



10 Years of Impact 2015–2025



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

This is called oracy.

Yet, unlike literacy and numeracy, oracy is not routinely taught or valued in our education system, meaning that too many children do not develop these vital skills.

At Voice 21, we're on a mission to change this.

What happens when we prioritise oracy?

Bishop Young Academy started working with Voice 21 in 2018. Oracy has been integral to their school improvement journey and has had a profound impact on their students.

“

Oracy education has changed my life.

TIA, FORMER STUDENT

“

They've blossomed into these really opinionated young people.

DENNY ABBOT,
ORACY CHAMPION

“

Oracy has given students more power in themselves and in their own learning.

LOUISE CORBETT, SUBJECT LEAD – SOCIOLOGY



Ten years ago, Voice 21 set out to drive a big, irreversible change in the education system.

To enable every child to use their voice to thrive in school, work and life by ensuring oracy is given the same status as literacy and numeracy in state schools across the UK.

Our approach:

Equip a critical mass of teachers and schools

with the knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality oracy education and build a network of schools that exemplify this in practice.

Demonstrate that oracy can and should be taught in schools,

with growing support from educators and policymakers.

Place oracy on the national policy agenda,

ensuring schools recognise oracy education as essential to providing a well-rounded and effective education.





Our impact:

We have trained over 16,000 teachers and 4000 leaders in oracy, improving the quality of oracy teaching and learning across the UK.

1,138 schools, including **over 80 Oracy Centres of Excellence,** are working to embed high-quality oracy education

p.6

Students in longstanding Voice 21 Oracy Schools develop stronger oracy skills, showing what's possible when oracy is deliberately and explicitly taught.

+50% oracy skills in established Voice 21 Oracy Schools compared to those in new schools

p.10

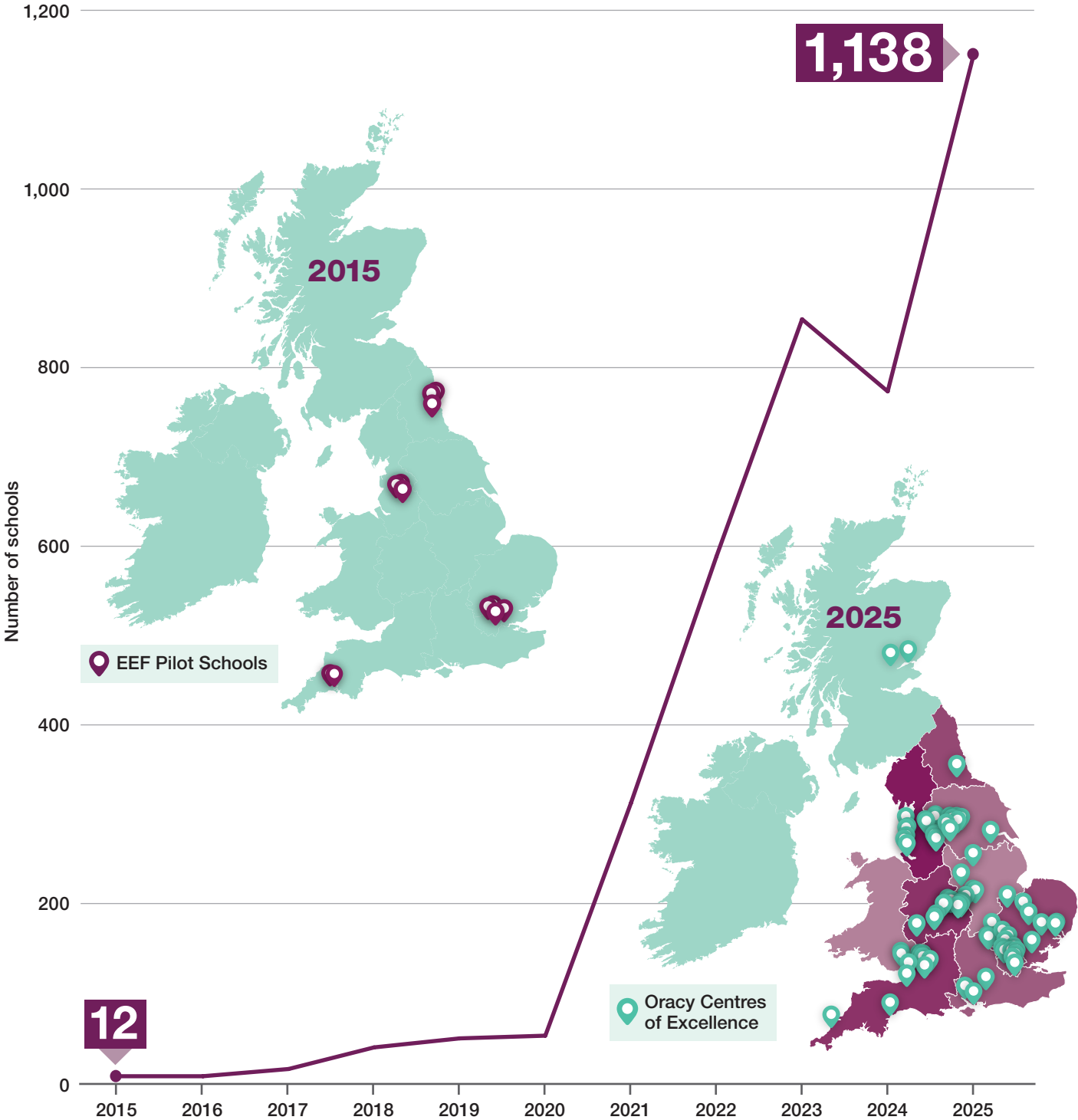
Oracy is now recognised as a vital element of a well-rounded and effective education, with growing support from educators and policymakers.


