

# The Oracy Benchmarks

Voice 21



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Voice 21 is a national charity that exists to enable teachers and schools to provide a high quality oracy education so that all young people can find their voice for success in school and life.

We achieve this by delivering teacher development and school improvement programmes, promoting the impact of oracy on student outcomes and building a movement for change.

To find out more about our work, visit: [www.voice21.org](http://www.voice21.org)

# Foreword

Voice 21 started delivering oracy programmes in 2016 and since then we have worked with thousands of teachers and hundreds of schools, supporting them to develop oracy both at a classroom and whole-school level. From large urban secondaries to small rural primaries, from Plymouth to Dundee, no two schools have been the same. Uniting these teachers and schools, however, is the belief that their students need, and are entitled to, an education in oracy.

Oracy is complex, too often both everywhere and nowhere within a school. With scant coverage in the national curriculum, a lack of focus on oracy in teacher development and without national standards or qualifications to work towards, it is often overlooked. With an increasing recognition of its importance, teachers and school leaders we have worked with have sought to understand how they can best enable every child to benefit from an oracy education. What does excellent classroom practice look like? What is the role of a school leader? How do we know if oracy is making a difference? It was this need to clarify, distil and share what makes a high quality oracy education that prompted the development of the Oracy Benchmarks.

The Benchmarks show what teachers and school leaders must do: teaching oracy explicitly and nurturing it continually, weaving it into their curriculum and all aspects of school life to ensure its efficacy and status. They reflect the ambitions and actions of educators

who understand that oracy is not a programme to be completed one year and gone the next, or an extra-curricular endeavour for a select few, but rather an essential facet of an effective, empowering and expansive education.

As with many important things in education, there is no one single 'right' way to provide a high quality oracy education. Recognising the diversity and complexity of schools and classrooms across the UK, we have sought to create benchmarks that schools and teachers can meet in a myriad ways, consistent with their different approaches. Through identifying and exemplifying the active ingredients that make a high quality oracy education, we hope to both motivate and guide educators towards ensuring oracy becomes a typical part of every student's education.

As more teachers and schools take up this challenge, we hope that the Oracy Benchmarks will be built upon, refined and developed further. Whether just starting out, or already on your oracy journey, we invite you to join this conversation.

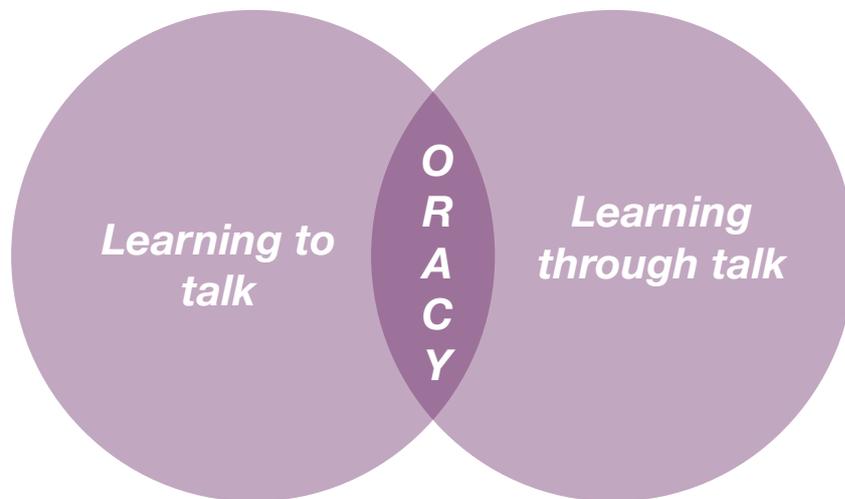
Let's get talking in class!

**Amy Gaunt and Alice Stott**

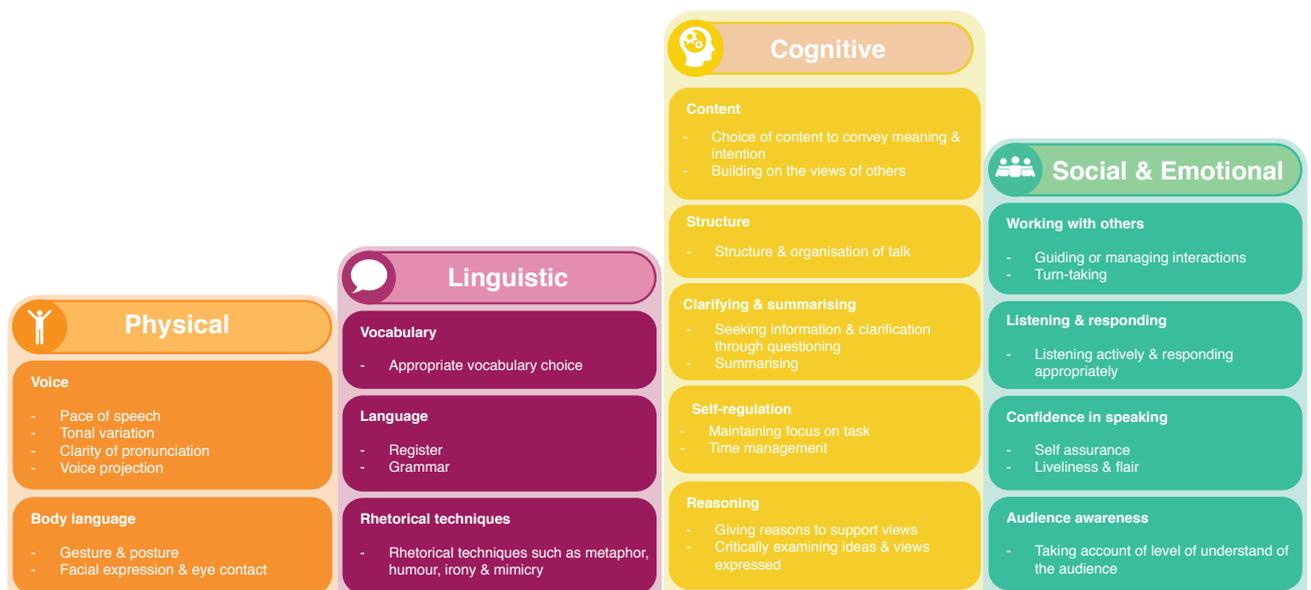
# The importance of a high quality oracy education

Oracy is the ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through spoken language. In school, oracy is a powerful tool for learning; by teaching students to become more effective speakers and listeners we empower them to better understand themselves, each other and the world around them.

Through a high quality oracy education students learn through talk and to talk. This is when they develop and deepen their subject knowledge and understanding through talk in the classroom, which has been planned, designed, modelled, scaffolded and structured to enable them to learn the skills needed to talk effectively.

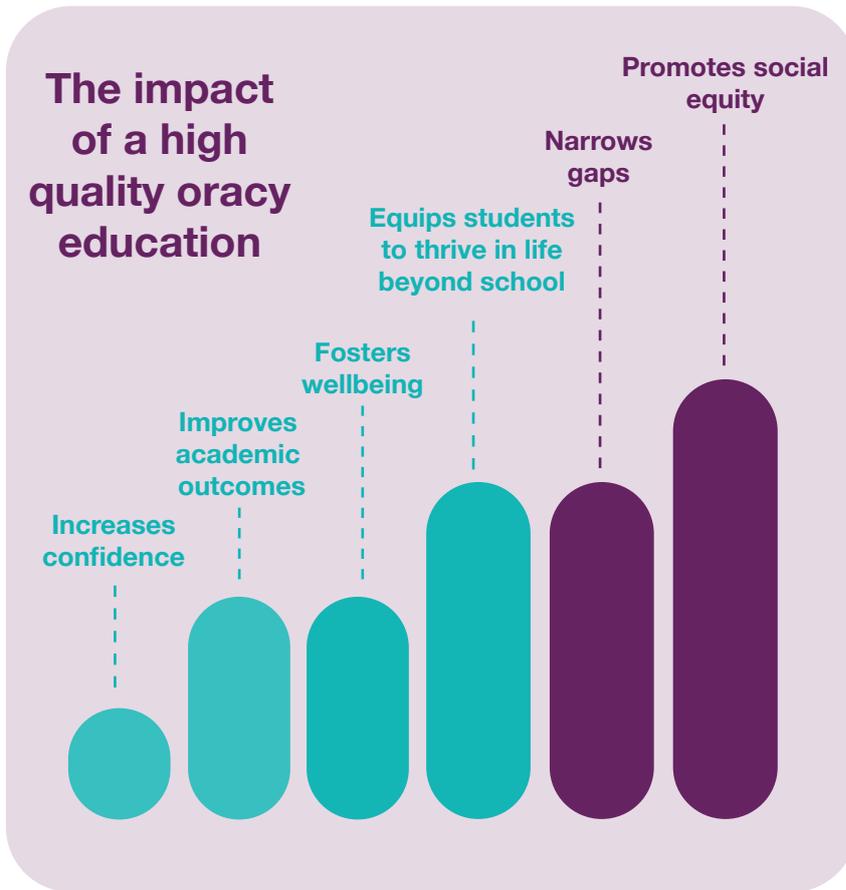


The deliberate, explicit and systematic teaching of oracy across phases and throughout the curriculum will support children and young people to make progress in the four strands of oracy outlined in the Oracy Framework.



The Oracy Framework was developed in partnership with Oracy Cambridge.

