

Great Oracy Exhibition 2025

The Storytelling Experiment: What happened when we put Oracy first?

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Welcome and Context:



The impact of Oracy



Oracy narrows gaps, enabling disadvantaged students to fulfill their potential

+6 months

Additional progress that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds can make through oral language interventions.

Source: Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) evaluation of oral language interventions.



Oracy promotes social equity, leading to a fairer society where everyone, regardless of background, finds their voice for success in school and in life

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Our Rationale:

To what extent does a six-week oral storytelling intervention improve written narrative outcomes among Year 3 students in a high – deprivation setting?



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Storytelling: The intervention

Week 1 – Basic Storytelling Connectors (<i>Replacing "and then"</i>) <i>Focus:</i> Replacing repetitive sequencing with basic storytelling structure.	One day... Suddenly... After that... In the end...
Week 2 – Suspense & Surprise (<i>Building engagement early</i>) <i>Focus:</i> Creating excitement and unexpected turns in the story	Without warning... Out of nowhere... Just at that moment... To everyone's surprise...
Week 3 – Time & Sequence Variety (<i>Broadening story flow</i>) <i>Focus:</i> Helping children structure events more smoothly.	Before long... Not long after... Meanwhile... A little while later...
Week 4 – Cause & Effect Connections (<i>Building logical storytelling</i>) <i>Focus:</i> Making sure actions have consequences in their stories.	Because of this... As a <u>result</u> ... That's why... Luckily / Unluckily...
Week 5 – Adding Drama & Emotions (<i>Deepening character reactions</i>) <i>Focus:</i> Encouraging characters' emotions and reactions to situations	Just when they thought it was over... To their horror... With a heavy heart... Much to their delight...
Week 6 – Refining with Foreshadowing & Reflection (<i>Advanced techniques</i>) <i>Focus:</i> Encouraging foreshadowing, reflection, and more sophisticated storytelling.	If only they had known... Little did they realise... Against all odds... From that day on...

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Villains



Heroes



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Storytelling: The intervention

Tools we used:



- **Interactive story dice**
- Shakers
- **Sentence stems**
- Boxing Clever Framework

www.davebirss.com/storydice



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Sentence Starters:

- Just at that moment,
- A little while later,
- With a heavy heart,

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Start a story

Build a story



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Storytelling: The intervention

Our Data Collection:



- **Quantitative: No More Marking, teacher assessments**
- **Qualitative: Filmed case studies, student voice**

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Storytelling: Key Findings

- Focus group showed accelerated NMM position gain: +6 places in ranking
- Storytelling score increase: +22 points

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (5 points)	Secure (4 points)	Meets Expectations (3 points)	Working Towards Expectations (2 points)	Below Expectations (1 point)
Story Structure	Includes all essential story elements: clear beginning, middle, and end; conflict resolution; logical sequence. Example: "Once upon a time, in a bright village, a dragon stole the princess. The knight set off on an adventure to rescue her and, after many challenges, saved her."	Includes most story elements, with minor gaps in structure or flow. Example: "A boy went to the forest. He found a treasure, but then it was dark and scary, and the story ends there."	Includes most story elements but may have some unclear sequences or resolutions. Example: "In a small town, a girl found a magic stone. She used it to fly but lost it in a storm."	Few elements are present; the sequence is confusing and lacks coherence. Example: "The girl walked. Then there was a tree. It was big. The girl got lost."	No attempt to use a story structure.
Character Development	Characters are well-developed with distinct traits and motivations; demonstrate growth throughout the story. Example: "Liam was a shy boy who learned to be brave when he faced the dragon. By the end, he stood tall, ready to protect his friends."	Characters have clear traits and motivations, but some may not show significant growth. Example: "Mia was kind and always helped her friends, especially when they needed support during the big game."	Some character traits are present but may be underdeveloped or inconsistent. Example: "The pirate was fierce and loved treasure. He was always looking for new gold."	Little to no character development; characters are vague and indistinguishable. Example: "There was a cat. It ran."	No character development present.
Setting Descriptions	Vivid and immersive settings with strong adjectives and sensory details that enhance the story. Example: "The enchanted forest was filled with towering trees, their leaves shimmering in the golden sunlight, while a gentle breeze carried the scent of blooming flowers."	Descriptions provide a general sense of the setting with some strong adjectives, but may lack sensory details. Example: "The dark forest was filled with tall trees, and the air was chilly. It felt like something was watching."	Limited descriptions; settings are mentioned but lack detail or engagement. Example: "The old house creaked at night. There were dusty rooms with lots of furniture."	Very minimal use of descriptive language; settings are unclear. Example: "It was a place. Things happened."	No setting description present.
Language Choices	Uses a rich vocabulary, including figurative language, to enhance the story and create vivid imagery. Example: "The sun dipped below the horizon like a giant orange balloon, casting a warm glow across the land."	Adequate vocabulary is used with some variety; some figurative language is present. Example: "The dog barked loudly, and it was very big, making everyone turn to look."	Limited vocabulary; repetitive language detracts from the story. Example: "The girl was sad. She cried and cried because she lost her toy."	Very little vocabulary; writing lacks interest and clarity. Example: "The thing was bad. It was not good."	No language choice considered.
Overall Coherence	The story flows well with clear connections between ideas; engages the reader from start to finish. Example: "First, the hero found a map. Next, he followed it to a cave. Inside, he discovered a treasure, and at the end, he shared it with his friends."	Mostly coherent, with some connections that keep the reader engaged, though there may be abrupt transitions. Example: "The boy was happy. He played outside. Later, he went home for dinner."	Some coherence, but several jumps in ideas make it less engaging. Example: "The girl ran to the park. She saw a cat. Then, she got ice cream."	Lacks coherence; difficult for the reader to follow the story. Example: "There was a park. Then a car. The car went fast."	The story is disjointed or unclear.

