Voice North East 2023-24



Our ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through speaking and listening shapes our future life chances.

Children with good language skills achieve better results in English and Maths¹ and have higher rates of school enjoyment and confidence.²



On leaving school, they are less likely to suffer mental health difficulties and have more job prospects.³



and developing these essential

skills is left to chance in our

education system.

We're on a mission to transform the learning and life chances of young people through talk so that all children learn to use their voice for success in school and in life.

Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Voice North East

Voice North East is a project bringing together schools from across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland to deliver a high quality oracy education for every student, every day. We've been working to ensure oracy is part of the curriculum, teaching and learning and wider school life. In Voice 21 Oracy Schools across the North East, you will hear students solving problems collaboratively in maths and dissecting arguments in history, talking through conflicts in the playground and leading assemblies.

As the national oracy charity, Voice 21's role has been to provide whole-school support for schools as they begin their oracy journeys. This has included professional development; implementation support; impact reporting; and network events.



Voice 21's sustained support empowers schools to provide a high-quality oracy education to every child

MORE TEACHERS IN THE VOICE NORTH EAST GROUP BECAME CONFIDENT ORACY PRACTITIONERS

START OF FIRST YEAR:

30% ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที

END OF FIRST YEAR:

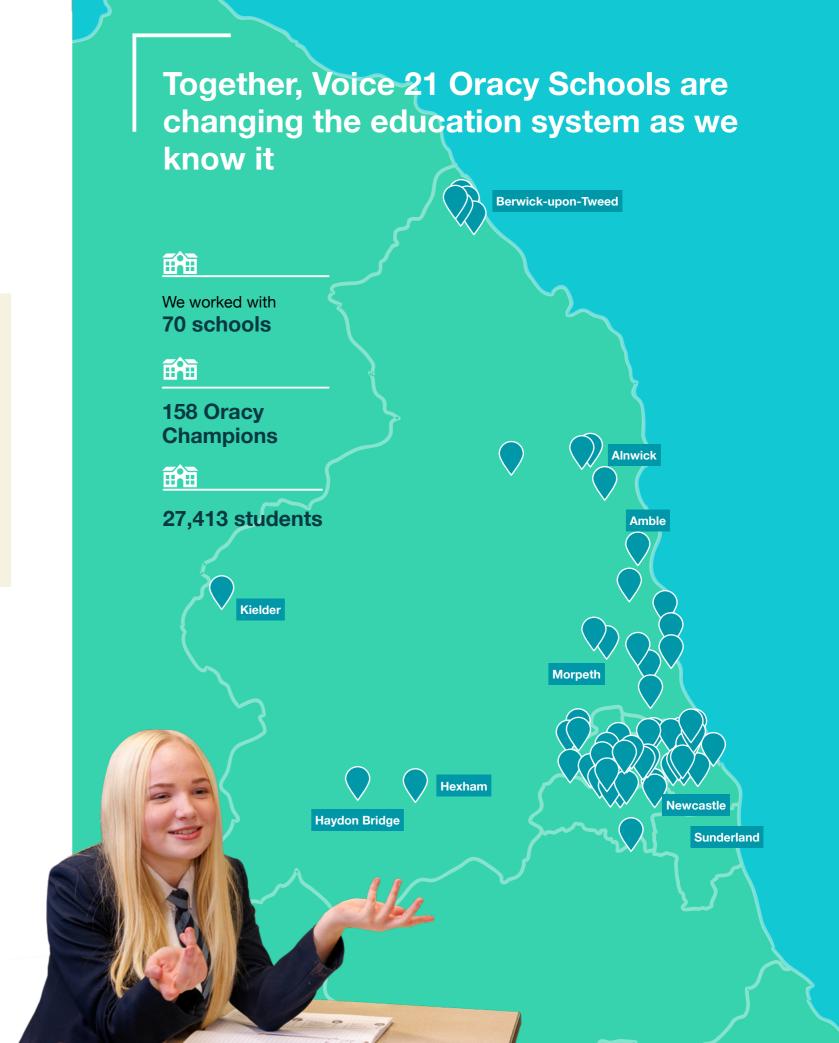
57% ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที่ที

At the beginning of their first year, just 30% of teachers were confident oracy practitioners, rising to 57% at the end of their first year.