These skills are crucial to children and young people's success in school and in their life beyond. It is therefore vital that all schools believe that an education in oracy is the responsibility of every teacher and the entitlement of every child.



**“You are the only second chance for some children to have a rich language experience. If these children are not getting it at school, they are not getting it.”**

Neil Mercer, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge & Director, Oracy Cambridge

Since 2015, Voice 21 has been working to make this a reality by building the capacity of schools and teachers across the UK to provide all students with a high quality oracy education and developing and promoting evidence on the impact and value of oracy.

Find out more about our work and how you can get involved [www.voice21.org](http://www.voice21.org)

# The Oracy Benchmarks

The vast majority of teachers (68%) and headteachers (84%) believe that oracy is important for their students. This is borne out in the research evidence about oracy, which demonstrates its importance for success in school, and in life beyond. However, knowing that oracy is an essential skill, alongside literacy and numeracy, is not enough.

Just as with literacy and numeracy, the key skills and knowledge for oracy to be taught must be defined. The Oracy Framework, devised by Voice 21 and Cambridge University, does this, outlining the skills needed to be an effective speaker and listener. But how does this translate into practice? What does it mean for the teachers in classrooms up and down the country? How can a school ensure every student leaves them a confident speaker?

For other key pillars of education, such as literacy and numeracy, there have been vast swathes of guidance to support teachers and schools to understand how best to teach these essential life skills. But our research shows that teachers and school leaders aren't confident about how to deliver an oracy education or what good looks like.

The Oracy Benchmarks seek to address this, creating shared expectations for oracy teaching in schools. They reflect how, just as with literacy and numeracy, students' oracy cannot be developed through one singular strategy or intervention. Instead, they draw together the layers of school life which oracy must permeate if every child is to find their voice.

## What are the Oracy Benchmarks?

The Oracy Benchmarks outline what constitutes a high quality oracy education. They provide a robust and realistic framework for teachers and schools to:

- Understand what makes a high quality oracy education
- Articulate clear goals for their own oracy provision
- Open up dialogue about their current practice
- Guide strategic planning and improvement

In creating the Oracy Benchmarks, we have drawn upon Voice 21's experience working with hundreds of educators in different settings, phases and roles across the country and have worked in close consultation with teachers and schools.

They are informed by academic literature about best practice for oracy, drawing upon the research evidence into oracy and its impact on students. At the end of this report, you will find a reading list pointing to some of the key publications which underpin many of the principles outlined within the benchmarks.

We have also benefited greatly from the experience and expertise of an advisory group of teachers and school leaders who generously gave up their time to shape our thinking, critique early drafts and test later versions against practice in their own settings. This was particularly helpful in ensuring the final benchmarks are both achievable and relevant in a range of different contexts.

In the pages that follow, we take the opportunity to expand upon each benchmark and describe what meeting it could look like. However, we recognise that every school is different. What follows is therefore not a step-by-step guide or one-size-fits-all checklist; nor is there a single way to implement the Oracy Benchmarks in your school. Instead, they set out guiding principles which will require interpretation for your context; there are many different routes to reaching a benchmark.

Similarly, the case studies you will find throughout this report are used to illustrate, rather than restrict or specify, what each benchmark can look like in practice. They are a testament to the pioneering practice that is happening in schools across the country and are included to act as a starting point for you to think about how to apply each benchmark in your school.

## **How to use the Oracy Benchmarks**

In creating both teacher and school benchmarks, we seek to recognise and articulate the different choices available to a teacher, or a school's leadership, when embedding oracy into their practice.

The Teacher Oracy Benchmarks define excellent classroom practice for oracy. Teachers create the culture of their classroom and based on the needs of their students they make choices every day about what to teach and how to teach it. The Benchmarks provide a framework to identify, guide and empower teachers who are developing and refining their oracy practice, whether within their own classroom or as part of a school-wide approach.

The School Oracy Benchmarks articulate the strategic decisions to be made by school leaders to ensure every child in their school receives a high quality oracy education. They reflect the key levers for change available to a school's leadership, including the steps needed to create the conditions to enable every teacher to meet the Teacher Oracy Benchmarks.

While the teacher and school benchmarks can be read as standalone, they are most meaningful when read alongside each other, reflecting the fundamental relationship between the knowledge, capability, confidence and actions of individual teachers and the expectations, ethos and success of the school as a whole.

It is for this reason that throughout this report we present each teacher benchmark alongside its school analogue. We encourage all readers to engage with both, and to consider how the ideas encapsulated in the teacher benchmarks can be scaled and sustained to encompass a whole school. School leaders must consider how they can best enable their teachers to meet the teacher benchmarks, and teachers should not underestimate the power of sharing their practice to influence the wider school.

Each benchmark is broken down into the following sections:

- **The benchmark**, as a single statement.
- **The outline**, which defines the parameters of the benchmark and sets out the main ideas contained within it.
- **What could it look like?**, which allows us to explore what meeting the benchmark could - rather than must - look like in a school. This is included to help you translate the benchmark into practice.
- **A rationale**, which unpacks the big ideas behind the benchmark, and the reasons for the inclusion of the benchmark.
- **A top tip**, from a school which has begun to implement the benchmark, to provide actionable ideas on how to start to meet the benchmark.
- **A case study**, which describes how a school has met the benchmark and illustrates what the benchmark looks like in practice.

## How to self evaluate using the Benchmarks

The primary purpose of this report is to empower teachers and school leaders to strengthen their oracy provision. An important part of this will come from reflecting on current practice, and identifying areas for further improvement.

To support this, we have included a self reflection tool on pages 23 & 25. This is designed to help you to reflect on your current practice and also to encourage you to consider what meeting each benchmark would mean in your setting.

<b>Teacher:</b>	<b>School leader:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think about your practice both within a single lesson and over longer periods of time. You may want to look at curriculum or lesson plans to help you to do this.</li><li>• Ask your students what they think.</li><li>• Try to get different perspectives from other adults in your classroom, or from recording yourself teach.</li><li>• Use the tool to open up conversations with your colleagues about your practice.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek out different voices and views from across the school; ask your students what they think.</li><li>• Use the Benchmarks to open up conversations about practice with your colleagues.</li><li>• Remember that you may be doing something that is oracy, but may not yet be calling it that or thinking about it through this lens.</li></ul>

## Meeting the Benchmarks

We hope this report brings clarity to an area of education that holds so much, often untapped, potential and serves as a call to action to strengthen your school's oracy provision. To help you to do this, we have included in this report a further reading list on page 35 and five steps you can take straight away on page 21.

We also want this report to act as a stimulus for dialogue in your school: why does oracy matter for your students? How can you enable every student to find their voice? What good practice is already happening? Posing questions like these will support intelligent implementation of the Oracy Benchmarks, connecting them to your school's context, exploring existing practice and strengths in order to inform actions going forward.



# Teacher Benchmarks

1.

## Sets high expectations for oracy

The teacher establishes and models ambitious and challenging norms for talk, ensuring that students understand the expectations for talk in their classroom. Opportunities for oracy are regular, purposeful, appropriately pitched and thoughtfully planned to ensure that students are well prepared to meet expectations.

2.

## Values every voice

The teacher supports *all* students to participate in, and benefit from, oracy in the classroom. The teacher listens meaningfully to students, encouraging them to develop their ideas further, and creates a culture in which students do the same.

3.

## Teaches oracy explicitly

The teacher has a strong understanding of what constitutes good oracy in different contexts and is intentional in their teaching of oracy. They are deliberate and strategic in their planning for oracy teaching, and tactically exploit opportunities to ensure their students' skills develop over time.

4.

## Harnesses oracy to elevate learning

The teacher considers how oracy can deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding within a given subject, domain or context. As a result, students are engaged in dialogue, both with the teacher and their peers, which encourages them to articulate, justify and expand their ideas and have opportunities to share, develop and consolidate their understanding through talk.

5.

## Appraises progress in oracy

The teacher evaluates their students' progress in oracy and uses this to inform their teaching. Opportunities are created for students to reflect on and receive meaningful feedback on their oracy, from both the teacher and their peers.

**1.****Has an ambitious vision for oracy**

School leaders value oracy as an integral part of how their school provides an effective education. They can articulate clear aims for oracy which guide decision-making, allocation of resources and planning. As a result, everybody in the school community shares in, understands their contribution to, and is motivated by, fulfilling the vision.

**2.****Builds a culture of oracy**

The school maximises opportunities for oracy for all students; students use their voices in meaningful contexts in and beyond the classroom. Across the school community, oracy is nurtured by everyday interactions and is visible, showcased and celebrated throughout school life.

**3.****Has a sustained & wide-ranging curriculum for oracy**

The school's curriculum is intentionally designed to develop students' oracy knowledge and skills. As students move through school, the curriculum provides new challenges and opportunities for oracy which build on previous learning. As a result, students are taught how to engage in a range of different types of talk, varying the context and audience.

**4.****Recognises oracy as central to learning**

School leaders consider how oracy can deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding across subjects, contexts and phases, fostering common and domain-specific approaches to learning through talk. As a result, classroom talk is used skillfully to develop students' thinking and understanding.

**5.****Is accountable for the impact of oracy**

School leaders proactively seek information to support their understanding of the effectiveness of oracy provision and its impact on students. This information is used to refine and improve the school's approach to developing oracy.

1.

