

Speak for Change



Initial findings and recommendations from the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry

December 2020



About the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group

The Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is committed to helping every child be a confident communicator and find their voice. The Group was established in 2018 to co-ordinate research, promote best practice and encourage the overarching principles of oracy in education and society at large.

Our officers and members are listed on our website at www.oracyappg.org.uk/about-us.

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in this report are those of the Oracy APPG.

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Articulacy
Elklan
Economist Foundation
English Speaking Board (International) Ltd
English-Speaking Union
I CAN
NAPLIC
National Literacy Trust
Oracy Cambridge
SAPERE
Speakers Trust
Speaking Citizens
Talk the Talk
The Centre for Education and Youth
The Noisy Classroom
Trivium
Voice 21
Votes for Schools
Kate Freeman and Duncan Partridge

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1 Foreword

Talk is a fundamental part of our lives. Oracy – that is, purposeful classroom talk – improves children and young people’s cognitive development and academic attainment, their wellbeing, and life chances by enabling them to develop the spoken language skills necessary to thrive in further education, training and employment. Oracy provides a gateway not only to improved reading and writing, but also to learning across the whole curriculum for children and young people throughout their schooling.

Oracy has always mattered, but it matters now more than ever. The Covid-19 pandemic has widened the already stubborn ‘language gap’, with Ofsted recently raising its concerns that children hit hardest are “regressing in basic skills and learning”, including language, communication and oral fluency.¹ Meanwhile, recent research by Oxford University Press and The Centre for Education and Youth found that 92 percent of teachers think school closures (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) have contributed to a widening of the ‘word gap’ and that 94 percent found it challenging to support pupils’ vocabulary development while teaching remotely during the national lockdown.²

It is therefore clear that the Covid-19 pandemic will exacerbate the inequities facing children in our school system. While the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry began its work before the pandemic struck, the importance of the work has come into ever-sharper focus since then. Oracy offers an important means by which we can address the injustices worsened by the pandemic. A greater focus on oral language is proven to help the most disadvantaged students catch up.

I am personally hugely grateful to the enormous range of people who have contributed so far to our Inquiry. We have heard from teachers and other practitioners working with children, employers, academics, organisations supporting oracy and parents. But perhaps most importantly, we have heard from lots of young people. It is not often – particularly in this day and age – that you find something about which so many people agree. Virtually everyone contributing to our Inquiry believes that oracy should have a higher status or even equal status to reading and writing within the education system.



THE ECONOMIST EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION'S BURNET NEWS CLUB PROGRAMME (WOODHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL)



VOICE 21 (SCHOOL 21)

Yet this is not a new debate. For years there have been efforts across the UK to increase high-quality classroom talk, against a background of extensive and ever-growing evidence of oracy's importance. Last year, Schools Minister, Nick Gibb MP, said that oracy is not simply "talking more – it is precise, productive and purposeful discussion to sharpen thought and challenge perception[s]", and that there has been "too little debate about how to make oracy work effectively."³

Unfortunately, as this Inquiry is finding, many barriers get in the way, resulting in a gulf between teachers' intuition that oracy matters, and their capacity to support it in their lessons. Fewer than half of teachers feel their school's approach to oracy is consistent or embedded.⁴ Of course, teachers are facing enormous and unprecedented pressures. A focus of this Inquiry is to explore how the school system can better support teachers to harness oracy's untapped potential, and move past the wider assumptions that speaking skills will just be 'picked up' as children progress through school without explicit teaching.

I am proud to chair the Oracy APPG, and excited to share this interim report on our work and progress to date. In 2016, the landmark *The State of Speaking in our Schools* report provided an overview of oracy in schools across the UK.⁵ We are building on this by examining how the oracy landscape is changing, which pupils benefit most from oracy, the costs of inaction, and how best to support teachers in embedding oracy in their classrooms. As our emerging recommendations show, this is about balancing high expectations across the system and universal access to high-quality support and resources, with flexibility to ensure that teachers can respond nimbly to their pupils' needs.

Above all, I am struck by how much reason we have for optimism. Appetite for oracy is high. A vanguard of teachers and school leaders are leading the way in terms of innovative oracy practice, with the support of passionate and expert organisations. Alongside everything else that teachers deal with day to day, I remain in awe of the work already underway in schools across the country. We are pushing at an open door. There is near consensus on oracy's importance. Our job now is to look forward and build on this momentum.



Emma Hardy MP
Chair, Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group

“

Above all, I am struck by how much reason we have for optimism. Appetite for oracy is high.

