



Curriculum Statement - Oracy

Intent

The intention of our oracy curriculum is to allow our children to become confident communicators. This includes:

- Being able to speak confidently and appropriately in a range of contexts
- Speaking using clear diction and correct grammar
- Understanding that different tones, registers and vocabulary may be appropriate in different contexts and for different audiences, and being able to adapt speech appropriately
- Using speech to express their feelings and opinions and knowing that these feelings and opinions are valued and important
- Asking and answering questions appropriately
- Using a wide range of 'tier 2' and 'tier 3' vocabulary (*terminology explained in the 'implementation' section*)
- Listening to, respecting and responding to the comments of others
- Developing an understanding of the importance of body language and gesture in speech, and that a large amount of communication is non-verbal

Of all the strands of the English curriculum, oracy (spoken language) is the one children will use most through their lives. Furthermore, our speech will often be one of the first elements others use to make a judgement about us. Developing confident speakers who can express their thoughts and feelings clearly, confidently and appropriately is fundamental.

We view listening as an equally important oracy skill to speaking. Where there is a speaker, there will usually be at least one listener. In a conversation, we will usually be listening for at least as much time as we are speaking. Active and attentive listening is a core oracy skill, as it recognises and respects the value of the spoken input of others, and it allows us as speakers to make relevant contributions that support, build on, challenge or clarify what has already been said.

We believe good quality oracy education is now more important than ever. Many children will spend large amounts of time online or using electronic devices in isolation. This will often mean they are not communicating with others, and may not be hearing good models of speech.

Moreover, many children now in school missed out on key formative experiences due to Covid lockdowns, when nurseries, playgroups and other baby and toddler activities were not able to operate. Many parents did wonderful work with their children during this time, but by definition were not able to recreate the social and linguistic experience of mixing with large numbers of other children for the first time during these important months and years. Whilst the impact of these lockdowns on children is still being investigated, there is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that the language development of some children was affected by this.

Finally, language development is a core strand of our Pupil Premium strategy, as we recognise that good spoken and receptive language is fundamental both to children's ability to access the school curriculum, and to their social and emotional readiness for learning.

Our oracy curriculum is designed to give children regular and varied opportunities to communicate purposefully, reflect on their interactions with others, and become more effective speakers, listeners and communicators.

Implementation

Elements of oracy teaching are present in all aspects of school life and our curriculum. In some cases, these are formally taught and form a key part of classroom pedagogy, and in others, they are a core element of the values and ethos of our school.

We are conscious to promote all [four strands of oracy](#): Physical, Linguistic, Cognitive and Social/Emotional oracy. All four together comprise the core elements of good communication. None can be taught in isolation, but aspects of each can be made the focus of a specific activity.

Oracy is taught explicitly in school through:

- Designated oracy lessons. In these sessions, children practice oracy skills; play games designed to develop their speaking and listening; are encouraged to express opinions; use sentence stems to develop their speaking and language skills.
- Many areas of the wider curriculum, including history, geography, science, religious education and RSHE are taught using an oracy-based pedagogical approach, meaning there is significant emphasis on exploring key concepts and vocabulary through structured speech activities and discussion.
- Reading and maths lessons also have specific, structured oral elements built in to planning.
- There is an oracy component to all other curriculum teaching. Children are encouraged to formulate and express precise responses to taught content regularly, and to reflect on, evaluate and improve these responses.
- In all areas of the curriculum, teachers and support staff will use higher level questioning to encourage children to articulate their thoughts more deeply or clearly.
- In all teaching, problem solving approaches are modelled by teachers, which will demonstrate an 'inner voice'. Children are encouraged to replicate this way of thinking in their own approaches to tasks.
- Teachers use a variety of strategies to model thinking and to encourage participation. These include: '*silent solo*', where children are given time to consider a question and formulate a response before sharing their ideas with the class or with a talk partner, '*turn and talk*' where children discuss taught concepts with a partner, '*taking hands*', where children are able to volunteer a response, and '*cold call*', where children are chosen for responses by the teacher.
- Generally, 'hands up' is discouraged as a means of participation unless paired with one of the strategies listed above. All of these strategies require children to engage carefully with the teacher, or whoever else is speaking, as they will know they will be called upon to respond to the lesson content in a variety of ways throughout the lesson. Listening to others and responding to what they say is an important aspect of oracy. Children will always be given time to formulate a response, and teachers will target their questioning carefully. Questions in class should stretch or deepen a child's learning or understanding, but **should never leave them feeling anxious or humiliated**.
- Sentence stems are used to promote correct grammar and to encourage children to speak in full sentences, as well as making responding to questions more accessible for less confident children.