1 in 10 schools now have a named Oracy Lead

p.12

We have built a national network of Voice 21 Oracy Schools.

They prove what is possible when oracy is given the same status as literacy and numeracy. Together, they are reshaping the education system as we know it.





Our network of Voice 21 Oracy Schools is powered by the passion and expertise of dedicated teachers and leaders.

Since 2015, we have equipped over 16,000 teachers and 4,000 school leaders with the knowledge and tools to embed oracy in their classrooms and across their schools — increasing expertise in the system.

We work predominantly with schools serving economically disadvantaged communities.

It is especially important that children facing systemic barriers receive a high-quality oracy education that equips them to thrive in school and beyond.



6 in 10 Voice 21 Oracy Centres of Excellence are in the top 40% of schools with the greatest proportion of students eligible for Free School Meals.



Seeing the impact of oracy on students has transformed my teaching. It's especially important at my school, where **it can feel like lots of children have the odds stacked against them.** Through oracy, my students are active in their learning. They become mathematicians, historians, scientists, through the rich discussions they're part of. This love of learning and identification as learners can only be an asset to them as they go up to secondary school.

JON CHAPMAN, ORACY LEAD,
SAMUEL BARLOW PRIMARY ACADEMY
(32% OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR
FREE SCHOOL MEALS)



“

Hazelbury is a diverse and highly inclusive primary school in North London, serving many children who start the school with limited language and communication skills. Oracy is a core value for us as an aspirational and inclusive school that values the rights of each and every individual. We've always known the impact oracy has on future life chances and so it is more important than ever that we enable our children to communicate effectively with each other and engage actively in their learning in order to succeed in the future.

**MEL BOWMAN, ORACY LEAD, HAZELBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL
(31% OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS)**



Case study | Primary

Longsight Community Primary

Manchester



211 students on roll



40.3% of students eligible for free school meals



With Voice 21's support, we've woven oracy into the very fabric of our school, like a golden thread running through everything we do

SUSAN PARKER-STONE, HEAD OF SCHOOL

A progressive curriculum for spoken language

Children benefit from a progressive oracy curriculum which outlines which oracy skills will be explicitly taught in each year group. They apply these through talk-rich lessons, becoming confident, enthusiastic speakers who enjoy sharing their learning.



I like how everyone gets a turn to speak

USMAAN, YEAR 2

Opportunities to 'speak like a...specialist'

Pupils develop their subject knowledge through explicit teaching of specialist vocabulary and subject-specific ways of speaking. In maths, children explain reasoning; in science, they present findings, rehearse explanations, and debate complex ideas.

