empathy, see situations from others' perspectives, reason, make informed decisions, manage money, contribute to society, critically engage politically, challenge, develop a broad world view, I believe are all linked to language. We are fortunate that English is the dominant global language in business, but we are also experiencing huge political change, and the ability to understand and reason, and critically engage with the world, I believe is of huge importance.

Provision and access

1. What should high quality oracy education look like?

We have developed a powerful CPD model that helps develop long-term, sustainable oracy skills in schools. My belief is that oracy should be at the heart of everything in school, modelled by all staff including all support and admin staff. It should be integral to

every lesson, promoting a truly dialogic experience. In addition, parental training is crucial, in order that parents can model language at home, and understand the implications for not doing so. It should not be an 'oracy lesson' or delivered only by the English department. Giving children opportunities to speak publicly, debate, reason, argue, problem-solve and practice vocabulary are examples.

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?

In designing the Plymouth Oracy Project I included the following key principles:

- Cross-phase, working from EY to KS4.
- Creating collaborative groups of professionals focused on both oracy and implementation to help support and QA schools' oracy action plans (that they had created).
- Use of local expertise trained up by specialists to perform the above and train key individuals in each school as oracy champions.
- Involving all staff at some point in the training, and then the wider community and parents.
- Using specialists to deliver training that formed the foundation for the collaborative work. Creating an Oracy Hub for all schools to access.

I am now working as the research and CPD lead across the SW for the Teaching School Council. Effectively accessing expertise created through the Strategic School Improvement Fund (DfE) is an integral part of the region's school improvement offer for disadvantaged children.

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

In early 2017 we began work on an Oracy project for Plymouth as a result of the citywide school performance data. At the time oracy had not been identified as an 'issue' nor was it on the RSC/DfE list of regional priorities. However, through developing a truly evidence-informed programme of training we have successfully raised the profile of oracy across the south west. This includes: schools, LAs, TSC, RSC and DfE. We secured Strategic School Improvement Funding to run the project to March 2019 and the legacy of the programme ensures the sustainability of the training. It is part of the joint Team SW (TSC SW, RSC SW, DfE, Diocese, MAT CEO, LA) regional delivery plan for 19/20 with a focus on disadvantaged pupils. I cannot speak for Ofsted, it would be interesting to engage their research lead Professor Danial Muijis in discussions around this. Although we are now seeing the growth of training in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire and Swindon, I believe there is much more to do for teachers to raise the profile. I presented at ResearchEd last year, and my colleague Ciara Moran (co-creator of the Plymouth Oracy Project) presented this year. It would also be useful to engage the Chartered College of Teaching.

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

Without doubt the Plymouth Oracy Project in the SW. There is a full evaluation of the project collated externally by the University of Marjons. I can provide this if you do not have a copy. Key specialists include Judy Clark and Carol Satterthwaite, both with proven track records of expertise in Oracy training, Oracy Cambridge and of course, Voice 21.

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?

Access to high-quality training that is not prohibitively expensive for schools is crucial. There is a growing market of organisations offering training. Schools that need the training the most are often struggling with other issues and funding is a significant barrier. Having Oracy as part of the DfE's School Improvement Offer would be a significant development. It is part of the regional delivery plan but there is no funding attached to this strand as far as I am aware.

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

In the last 4 years I have been Director of the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance and Director of Professional Development for the White Horse Federation based in Swindon. The commonality between the 2 is high levels of deprivation. The significant difference is the number of EAL children in Swindon. Both require subtly different approaches to Oracy training but the fundamentals remain the same.

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?

Skill, knowledge and experience.

2. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?

There is a specific requirement for high-quality training for both primary and secondary teachers and support staff. The most effective model uses accessible evidence of need and of approaches with proven success, some external expertise, training of both identified individuals in schools as Oracy Champions to lead whole school change, and wider staff on oracy practice. The approach develops collaboration through professional learning networks with a focus on oracy. This needs the full support of headteachers and chairs of governors, and staff need time to develop practice. I can provide more details on effective implementation drawing from the EEF implementation guidance.

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?

Accountability is an interesting term as is incentivise. Holding the profession to account is one approach and/or incentivising engagement. The risk is that oracy is devalued through a tokenistic response to satisfy external scrutiny or incentives. An alternative is to present evidence to suggest there is a need, and evidence of impact of successful strategies. It is also important that skilled leaders are able to contextualise need and training with their own schools and communities. This is not a one-size fits all approach, and requires commitment at all levels. It would be useful to engage the Ofsted research team, EEF and an HEI on the impact of oracy on effective curriculum design and offer.

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

I believe this should be a multi-agency approach. The fact there is an Oracy APPG is fantastic validation of the need to further understand and explore oracy and education,

and successful approaches. Funding through the school improvement commission to help fund training for the most vulnerable schools and/or schools in isolated rural, coastal and deprived city contexts would be an excellent strategic approach.

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

Assessment should be used as both a formative and summative tool to shape practice. However, it is notoriously difficult to assess. Oracy Assessment Matrices have been designed by Oracy Cambridge, Voice 21 and practitioners in Plymouth. It is about collating the right data to inform decision making and practice.

6. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?

No

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

Refer to question 3 above

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

This is a really good question. I believe the traditional model of professional development is seriously flawed, hence we struggle to evidence meaningful impact from changes in approach. However, there are examples where successful, collaborative approaches to professional development, have had impact and I have mentioned some of these in this report. With partners such as EEF, CCT and initiatives such as ResearchEd we are beginning to acknowledge the importance of research and evidence to inform the profession.

Additional guidance:

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)?
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 do 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?
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?
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?

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?
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 deliver high quality oracy education?
7. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?
8. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?