

Voice 21 Oracy Schools **IMPACT REPORT** 2021



WELCOME



When describing last year, the word disruption is the first to spring to mind. School closures, bubbles bursting, regulations coming in and out, and constantly shifting expectations of what might happen next. Schools faced obstacles that they could not foresee, testing the resilience of teachers and students in new ways every day.

In response, Voice 21 had to dramatically and speedily rethink how we could continue to support teachers and schools as they reacted to the needs of their students in this demanding and volatile context. Like schools, we quickly learned to adapt to the virtual environment. Professional development programmes crafted over the last six years were translated online in just a few weeks. Our team of oracy experts discovered how to facilitate engaging courses through a camera lens, and our online platform (the Voice 21 Exchange) went from being an under-utilised supplementary resource to a central hub of learning and school networking.

Alongside these tactical shifts, Voice 21 took the bold step of launching our new strategy and school membership offer. Despite the pressures of the pandemic, we were delighted that 321 schools chose to commit to being Voice 21 Oracy Schools.

Supported by our blend of professional development, consultancy, resources, and community, they set out on a long-term, whole-school action plan to embed high-quality oracy education in their teaching, curriculum, and culture. The impact data and case studies in this report demonstrate the significant difference this is making to the academic achievement, well-being, confidence, and resilience of the 144,000 students they serve.

Last year's crisis shone a light on the value of talk, interaction, and dialogue in learning and life and the negative implications on outcomes for our most vulnerable students when these are absent. Schools grappled with sustaining student participation and oral language development whilst children were at home and not in the classroom and identified the need to reintegrate their school community through an oracy-rich recovery curriculum. But an education system that builds back better must recognise that regardless of circumstances, oracy is an essential aspect of the rounded and expansive education all our children deserve each year during their time at school. Our Voice 21 Oracy Schools are leading the way.

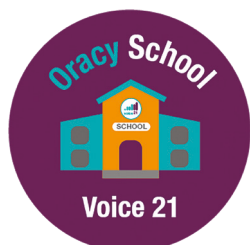
It may not have been the year we all wanted or expected it to be, but 2020/21 affirmed the value of talk, motivated schools to embrace oracy, and strengthened Voice 21's resolve in our mission to empower all children and young people to use their voice for success in school and life.

BECCY EARNSHAW, CEO, VOICE 21

Oracy is now living and breathing in our school, you can walk into any classroom and see it!

Krystyna Stokes, Newsome Academy

ABOUT VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS



WHAT IS A VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOL?

In September 2020, we launched 'Voice 21 Oracy Schools', the culmination of everything that we had learned over the previous five years about how to effectively drive change and improve oracy provision across a school.

By working with Voice 21, schools are making a commitment to transform the learning and life chances of their students through talk. Through our Voice 21 Oracy Schools' membership, we work in partnership with schools over a number of years to inspire long-term change, ensuring that those children who need it most have access to a high-quality oracy education.

Through our blend of professional development, consultancy, resources and community, which is underpinned by a whole-school commitment to oracy, we support schools to transform their teaching, curriculum and culture in order to ensure every child is empowered to find their voice for success in school and in life.

September 2020:

196

Voice 21 Oracy Schools

January 2021:

321

Voice 21 Oracy Schools

Voice 21 is committed to improving access to a high-quality oracy education for those students who need it the most.

On entry to school, economically disadvantaged children's spoken language development is significantly lower than their more advantaged peers. These gaps widen from just a few months (aged six) to five years difference (aged 14).

Left unaddressed, economically disadvantaged children are more likely to leave school with poor verbal communication skills and to suffer from mental health difficulties throughout their life.

In 2021, 68% of Voice 21 Oracy Schools met our target population criteria. This meant we could focus the majority of our time and resources on schools that serve the students that need us the most.



THEORY OF CHANGE

Voice 21 Oracy Schools' membership



Evidence and context driven

We support schools to navigate what works, apply this to their context and monitor impact, adapting our support accordingly.



Sustained

Our approach is cumulative and progressive, creating the conditions for long-term change which thrives beyond our intervention.