Emma Hardy MP

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2 Introduction

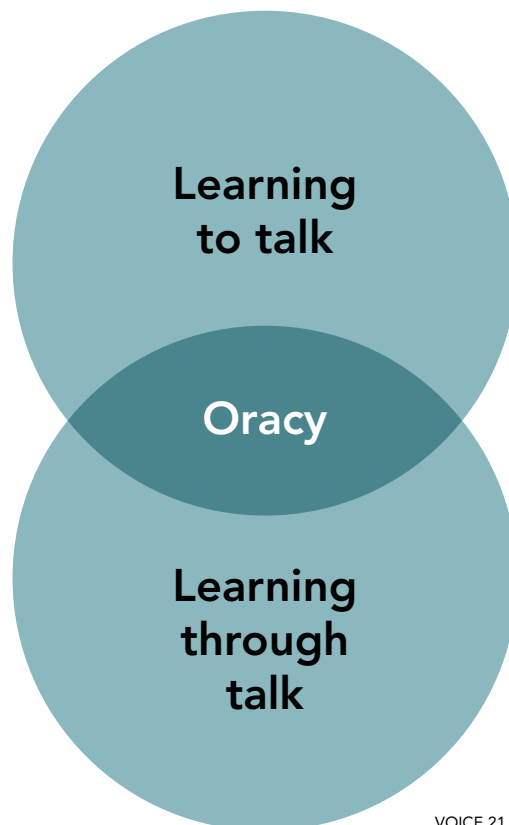
2.1 What is oracy?

Oracy is the ability to speak eloquently, to articulate ideas and thoughts, to influence through talking, to collaborate with peers and to express views confidently and appropriately.⁶

Oracy involves learning to talk and learning through talk.⁷ It is to speech what literacy is to reading and writing, and numeracy is to maths.

The *Speak for Change* Inquiry (the Oracy APPG Inquiry) has adopted a deliberately broad definition of 'oracy', in order to capture as wide a range of contributions as possible. Submissions to the Inquiry emphasise that good oracy:

- involves learning the specific linguistic, cognitive, physical and social emotional knowledge and skills that support effective spoken communication in a range of contexts and settings
- includes structuring ideas verbally, the choice of vocabulary or use of rhetorical devices or the understanding of audience and use of tonal variation
- involves both processes (learning 'through' talk) on the one hand, and outcomes (learning 'to' talk) on the other
- includes both presentational talk for sharing ideas more formally with others (such as public speaking, debate and interviews), and the exploratory talk we use to develop and hone our thoughts and understanding through discussion
- involves listening and valuing everyone's voice
- is about what pupils and their teachers do
- is inclusive, taking account of our most vulnerable children with poor language, whether due to limited experience or a developmental language disorder
- involves speaking confidently and appropriately
- is not limited to standard English and includes all 'educationally productive' talk regardless of pronunciation or dialect⁸
- supports children and young people's learning and development in school and their lives beyond school.



VOICE 21

"Oracy education does not only mean teaching children ways to talk that will help them to do well in future job interviews or work settings. It means teaching children the spoken language skills that will enable them to make the most of the education they are offered in their classrooms every day.... Good, inclusive oracy education provides children with the speaking and listening skills they need to think and learn."

Oracy Cambridge⁹

All children – including those with limited language – should benefit from high quality oracy education. Organisations supporting children and young people with Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) have emphasised the importance of recognising and valuing forms of communication other than spoken language, such as British Sign Language and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) methods to enable participation. We also recognise that for pupils with SLCN, oracy "provides the essential foundation on which can be built more targeted and specialist interventions."¹⁰

2.2 About the *Speak for Change* Oracy APPG Inquiry

2.2.1 Purpose and scope of the Inquiry

There is a growing consensus across society regarding the importance of oracy in education. However, there is still much debate as to how this can be effectively achieved and delivered. The Oracy APPG Inquiry wants to build on this current momentum to improve the status of oracy in our education system, and access to oracy education for every child.

Based on a wide and inclusive process of evidence gathering, the Oracy APPG intends to develop a clear set of practical recommendations for government, policy makers, educational bodies and school leaders to ensure that every child receives quality oracy education. The Inquiry is focussing its efforts on primary and secondary education but we will also explore the impact of and opportunities for oracy in wider settings, and among wider age groups from the Early Years to post-16.

The Inquiry has gathered evidence examining the following three key areas:

- **Value and impact.** What is the impact of oracy education at different life stages, from the Early Years through to employment, and how does the delivery of effective oracy education contribute to individual and societal outcomes?
- **Provision and access.** What is the current state of provision of oracy education across the UK, who is missing out and what factors create unequal access to oracy education?
- **Barriers to improving oracy education.** What are the barriers to the provision of a quality oracy education for all, and what is the role of government and other bodies in incentivising provision?