## Sets high expectations for oracy

The teacher establishes and models ambitious and challenging norms for talk, ensuring that students understand the expectations for talk in their classroom. Opportunities for oracy are regular, purposeful, appropriately pitched and thoughtfully planned to ensure that students are well prepared to meet expectations.

### What could it look like?

- The teacher and students have a shared understanding of effective oracy in their classroom context. A common framework or set of guidelines could be used to articulate this, e.g. the Oracy Framework.
- Oracy tasks are pitched ambitiously, demonstrating the teacher's high expectations e.g. challenging stimuli for talk are selected; students are expected to organise their talk effectively, independent of an adult; students are held accountable for the quality of their contributions during whole-class discussions.
- The teacher scaffolds oracy-based tasks, where appropriate, to enable students to meet their high expectations.

The importance of teachers setting high expectations for their students' behaviour or the quality and quantity of the work they produce is well established. If students are to become accomplished speakers and listeners, it is vital that teachers also set high expectations for the quality of their students' oracy, establishing, communicating and upholding conventions for speaking and listening.

To do this, teachers must decide on what the norms for oracy in different contexts will be in their classroom. For example, in whole-class discussion, students could be expected to look at the person who is speaking and respond to their ideas rather than simply offering their own perspective; during exploratory talk students might be expected to share their ideas even if only partially formed or not yet fully articulated; during paired talk they may be expected to justify and reason rather than merely recall.

Another important consideration for teachers is how opportunities for oracy are pitched. When planning for oracy, teachers should be ambitious about what their students can achieve and provide scaffolding, as well as explicit teaching, to enable them meet these high expectations. For example, if students are expected to engage in an extended discussion about a text independently, the teacher might spend time teaching students how to challenge each other's ideas respectfully, as well as providing students with sentence stems, prompt questions or key vocabulary to support them to do this.

### Top tip:



The first step to establishing high expectations for oracy in my classroom was not accepting undeveloped or incomplete answers from my students during whole class feedback. Instead, I probed them, encouraging them to develop and reformulate their ideas, using precise vocabulary. Students soon learnt what was expected of them and rose to meet the challenge.



**Hester Dickinson, Oracy Lead, Dinnington High School, Rotherham**

### In action

#### **Liz Strong, Oracy Lead and Deputy Headteacher, Ryefield Primary School, Uxbridge**

This year, my colleagues and I decided that, in preparation for an end of term showcase, our KS2 students would write and perform a speech on something they were passionate about. We set the bar high; every student would write a two to three minute speech, performing it from memory to an audience. We spent plenty of time preparing students for this, teaching them the conventions of speech making, providing them with templates and structures to scaffold the writing of their own speeches and allowing them time to practice performing them.

When the process came to an end and the day arrived for students to perform their speeches to an audience, the quality of their speeches surpassed even our high expectations. This episode really taught me the power of having high expectations for what students can achieve; anyone that doubted whether ten and eleven year olds could perform compelling, heartfelt speeches more competently than most adults was proved wrong!

1.

## Has an ambitious vision for oracy

School leaders value oracy as an integral part of how their school provides an effective education. They can articulate clear aims for oracy which guide decision-making, allocation of resources and planning. As a result, everybody in the school community shares in, understands their contribution to, and is motivated by, fulfilling the vision.

### What could it look like?

- There is designated leadership for oracy e.g. an Oracy Lead, an oracy governor, oracy champions in each department or phase.
- There is a strategic plan for oracy across the school which stakeholders at all levels are responsible for fulfilling e.g. oracy is part of the School Development Plan.
- Leaders across the school understand the importance of oracy in their areas of responsibility e.g. pastoral leads understand the relationship between oracy and wellbeing; the Head of Maths understands the role of talk in developing mathematical thinking.

Creating an ambitious vision for oracy requires school leaders to articulate the school's goals in relation to oracy as well as the purpose for pursuing these, setting high expectations for what students can achieve. It should guide the school's direction of travel, enabling both teachers and the wider school community to work together towards achieving a common goal.

A school's vision for oracy should link strategically to its policies and practices. For example: if a school's vision for oracy is to equip students with the skills to develop and sustain meaningful relationships, this should be reflected in its approach to behaviour management and conflict resolution; if a school's vision emphasises the centrality of oracy to effective teaching and learning across the curriculum, oracy should be a feature of its professional development for staff.

Effective leadership for oracy is essential in order to ensure a school's vision for oracy is realised. School leaders should have a clear plan for how the vision will be enacted across the school, outlining key actions and priorities. This should be regularly revisited by school leaders who should allocate sufficient resources to ensure it is achieved.

### Top tip:

As we thought more about oracy, we started to realise that it was the foundation for everything we wanted to be as a school. As well as incorporating it as a strand of our school development plan, providing extensive professional development for staff in oracy and including it as an element of our performance management process, we appointed an oracy governor to drive forward our ambitions for oracy.



**Helen Bruckdorfer, Headteacher, Torriano Primary School, Camden**

### In action

#### **Megan Hubbard, Assistant Headteacher, Park High School, Stanmore**

After identifying that our students needed to develop better oracy to support them in their academic work but also in their life beyond school, we decided that it was crucial to allocate the same resource to this area as other priority areas, such as literacy.

As a result, we appointed an Oracy Leader to drive the development of oracy across the school. They work closely with the leadership team and are responsible for implementing an oracy action plan we have developed together. This year, our Oracy Leader has run a staff working group, which has worked particularly well. As part of this, staff have undertaken professional development in oracy and then investigated how this can be applied in their own practice.

2.

## Values every voice

The teacher supports *all* students to participate in, and benefit from, oracy in the classroom. The teacher listens meaningfully to students, encouraging them to develop their ideas further, and creates a culture in which students do the same.

### What could it look like?

- The teacher understands the individual needs of their students and uses a range of approaches to ensure every student is able to benefit from oracy teaching.
- The teacher can identify the barriers some students might face and draws upon specialist support and guidance where appropriate e.g. Speech and Language Therapy.
- Students receive recognition for their oracy which encourages them to participate e.g. giving specific praise for showing good listening by asking questions or giving a well-structured and developed response

In a classroom where every voice is valued, it is not just the loudest, most confident or most eager to contribute that are heard. The teacher appreciates the diversity of communication and language, listening meaningfully and supporting all students to develop, expand and extend their ideas and their verbal and linguistic repertoire. Students are taught how to listen to each other with courtesy and respect so that they all feel confident to contribute.

All students can and should benefit from a focus on oracy in the classroom. However, as in most areas of learning, the teacher must be aware of the individual needs of their students, ensuring that they are supported to access the full breadth of the curriculum. To do this, teachers could, for example, consider how they group students, provide prompts for speaking and listening or resources for non-verbal students to contribute, or pre-teach key vocabulary. Where appropriate, teachers should liaise with specialists to inform teaching strategies and ensure their approaches complement and reinforce their work.

High quality oracy teaching demands that all students are explicitly taught the speaking and listening skills, rather than simply assuming that they arrive with them or will develop them as a matter of course. An inclusive, talk-rich classroom should therefore benefit all students, including those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and other specific learning needs. Effective oracy teaching enables students to practise speaking and listening, uses structured approaches which support participation and develops their metacognitive skills to identify when they do or do not understand something. This focus can, in turn, support with the better identification of students with SLCN, and the provision of support.

### Top tip:



Praise is a really simple step to help create an environment where all students feel able to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas. To encourage students to contribute, I praise pupils for their contributions, giving oracy-specific praise for how something is said, as well as what they have said.



**Paul Butler, Oracy Lead & Head of English, New College, Leicester**

### In action

#### **Rosie Cook, Oracy Lead, St Stephen's C of E Junior School, Bristol**

When asked to share their work or ideas, many children in my class lacked confidence. To change this, I focused my teaching specifically on what it means to be a good listener. As a class, we created guidelines which demonstrated what good listening looks like and regularly referred to these to ensure that, when students did find the confidence to share their ideas, they felt heard.

After creating the guidelines, children referred back to them in lessons and I heard students giving feedback to each other, such as: "we're all listening so it doesn't matter if you're shy", "Wow, your work is amazing, I can't wait to hear more!". By focusing on listening, I was able to create a classroom culture in which all students felt that their voice was valued which, in turn, helped students feel more confident to share their ideas and speak up in front of the class.

## 2.

### Builds a culture of oracy

The school maximises opportunities for oracy for all students; students use their voices in meaningful contexts in and beyond the classroom. Across the school community, oracy is nurtured by everyday interactions and is visible, showcased and celebrated throughout school life.

#### What could it look like?

- Routine aspects of school life have an oracy focus, enabling all students to practice their oracy in contexts outside of the classroom.
- Whole-school events provide a platform for oracy e.g. competitions and events promote oracy; the school's approach to oracy is highlighted at open evenings.
- Staff across the school capitalise on opportunities to develop students' oracy e.g. canteen staff encourage students to ask for their meal, lunchtime supervisors seek out conversations with students, the school librarian facilitates conversations about books.

Building a culture of oracy that reverberates in classrooms and beyond, ensures that teachers, parents and most importantly students recognise that oracy is valued. A school which values oracy creates opportunities for students to find and use their voice regularly. Oracy is built into the DNA of the school; it is not a bolt-on reserved for a ring-fenced lesson or themed week, it is present in all aspects of school life.