A high-quality oracy education: The Oracy Benchmarks



Vision

The school community has a shared understanding of oracy; everybody is motivated to empower students to find their voice for success in school and in life.



Culture

Oracy is visible, showcased and celebrated throughout school life.

Impact



Increases engagement in learning

Learning is rich and enjoyable when students bring their own voice and experiences to school life.



Improves academic outcomes

Students think critically and reason together.

Promotes social equity:




Layered

We engage both teachers and leaders in order to secure whole-school impact.




Collaborative

We foster inter-school collaboration through peer-learning, practice sharing and network events.


Curriculum

Students are taught to engage in a range of different types of talk, with new challenges and opportunities for oracy as they progress through school.



Learning

Classroom talk is used skillfully to develop students' thinking and understanding.



Impact

The school understands the impact of oracy provision on students and use this to continually improve and refine their approach.



Fosters confidence and wellbeing

Students build successful relationships and realise their voice has value.



Supports transitions and employability

Oracy helps young people flourish in further/ higher education and employment.



Equips students to thrive in democratic & civic life

Citizenship requires us to express our views & listen kindly and critically.

students' life chances are transformed through talk

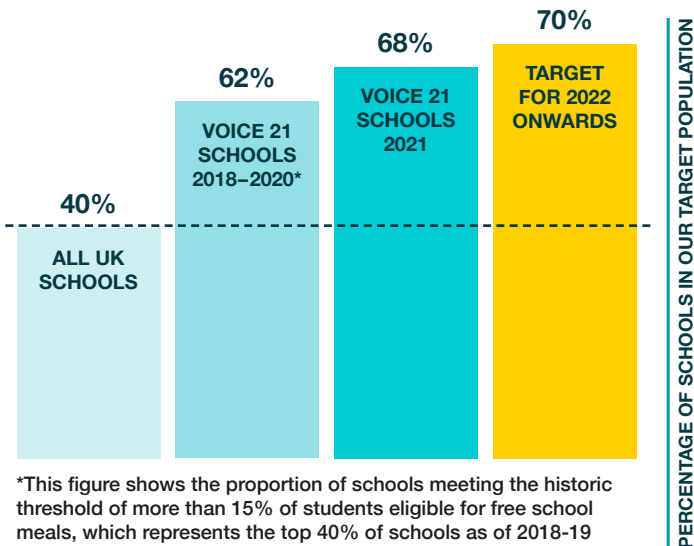
OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

WHERE ARE VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS 2020-21?

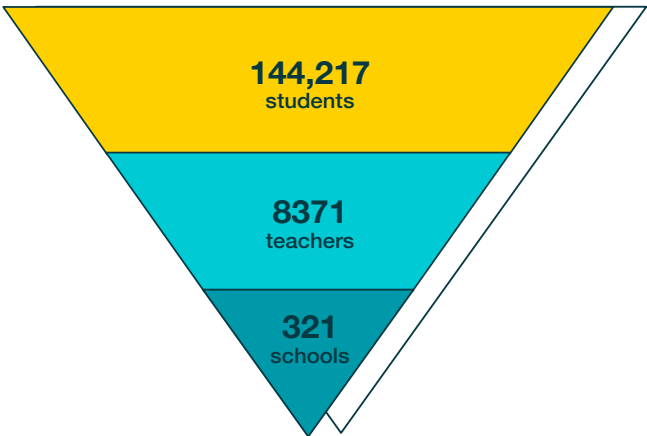
HOW MANY VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS ARE IN OUR TARGET POPULATION?

We aim to work with schools with a greater proportion of economically disadvantaged students. Our measure for this is whether schools are in the top 40%, when ranked by proportion of students eligible for Free School Meals.

This doesn't mean we won't work with schools falling outside this range – we want to be able to respond to the schools and students that need us most, whoever they are. Rather, we use this measure to inform planning and prioritisation to keep our mission at the heart of what we do.

