

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'

Thomasin Seddon

Full name:

School or Organisation:

Parent of dysfluent (stammering) child

Role:

Written evidence:

Evidence from Thomasin Seddon in a personal capacity as a mum of a child with speech dysfluency (stammer).

- When I first read about the Oracy strategy I was pleased, as I seemed that oracy and the importance of speech and language would be more recognised.
- I did not like the word oracy, as it has many negative connotations as a word that excludes those with SLCN needs and those of certain social classes. However, I hoped that this would overall be a positive movement.
- Unfortunately, as I began to read about the curriculum I was deeply concerned about the interpretations of oracy. I also read about Voice 21 and the EEF reviews of their research and pilot, and the enormous amount of funding they had received. I became very concerned indeed.
- The Bercow 10 years on campaign had been recently launched and it seemed to be such a clash of worlds to see SLCN services struggling for money while a free school accessed over half a million pounds of funding, and a potential stream of income from selling the training on, regardless of quality.

- One of my children had been taught by Ms Hardy and I respected her as a professional. So I felt sure she would have been aware of these issues and onboard with my concerns. She is not my MP (I live just over the boundary, in East Riding), but as chair of the Oracy APPG, I asked to meet with her and discuss my concerns.
- Unfortunately, after one meeting and a number of emails she did not address my concerns, and asked that I take my issues elsewhere, suggesting my MP, or Ms Earnshaw, of Voice 21. I did share a couple of emails with Ms Earnshaw and, eventually after several attempts, got a very detailed response, none of which really addressed the basic ethos of assessing oracy and “eloquence” (Voice 21’s word). Neither did it address the use of such large amounts of money.
- I strongly believe Voice 21 curriculum is lazy, damaging, exclusionary and ineffective.

Oracy Strategy ‘highlights’

Unit 1: Finding our voice

The focus of this first unit is to familiarise pupils with the Oracy Skills Framework and to introduce them to a range of strategies and protocols to support the development of their talking and listening skills, especially in group work situations.

Unit 2: Performance poetry

This unit focused on the physical and social- and emotional areas of oracy. Pupils use performance poetry to support the development of effective talking and listening skills in small groups.

Unit 3: Persuasive techniques

Pupils consider a range of formal and informal talk scenarios which use persuasive techniques. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the effectiveness of a range of these techniques. This unit focuses on the linguistic and social and emotional areas of the oracy skills framework.

Unit 4: Ignite

The final Ignite unit was **the only mandatory part of the curriculum for the pilot phase. It prepared pupils for a **five-minute individual talk** on a subject of their own choice. The final unit**

was intended to encourage pupils to draw on skills and techniques developed from all strands of the Oracy Skills Framework.

The one year pilot programme was based on School 21's Oracy Skills Framework and consisted of:

- one hour per week of lesson time dedicated to **developing four key areas of spoken language: physical**, linguistic, cognitive, and social and emotional;
- materials for an oracy curriculum, including a mandatory unit that prepared pupils to do a five- minute individual talk;
- activities to promote an 'oracy culture' in the school, including building oracy into assemblies and cascading the principles of oracy to teachers and staff; and
- use of **an oracy assessment measure** developed by School 21 in collaboration with the University of Cambridge

1. The insensitive and outdated curriculum structure has a mandatory unit where every child has to give an individual 5 minute speech. No mention of any adaptations or reasonable adjustments. I don't really see how any could work anyway.
2. This curriculum is so much in contradiction to how we try and work with our dysfluent children. We need not to see fluency and performance as important or a goal. Instead we need to value the message, however untraditionally expressed. Children already have the opportunity to speak and present in class, why make it mandatory? It suggests that this is some sort of gold standard. A very discriminatory and dated view.
3. Talk rich classrooms are wonderful and powerful. But nothing is added to this, educationally, by putting each Year 7 alone in front of the class to perform. Bercow could achieve much more without the money-draining, unnecessary Voice 21 input.
4. The framework is equally insensitive; including a physical category which requires fluency. Where are dysfluent children recognised or incorporated at all? They will fail, by definition, before they even begin. It worries me greatly that this area will be taught in the hour long sessions. My son has had extensive speech therapy to learn ways to prevent his fluency affecting his message. I don't think it's wise for a non specialist to start "teaching" this as it is a highly specialised area.