As noted in the previous section, the Inquiry has deliberately adopted a broad definition of 'oracy' and welcomed evidence from a wide range of contributors, from within the education sector and beyond. We have also heard from third sector organisations, businesses and academics. Most importantly, the Inquiry is capturing the views of many teachers, parents, children and young people. The Full Terms of Reference for the Inquiry can be found at www.oracyappg.org.uk/submit-evidence-here.

2.2.2 Evidence gathering process

- Since the *Speak for Change* Inquiry launched in May 2019, it has received more than 120 written evidence submissions from a diverse range of individuals and organisations.
- Between June and September 2020 we conducted four oral evidence sessions online with 27 witnesses in total.
- We have conducted two surveys for teachers, gathering 268 responses. We are grateful to the Parliament Education Centre for gathering evidence for the Oracy APPG from young people.
- We are grateful to the participants who organised evidence gathering seminars and events to gather evidence for the Inquiry and inform their submissions.
- We have been encouraging teachers in particular to share video evidence with the Inquiry and will be seeking to gather more in the coming months.



THE ECONOMIST EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION'S BURNET NEWS CLUB PROGRAMME AT NEWBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

2.3 About this interim report

This interim report is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of all the evidence. Our final report will provide a more in-depth overview of all the evidence submitted to the Inquiry.

Rather, this interim report provides a snapshot of the key themes arising from the evidence, where there is emerging consensus and our initial suggestions about ways forward. The discussion and feedback arising from the ideas set out in this report will help formulate our final recommendations in Spring 2021.

3 Value and impact of oracy education

The evidence presented to the Inquiry highlights five key areas where oracy has a particularly notable impact on children and young people's progress and life prospects:

- 1 academic outcomes
- 2 tackling social disadvantage
- 3 transitions into further education, training and employment
- 4 wellbeing
- 5 citizenship and empowerment.

3.1 Academic outcomes

Engaging in high quality oracy practices during lessons – for example through dialogue and questioning – deepens understanding and is linked with improved test scores and exam grades as well as greater knowledge retention, vocabulary acquisition and reasoning skills. The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) trials of oral language interventions in schools are demonstrating the benefits in terms of pupils' academic outcomes, equating to an average of five months additional progress over a year, and oracy underpins many of the most effective approaches in its well-respected Teaching and Learning Toolkit.¹¹ Separate studies have also demonstrated gains in academic progress through dialogic teaching.¹² These benefits apply across the curriculum, and for pupils of all ages.

"There is a direct link between cognitive development and spoken language. To put it simply, if students have a small vocabulary and cannot speak in sentences then they will have little knowledge and lack the ability to manipulate ideas, deepen understanding and communicate."

Talk for Writing¹³

"What has always been evident to us is the centrality of oracy in achievement – commensurate with literacy and numeracy. They are the building blocks of effective learning, participation, economic achievement and development"

English Speaking Board (International) Ltd¹⁴

“

For the majority of students, if they can't articulate their thoughts they are going to struggle to write them. We often don't fully know what we think and believe until we try to explain to others.

Teacher¹⁵

”

KS3 STUDENTS TAKING PART IN DEBATE PROGRAMMES ORGANISED BY NOISY CLASSROOM



“

Oracy is very important so I can understand what I'm learning, and so I can be confident speaking in front of the class and be brave about what I'm saying.

Young person¹⁶

”

3.2 Tackling social disadvantage

Pupils from poorer backgrounds have lower levels of language development, on average, than their peers. They are also more likely to develop SLCNs.¹⁷ Furthermore, the Fair Education Alliance's submission to the Inquiry highlighted how the language gap on entry to nursery school widens throughout schooling. Because of the close links between language development and academic outcomes, poorer children tend to perform less well in tests and exams.

"The educational consequences of social disadvantage can be compounded by children's difficulties in oral development and communication. However, oracy can also be an effective means of re-engaging the disengaged and closing the overlapping gaps of equity and attainment."

Professor Robin Alexander¹⁸

The EEF's research shows the impact of oral language interventions is particularly pronounced for disadvantaged pupils. Given the correlation between children's spoken language and their educational attainment¹⁹, and the impact oracy can have on attainment, a focus on oracy is particularly important to improve opportunities for young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and improve their educational outcomes.