Our staff have felt that it's really practical and a great thing to add to their teaching practice. Teachers are starting to naturally see where they can capitalise on opportunities for talk in the classroom."



Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24 Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Case Study | Primary

Newcastle upon Tyne

Benton Park Primary



459 students on roll



12.2% students eligible for free school meals

Oracy in Benton Park Primary

For Charlotte and Helen, becoming a Voice 21 Oracy School was an opportunity to use talk to elevate everyday teaching and learning by developing a shared language and consistent practice around oracy across the school.

The core oracy team took a staged approach to implementation in order to maximise effectiveness whilst attending to teachers' workload. They trialled approaches in their own classrooms before selecting a few high priority contexts for talk and oracy strategies to introduce to the wider school.

As a result, teachers beyond the core team are motivated to continue developing their oracy practice in their own classrooms. Curriculum leads are able to engage in professional dialogue that identifies opportunities to integrate oracy approaches with the school's existing approach to teaching and learning.

...because people can see the impact, they're happy to work with us on it."

Listening walks conducted by the oracy team found that teachers across the school are integrating oracy into their approach to teaching and learning. Classes have made 'oracy agreements' to create shared expectations for talk; and teachers and students are reporting that they're better able to communicate with each other.

We're raising the expectation of what oracy is and what it looks like. By raising its profile, it has heightened its value and importance in school."



Staff have felt the introduction of oracy has not been an extra burden on their workload as talk is already a huge part of our day-to-day teaching. They left our first staff meeting prepared to

HELEN WILLIAMS, ORACY CHAMPION, BENTON PARK PRIMARY

already planned."

use oracy strategies to

enhance lessons they'd





Impact

High quality discussion

A focus on oracy has helped teachers at Benton Park to set clear expectations for partner talk. As a result of this 'talk about talk' and, where needed, scaffolds such as sentence stems to support students, partner talk is a more effective means of learning.

"It focuses the students: there's something very specific to talk about with explicit rules and conventions around the talk. So where we might have had children, even in a paired discussion, who became disengaged, when you allocate roles within the talk, children naturally take more responsibility and accountability in their pairs."

Teachers are able to use this higher quality discussion to develop a richer picture of the knowledge and understanding of the children in their class: talk is making learning visible. This is especially true of children who would previously have stayed quiet during discussions, and for children whose written work doesn't convey the depth of the subject knowledge.

"It's a lot easier to work out what children actually know. Because everybody's got a role, you hear everybody's voice. As a teacher, your observations are much more accurate. There are some children who can't record very well in their books, but when you listen to them you realise that they totally understand. If you didn't have that opportunity to listen built-in, you would miss it."

An inclusive approach

Oracy has been especially beneficial for students who were previously reluctant to talk, due to the focus on clear, high expectations for talk, paired with an understanding of the scaffolds and structures that can be deployed to support engagement.

"We're seeing students who were more reluctant to talk suddenly coming out of their shell a bit more and sharing their ideas."

"It's a very inclusive way of working - you hear more from the children who before, lacked the confidence, or our SEND children who sometimes were dominated in discussions by children who remembered more than they did."

"As a school with a HIARP (Hearing Impaired Additionally Resourced Provision), we are also keen to explore how oracy strategies can further integrate dialogue between hearing and deaf children."

BAINBRIDGE, ORACY CHAMPION, BENTON PARK PRIMARY

CHARLOTTE

What's next?

The oracy team at Benton Park worked with their **Voice 21 Programme Lead to develop a clear** roadmap for oracy in their school, which they're looking forward to implementing. They'll build on their early successes by delivering further CPD to their wider teaching team, layering on additional oracy strategies and principles for planning for high-quality talk.