Walking into a school with a strong culture of oracy, you might notice: classrooms in which students listen to each other meaningfully and all students feel confident to share their ideas; students', rather than teachers' voices, are centre stage at whole-school events; student discussion is at the heart of assemblies; students share their learning at parents' evening; achievements in oracy are celebrated at a whole-school level; family dining which promotes meaningful conversations with adults and peers.

To successfully institute a culture of oracy, improving the quality of student oracy must be a priority shared by the whole school community. To develop this, every interaction with students should be viewed as an opportunity to develop their oracy. Similarly, when planning whole school events or initiatives, school leaders should consider how student oracy can be developed and showcased.

#### Top tip:



To place oracy at the heart of school life, we changed the format of our assemblies to incorporate more opportunities for student discussion and presentation. This was a great way to signal to students that oracy is valued at our school, as well as to model oracy-rich teaching to teachers attending the assembly with their students. .



**Nicky Pear, Oracy Lead & Assistant Headteacher,  
Cubitt Town Junior School, Tower Hamlets**

#### In action

##### **Julie Gibson, Whole School Literacy & Oracy Lead, Park View School, Chester le Street**

We started our oracy journey three years ago as part of an EEF pilot focusing on improving oracy. As part of the programme we introduced speech making as a focus in Year 7. By the end of the year, all students were supported to give a 5 minute, no-notes 'Ignite' speech on something they were passionate about. This has now become a key milestone and is an important aspect of our school's culture. Since we introduced the 'Ignite' programme, I have seen students who barely had the courage to introduce themselves at the beginning of the year proudly give speeches on issues they are passionate about.

The importance of our students being heard has now seeped into other areas of school life. We regularly provide opportunities for students to use their voice in the classroom and beyond: oracy is now an important element of our careers and PSHE programme and student voices are given prominence at whole-school events, sending students the message that their voices are important and need to be heard.

### 3.

## Teaches oracy explicitly

The teacher has a strong understanding of what constitutes good oracy in different contexts and is intentional in their teaching of oracy. They are deliberate and strategic in their planning for oracy teaching, and tactically exploit opportunities to ensure their students' skills develop over time.

### What could it look like?

- Students take part in and are prepared for a range of different oracy tasks e.g. discussion guidelines used as a scaffold for exploratory discussion tasks; analysing model examples and using this to prepare for their own presentations.
- Within their day-to-day teaching, the teacher identifies opportunities to develop their students' awareness and understanding of oracy e.g. using the failure of a group discussion as an opportunity to help students learn how they can engage in more effective group talk in the future.
- The teacher is adept at upskilling their students to become better speakers and listeners and building their competence over time e.g. how to project voice; build an argument; take turns; speak with an appropriate level of formality.

To teach oracy successfully, teachers must first have a strong understanding of what constitutes good oracy in different contexts, for example how the oracy skills needed to engage in discussion differ compared to those needed for debate, and how spoken language differs from written. The Oracy Framework, co-created by Voice 21 and Cambridge University, provides a helpful starting point, breaking down oracy into four interwoven strands: physical, cognitive, linguistic and social & emotional.

Effective oracy teachers think carefully about how they will develop their students' oracy skills, deliberately planning tasks such as collaborative problem solving, peer teaching or presentations into their practice. They ensure that students have been taught the skills needed to undertake this successfully and that, over time, they have opportunities to develop a range of oracy skills.

Teaching oracy effectively also requires teachers to identify and exploit opportunities to develop oracy which arise in their everyday teaching. For example, when modelling how to challenge or probe a student's idea when engaging in whole-class discussion, or deliberately drawing attention to the level of formality with which they are speaking in a given situation.

### Top tip:



I often created opportunities for students to use oracy in my lessons, for example presenting their findings back to the class, or engaging in paired talk, but I realised that I wasn't teaching students how to do this effectively. Even just making students aware that they needed to listen actively and respond appropriately, using sentence stems, to what their partner had said has significantly raised the quality of the talk in my classroom.



**Maggie Moe, Oracy Lead, The Angmering School, West Sussex**

### In action

#### **Chanelle Owen, Literacy Team, Star Primary School, Newham**

In my classroom, I try to plan opportunities for students to engage in exploratory and presentational talk. Recently, I prepared my students to take part in a borough-wide speechmaking competition, teaching them the oracy skills needed to give a compelling speech. As students were reenacting famous speeches, we focused mainly on the physical and social-emotional aspects of the Oracy Framework: for example, considering how they wanted the audience to feel at different points in their speech and how they could manipulate their pitch, tone, pace, and volume to achieve this.

As well as planning to develop presentational talk, I try to ensure students have plenty of opportunities to engage in meaningful discussion about their learning. To enable students to do this effectively, I co-created a class set of discussion guidelines with students, which we revisit regularly.

**3.**

### Has a sustained & wide-ranging curriculum for oracy

The school's curriculum is intentionally designed to develop students' oracy knowledge and skills. As students move through school, the curriculum provides new challenges and opportunities for oracy which build on previous learning. As a result, students are taught how to engage in a range of different types of talk, varying the context and audience.

#### What could it look like?

- There is a clear rationale for the school's curriculum for oracy which has been designed with the strengths and needs of the students in mind.
- The school's oracy curriculum details the oracy knowledge and skills to be developed by students and has been designed to support the progression of every student.
- Leaders ensure teaching across the school develops specific oracy skills e.g. providing high quality CPD and evaluating how teachers implement the oracy curriculum.
- As they move through the school, students are provided with meaningful opportunities to speak to authentic audiences e.g. making recommendations to local councillors; presenting work to parents at exhibitions; conducting market research in a shopping centre.

A high-quality oracy curriculum ensures that oracy is part of every student's education, and is not left to chance or enjoyed only by a self-selecting few. Creating an oracy curriculum requires schools to break down the foundational oracy skills they want every student to have, and think logically about how they are taught, honed and reinforced through a student's time at school.

This could be realised through embedding oracy into the core curriculum with different subjects or year groups taking responsibility for teaching different aspects of oracy. Or it could be through a discrete oracy curriculum taught in dedicated curriculum time, perhaps led by specialist teachers. Alternatively, it could be a combination of both approaches.

Designing an oracy curriculum requires curriculum leaders to take a broad view of oracy and how it can be sequentially taught. It should develop both audience-centric, presentational skills, alongside those needed for more discursive, exploratory talk. Opportunities for oracy planned into the curriculum could include: developing discussion skills as part of a RE unit on religious prophets; improving reasoning skills in Maths; using scientific vocabulary to aid explanation of a process in Science; sequencing and structuring instructions as part of coaching in PE.

#### Top tip:



We started by planning oracy into our existing curriculum. We looked at what was taught in the foundation subjects in each year group and considered which oracy skills could be taught in conjunction with each subject. We ensured that at least twice a year students worked towards an 'oracy outcome', producing a scientific tutorial for younger students, for example. We also made sure that key oracy skills are revisited as students move through the school.



#### In action

**Gemma Kirk, Oracy Lead, Filton Avenue Primary School, Bristol**

#### **Eleanor Grylls, Head of School, Biddenham International School, Bedford**

The first step to planning oracy into our curriculum was to create a year 7 oracy curriculum. We planned a number of discrete oracy lessons and carved out space for these in the timetable. Each term has a focus for oracy tied into a cross curricular theme. For instance, in the first term we wanted to develop students' understanding of oracy, why it was an important skill to learn and develop their discussion skills. Discussion points and activities were focused on the theme of Belonging, and culminated in students participating in a panel discussion to demonstrate and apply everything they have learned. In later terms we focused on listening (how to make a phone call to find out information) and speaking to an audience (how to pitch an idea). Each term has an outcome which is mapped against the oracy skills students have been learning, based on the Oracy Framework.

We have also encouraged other teachers to make connections between the skills learnt in these lessons and their own subjects, so that oracy is developed across the curriculum. At the same time, we have looked at how we can better prepare sixth form students for their Extended Project Qualification presentations, which were a great opportunity for oracy teaching which wasn't being fully exploited.

**4.**

## Harnesses oracy to elevate learning

The teacher considers how oracy can deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding within a given subject, domain or context. As a result, students are engaged in dialogue, both with the teacher and their peers, which encourages them to articulate, justify and expand their ideas and have opportunities to share, develop and consolidate their understanding through talk.

### What could it look like?

- The teacher has a repertoire of approaches to support students to learn through talk, deploying them as necessary to support the learning at hand e.g. socratic seminars to develop use of evidence to support ideas; concept cartoons to encourage students to interact with others' viewpoints and unearth misconceptions; role play to practise and internalise target language in MFL.
- The teacher uses dialogic approaches to deepen understanding through talk, such as whole class discussion, small group discussion, skillful use of questioning.

Talk is the primary means through which we share our ideas and thinking with others. In the classroom, teachers use it to pose and answer questions, explain concepts, push students to elaborate on their ideas and develop their understanding and provide feedback. Oracy is therefore not separate from, or additional to, core teaching but is rather a central part of everyday teaching and learning.

There is robust evidence which demonstrates that the quality of classroom talk has a clear and measurable impact on standards of attainment across the curriculum (Alexander 2012). This requires a teacher to have a talk repertoire which stretches far beyond typical question, answer and affirmation routines. Instead, they must understand that dialogue, discussion, presentation, questioning and 'messy' exploratory talk all have their part to play in elevating their students' learning. Moreover, they must be confident to identify and draw upon the mode of talk best suited to the learning at hand.