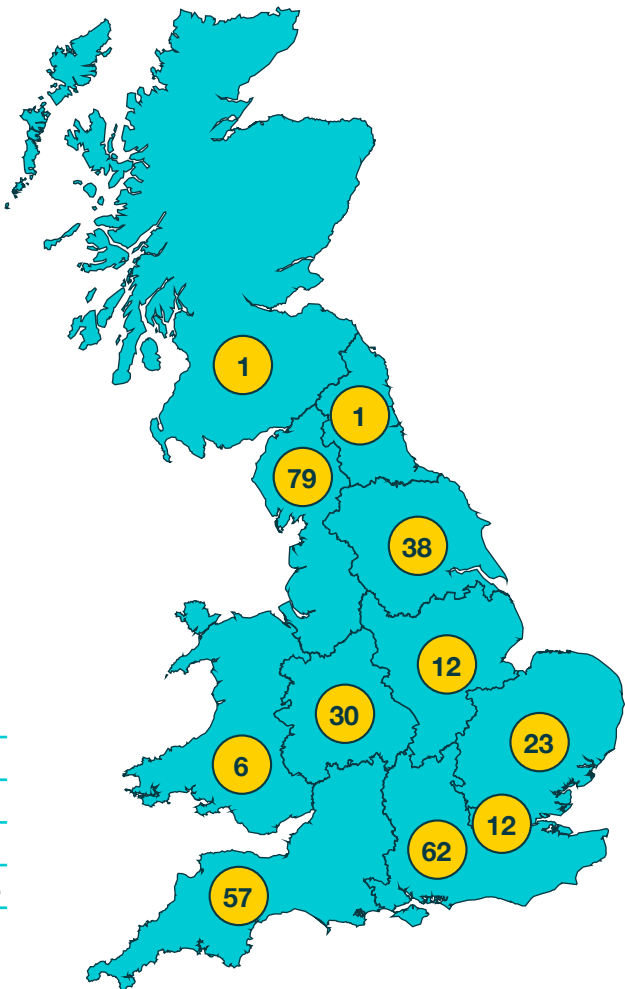


HOW MANY STUDENTS HAVE WE REACHED?



WHERE ARE VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS?

East Midlands	12	South East	62
East of England	23	South West	57
London	12	Wales	6
North East	1	West Midlands	30
North West	79	Yorkshire & Humber	38
Scotland	1		



THE IMPACT OF VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS 2020-21

Voice 21 is an impact-led organisation. We listen to staff and students in Voice 21 Oracy Schools, gathering feedback throughout the year. Annual Oracy Surveys are a cornerstone of our evaluation approach as they give us an insight into how oracy is developing in all our schools. Last year, these surveys were completed by 8000+ of our teachers and 13,000+ students.

This is the difference that the Voice 21 Oracy Schools' membership made to them:

WHAT TEACHERS SAY

79% 

of teachers agree/strongly agree that oracy has supported students' wellbeing.

82% 

of teachers agree/strongly agree that oracy has contributed to students' academic attainment.

83% of teachers agree/strongly agree that oracy has improved students' engagement in school.

96% of teachers agree/strongly agree that oracy is an essential part of teaching and learning.



95% 

of teachers agree/strongly agree that teaching oracy is important for students' success in life after school.

After one year, teachers are
twice as likely

to be confident oracy practitioners.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

78% of students agree/strongly agree that speaking and listening has helped them to share how they feel at school.

89%

of students agree/strongly agree that speaking and listening has helped them make progress with their school work.

Oracy is important to me because it allows me to make my voice heard and to share and listen to others.

Student, Voice 21 Oracy School

“

Now when I walked the corridors recently, I could just hear the buzz of language and quality of oracy across the school.

Holly Dyson, Oracy Lead, Boothroyd Primary Academy, West Yorkshire

“

I feel confident in class discussions and when I participate, I feel braver because my teachers support me, and class is a kind and respectful place to be.

Year 6 Pupil, Boothroyd Primary School

THE IMPACT OF ORACY

FOSTERS WELLBEING AND CONFIDENCE

Oracy supports students to build successful relationships and realise their voice has value, giving them the ability to express themselves, their feelings and their emotions. These communication skills are vital both in the classroom and later in life.

CASE STUDY: GOSFORTH CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



To kickstart their oracy journey, teachers at Gosforth Middle School conducted a small-scale project in which oracy was taken outdoors.