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Storytelling: Key Findings

- **PP pupils gained 3.8 NMM positions vs 0.6 for non-PP**
- SEND pupils showed 7.8% storytelling growth Vs non-SEND 6.3%
- **Richer character development and improved cohesion**
- Confidence and Engagement – increased storytelling length and complexity
- **Improved body language and willingness to take creative risks**



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Storytelling: Examples

Baseline

Please do not write your name on this sheet

Many
To day I for three trouges on the
Troabor was bowing & fohn to ma ten I
sol to bring ha ten I cloma ten I horpt mlie
Bel amt fo the hais ten we cica the
Traguns a to geva ten the troalns fal
to the for



Final

The evil dragon is a Those three evil dragons are working in Ningbo. They live in a dark cave. These three evil dragons are very happy one day and want to celebrate. They went to a large village ^{Yellow} A vandalised house An orange dragon is killing people everywhere A dragon, with blue eyebrows is looking for prey They are not so lucky sometimes, because today when ~~th~~ to look for prey, they found a knight who said you can't kill anymore The knight mounted his sword and stabbed at the dragon The three evil dragons of the dragon quickly discovered that the knight's great health care ~~had~~ the wings The knight took up his shield and blocked the pawn Even if he forced Bing Rong, to ~~best~~ in a hurry, he summoned two junior brothers, one of whom was a fire type and a younger brother ~~was~~ who was an earth type, and they used their ultimate move together But those two younger brothers were too weak, and the eldest brother had already become a lens of strength, and in the end, they had already been killed by that kill knight.

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Storytelling: Examples

Baseline:

They was 3 dragons one of them shoot fire out of his mouth and the shidorl sard him. The 3 dragons was scery but he ~~thia~~ was not scery. and finly he cild the 3 dragons but it was not heard. and finly he cross the dragons brig and sard his friend and family.



Final:

One day thay was a powerfull knight he lived in a calim beautiful castle Then the balcony and sees his friends house burning down. down down. Quickly! he gets in his pretty fancy cot and goes to his friends house. suddenly, a three-headed scery dragon is breathing fire and was burning the house. after a kind mum helcs. after he come back to his castle. th and he ringseds happily every after.

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Storytelling: Implications

What worked:

- **Structured oral rehearsal builds narrative fluency**
- **Play – based tools foster engagement and creativity**
- **Prioritising story-telling through an element of risk-taking and trust**
- **On-going impact**

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Storytelling: Vision

- Vertical scaling across all year groups
- A school wide storytelling curriculum

Year 3 – Establish story structures

Year 4 – Tangled tales

Year 5 – Dual Perspective

Year 6 - Flashbacks

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using big voices
dragons and knights
heroes and villains
making the story flow
thinking
story shaker
that we can make up our own stories
writing
speech
oracy activities
boxing clever

Word cloud generated from pupil questionnaires, with word size reflecting frequency of use in response. This breakdown shows that children valued interactive tools like the Story Shaker, creative writing and structured techniques such as Boxing Clever. They also valued performance and the freedom to create.