Teachers also need to carefully consider the quality of teacher-student and student-student talk and how this supports learning. To do this, teachers must be judicious in selecting interesting and appropriate stimuli for talk which enable students to develop, apply and consolidate their subject knowledge, allowing teachers to identify and address misconceptions and ensuring students have a firm grasp of the subject matter at hand. This could be consolidated through and demonstrated by presentational tasks which require students to curate their subject knowledge and understanding in order to share this with an audience.

### Top tip:

I wanted to improve my year 5 students' self-regulation and stamina, as well as problem solving ability, in maths lessons. I worked with them to establish discussion guidelines specifically for maths lessons, which emphasised the need to back up their answers with mathematical explanations and ask questions to probe each others' thinking.

**Ed Booth, Oracy Lead, Braunstone Frith Primary School, Leicester**

### In action

#### **Naomi Henna, Chemistry Teacher, Northampton School for Boys, Northampton**

I've been developing approaches which support my students to develop their knowledge and understanding of practical work in chemistry through exploratory talk in small groups. I want them to be able to link what they see during practical experiments to the underlying scientific concepts they have been learning about.

To do this, I've focused on equipping my students to pose and answer the types of questions needed to investigate and better understand chemistry. This 'lab talk' requires them to connect their observations to the scientific concepts they are learning about, building on and challenging each other's thinking as they go.

To date, I've found a statistically significant increase in students' retention of practical knowledge and students report an increased confidence in carrying out practical tasks and in answering questions related to these tasks.

## 4.

### Recognises oracy as central to learning

School leaders consider how oracy can deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding across subjects, contexts and phases, fostering common and domain-specific approaches to learning through talk. As a result, classroom talk is used skillfully to develop students' thinking and understanding.

#### What could it look like?

- School leaders understand the role of classroom talk in developing subject knowledge and thinking and understanding, and ensure this is shared by teachers in the school, providing effective professional development to support them to translate this into their practice.
- There are shared approaches to oracy teaching and learning across the school e.g. use of discussion guidelines or dialogic questioning techniques.
- Teachers understand and apprentice students into the specific hallmarks of talk in their subject areas e.g. 'Talk like a historian/scientist/mathematician'

In recognising the central role of oracy in every classroom in the school, school leaders must consider how they will support teachers across phases and disciplines, to value, identify and hone high quality classroom talk. School leaders may need to think about how they can proactively remove potential barriers for their colleagues: perceptions that written work is the only thing that 'counts' or that a classroom filled with the buzz of purposeful talk may be considered disruptive must be dispelled.

Instead, school leaders must create a common understanding of how oracy elevates learning and supports every teacher, for example through professional development, observations and feedback and collaborative planning, to use talk for learning in their classroom. This may involve establishing a shared set of approaches to oracy across the school, enabling students to connect and transfer their oracy knowledge and skills into different contexts.

It will also demand that subject leaders grapple with defining oracy in their subject area. Just as a science teacher should consider the disciplinary literacy skills needed to read and write in their subject - say, in reading or producing a scientific report - so too should they consider the specific genres and modes of speaking and listening they will need to teach and use. For instance, the basis on which claims are made, arguments built and questions posed varies considerably depending on whether you are listening to a discussion taking place in a science, history or English literature classroom.

#### Top tip:

Vocabulary has been a big focus in the schools I work in, and so we wanted to use oracy to support children's language acquisition. This included establishing a routine for teaching new words which emphasised the need for students to hear and use new words in spoken language, to help them take ownership over new vocabulary. This approach has had a school-wide impact and was recently remarked upon by Ofsted.



#### In action

**Alun Reeves, Assistant Headteacher and Oracy Lead,  
RSA Academies Abbey Wood First School & Church Hill Middle School, Redditch**

#### **Richard Long, Oracy Lead & English Lead, St Michael's Catholic School, High Wycombe**

We wanted to develop oracy practice across the school but felt strongly that a key part of securing buy-in from teachers would come from them seeing the value of oracy in their lessons. To do this, we ran a series of Lesson Study cycles, where staff from different subject areas jointly planned, taught and reflected upon lessons which had used oracy. My Lesson Study trio was made up of a Maths, RE and English teacher.

Over the course of the lesson study lessons, we focused on how we could develop students' understanding of talk by introducing them to the Oracy Framework in subject-specific contexts. For instance, how the framework could be used to improve the quality of collaborative problem solving in a maths lesson. We observed how our target students and used these observations to open up a professional dialogue for us as teachers to think about how, as we watched students move between the three lessons, we could ensure that they transferred the oracy skills developed in one lesson into a completely different context in another lesson.

**5.**

## Appraises progress in oracy

The teacher evaluates their students' progress in oracy and uses this to inform their teaching. Opportunities are created for students to reflect on and receive meaningful feedback on their oracy, from both the teacher and their peers.

### What could it look like?

- The teacher ensures students engage in structured and focused reflection on their oracy skills e.g. use of success criteria to support peer feedback, use of film/audio recording to aid reflection
- The teacher has a detailed knowledge of their students' oracy skills e.g. knows that student X is a confident speaker but sometimes needs support to express ideas succinctly; student Y prefers to have thinking time before answering questions in front of the whole class.

Just as in any other subject area, effective oracy teaching requires teachers to continually gauge what their students have learned, and use this to judge what to teach next. To do this, the teacher must themselves have a strong understanding of which facet of oracy they are developing and how they will know when their students have mastered it.

The teacher has a central role in providing and promoting feedback, building up their students' metacognitive understanding of oracy. They must design tasks which support students to analyse and evaluate speaking and listening, teaching them the vocabulary needed to do this with precision. As a result, it should not only be the teacher, but also students, who are able to provide meaningful and useful feedback which supports them and their peers to make progress in oracy.

In building a picture of their students' oracy, teachers must consider applying different approaches than they would in written subjects. Methods for capturing and quantifying progress will be different; it is far harder to go back through a discussion or interview, add comments or make edits and improvements. While recording technology can help with this, teachers must also be attentive listeners and astute observers, building up an understanding of their students' oracy skills across a range of contexts.

### Top tip:



I track extended discussions in my class using a Harkness tool, which provides a visual representation of a discussion. I've adapted it as I'm looking for students who provide reasons for their opinions, use textual references to support their interpretations, or offer alternative views. Just seeing their discussions mapped on paper has made students more aware of their talk and more accountable. It's also helped me see that as a group, they really struggle to disagree!



**Dave Spence, Oracy Lead and Director of English, Wilmslow High School, Cheshire**

### In action

#### **Bev Knuckey, Deputy Headteacher, Llanedeyrn Primary School, Cardiff**

We'd begun thinking about how to capture, through recording, our students' progress in oracy. However, we realised we hadn't given enough thought to what then happened to those recordings and how to actually use them to support further progress.

We created an 'Oracy Evaluation Process' which had eleven steps designed to support students to engage with their recordings and use them to improve. Each reflective cycle starts by us choosing a genre of talk, for instance, debate, and using the Oracy Framework to analyse a number of examples. We also introduce a pair of oppositional words to support vocabulary development, e.g. lively/listless. Students then prepare for their own version, which is recorded. We watch it back, and they receive peer and teacher feedback on their performance, which they take into the next cycle.

As one Year 6 explains, 'When I first watched and listened to myself speaking, it was embarrassing. I didn't like hearing my own voice, it didn't sound like me... But I realised that only by watching myself [...] I see how I improve and what I needed to work on. I definitely would not feel so nervous during this process next time.'

## 5.

### Is accountable for the impact of oracy

School leaders proactively seek information to support their understanding of the effectiveness of oracy provision and its impact on students. This information is used to refine and improve the school's approach to developing oracy.

#### What could it look like?

- Leaders have thought carefully about how to assess the impact of oracy in their school e.g. student and teacher voice, measuring student progress. Where necessary, they make changes to the school's oracy provision based on the information they have gathered.
- Teachers are encouraged to be reflective about the effectiveness of their oracy practice on students.
- Information about progress in oracy is shared with the wider school community, e.g. at parents' evening or in reports.

A school must hold itself to account for the effectiveness of its oracy provision, and the progress students make as a result. To do this, leaders at all levels need to proactively seek information which enables them to make informed decisions about what is - and isn't - working. This is not merely a box-ticking exercise, but instead requires the school to pose itself the question, are our students equipped with the oracy skills they need for success in school, and beyond? And if not, what can we do better to ensure that they do?

In answering these questions, school leaders need to seek information from a range of sources to gain a complete picture. This might include: feedback from teachers about their oracy practice; observations of teaching and learning; views shared through teacher and student voice; planning documents and how they are enacted; tracking student progress data in oracy or other areas of the curriculum. They must use this information to identify and amplify strong oracy practice, making changes where needed to continually improve outcomes for students.

Moreover, a school may want to consider how it can use its existing systems and processes to hold themselves to account at all levels: oracy could form part of its quality assurance practices, for instance as part of staff appraisals; information about students' progress in oracy could be shared with parents and carers. In doing so, the school chooses to hold themselves to a higher standard, raising the status of oracy in school and beyond.

#### Top tip:

We wanted all staff to see that we value high quality talk in lessons as much as written work so we introduced oracy learning walks, listening out for talk for learning in class. This helped us to see areas of strength among our students and identify good practice. It was a great starting point for us to think about which areas of oracy we wanted to develop as a school, and we will do the same exercise again in a few months' time to see improvements.