"Children with poor life opportunities are impacted most by poor focus on oracy in education. ... Providing rich experiential opportunities, valuing pupil opinions, [and] encouraging opportunities for talk during all curriculum areas will support children of all backgrounds and will offer particular benefit to children from lower socio-economic backgrounds."

UCL Centre for Inclusive Education²⁰

Poorer children have less access to extra-curricular activities that support oracy and could close the language gap, such as debating clubs and the performing arts. Schools with the lowest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals are twice as likely to offer debating clubs as schools with the highest.²²

Evidence to the Inquiry highlighted that a lack of spoken communication skills can hamper social mobility acting as an additional barrier to young people from poorer backgrounds when they leave school. The Social Mobility Commission has identified a lack of 'soft skills' as a barrier to social mobility and has particularly highlighted the importance of spoken communication skills.²³

"Ultimately, oracy [... is] really driven by the element of social capital. ... social mobility is a key part of the success of young people. That is largely driven by their ability to communicate, especially in the workplace, [and] how to sell themselves to employers."

Edge Foundation²⁴

“

Poor oracy skills have a lifelong impact that goes well beyond lack of academic success.... A failure to succeed in these skills can have devastating results for the individual, and society as a whole.

Teacher²¹

”



ORACY APPG

3.3 Transitions into further education, training and employment

Many of the submissions to the Inquiry emphasise the critical role of oracy in supporting young people's transitions into further education, training and employment. With improved oracy comes better academic outcomes and greater self-confidence, enabling young people to access and thrive in post-secondary pathways.²⁵

"Seminar teaching at university expects the ability to articulate your thoughts within a wider academic dialogue. To critically engage with material, assess evidence and to compare different interpretations and approaches is at the heart of much of the study of the humanities, arts and social sciences. If a student's prior experience of this is limited they are ill prepared for the rigour of higher level academic practice."

The Noisy Classroom²⁶

The benefits extend to all pupils, not just those attending university. One apprenticeship provider stressed the relevance of oracy to their candidates.²⁷

Employers, teachers, parents and young people alike emphasised the role that oracy plays in supporting young people's job prospects.

Employers place great emphasis on the value of spoken communication skills in the workplace, with some surveys ranking these as the top or among the most desired skills of employees.²⁸ This has been sharpened by increased demand for 'soft skills' which, in an age of advancing technology and automation, computers are unable to mimic.²⁹

"From the view of business the overriding priority across all businesses is that young people have actually got communication skills. It is a fundamental requirement not just of success but even starting in the world of work. You cannot be recruited if you cannot speak effectively. [These skills] are a passport to work....as important as the oxygen we breathe when it comes to opportunity in the future."

Paul Drechsler, former CBI Chairman and former Chair of Teach First³⁰

Unemployment has sky-rocketed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic – particularly among young people – and so it is vital that we do all we can to support them to gain the knowledge and skills they need to find work in our precarious jobs market. Employers and teachers alike emphasise the role that oracy plays in supporting young people's job prospects.³¹

Lower levels of oracy may make future hardships more likely because they hold young people back. For example, evidence indicates a correlation between language difficulties and unemployment.³²

Yet, unfortunately, oracy is a key skills gap, which harms not only young people, but also the UK economy itself.³³ Employer surveys repeatedly show that employers find it difficult recruiting people with adequate communication skills.³⁴ Supporting pupils' communication skills is something many employers would like schools to prioritise.³⁵

“

Oracy increases your communication abilities and will help you in your job and later life, to communicate your ideas with people you work with.

Young person³⁶

”

SCIENCE LESSON AT ST FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL



“

Employers want rounded individuals who can think for themselves. Oracy promotes critical thinking and articulation of ideas.

Teacher³⁷

”

3.4 Wellbeing

The Covid-19 pandemic has wrought havoc on many young people's wellbeing, and responses to the crisis must ensure that young people are adequately supported. Oracy plays a critical role in supporting young people's wellbeing. Teachers see it as an important means of helping their pupils process their experiences during the pandemic³⁸, enabling students to articulate their emotions, talk about feelings and concerns, and have the confidence, ability and agency to ask for help.

"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 wellbeing. 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."

SAPERE³⁹

"The connection between oracy and wellbeing is crucial and while there are many other risk factors that can impact on a child and young person's wellbeing, oracy is one that we can turn into a protective factor."

English-Speaking Union⁴⁰

On the flip side, not possessing oracy skills comes at a high price. For example, submissions to the Inquiry have emphasised the links between language difficulties and emotional and behavioural issues, and between SLCNs and an increased risk of exclusion and youth offending.⁴²

“

We all need to talk, to be able to make sense of what is going on. We need to give young people the tools to articulate and express their fears and anxieties at this unprecedented time.