They're expecting to see further improvement, as a result, in the quality of children's writing. This is especially important as for the school, writing outcomes have not been as strong as in reading and maths.

We're just starting to see better quality writing outcomes because of the opportunities for oral rehearsal and to talk. But this is only scratching the surface really: the opportunities oracy presents in terms of supporting the writing process are huge."

Case Study | Primary

Newcastle upon Tyne

Westgate Hill Primary



781 students on roll



44.3% students eligible for free school meals

Oracy in Westgate Hill Primary

For Westgate Hill Primary, becoming a Voice 21 Oracy School was a means of supporting their EAL learners to engage with each other and with their learning through talk. 94% of their student population is learning English as an additional language, and there are over 50 languages spoken in the school, so ensuring that the school is inclusive for these students is essential.

In her classroom, Sorrel, one Westgate Hill's Oracy Champions, has focused specifically on using trio groupings to support her EAL learners. She groups the students strategically, ensuring that, where possible, there are students who speak the same home language and students with different English levels in each group so that they can offer support to newer English learners.

I find it an effective way of being inclusive to all of our learners. Children get really excited, especially our newer English learners, when they have the chance to speak their home languages in the classroom."





Sorrel has found that using trios allows students the space to sit back and listen to other students, which means that there is less pressure to contribute and respond to their group members. Sometimes, she assigns one student to be the "scribe," who writes down what the other two trio members have said. This, she says, can help students feel motivated to contribute, as there is someone listening to them and writing down their ideas.

I listen to the trios and I'm really surprised by the quality of the talk that's happening. It's also been great to see

students wanting to stand up and speak to the class who I never thought actually would."

SORREL PRICE, ORACY CHAMPION, WESTGATE HILL **PRIMARY**

Sorrel also gives the students opportunities for the trios to share back to the whole classes, as well as plenty of time to think through their answers and rehearse in a low-stakes environment. By sequencing lessons to build the confidence of her students, Sorrel has created an environment where EAL learners are supported by other students and where they have low-stakes opportunities to practice speaking in front of different audiences.



Students are excited and engaged by oracy lessons

A focus on oracy has helped Westgate Hill Primary support their EAL learners to feel confident speaking in class, and also to feel more engaged with their learning.

"When I let them know that we'll be working on their oracy skills at the start of a lesson, they just think it's brilliant. They get really excited because they'll get lots of opportunities to talk and share their ideas."

Oracy has allowed Westgate Hill to create and capitalise on opportunities for talk, which has led to students who wouldn't previously have spoken up in class becoming more vocal.

"Seeing the impact of them, some of them being so brave and speaking out for the first time has been amazing, and they wouldn't have had these opportunities if we weren't doing oracy."



What's next?

Westgate Hill has created a broad oracy team, including a School Lead, two Oracy Champions, and a wider oracy team which includes the EAL Lead, the SEN Lead, the Science Lead, as well as other middle leaders. The team has planned to start running CPD with the whole school in September, and will share the learnings and successes of their first year as a Voice 21 Oracy School in order to cascade, sustain and embed oracy across the whole school.



I'm really looking forward to putting it out there for the whole school, because, particularly in our setting, oracy is so valuable for creating an inclusive learning environment for all of our students, but especially for our EAL learners."

Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Case Study | Primary

St Bede's Primary



208 students on roll



24% students eligible for free school meals

Oracy in the EYFS: building strong foundations in St Bede's

At St. Bede's, a commitment to developing oracy sits at the heart of teaching practice in Reception. This small yet diverse setting is fast becoming a model for innovative oracy practice in the early years as teachers seek to build the foundations for spoken language and communication across the EYFS curriculum that will support children as they progress through the school and beyond.



Embracing oracy in the early years supports the rest of the school to build a challenging and engaging curriculum that harnesses oracy for academic and social and emotional development."