A select group of 12 students identified by their teachers embarked on an exciting programme: “Post Covid our children are rebuilding their cultural capital ... So we aimed to design a project that would allow us to volunteer in the park and at a local nature reserve. Through that positive social interaction, we’d give children an experience that would give them scope to improve their oracy [...] The project also served as a positive cultural [...] and] social experience”.

The project helped staff to build constructive relationships with the students who took part, and fostered positive social interactions between students. Pupil voice surveys showed that students felt more positive after the project, **particularly with regards to oracy and how confident they felt in expressing themselves**. Staff noticed that some of the children who had been involved in the project were more willing to put themselves forward in class, **it really did have quite a dramatic effect on their confidence**.

Kate Tomkins, Head of Modern Foreign Languages and Voice 21 School Lead



[Oracy] is important because if we don't talk to other people then our emotions will be locked inside [...]. If we don't listen to other people then they might think that we just don't care.

Year 7 student, Voice 21 Oracy School

“The ability to listen and to speak are critical components in the development and maintenance of mental health and well-being.”

Dr Fiona Pienaar, Director of Clinical Services, Place2Be



Pupil referral units (PRUs) are a high-need, intensive context for Voice 21, serving a population of students with high rates of behavioural, emotional, and mental health needs. Compared to their peers in mainstream education, young people in PRUs are “twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special

educational need and ten times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems” (IPPR: *Making the Difference*). Our two-year project ‘Get Talking in PRUs,’ working with 25 PRUs and Alternative Provision (AP) setting, found a measurable increase in students’ social and emotional competencies. Teachers in PRUs reported that oracy supported students to build and develop positive relationships with staff and peers, and to regulate their emotions.

THE IMPACT OF ORACY

INCREASES ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING

Learning is rich and enjoyable when students bring their own voice and experiences to school life.

CASE STUDY: MONTREAL CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL, CUMBRIA

“We started working with Voice 21 to improve student outcomes and also because we recognise that oracy is an important skill for life. At Montreal, we want to ensure every child is celebrated and every voice is valued.

An unanticipated but welcome outcome of our focus on oracy has been the children’s increased engagement and enjoyment in learning. **We’ve noticed that our children have started to participate more in lessons by building on each other’s ideas and understanding that it’s ok to disagree.**

We’re also finding that our children are able to reason with each other and solve problems independently.”

Leanne Long, Assistant Headteacher

Leanne and the team at Montreal have worked hard to create shared expectations for oracy across the school. Teachers actively model oracy and recognise the impact it can have on students’ learning across the curriculum. As a result, children at the school are becoming increasingly confident to engage purposefully in talk for learning.

Simon McDonagh,
Voice 21 Oracy Consultant



Research from the EEF shows that on average pupils who take part in spoken language interventions make **approximately 5 months of additional progress over a year**, with some studies showing the progress of up to six months for pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



“

I think [...oracy is] important because if people couldn’t talk then you wouldn’t understand what they are thinking.

Year 2 student, Voice 21 Oracy School

THE IMPACT OF ORACY

SUPPORTS TRANSITIONS AND ENHANCES EMPLOYABILITY

Oracy helps young people flourish in further and higher education or employment.

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER ENTERPRISE ACADEMY CENTRAL



“At MEA Central, the purpose of our curriculum is to ensure that our students can ‘meet every citizen as an equal’.

For us, oracy is key to ensuring our students can take their place in the world beyond school.

Oracy is now embedded across our school and is a key aspect of our pedagogy. To develop our students’ confidence beyond the classroom, we prepare students to give Ignite speeches and to speak at whole-school events. You can already see the difference; students aren’t afraid to start a conversation with you and they can manage that conversation well.

Voice 21’s work is all evidence-based, and it feels like you are doing something that is grounded in good research and is the right

thing for the students. There are so many approaches you can take to embedding oracy in your school and that’s what makes it really flexible.”

Kate Edwards, Vice Principal for Quality of Education and Claire Willis, Oracy Champion

It has been really exciting to work with MEA Central on their oracy journey as they embed it into their curriculum. The school has a particular focus on developing the confidence of their students to equip them all with the skills to articulate their abilities and ideas when they leave school. This is all helping to prepare each person for the wider world. Their students are confident that their voices matter and that their ideas have value and are worth sharing.