Teacher⁴¹

”



ORACY ZOOM LESSON AT ST FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

3.5 Citizenship and empowerment

The Inquiry has taken place against a backdrop of seismic social and political upheaval, with social and cultural tensions running high. As the Black Lives Matter movement demonstrates, children and young people can use their voices to generate important social change. Oracy is critical in giving children and young people a voice, literally and figuratively. It helps them formulate and discuss ideas, deliberate with others, navigate disagreement and find common ground:

"Sharing opinions about current affairs requires particularly strong oracy skills, meaning that if young people do not develop strong oracy skills they are unlikely to be able to make their voices heard on current issues affecting their lives and participate as engaged citizens. Oracy skills are not only needed to speak up about topical issues, they are also important for establishing the truth about them."

Economist Educational Foundation⁴³

At a time when faith in democracy and political institutions is so low, this is more important than ever. Evidence submitted to the Inquiry highlighted oracy's role in empowering young people, and providing a means by which schools can address issues of disinformation:

"[Oracy] seems to be particularly important at a time when schools need to be tackling topical questions around democracy and 'fake news'. Classroom discourse is instrumental in shaping students' inner working models of participation and citizenship."

Dr Rupert Knight, The University of Nottingham⁴⁴

Oracy can empower some of the most vulnerable and marginalised children and young people in our society by giving them the tools and confidence to say what they think and therefore be listened to:

"One child said to us she just felt like a parcel being passed around in care. Oracy could be powerful for those children to help them, to empower them to speak up for themselves and make it harder to overlook them and have things done to them."

Office of the Children's Commissioner⁴⁵



“

I think it is ever important in a society where teenagers in particular are speaking up on issues of Brexit, climate change, and social equality that people are able to communicate an opinion confidently and feel comfortable in doing so.

Young person⁴⁶

”

4 Barriers to oracy

While evidence to the Inquiry suggests widespread consensus on the value and importance of oracy, contributors identified a range of sizeable and systemic barriers inhibiting oracy in schools.

4.1 Inconsistent provision within and across schools

Many schools have developed innovative and effective oracy practice. For example, Voice 21 (a charity helping schools to provide high-quality oracy education) has grown from working with 140 schools in 2017, to nearly 760 in 2020. However, despite successes, oracy provision remains inconsistent, both within and between schools. Contributors to the Inquiry believed that this was a result of a lack of understanding, unclear expectations, difficulties with assessment and a lack of support.

4.1.1 Poor understanding of oral language development

Contributors to the Inquiry argued that some teachers mistakenly assume that children arrive at school having already learned to talk, and that once there, they can simply extend their vocabulary and skills 'organically' through casual interaction with other children, and by listening to adults. This assumption, that oracy skills are 'caught not taught', is at odds with the evidence.

"The power of talk is poorly understood. ... there are plenty of assumptions that because virtually everyone makes sound, this just happens organically."

Mary Myatt, Education Advisor⁴⁷

4.1.2 A lack of clear expectations

Lack of clarity about expectations relating to oracy has an impact on both inter-school inconsistency and intra-school consistency.

In terms of inter-school consistency, the National Curriculum refers to the importance of spoken language, but in his oral evidence to the Inquiry, Cambridge Assessment's Tim Oates said that the intention and statutory requirement in the National Curriculum is "not enacted in all schools." Some contributors to the Inquiry argued that there is not enough emphasis on oracy in the National Curriculum, and that there is a lack of guidance about universal expectations in relation to oracy and that written work is prioritised:

"The relatively low status of spoken language in England is related to the high-stakes accountability system which focuses on reading and writing. The National Curriculum for English in England devotes little space to spoken language and much more to grammar, spelling and punctuation, thus signalling that even specific aspects of written language are more important than talk."

UK Literacy Association⁴⁸

Contributors suggested that the comparatively low emphasis on talk in the National Curriculum reduces the 'licence' for classroom talk.

Within schools, fewer than half of teachers working in state-funded schools agree that their school has a consistent approach to oracy.⁴⁹ Secondary school teachers are less likely than their colleagues in primary and private schools to say their school has a consistent approach.

A lack of whole-school policies and cross-curricula planning can therefore lead to considerable inconsistency:

"Teachers continue to adapt their own pedagogy to incorporate their own ideas for 'talk' within their own classroom. Most schools [in our alliance] don't have a whole-school policy on oracy but it is mentioned within the English/literacy policy to include opportunities for drama, role play and possibly book talk."