CATHERINE COATSWORTH, SCHOOL LEAD AND RECEPTION TEACHER, ST BEDE'S PRIMARY



Newcastle upon Tyne

Stepping back to listen in



Over the last year, teachers have concentrated on understanding and applying the Oracy Framework to better understand the skills that can be taught explicitly in different contexts. For St Bede's, the starting point was to simply step back and listen to children's language through the lens of the framework.

This reflective approach has led to a deeper understanding of the spoken language skills required in different areas of provision in the early years setting. School Lead and Reception teacher, Catherine Coatsworth, comments that

Whilst a focus on spoken language is common practice in the early years, the Oracy Framework acts as a magnifying glass, offering deeper insights into the skills involved in communication and language development."

Structured support for talk

Developing oracy practice has led to more structured scaffolding and support for talk during one-to-one, small group and whole class activities. Teachers have trialled a range of strategies to support talk such as talk tokens, story maps and hoop groups.

The introduction of guidelines for talk has promoted essential social and emotional skills such as listening and turn-taking and an increased emphasis on modelling different interactions for children is enhancing participation in learning and play.



Oracy isn't a stand alone activity for us, we're integrating these strategies into all areas of the day, whether that's maths, storytime or free play."

This purposeful and deliberate approach to talk is having a profound impact on children who are new to English and has created a supportive environment that fosters greater engagement - enabling all children to take part in meaningful extended dialogue.

We've been really surprised by how quickly quieter children have started to participate more in both play and guided activities."





What's next?

As St. Bede's looks to the future, the goal is to extend these oracy practices throughout the entire school. The Reception team is planning to establish a shared understanding of oracy education across all year groups. This will involve articulating a clear vision for oracy, understanding how oracy skills progress, and planning for the integration of oracy into the broader curriculum.

By focusing on the fundamental skills of communication from an early age, St. Bede's Primary School is not only enhancing the educational experience of its students but is setting them up for lifelong success both in school and in life.



Case Study | Primary

Whitley Bay

Southridge First School

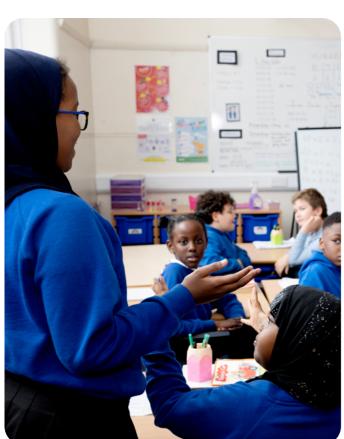




5.3% students eligible for free school meals

Oracy in Southridge First School





Southridge First School has become a **Voice 21 Oracy School to ensure that** every student is heard in the classroom, not just those who arrive at school with the most confidence. To do this, they have focused on creating shared expectations for talk and listening skills. This creates classrooms where everyone is an active participant, not a passive listener.

We identified that since lockdown really, for some children, listening wasn't great. We've got some children who are really really confident speakers, and they tend to dominate conversations. But actually, every child needs to feel confident enough to take part and have a voice."

The school's oracy team has worked collaboratively to identify priorities for the start of their oracy journey. Across several staff meetings, they've built a strong foundation, using the Oracy Framework and some associated strategies and activities to embed a shared language and expectations for talk across the school. This thoughtful approach ensures that the school's approach to oracy education is implemented incrementally over time, with time and space for pupil and staff voice to influence its direction, rather than overwhelming staff and students alike with a flood of ideas.

We've got discussion guidelines in every class. When you go round, all classes can tell you what oracy is; they've all had a go; they understand the importance of the guidelines. Some classes have done more than others, but everyone is very familiar with oracy and what we expect."

Impact

Levelling the playing field

The first changes that Ian, an Oracy Champion, has noticed in school have been for the students who would previously have been the quietest. The school's explicit focus on oracy is levelling the playing field for the students who previously found it hardest to join in.

"The children are now fully aware of what oracy is and not just what it is but how they can apply themselves in a lesson. And again, you're not looking at the really confident speakers, but those children who wouldn't necessarily be the ones contributing to a lesson."