Rachel Ratcliffe,
Voice 21 Oracy Consultant



Unemployed young people are almost **twice as likely** as those in employment or fulltime students to feel that their schooling did not give them sufficient spoken language for success in later life.

Speak for Change
Inquiry, 2021

“

I feel speaking and listening is important if you want to have [a] future career like politics and such. Many jobs include being able to listen so it is important that you learn these types of things.

Year 6 Student, Voice 21 Oracy School

SUPPORTING VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC

HOW DID WE SUPPORT VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS?

Due to ongoing disruption from the pandemic, including national and local school closures, our first cohort of Voice 21 Oracy Schools had to be supported virtually rather than in person, with all of our content and methods for professional development translated to online learning. Despite this disruption, we have been awed by the continued commitment to oracy demonstrated by the teachers and leaders in our schools who recognise oracy as a vital means through which they can address the impact of the pandemic on both their students' wellbeing and attainment.

WHY WAS IT SO IMPORTANT?

The impact of the pandemic has been felt by everyone, not least by students, teachers, and schools. It has shone a light on the inequalities all children are facing and exacerbated these disparities further in spoken language skills. The Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group's (APPG) Inquiry found that two-thirds of primary teachers (69%) and nearly half of secondary teachers (44%) said school closures had a negative effect on the spoken language development of students eligible for pupil premium.

If we leave current language gaps unaddressed, they are only set to widen with students from disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately impacted. This is why we have worked hard to ensure we can support Voice 21 Oracy Schools to have access to a high-quality oracy education.

The pandemic has widened the oracy gap across our school [...as pupils] now struggle to express themselves confidently and show a lack of self-assurance. Working with Voice 21 and [focusing on] oracy [...has] been pivotal to [...empowering children with the] confidence to follow their own pathways of learning.

Lisa Bowden, Executive Head Teacher, and Dawn Robertson, Deputy Headteacher – Ringland Primary School

When the children came back after lockdown they were very quiet and very unsure of themselves.

Kate Edwards, Vice Principal for Quality of Education and Claire Willis, Oracy Champion, Manchester Enterprise Academy Central

WHAT WE DID

As part of Oracy October 2021 we ran
7 free online webinars with over 500 attendees
exploring the power of talk to create connections.

Over 1300
teachers received our weekly Talk on Tuesday newsletter sharing best practice and support for Voice 21 Oracy Schools.

171
Development Days delivered online from September 2020 – December 2021.

Over 220
teachers attended online events on how to provide a high-quality oracy education for their students.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR VOICE 21 ORACY SCHOOLS

Over the next two years, we want to ensure that the young people that need us most have access to the support of Voice 21 Oracy Schools. We'll be bringing together Voice 21 Oracy Schools from across the UK to work on a variety of new projects that will help us support schools to continually raise the bar for a high-quality oracy education.



Voice 21 accreditation

We will support schools to better understand and celebrate the effectiveness of their oracy provision by recognising progress towards the Oracy Benchmarks. Our accreditation will raise the bar for oracy education even higher, providing a clear standard towards which schools can strive.



A standardised measure of oracy

We recognise that schools must be able to pinpoint the impact of their provision on students' oracy skills. Over the next two years, our project 'Comparing Talk' aims to develop a reliable oracy assessment, for all ages and stages, so that schools can better understand their impact and monitor progress.