- In English lessons, 'Tier 2' vocabulary is explicitly taught. Tier 2 vocabulary are higher order words which go beyond basic expression of meaning, for example: '*immense*', '*absurd*', '*ecstatic*'.
- When new Tier 2 vocabulary is taught, it is introduced, explained and used in context by the teacher before children have the opportunity to experiment with the word. Part of learning a new word includes examining circumstances in which it would *not* be an appropriate word to use.
- In the wider curriculum, 'Tier 3' vocabulary is explicitly planned into the teaching of different units of learning. Tier 3 vocabulary are domain-specific words which often have a technical meaning: 'photosynthesis', 'archaeology', 'tempo'. Taught Tier 3 words are regularly revised and revisited, as well as being displaying in classrooms.
- In EYFS, talk forms a key element of curriculum provision and assessment. Provision is designed deliberately to allow children constant opportunities to talk, share, collaborate and negotiate.
- The 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' are promoted through the EYFS curriculum, and these encourage children to develop their communication skills.
- Our F2 classes use 'Drawing Club' to teach writing and promote good oracy and language and vocabulary acquisition.
- 'Helicopter Stories' are also used in EYFS. Children tell a story to an adult (the story can be of any length or complexity, and on any subject) and the adult records their words. The story is then read back to the class by an adult, whilst children act the story out. This encourages all children to know their words and ideas are valuable and will be treated with respect. It encourages the children to see the value of sharing their ideas and also provides opportunities for teachers to model correct speech, as grammatical errors are corrected when the stories are repeated to the class.
- Some element of provision remains for our Year 1 classes at the start of the school year. This provision allows children to continue the language development and emotional regulation they began learning in EYFS. Provision for Year 1 children recognises that learning through structured and focussed play remains important, and that not all children will be immediately ready for full days of formal learning when they leave EYFS.
- In Key Stage One, elements of Talk for Writing remain in our English curriculum and are used at the teachers' discretion when introducing new text and grammar features.
- Children throughout school are given opportunities to formulate the sentences they will write orally before committing them to paper. Doing this is an explicit part of EYFS and Key Stage One pedagogy. Talking postcards are used in some instances for SEND children throughout school who may struggle to remember their ideas or to transfer them onto paper.
- Once the children's work has been written, children are often given the opportunity to read it aloud to the class.
- When writing or learning poetry, there are opportunities to perform their work.
- Every phase in school will participate in a performance every year. All children are given the opportunity to participate in singing and acting. For some children, this is an incredibly challenging thing, and, whilst no children are made to perform if they do not want to, those with anxieties are coached sensitively so that they too can experience delivering their words in front of an audience.
- Other opportunities for children to develop and use oracy skills include: making presentations to their class (for example, for election to the School Council), discussion prompts during 'Picture News' assemblies; 'Show and Tell' opportunities, which children are encouraged to prepare for in detail at home; children learning and performing jokes for Comic Relief; the school's annual Talent Show; participation in school debating competitions; question and answer sessions with visitors such as the local MP or as part of our annual Careers Fair.

Oracy forms a part of our school culture, ethos and values through:

- Our culture of listening to our children. Children at Strawberry Fields will always be given an opportunity to tell their side of the story. Children's opinions and responses will always be listened to and respected. Children know this and we believe this encourages them to know that their voice is valuable and the things they say matter. This is in keeping with our 'Relationships and Behaviour Policy'.
- We share this ethos with our parents/carers.
- Where children have specific difficulties with speech and their spoken language is significantly below that of their peers, we act quickly to refer for Speech and Language Therapy assessment and support. Investment in additional SLT hours is an important part of both our SEND and Pupil Premium strategies.
- Circle time groups, 'social stories' interventions, 'socially speaking' and turn-taking interventions all form an important part of our wider provision as a school.
- For pre-verbal children, early communication support such as PECS, Makaton and objects of reference may be used.
- Some children in school who experience additional challenges regulating their emotional responses or behaviour will have specific trusted adults they can speak to.
- Teachers will always model correct speech, both in general when teaching or speaking to children, but also by sensitively repeating back things children have said using the correct grammar.

Impact

The impact of our oracy teaching will be assessed through the progress our children make as speakers, listeners, communicators, collaborators, presenters, actors and performers during their time at Strawberry Fields.

The impact of good oracy teaching will also be measurable in terms of outcomes in other subjects. Children who can use and understand a wider range of Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, and who can understand detailed texts, nuanced arguments and the points of view of others are likely to achieve higher outcomes across the whole curriculum. It is important to note that whilst this is one way to measure our success in teaching oracy, and an undoubted benefit of doing so, oracy education is incredibly important in its own right. It is taught at Strawberry Fields for its own sake *as well as* for its impact on other curriculum areas.

We will refer to the National Curriculum for English and the [Voice 21](#) Progression Map when making judgements about the success of our oracy teaching. Where we are not seeing clear progress and/or we do not see the outcomes we expect, we will adapt our oracy provision as required.