Noctua Teaching School Alliance⁵⁰

4.1.3 The challenges of assessment

Many contributors to the Inquiry argued that the 'downgrading' of oracy in GCSE English language sent a message to teachers that oracy is not a priority. In his oral evidence to the Inquiry, Roy Blatchford – chair of the Forgotten Third Commission – noted that "if you don't examine it, sadly, in our system, it won't get done."⁵¹

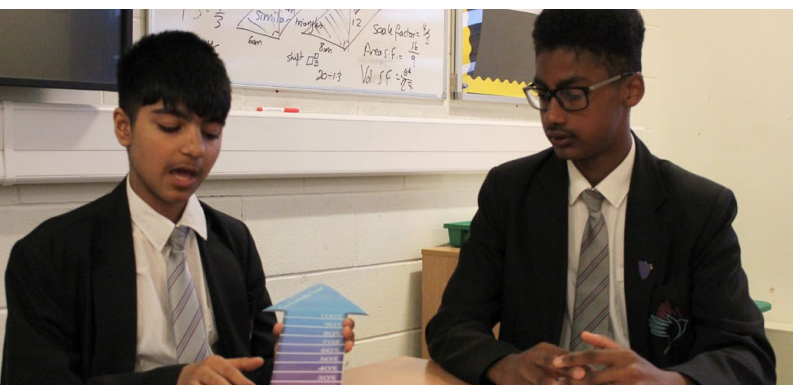
Furthermore, evidence submitted to the Inquiry indicates that teachers can deprioritise spoken language because – unlike written work – it leaves no 'proof', or what the National Literacy Trust referred to as its "ephemeral nature."⁵²

"For decades, means have been found to assess students' achievement in the spoken language ... by its nature, [it] may be harder to assess accurately than written language, but the presence of difficulty is no reason to duck the challenge."

National Association for the Teaching of English⁵³

4.1.4 A lack of access to support

Research indicates that a majority of teachers have not received professional development on oracy.⁵⁵ As the report *The State of Speaking in our Schools* demonstrates, this lack of support has an impact on teachers' confidence in developing oracy in their classrooms.⁵⁶



VOICE 21 (BISHOP YOUNG COFE ACADEMY)

“

I'm concerned that if teachers are pressured to show evidence of progress immediately [after lockdown] then this will be written evidence rather than verbal.

Teacher⁵⁴

”

“

Many of our children will not have had a full conversation in the whole lockdown period. ... They will have missed out on hundreds of hours of exploratory, story and formal language.

Teacher⁶¹

”

4.2 The Covid-19 pandemic

Pupils from poorer backgrounds have suffered the most during the Covid-19 pandemic, and face a greater loss of learning as a result of school closures.⁵⁷ Evidence suggests that school closures during lockdown have widened the language gap, something both teachers⁵⁸ and parents⁵⁹ fear. While this has the potential to have an impact on all age groups, the effects may be particularly pronounced in the Early Years and transition points (for example between primary and secondary schooling).

Some contributors highlighted that while some children's language has significantly improved due to increased conversation at home, for many children this will not be the case:

"I've got a lot of evidence, anecdotal, that children from more affluent families with professional parents, those young children's language has just come on in leaps and bounds in the last two months because they have been exposed to a lot of adult conversation. They've been at home with their parents and they have gone from two words to sentences in a very short space of time. But if you are in a home in lockdown period where you're not having those conversations, then that won't be happening. So that could widen the gap."

Jean Gross, Education Advisor⁶⁰

Given that the academic gains associated with oracy are most pronounced for disadvantaged pupils, oracy clearly matters now more than ever and should be a key plank in any strategy not just for recovery but also for 'building back' stronger and fairer. However, teachers have highlighted the current challenges in prioritising oracy in the classroom and continued language development for students due to high pupil absences and curriculum pressures.⁶² Submissions raised concerns that restricted classroom layouts in place post-Covid could reduce quality talk for learning and teaching.⁶³

5 Our vision for oracy, and emerging ways forward

5.1 The APPG's vision for oracy

Overall, nearly all respondents agree that oracy should have a higher status than it currently does. Contributions to the Oracy APPG Inquiry have enabled the APPG to develop six principles that it believes should underpin oracy in the future:

- 1 a clear definition of oracy, understood by everyone
- 2 evidence-based policy making that recognises oracy's critical importance
- 3 a consistent approach to oracy in schools
- 4 explicit oracy teaching that is purposeful, well-planned and supported
- 5 inclusion, ensuring that all pupils benefit, including those with additional learning needs
- 6 partnership with parents, families and communities.