Physical

Voice

- Fluency & pace of speaking
- Tonal variation
- Clarity of pronunciation
- Voice projection

Body language

- Gesture & posture
- Facial expression & eye contact

5. Similarly how will these none speech therapists assess oracy in SLCN children? SLTs are highly trained and they work, long-term assessing and creating therapy programmes for the children. A clumsy assessment tool, that may well not be fit for purpose, has no value. Why is there no mention of these issues in the strategy. SLCN children are just ignored.
6. The transition into year 7 is hard enough for dysfluent children. My son's speech therapist began preparations months prior to his September 2018 start, with paperwork strategies and meetings. The thought that he would walk into a year 7 classroom, nervous and unfamiliar, and be told his fluency will be assessed and that he will have to eventually complete a 5 minute individual speech would be appalling. He is dysfluent, as many are, and always will be. What message exactly are Voice 21 sending him? He is a failure. And he is definitely not alone, or even a severe case.
7. I believe funding would be much better spent on Bercow. When frontline, expert SLCN services are collapsing we have no need for this showboating waste of money which is all style (launch events with balloons and hundreds of full colour brochures) over substance, not recognising SLCN at all in the literature.
8. I am very disappointed that Ms Hardy did not follow up correspondence I had with her on the key matter of the competence and appropriateness of School 21 and Voice 21. I raised several very concerning issues around the lack of quality of research methods and unreliable outcomes described in their 2 pilot studies. I am very concerned that such poor research received £552,000 in funding from the EEF. The oracy assessment method mentioned above is dismissed by the EEF review as not fit for purpose. Not that we should be assessing these skills in this way at all. I also believe some very clear questions should be asked about their motives, and understanding of speech and language across the spectrum of SEND. I could find no specific reference to SLCN children and or dysfluency in the strategy.
9. I also expressed a clear belief that School 21/Voice 21 are a money and status making outfit, planning to charge schools (publicly funded) £6000 each for the Oracy curriculum training. I am surprised that Ms Hardy is happy to put faith in a free school like this. The corporatisation of education is destroying the ethos and equity in our comprehensive state system, which is the vast majority of our education system.
10. I was concerned when I met Ms Hardy she did not seem confident about the content of the information that she herself had sent out to me. I believe that Ms Hardy had not read the information

sent out in any detail and had not read the article I sent to her, as agreed. I apologise in advance if this is not the case. It concerns me that Ms Hardy seemed so unaware of the details when she had already attached her name, face and, therefore, MP status to the network. It felt like Ms Hardy had accepted what the free school had told her without fully analysing their methods, evidence or motives. And possibly without reading the EEF review of the research and pilot in detail. MP backing gives a strategy weight and kudos, and should not be treated so lightly.

11. I would be the first to embrace SLCN being picked up earlier, identified sooner, and supported in talk rich classrooms. But this needs to be done with expertise and sensitivity, leading to an inclusive celebration of difference in communication. This oracy strategy all seems really rushed, and I cannot believe that none of the half a million could have been spent on some real experts to shape a quality curriculum for all.
12. Adults struggle to express how they feel about stammering and clarifying what's going on with their speech (see stammer campaign below). Expecting children to do that seems cruel. Unless you have experienced this with a child you have no idea of the damage this clumsy approach could have.
13. "If we are to break down the barriers that stop many young people succeeding, then we need an education system that teaches our children to be articulate and confident" **Beccy Earnshaw, Director, Voice 21**. This sounds so positive and a no-brainer. But I completely disagree. We need an education system that teaches our children that to be confident, successful and have a valuable contribution to make – *they don't need to be articulate*. They just need to communicate effectively. It's the message that matters.
14. I approached Ms Hardy as I really believed that with her ethos, some work and tweaks and real experts on board, rather than Voice 21, this strategy could have been part of a solution, for all children. I am so disappointed it's just another one of the many problems that dysfluent children will have to battle against. All this strategy does is to make me scared for my son and others like him and it feels like a really backward move. Life is surely tough enough.