This effect has been particularly noticeable when it comes to constructive disagreement in the classroom:

"Children do feel that their voice is valued and that it doesn't matter if not everybody agrees with them. That might just seem like a small thing. But to a five, six, seven year old, that's huge, isn't it: to be able to have that confidence to say, 'I don't actually agree with little Jimmy, I'm going to say my own thing', and then be prepared to discuss that."



IAN PRICE, SCHOOL LEAD, SOUTHRIDGE FIRST SCHOOL

What's next?

The team at Southridge First School see themselves as being at the start of a long term project. They're looking forward to the benefits they can gain as students are able to develop their oracy progressively as they move up the school.

What we're hoping to see is that for the children who are in Reception now, it'll just become part of the norm. That's what you want, you know, as they go through. So you'll see the consistency in every classroom, and then oracy just becomes a normal part of the school."

For this to happen, the oracy team knows that their careful implementation must secure the buy-in of teachers and students across the school: and they're glad to see that this is happening.

I'm proud that the children and the staff have all just engaged in it, and got on board and embraced it. And we're seeing a real improvement in speaking and listening as a school."



Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Northwest of Newcastle

Cheviot Primary School



229 students on roll



80.7% students eligible for free school meals

Oracy in Cheviot Primary School

For Stefanie and Josh, choosing to join Voice 21 came at a serendipitous moment. Following school closures due to the Covid 19 pandemic, Cheviot Primary School were exploring how they could best support their children who were experiencing the impact of lockdowns and school closures.

We need to do more than average for our children, and we look for anything that will support us with that - it's what we are after."

The core oracy team took a staggered approach to the implementation of oracy across school. Initially, they wanted teachers across the school to gain a clear understanding of what oracy is, and the benefit it can have on both teaching practice and student outcomes across the school. In the school's first year working with Voice 21, they ensured that all staff had access to high-quality oracy CPD.

We didn't want to just say to staff 'This is oracy, now off you go.' We wanted confidence and expertise in oracy strategies to gradually build up - so that it was purposeful and worked for our teachers."



My favourite part of our oracy journey so far is that everyone can see what I can see. We are all moving towards our goal together."

Once a shared understanding of oracy had been developed and training on key strategies delivered, the teachers could then begin to capitalise on opportunities to implement oracy within their classrooms more explicitly. Staff were able to trial a variety of different strategies within their settings, observing both the successes and challenges of implementing these.

Stefanie and the core oracy team felt that it was important that teachers did not just focus on presentational talk outcomes (such as encouraging students to perform a speech) without first ensuring that oracy was being used to enrich teaching and learning as a whole.

As a result of this approach, teachers now have a true understanding of both exploratory and presentational talk, as well as the confidence to support and enhance how talk can be used in the early stages of learning and knowledge acquisition.

We wanted to focus on the core oracy strategies, implementing listening as an active skill and making sure students could use the discussion guidelines within the classroom."

Impact

A Shift in Thinking

Teachers have reported that they are already seeing improvements in classroom communication, and they feel that oracy is something that has been woven into the fabric of the school.

"Because of the hard work everyone has put into oracy, and the impact it will have on our children, it will become embedded, not something that can drift off."

The main impact on staff has been in relation to their understanding of the importance of talk in the classroom and specifically how this can help children's learning. Teachers now have the knowledge and understanding to ensure that all children are exposed to a wide variety of talk, in terms of purposes, outcomes, groupings and opportunities.



STEFANIE SANDS, SCHOOL LEAD, **CHEVIOT PRIMARY SCHOOL**





What's next?

Cheviot Primary School's oracy team have worked in collaboration with their Voice 21 Programme Lead to build in their next steps for oracy across the school. They have decided to focus on a clear progression map document for oracy, so that each skill can be specifically planned for across key stages.



Staff and students have embraced oracy; we are all on the journey together."

In addition to this, oracy will become a focus in the curriculum, with oracy outcomes becoming a key aspect of what teachers and students are working towards.



Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Case Study | Secondary



Moorbridge Alternative Education Partnership School

Oracy in Moorbridge Alternative Education Partnership School

Improving the learning and life chances of the young people is at the heart of Moorbridge's provision. They have a major focus on behaviour and conflict resolution, which led them to begin working with Voice 21 and embedding oracy across the school. Deborah, the Oracy Lead, hoped that oracy would serve as a golden thread to support students' wellbeing and behaviour, staff confidence and teaching practice.

I wanted something that would interweave with our students' week, in a little and often way."

Moorbridge has put oracy at the centre of their approach to behaviour and conflict resolution by using talk tactics and linking the Oracy Framework to their behaviour policy.

We came to the conclusion that oracy would be most beneficial woven into our existing behaviour support system."





Oracy has been met very enthusiastically by staff. My thinking immediately was how helpful oracy could be to our students SEMH [social, emotional and mental health] needs, how it could help them verbally articulate themselves, and assist with conflict resolution."

DEBORAH GRIER, SCHOOL LEAD, MOORBRIDGE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL

Conflict resolution

The core oracy team at Moorbridge have designed key strategies around the Oracy Framework to support the school's behaviour policy. Moorbridge uses a behaviour cycle for conflict resolution, and have recently incorporated the four strands of oracy into the cycle:

Reconnecting...

using appropriate language to listen and respond to others (social and emotional strand)

Recognising...

the physical signs of dysregulation (physical strand)

Reflecting..

upon a situation by understanding and building on the views of others (cognitive strand)

Regulating...

emotions by using appropriate vocabulary choices (linguistic strand)

The school uses talk tactics to support their restorative conversations based on the behaviour cycle, and give students the tools to scaffold dialogue and develop and verbalise their thinking.



Impact

A culture of oracy

"We have come at oracy from a culture perspective – it should become something that tethers everything together."

By focusing on the oracy basics, such as agreeing discussion guidelines and trying different groupings and strategies for talk, Moorbridge was able to look at the impact of oracy within the classroom, whilst still working on the ways in which oracy would be included in the behaviour support system across the provision.

What's next?

Moorbridge Alternative Education
Partnership School have since created a
broad oracy team, including a School Lead,
Oracy Champion, and a wider oracy team
which includes a range of staff from different
areas across the school, including the
behaviour and pastoral teams.

The team has planned to start running CPD with the whole school in September, and will share the learnings and successes of their first year as a Voice 21 Oracy School in order to cascade, support and embed oracy across the whole provision.

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Supporting EAL learners through oracy in the North East

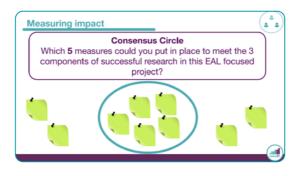
Voice 21 has created a Voice North East focused EAL Learning Community with the intention of supporting and celebrating EAL learners through classroom-based research of oracy strategies.

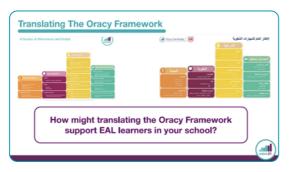
Supporting EAL learners was identified as a priority area by Voice North East schools. Teachers wanted to share best practice to ensure that they implemented oracy education in a way that maximised benefits for EAL learners: creating an inclusive environment and accelerating the progress EAL learners can make through oracy.

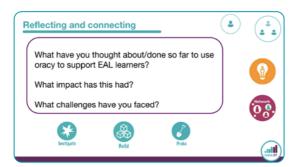
This year, the project provided CPD and support to teachers in the North East, developing expertise and providing strategies to enable them to better support EAL learners through oracy. Participating schools gathered to share findings, expertise and knowledge, to celebrate successes and discuss next steps for EAL learners. Some of the strategies shared included translated oracy frameworks, sentence stems, trio groupings, dictogloss, and role play.