5.2 Emerging ways forward

The Inquiry has uncovered a number of possible ways forward. The suggestions outlined below are by no means final. Rather, they serve to summarise the ideas submitted to the Inquiry so far. Each suggestion raises further questions, and we welcome discussion and feedback on these. Our suggestions capture how the system might change, in order to better support school leaders and teachers.

5.2.1 Better support for teachers

Teachers need to be better supported to embed oracy in their classrooms. Submissions to the Inquiry suggest that this could be achieved through:

- increased government investment in oracy-focused continuing professional development (CPD)
- a greater emphasis on oracy during initial teacher education
- improved support for school leaders to embed quality oracy across their schools, drawing on evidence regarding effective implementation.

5.2.2 Greater recognition of oracy within policy and guidance

We need government to emphasise where possible the transformative impact of oracy beyond the Early Years and ensure this is more effectively communicated. This includes:

- the government actively promoting oracy as a means of improving children and young people's life chances and closing the attainment gap
- creating and disseminating non-statutory guidance on oracy, akin to the Gatsby Benchmarks for careers education⁶⁴, and establishing a cross-sector working group to support this
- embedding oracy into neighbouring policy areas affecting children, young people, families and schools, including mental health, social mobility, employment and skills policy
- monitoring and evaluating the impact of oracy-focused policy.

5.2.3 Raised expectations

Expectations about pupils' entitlement to quality oracy teaching need to be raised. This could be done in a variety of ways but should include:

- ensuring that the intent for oracy in the National Curriculum is sufficiently prominent and clearly articulated and understood at each phase with guidance and support made available to aid the implementation of this within schools
- increasing and improving the assessment of oracy across all age groups, ensuring various methods of assessment for oracy skills are more widely understood and utilised, and possibly reintroducing statutory assessment at GCSE level
- increasing Ofsted's focus on oracy, including giving specific feedback on schools' oracy provision following inspections.

6 Conclusion

The case for oracy continues to build. Many teachers are developing innovative and effective oracy in their classrooms. However, while most teachers intuitively recognise oracy's value and importance, barriers persist inhibiting its uptake in schools. This means provision is patchy and young people have unequal access to quality oracy opportunities.

This interim report sets out some suggestions emerging from the Oracy APPG's Inquiry about possible ways forward. We welcome feedback on these suggestions to help us in formulating our final report and recommendations, and you can share feedback with the APPG via:

 www.oracyappg.org.uk

 inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk

 @AppgOracy

We will publish a final report in Spring 2021.

7 Evidence received

7.1 Written evidence

All evidence received by the Inquiry so far is published at www.oracyappg.org.uk/evidence-received

Access Team, Trinity College, University of Oxford
ACE centre
Achievement for all
AFASIC
AimHigher London Oracy Project
Amber-Page Moss, University-Schools Liaison Officer
Articulary
Association of Colleges
Auditory Verbal UK
Barbara Priestman Academy
Bespoke Speechwriting services
Better Communication CIC
Bristol Early Years
British Stammering Association
Chartered College of Teaching
Chatta
City of London Corporation
Claire Buchanan, Speech and Language Therapist
Cubitt Town Junior School
CUREE
Dandelion Education
Debating Mental Health
Dr Katerina Loukopoulou, Middlesex University
Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson (Speaking Citizens)
Dr Deborah Jones, Brunel University London
Dr Ioanna Bakopoulou, University of Bristol
Dr Jan Hardman, University of York
Dr Julia Snell, University of Leeds
Dr Karen Daniels, Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Rob Drummond, Manchester Metropolitan University
Dr Rupert Knight, University of Nottingham
Durham Commission on Creativity and Education
Economist Foundation
Education Endowment Foundation
Education Scotland
Education Works Ltd on behalf of Oracy@GwE
Elmhurst Primary School
English & Media Centre
English Speaking Board (International Ltd)
English-Speaking Union
ESTYN
European Speechwriter Network
Fair Education Alliance
Fit 2 Learn
Gearies Primary School
Harrington Nursery school
Hatchlands Primary School
Heacherteachers Roundtable
Head of English and Drama Portsmouth High School
Herts and Bucks TSA (St Clement Danes School)
Highlands Primary School
Holland Park School
Holy Rosary Teaching School Alliance
I CAN
Independent Thinking Ltd/ Association for Language Learning
Isle of Man Government (Department of Education, Sport and Culture)
Laurus Trust and Altius Alliance
Let's Think in English (King College London)
Madeleine Holt, The Media Coach
Mayespark Primary School
NAPLIC
National Education Union
National Literacy Trust
National Theatre
New Schools Network
Newham 6th Form Centre
Noctua Teaching School Alliance
Noisy Classroom
Northampton School for Boys
Ofsted
Oracy Cambridge
Oracy for Everyone/ Find Your Voice
Organisation/ school
Parc Eglos School
Parentkind
Pearson
Plymouth Oracy Project
Professor Alan Finlayson, University of East Anglia
Professor Courtenay Norbury, University College London
Professor Elizabeth Stokoe, Loughborough University
Professor Julie Dockrell, UCL Institute of Education
Professor Robin Alexander, University of Cambridge
Professor Stephen Coleman, University of Leeds
Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists
Royal Institution and British Science Association
Ryders Hayes School
Sally Harper, Independent supply teacher and consultant
SAPERE
Siddiqui Education Ltd
Siobhan Boyce, Communication/ Behaviour specialist
Smart Schools Councils
Speakers Corner Trust
Speech Bubbles
Spinney Academy
St Ambrose Barlow RC High School
St Anne's Primary School
St Christopher's C of E High School Academy
St Mary's CE Primary Academy
Storytelling Wchools
Stour Vale Academy Trust
Sutton Trust
Swakeleys School for Girls
Talk for Writing/ Talk for Reading
Talk the Talk
Talking Mats
Teach First
Teaching London
Teaching School Council South West
The Centre for Education & Youth (formerly LKMco)
The Philosophy Foundation
Thomasin Seddon, Parent
Topsy Page, Freelance oracy trainer and consultant
Tudor Grange Academy Solihull
UCL Centre for Inclusive Education
UK Literacy Association
Uni of Nottingham
University of Leeds
Voice 21
We Speak
Wendy Lee, Speech and Language Consultant
Wexham Primary School
WhiteHat