**Richard Ludlow, Oracy Lead and Assistant Headteacher,  
Churchill Community College, North Tyneside**

#### In action

##### **Emily Hart, Oracy Lead, Humberstone Junior Academy, Leicester**

Each term, we review our oracy action plan, which is based on the Strategic Development Plan for the year. We use a range of QA measures to do this: learning walks, feedback from staff on the impact of professional learning sessions, student progress against our oracy skills ladders, talking to students. Based on the information gathered, I then present an impact statement for the term and use this to set the agenda going forward.

However, it isn't only my role as Oracy Lead to feed into our whole-school understanding of the impact of oracy. It also forms part of other subject leaders' reviews and quality assurance systems across the school. For instance, the Project-based Learning Lead looks at the range and quality of oracy teaching in PBL; the Maths Lead specifically reviews the quality of spoken language in Maths lessons.

# 5 Things you can do straight away

## 1. Create leadership

Designate an Oracy Lead to spearhead your school's approach to oracy. It can feel like oracy is both everywhere and nowhere in a school. Creating responsibility and leadership will accelerate progress and generate momentum.

## 2. Build teachers' confidence and repertoire in oracy teaching

Invest in oracy CPD for teachers to upskill them to use talk effectively in the classroom. The State of Speaking in Our Schools found that 57% of teachers had not received any recent oracy professional development.

## 3. Identify your existing strengths

Use the self-evaluation tool to reflect on what is currently happening in your classroom and school. Use your existing strengths as a basis to build upon.

## 4. Decide your first steps

Like reading and writing, oracy is complex but you need to start somewhere. Use our self-evaluation tool to identify a couple of small steps that will generate quick wins and consider where you want to be in a term, and by the end of the year.

## 5. Connect with other teachers and schools

There are countless places to start and routes to reach the benchmarks. Join the Voice 21 Exchange to get inspiration and advice from Voice 21 and our network of schools across the country, and share what you're doing too!



# Self-evaluation tool

## 1. Sets high expectations for oracy

**EVALUATION:** What am I currently doing for this benchmark?

- I establish ambitious and challenging norms for talk
- My students understand the expectations for talk in our classroom
- Opportunities for oracy are regular
- Opportunities for oracy are purposeful, appropriately pitched thoughtfully planned
- My students are well prepared to meet expectations

## 2. Values every voice

**EVALUATION:** What am I currently doing for this benchmark?

- I support all students to participate in, and benefit from, classroom talk and opportunities for oracy
- I listen meaningfully to students, encouraging them to develop their ideas further.
- I create a classroom culture in which students listen meaningfully to each other and develop each other's ideas.

## 3. Teaches oracy explicitly

**EVALUATION:** What am I currently doing for this benchmark?

- I have a strong understanding of what good oracy looks like in different contexts
- I am intentional in my teaching of oracy.
- I am deliberate and strategic in planning for oracy teaching
- I tactically exploit opportunities to ensure my students' skills develop over time.

## 4. Harnesses oracy to elevate learning

**EVALUATION:** What am I currently doing for this benchmark?

- My students deepen and their knowledge and understanding within a given subject, domain or context through oracy.
- My students are engaged in dialogue which encourages them to articulate, justify and expand their ideas
- My students have opportunities to share, develop and consolidate their understanding through talk.

## 5. Appraises progress in oracy

**EVALUATION:** What am I currently doing for this benchmark?

- I evaluate my students' progress in oracy
- I use this to inform my teaching.
- I create opportunities for my students to reflect on and receive meaningful feedback on their oracy



**INTENTION:** What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?

**ACTION:** What do I need to do now?

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**ACTION:** What do I need to do now?

## 1. Has an ambitious vision for oracy

**EVALUATION:** What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Our school values oracy as an integral part of how we provide an effective education.
- We can articulate clear aims for oracy which guide decision-making, allocation of resources and planning.
- Everybody in our school community shares in, understands their contribution to, and is motivated by fulfilling our vision for oracy.

## 2. Builds a culture of oracy

**EVALUATION:** What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Our school maximises opportunities for oracy for all students
- Oracy is nurtured by everyday interactions in our school.
- Oracy is visible, showcased and celebrated throughout school life.

## 3. Has a sustained & wide - ranging curriculum for oracy

**EVALUATION:** What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Our school's curriculum is intentionally designed to develop students' oracy knowledge and skills.
- Our curriculum provides new challenges and opportunities for oracy which build on previous learning.
- Our students are taught how to engage in a range of different types of talk, varying the context and audience.

## 4. Recognises oracy as central to learning

**EVALUATION:** What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Oracy is used to deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding across subjects, contexts and phases,
- Our school has common and domain-specific approaches to learning through talk.
- Classroom talk is used skillfully to develop our students' thinking and understanding.

## 5. Is accountable for the impact of oracy

**EVALUATION:** What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- We proactively seek information to support our understanding of the effectiveness of oracy provision and its impact on students.
- We use this information to refine and improve our school's approach to developing oracy.

**INTENTION:** What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?

**ACTION:** What do we need to do now?

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## 1. Sets high expectations for oracy

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I establish ambitious and challenging norms for talk
- My students understand the expectations for talk in our classroom
- Opportunities for oracy are regular
- Opportunities for oracy are purposeful, appropriately pitched thoughtfully planned
- My students are well prepared to meet expectations

- I use talk partners and think-pair-share but haven't previously been explicit about expectations for listening and responding.
- I often include a couple of minutes of partner talk before getting the whole class to answer a question in Literacy.
- My students know they have to speak loudly and clearly to the whole class.

## 2. Values every voice

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I support all students to participate in, and benefit from, classroom talk and opportunities for oracy
- I listen meaningfully to students, encouraging them to develop their ideas further.
- I create a classroom culture in which students listen meaningfully to each other and develop each other's ideas.

- I group EAL students with strong language models for talk tasks
- I held a storytelling in home languages morning for parents.
- I pre-teach key vocabulary.

## 3. Teaches oracy explicitly

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I have a strong understanding of what good oracy looks like in different contexts
- I am intentional in my teaching of oracy.
- I am deliberate and strategic in planning for oracy teaching
- I tactically exploit opportunities to ensure my students' skills develop over time.

- I taught students about voice projection for the school play.
- I remind students about facing their audience when speaking to the class.
- All students know what a good listener looks like.

## 4. Harnesses oracy to elevate learning

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- My students deepen and their knowledge and understanding within a given subject, domain or context through oracy.
- My students are engaged in dialogue which encourages them to articulate, justify and expand their ideas
- My students have opportunities to share, develop and consolidate their understanding through talk.

- I encourage students to talk in pairs before they start writing.
- I often use whole class discussions especially in Literacy.
- I've used role play within topic which helped students use their subject knowledge.

## 5. Appraises progress in oracy

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I evaluate my students' progress in oracy
- I use this to inform my teaching.
- I create opportunities for my students to reflect on and receive meaningful feedback on their oracy

- I know which of my students are very confident, and those that are more shy.
- I try to praise students for their speaking and listening, and sometimes ask students to do this too.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- A high level of trust and independence: students able to talk and listen for a sustained period of time.
- Students well practised at talking to different people in different groups
- Students able to manage disagreements and reach consensus.
- Students know what good pair/group/whole class discussion and presentations involve.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Develop my students' stamina to talk for longer periods of time and self regulate during discussions.
- Explore different stimuli for talk which require students to question and challenge.
- Share my expectations for speaking and listening more explicitly and use scaffolds where needed to support.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Every student feels confident to speak, especially if new to English language
- Students are attentive listeners and respond to each other's ideas.
- Every student has opportunities to participate, whether in small groups or whole class.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Encourage students to respond to what each other have said and build on it.
- Remember to celebrate and praise listening as well as speaking.
- Introduce scaffolds and roles to support quieter students.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Students able to engage in a range of different types of talk, having been taught the hallmarks of each
- Explicit teaching of oracy woven into lessons - planned and unplanned.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Expand students' understanding of listening beyond physical aspects
- Map out oracy tasks/opportunities in this term's topic and plan to teach key skills.
- Introduce oracy success criteria using Oracy Framework.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- My students would be able to use talk to help them work out initial ideas, and share these more widely. I would have a range of methods to use to support this.
- All talk in my classroom would be purposeful and students would value talk as part of their learning.
- I would be confident using different 'talk moves' within whole class discussions to draw out students' thinking.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Explore how I can integrate more talk into my teaching, especially in Maths and Science.
- Increase the level of challenge in whole class discussions e.g. introduce more challenging and probing contributions.
- Identify purpose for different talk tasks in my classroom within my planning.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- I would know in more detail the specific strengths and areas of development for all my students, not just those at the extremes.
- I'd be able to articulate their oracy progress, using the Oracy Framework.
- My students would be able to reflect on their own talk and give feedback to others which is specific and useful in helping them to improve.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Familiarise myself with the Oracy Framework and use this to broaden my understanding of what good speaking and listening looks like.
- Identify at a cohort level which aspects of oracy I want to focus on this term with my class.
- Design tasks where students are supported to give each other specific, positive feedback about each other's talk.