Growing our reach and sustaining impact

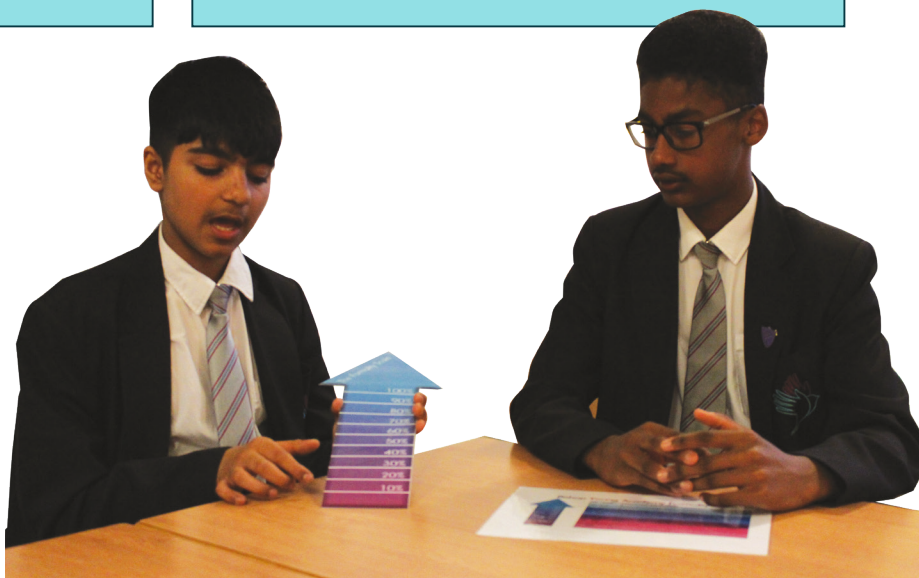
By 2025, we will grow our reach to over 800,000 students in 1900 schools whilst continuing to focus our work on those who need it most.



Voicing Vocabulary

We have launched Voicing Vocabulary, a two-year research development project funded by the Dulverton Trust, to improve the vocabulary of KS2 and KS3 students in participating schools and develop an oracy-rich, cross-phase approach to vocabulary development.

We are also continuing to champion the voices of Voice 21 Oracy Schools and to raise awareness of the benefits of a high-quality oracy education. As the secretariat for the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary group, we will continue to make the case for the centrality of oracy within education.





“

Without a doubt introducing oracy has been transformational... I credit lots of the changes we have seen down to our focus on oracy. It's because of this that our students feel confident that they are being listened to and that they can articulate how they feel.

Mel Carlin, Bishop Young Academy, Leeds

“

It's been inspiring to see a genuine community of shared practice evolve over time at Bishop Young. From open classrooms, impact projects, sharing strategies and dilemmas to collaborative curriculum design and leading CPD, the quality of oracy teaching has been shaped by learning from one another.

Catherine Pass, Voice 21 Senior Consultant

THANK YOU

We are grateful for the continued support we have received from the Voice 21 community over the last year. It is thanks to the determination, passion and commitment of our Voice 21 Oracy School teachers and leaders that more students than ever before are benefiting from a high-quality oracy education.

We would also like to thank all of our supporters, past and present, who continue to make the work we do possible.

Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropy
 Allen and Overy Foundation
 Big Change
 The Dulverton Trust
 Fidelity Foundation
 The Forrester Trusts
 Impetus

John Horseman Trust
 Leathersellers' Charitable Fund
 Minton Charitable Trust
 The Mohn Westlake Foundation
 Oxford University
 St John's Foundation

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Oracy is important to me because it allows me to make my voice be heard despite my age and oracy also allows me to share and listen to others.

Y6 Student, Voice 21 Oracy School

Working with Voice 21 and taking an oracy based approach to learning this year has had an incredibly positive impact on the children's learning. I have been amazed at how much my pupils' confidence has grown, how their co-operation skills have developed and how engaged they have been in lessons.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

Voice 21 helps to build the confidence of my students and helps them form relationships as they are able to be more aware of others.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

It is important to me because it made me more confident in class.

Y6 Student, Voice 21 Oracy School

It has improved children's confidence in expressing themselves and sharing opinions.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

Through oracy skills being embedded we now have confident pupils who are able to share their thoughts and opinions and understand different strategies that can be used when getting their point across.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

I have found that it is helping some of the quieter students to participate and become more confident.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

Oracy is now the golden thread that runs through our curriculum.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

Oracy is clearly having a positive impact on the experiences of the children in our school.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

Oracy is allowing our pupils to be confident in verbalising their thought and opinions as well as their concerns and emotional state.

Teacher, Voice 21 Oracy School

Speaking and listening comes in handy in the future you have to be able to speak and listen to others throughout your life.

Y12 Student, Voice 21 Oracy School

I love oracy it is so fun and calming also it gives you a chance to get to know people.

Y4 Student, Voice 21 Oracy School