7.2 Online oral evidence sessions

All online oral evidence sessions were conducted by the Oracy APPG between June – September 2020 and can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

Can oracy help tackle the disadvantage gap and address inequalities?

2nd June 2020, Chaired by Emma Hardy MP

- Professor Becky Francis, Chief Executive, Education Endowment Foundation
- Jean Gross CBE, Chair, Bercow: Ten Years on Inquiry
- Roy Blatchford CBE, Chair, Forgotten Third Commission
- Professor Sonia Blandford, Founder and CEO, Achievement for All
- Alice Barnard, Chief Executive, Edge Foundation
- Harriet Waldegrave, Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England

What is the place for oracy in curriculum, assessment and the accountability system?

14th July 2020, Chaired by Ian Mearns MP

- Professor Robin Alexander, Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Cambridge; Professor of Education Emeritus, University of Warwick; Chair of the Education Section, the British Academy.
- Professor Neil Mercer, Director, Oracy Cambridge
- Tim Oates CBE, Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment
- Mary Myatt, Education Consultant and Author
- Prof Dame Alison Peacock, Chief Executive, Chartered College of Teaching
- Sarah Hubbard, Schools HMI and Subject Lead for English, Curriculum Unit, Ofsted and Jonathan Keay, Senior HMI, Curriculum Unit Ofsted

What can we learn from international approaches to classroom talk?

9th September 2020, Chaired by Emma Hardy MP

- Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education & Skills – OECD (Education & Employment)
- Professor Lauren Resnick, Professor of Psychology & Cognitive Science, University of Pittsburgh
- Dr. Sandra Berkowitz, World Schools and Public Forum debate coach, and former professor of Communication Studies at the University of Maine
- Dr. Arlene Holmes-Henderson, Senior Research Fellow, University of Sussex, and Research Fellow, University of Oxford

What status does oracy have in the Scottish and Welsh education systems?

17th September 2020, Chaired by Marion Fellows MP & Tonia Antoniazzi MP

- Paul Morgan, Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland
- Nicola McDonald, Education Support Officer, Nicola McDonald, Education Support Officer, Children and Families Service, Dundee City Council
- Gillian Campbell-Thow, Quality Improvement Officer with strategic remit for language learning & Gaelic Medium Education, Glasgow City Council
- Jim Whannel, Director of Gaelic Education at Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Eleri Goldsmith, Welsh government (Lead for the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience for the new Curriculum for Wales, Curriculum and Assessment Division)
- Richard Thomas and Liz Barry, HM Inspectors, ESTYN
- Julian Dessent, Curriculum lead for Carmarthenshire Council and Seren Lead for Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire
- Cathryn Billington-Richards, Strategic Lead for Languages, Literacy & Communication at the Central South Consortium

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