## 1. Sets high expectations for oracy

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I establish ambitious and challenging norms for talk
- My students understand the expectations for talk in our classroom
- Opportunities for oracy are regular
- Opportunities for oracy are purposeful, appropriately pitched thoughtfully planned
- My students are well prepared to meet expectations

- I expect students to share their ideas with the class and give reasons for their opinions.
- My students know I don't accept one word answers!
- I often invite speakers into lessons and expect my students to listen respectfully and ask questions.

## 2. Values every voice

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I support all students to participate in, and benefit from, classroom talk and opportunities for oracy
- I listen meaningfully to students, encouraging them to develop their ideas further.
- I create a classroom culture in which students listen meaningfully to each other and develop each other's ideas.

- In some classes, a number of the more vocal students dominate especially in A Level class.
- Students tend to listen to peers they perceive as clever rather than thinking/speaking for themselves.

## 3. Teaches oracy explicitly

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I have a strong understanding of what good oracy looks like in different contexts
- I am intentional in my teaching of oracy.
- I am deliberate and strategic in planning for oracy teaching
- I tactically exploit opportunities to ensure my students' skills develop over time.

- Year 7s work towards a debates, year 8s do presentations. Up to now, not much teaching of how to do presentations/debate.
- A Level class use lots of whole group discussion.

## 4. Harnesses oracy to elevate learning

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- My students deepen and their knowledge and understanding within a given subject, domain or context through oracy.
- My students are engaged in dialogue which encourages them to articulate, justify and expand their ideas
- My students have opportunities to share, develop and consolidate their understanding through talk.

- Debate with Year 7s students to understand different sides of arguments and use evidence to support their claims.
- Focus on questioning helps push students to elaborate and develop reasoned responses.

## 5. Appraises progress in oracy

**EVALUATION: What am I currently doing for this benchmark?**

- I evaluate my students' progress in oracy
- I use this to inform my teaching.
- I create opportunities for my students to reflect on and receive meaningful feedback on their oracy

- I observe student group discussions to see who is speaking and who hasn't had a chance to speak.
- I give feedback after debates and presentations - normally on history content rather than speaking skills.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Students using talk to wrangle with historical concepts, and sounding like historians.
- Students confident to probe and challenge different ideas.
- Students know what makes good discussion/group talk

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Introduce scaffolds to support students to develop beyond one word answers, if needed.
- Reinforce expectations for group talk and whole class discussion/debate.
- Model how to respond to challenge.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Well balanced contributions from a range of students
- Students responding respectfully to differences in opinion.
- Everyone showing they are listening by asking questions and building on other's ideas.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Introduce system to get students to monitor and reflect on balance of contributions.
- Give specific prompts to help students invite others into discussions, and praise for doing so.
- Model how to respond to challenge.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Students taught and able to demonstrate/practise skills across all four strands of the Oracy Framework.
- My students develop and use their oracy skills in a range of ways across a scheme of learning - teaching sequenced to support this.
- Opportunities to develop oracy are capitalised upon!

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Consider progression of oracy skills within debates and presentations, and from year 7 to year 8.
- Use Oracy Framework to guide teaching of key debate and presentation skills.
- Develop criteria with Y12 for successful discussion.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Students use talk to develop historical arguments, and expand on their ideas.
- Talk is used to unearth gaps in knowledge and misconceptions, and to develop understanding

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Explore how small talk tasks can directly develop the skills needed for success in History.
- Build in more opportunities for students to develop their learning through talk, especially in KS4.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in my classroom look like?**

- Students are able to use their understanding of oracy to reflect on their own strengths/areas for development.
- I know which students need additional support for different contexts/tasks, and where they will excel.
- Plan teaching that will push students' oracy skills forward.

**ACTION: What do I need to do now?**

- Start to use the Oracy Framework to support my observations of different students- use this in lesson planning and scaffolding tasks.
- Upskill students to give each other oracy-specific feedback.

## 1. Has an ambitious vision for oracy

- Our school values oracy as an integral part of how we provide an effective education.
- We can articulate clear aims for oracy which guide decision-making, allocation of resources and planning.
- Everybody in our school community shares in, understands their contribution to, and is motivated by fulfilling our vision for oracy.

**EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?**

- Headteacher committed - language gap faced by disadvantaged students stark.
- Oracy on school SDP - focus on talk for learning in lessons.
- Head has appointed Oracy Lead & committed time to her engage in CPD and for whole staff CPD (internally and externally led).
- Students can explain why they think it's important to be a good speaker and listener

## 2. Builds a culture of oracy

- Our school maximises opportunities for oracy for all students
- Oracy is nurtured by everyday interactions in our school.
- Oracy is visible, showcased and celebrated throughout school life.

**EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?**

- Whole school poetry event with finale in assemblies.
- Some students speak in special assemblies
- Pupil parliament which is linked with other schools - a couple of students in each year attend.

## 3. Has a sustained & wide - ranging curriculum for oracy

- Our school's curriculum is intentionally designed to develop students' oracy knowledge and skills.
- Our curriculum provides new challenges and opportunities for oracy which build on previous learning.
- Our students are taught how to engage in a range of different types of talk, varying the context and audience.

**EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?**

- Some teachers teach oracy explicitly
- In some classrooms, discussion guidelines are used to support teaching discussion skills.
- Students take part in presentations, poetry readings and debates but up to now often not taught the oracy skills needed to do these successfully.

## 4. Recognises oracy as central to learning

- Oracy is used to deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding across subjects, contexts and phases,
- Our school has common and domain-specific approaches to learning through talk.
- Classroom talk is used skillfully to develop our students' thinking and understanding.

**EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?**

- Consistent use of talk partners, but often used for recall or lacking purpose
- In paired reading/guided reading, students take turns to ask questions and listen to each other.
- School-wide focus on developing questioning
- Talk used in Maths schemes of learning

## 5. Is accountable for the impact of oracy

- We proactively seek information to support our understanding of the effectiveness of oracy provision and its impact on students.
- We use this information to refine and improve our school's approach to developing oracy.

**EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?**

- A tracker group of students have been baseline assessed (and recorded talking in different contexts).
- Some teachers formatively assess students' oracy skills
- Oracy Lead is going to introduce oracy learning walks (to replace some book looks) with phase leaders

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Oracy would be defining feature of our school - parents, governors and visitors will notice it.
- All staff able to articulate what oracy is and why it matters for our students.
- Oracy included in our 'vision and values' statement

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Work with all staff to agree how oracy will be added to 'vision and values' statement.
- Oracy Lead to create an action plan for the next two years with key milestones and resource needs.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- All students will have multiple opportunities to talk outside the classroom every day e.g. lunch hall, playground, assembly.
- Students will talk about their achievements in oracy and be involved in big oracy events e.g. Spark Speeches

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Work with support staff to develop formal and informal opportunities for talk with students
- Introduce oracy certificates in assemblies
- Invite parents for oracy events e.g. poetry event
- Develop Pupil Parliament with class meetings to involve more students in discussions.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Every student will have had 'core' oracy experiences and been explicitly taught the skills needed to succeed at these.
- We will have an oracy curriculum which ensures balance across and progression within four strands of the Oracy Framework.

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Oracy working group to decide 'core' oracy experiences/outcomes for each year group.
- Develop teachers' skill in planning for oracy in schemes of learning.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- All teachers and teaching assistants oracy confident - a walk through the school will find talk supporting learning across curriculum
- Students will be able to articulate their learning, and talk about how they use talk to help them to learn.
- All classes will be able to use discussion guidelines effectively

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Develop programme of CPD based on Teacher Oracy Benchmarks
- Develop talk for reasoning further in Maths
- Introduce focused discussion into guided reading - to review at end of term.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Leaders across the school will know how oracy is being used effectively in their areas of responsibility and how this can be improved.
- Student voice will be used systematically to help shape decisions

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Upskill all teachers to formatively assess oracy
- Define frame for oracy learning walks

## 1. Has an ambitious vision for oracy

- Our school values oracy as an integral part of how we provide an effective education.
- We can articulate clear aims for oracy which guide decision-making, allocation of resources and planning.
- Everybody in our school community shares in, understands their contribution to, and is motivated by fulfilling our vision for oracy.

### EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Designated an Oracy Lead, reporting to SLT
- Whole school action plan (for second year running).
- SLT team have begun to talk about oracy internally and externally (e.g. Head at a conference). Motivated by desire for students to be able to confidently present themselves and their ideas, whether in school or outside.
- All staff introduced to oracy at GPL and staff briefings throughout the year.
- Core group of teachers very committed and passionate.

## 2. Builds a culture of oracy

- Our school maximises opportunities for oracy for all students
- Oracy is nurtured by everyday interactions in our school.
- Oracy is visible, showcased and celebrated throughout school life.

### EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Student Voice, including students on interview panels - limited reach.
- Occasionally students lead assemblies but say they worry about making mistakes when speaking in front of their peers.
- Some events e.g. Poetry by Heart but haven't really been thought about with oracy focus.

## 3. Has a sustained & wide - ranging curriculum for oracy

- Our school's curriculum is intentionally designed to develop students' oracy knowledge and skills.
- Our curriculum provides new challenges and opportunities for oracy which build on previous learning.
- Our students are taught how to engage in a range of different types of talk, varying the context and audience.

### EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Some teachers are teaching oracy explicitly in lessons e.g. ICT focus on presentation skills; Maths on group problem solving. Language to talk about talk not yet shared/used across the school.
- Oracy skills taught/opportunities for student tend to be ad hoc.