One of our EAL students was on an Individualised Education Plan as he was identified as having Speech, Language and Communication needs in key stage one. Last time we did a task in class, he volunteered to stand up and summarise what his group talked about in front of the class, which he would never have done in September. I really put this down to the oracy work that we're doing, and I have loved seeing the impact."

SORREL PRICE, ORACY CHAMPION, WESTGATE HILL PRIMARY







What's next?

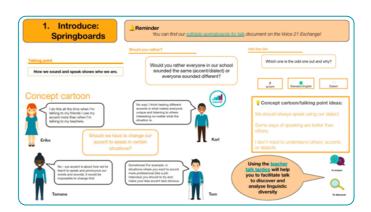
Voice 21 hopes to continue the Voice North East EAL learning community and to continue supporting schools to carry out school-based practitioner research focussing on the success and impact of oracy strategies for EAL learners. We will also continue to provide EAL support as part of our usual programme delivery.

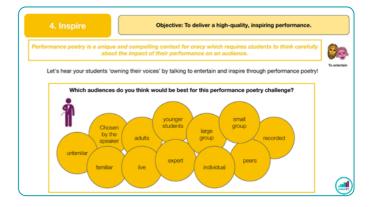
Linguistic Diversity Learning Community

This year Voice 21 has been working with schools to understand current policy and practices relating to linguistic diversity as we seek to articulate and exemplify how oracy education values every voice. Teachers from our Voice North East project joined us for both in-person workshops and an online seminar delivered by Professor David Waugh where we engaged in discussions around accent, dialect and language bias.

As a result of the in-person session, participants started the session with a limited understanding of the concept of 'linguistic diversity' but left with a clear understanding after engaging with core research. Teachers commented that a focus on linguistic diversity across their school would provide students to understand and engage with cultures and attitudes which differed to their own. At the end of the session, participants were keen to complete the intersession task and conduct a focus group with students to gather their ideas, opinions and attitudes to linguistic diversity.

The 'Owning Our Voice' oracy challenge was designed to equip teachers with resources to empower individuals to share their linguistic heritage, ensuring that diverse linguistic backgrounds are recognised and valued.







Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

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Voice North East Impact Journal 2023-24

Voice North East: an oracy network

At Voice 21, we know how powerful it is when schools come together with a vision. We want to create spaces for our schools to share ideas, empower each other, and form a community with students' voices at its heart.

Launch Event

The project kicked-off in the autumn of 2023 with a launch event in Newcastle. Alongside the mayor, representatives from all the participating schools came together to find out what it really means to be a Voice 21 Oracy School. Panellists from established local oracy schools shone a light on their journey to date and networking opportunities began to tease out the hopes and aspirations for each of the schools in the project. The launch was covered by various local media outlets, including BBC Look North.









Peer Open Morning

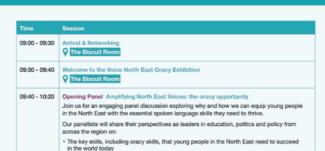
In June, 18 participating schools came together to visit Hawthorn Primary School; a thriving second-year Oracy School, in the West End of Newcastle, to see oracy practice in action with a focus on teaching and modelling oracy explicitly in KS2. It was a chance to hear about Hawthorn's journey so far, ask questions about the challenges they've faced as well as gaining tips and advice on implementation for their own settings from a listening and learning walk of the school.

Learning Communities

Voice 21 identified EAL and linguistic diversity as two areas where we could offer additional support to our Voice North East schools. To do this, we set up two learning communities where teachers from across the region could come together with Voice 21 staff and academics to learn oracy strategies to support EAL learners and advocate for linguistic diversity, share best practices, learn collaboratively and conduct classroom-based research.







Voice North East Oracy Exhibition

The Voice North East Oracy Exhibition 2024 is a celebration of oracy in the North East and a showcase of the incredible work which has taken place across new and established Voice 21 schools. Throughout the day, delegates will hear from from oracy experts, academics and Voice 21 school practitioners on how we can ensure all young people in the North East get the best possible chance to find their voice for success in school and in life.