Please also look at the links below.

- A Hull City of Culture Dysfluency Project my son Barney was part of.

Article

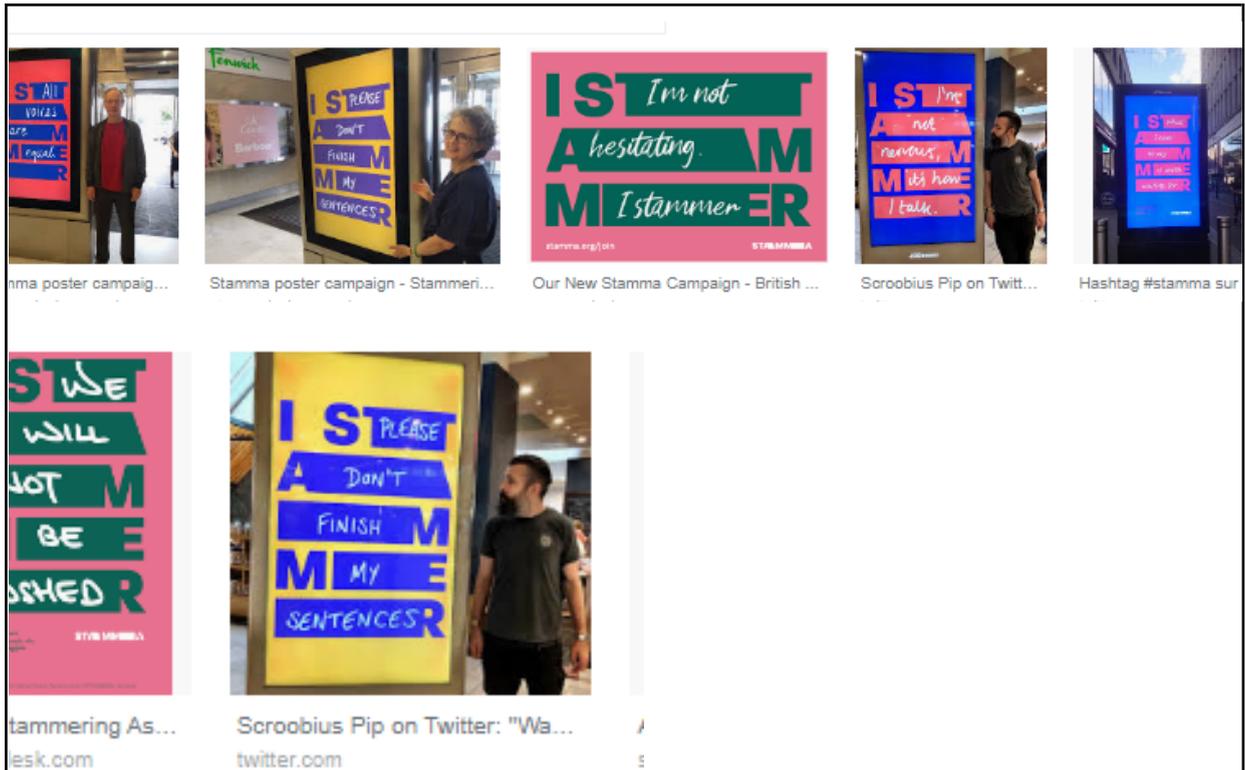
<http://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/three-inspirational-youngsters-share-stories-660923>

Animation

<https://vimeo.com/239094673>

- The new Stamma campaign.

<https://stamma.org/news-features/our-new-stamma-campaign>



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?