## 4. Recognises oracy as central to learning

- Oracy is used to deepen and enhance students' knowledge and understanding across subjects, contexts and phases,
- Our school has common and domain-specific approaches to learning through talk.
- Classroom talk is used skillfully to develop our students' thinking and understanding.

### EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Lead practitioner group representing range of subjects meets regularly to share practice, engage in reading and research.
- Staff briefings are led by different teachers from across subjects and phases, sharing ideas from their own practice.
- Oracy lesson study group - enabling collaboration across subjects.
- Introduction of key language and common approaches - oracy framework, discussion guidelines.
- Focused use of talk in English through group talk enquiry question
- Some pockets of practice within the school where oracy not being used/ not being used effectively.

## 5. Is accountable for the impact of oracy

- We proactively seek information to support our understanding of the effectiveness of oracy provision and its impact on students.
- We use this information to refine and improve our school's approach to developing oracy.

### EVALUATION: What are we currently doing for this benchmark?

- Oracy focused Lesson Study group - peer observations of teaching & learning, and interviews with focus students.
- Oracy focused research questions as part of appraisals.
- Oracy Learning Walks - feedback to drive improvement.
- Oracy Lead regularly reports to SLT and Governors on key actions

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Oracy woven throughout School Development Plan.
- All staff bought in on the school's vision and able to connect it to their roles.
- Vision for oracy set out and shared (similar to the Reading Pledge).

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Connect school's faith and mission with oracy.
- Explore how collective worship can develop oracy skills.
- Allocate time in calendar for oracy CPD based on oracy action plan.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- All oracy opportunities used as such, e.g. students prepared and taught about being on an interview panel; school council developing negotiation and argument skills.
- Assemblies used as a forum for students to practice oracy skills (low stakes building to higher stakes).
- Positive culture around talk - students confident speaking in assemblies.
- Number of oracy events over year, e.g. poetry slam, storytelling, involving all students and creating a buzz. Parent/carers attending some.

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Trial oracy assemblies with a year group to develop a model for whole school
- Plan two year-group wide oracy events (KS3 Ignite speeches and KS4 debate competition).

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Joined up oracy curriculum which ensures range and progression
- Oracy curriculum mapped against Oracy Framework and taught within subjects e.g. science develop discussion/enquiry skills; MFL spontaneous social talk; History debate and presentation.

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Review existing opportunities within curriculum.
- Identify key oracy skills and experiences for each key stage - share responsibility for teaching between subjects.
- Develop staff confidence for teaching for different oracy outcomes e.g. making a podcast; storytelling; debate
- Develop use of Oracy Framework to guide teacher planning and student learning/feedback.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Majority of teachers meeting the Teacher Oracy Benchmarks
- Department-led and owned approaches/best practice.
- Strong practitioners opening their classrooms
- Sustained time over the year given to oracy CPD.
- New staff induction to oracy.

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Engage with barriers raised by staff: improve teacher's ability to differentiate/scaffold oracy tasks; additional subject specific approaches
- Build on discussion and questioning skills across the school.
- English department to trial dialogic teaching methods.

**INTENTION: What would meeting this benchmark in our school look like?**

- Clear understanding of student outcomes - e.g. 'listening walks' to identify students oracy skills in different subjects/contexts. Areas of strength/good practice shared.
- Impact of oracy on tracker group of PP students measured
- Assess subject knowledge through talk
- Subject leaders incorporate oracy into their QA processes - leadership understand areas of strength/development.

**ACTION: What do we need to do now?**

- Identify and baseline tracker group
- Develop subject leaders' confidence in giving feedback on oracy in lesson observations.
- Ensure multiple people feed into oracy action plan review/milestones.

# Reading list & appendix

# Reading list & Appendix

## Books

Alexander R.J. (2017) *Towards Dialogic Teaching: rethinking classroom talk*. 5th edition. York: Dialogos.

*An essential read for anyone interested in how dialogue can be used to develop and extend thinking.*

Barnes D. (1976) *From Communication to Curriculum*. London: Penguin Education.

*Rich with transcripts from the classroom, this book explores how children's patterns of communication can be used to further learning.*

Gaunt A. and Stott A. (2019) *Transform Teaching and Learning Through Talk: The Oracy Imperative*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

*A highly practical guide to embedding oracy in every lesson from Voice 21's own Amy and Alice.*

Mercer N. and Hodgkinson (2008) *Exploring Talk in School: Inspired by the work of Douglas Barnes*. London: Sage Publications.

*A great introduction to the theory on classroom talk, with chapters from a range of experts focusing on topics such as exploratory talk, and talk in maths and science classrooms.*

## Publications (freely available online)

The State of Speaking in Our Schools

*Voice 21's 2016 report into the state of oracy in schools across the UK.*

Speaking Frankly

*A collection of essays on oracy, published by the English Speaking Union and Voice 21.*

Talking About a Generation

*The Communication Trust's review of current policy, evidence and practice for speech, language and communication*

Education Endowment Foundation's Dialogic Teaching Evaluation Report

*A research report on the impact of dialogic teaching on progress across the curriculum.*

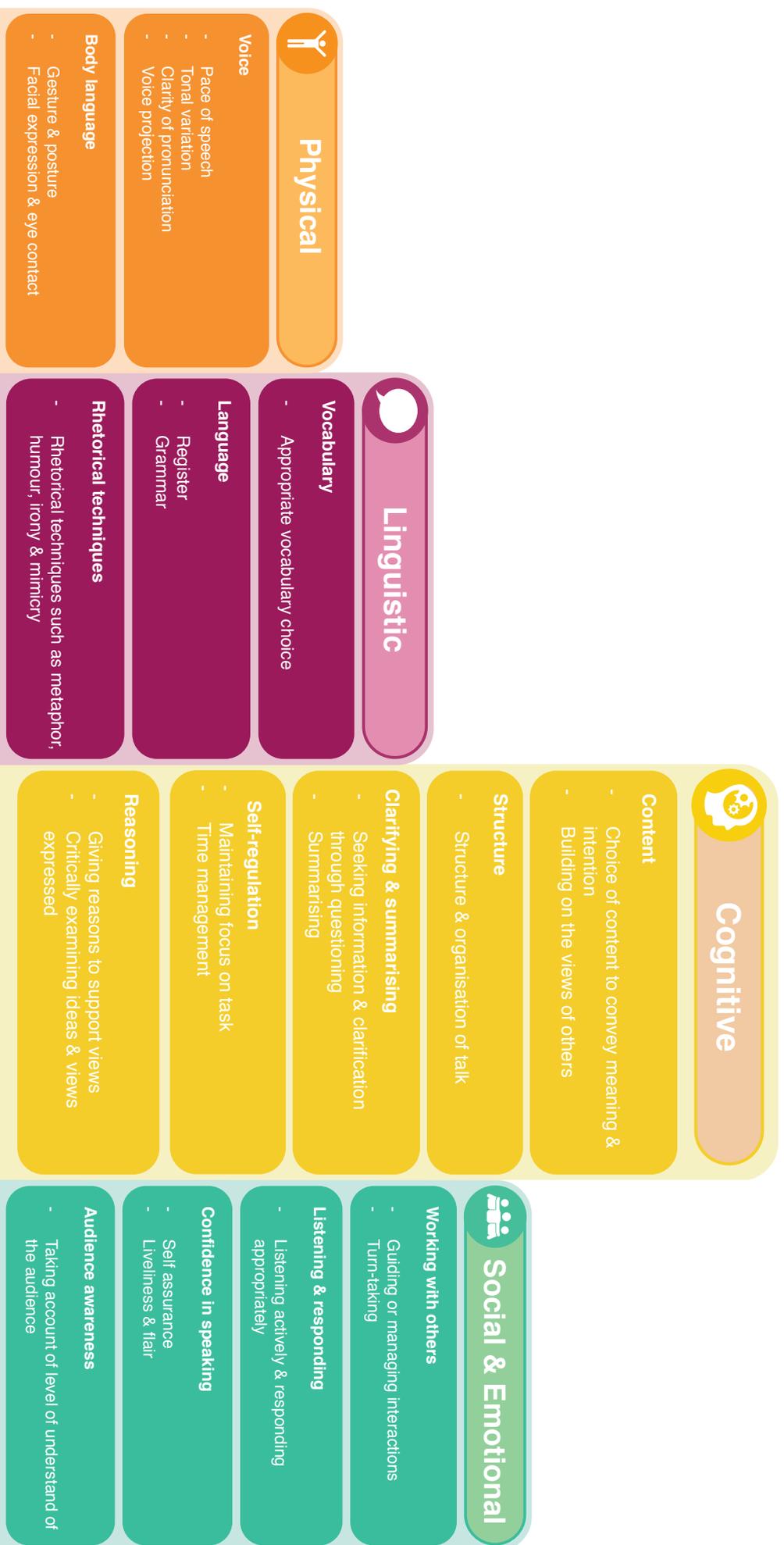
## Websites

Education Endowment Foundation's Summary of Evaluation of Oral Language Interventions

*Evidence for the impact of oral language interventions, which on average add five months progress over the course of a year.*

The Thinking Together project, Cambridge University

*A repository of publications, ideas and resources developed as part of the Thinking Together project at Cambridge University.*



The Oracy Framework was developed in partnership with Oracy Cambridge as part of an EEF Pilot study with School 21 and the University of Cambridge.

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