By the time that pupils leave Year 6, they are confident, articulate learners who are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils have a voice and are listened to in school. The school's work to develop pupils' communication skills results in self-assured pupils who can discuss and debate topics with other pupils. [Children's] ability to discuss their learning with confidence is impressive

OFSTED, 2024

Instilling pride in children's voices

Each week, one child in each class is named 'Speaker of the Week' in assembly, celebrating progress in oracy and fostering a sense of pride and confidence in children's voices.



Case study | Secondary

Meden School

Warsop



1075 students on roll



35.1% of students eligible for free school meals



‘Talk Assemblies’ enable students to practice and hone their oracy skills

In weekly Talk Assemblies, students explore local, national, and global issues through small-group discussions and opportunities to ‘stand up and speak out’ by presenting their ideas to the wider school community.

[Teachers] provide pupils with opportunities to discuss their learning and answer questions. Consequently, pupils [...develop] oracy within their lessons

OFSTED, 2023



At Meden, you know your opinions are valued and that you will get respected

MAE, YEAR 9

Presentational talk opportunities build confidence

Meden has expanded presentational talk opportunities, giving all students the chance to speak to authentic audiences—from peers to visitors—building their confidence to speak in a range of different contexts.

‘Big Conversations’ tackle misinformation and polarisation

Each term, students take part in The Big Conversation—an extended oracy session tackling complex topics like misogyny, gender, and animal rights. Through structured dialogue, they develop empathy, challenge misinformation, and learn to express and respect diverse viewpoints.



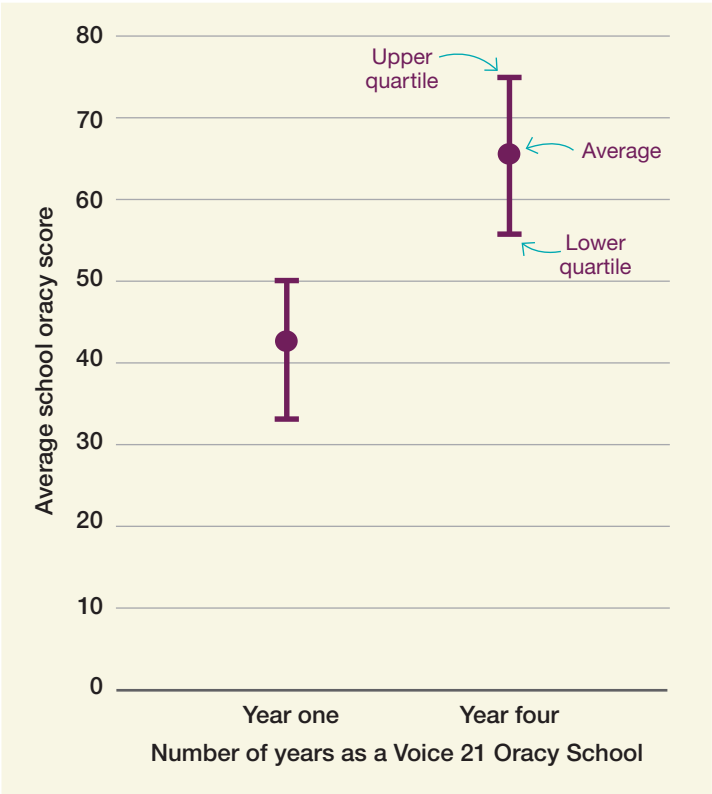
It's important to talk about what happens outside of school because we're living in that world

ALEX, YEAR 10



We can hear the difference.

Students in our schools develop the oracy skills they need to thrive in school, work and life.



“

Oracy is like a medal for me. It makes me feel strong, brave and independent. I’m grateful to my teacher for helping me be confident.

YEAR 5 STUDENT,
HERBERT THOMPSON PRIMARY

“

Oracy has helped them to develop their thinking and learning as well as supporting their confidence and presentation skills. It really is lovely to hear children of 6 or 7 years old discussing and debating their learning.

TEACHER, ST GEORGE’S PRIMARY SCHOOL

In 2023 we developed an oracy assessment powered by innovative comparative judgement software. **We assessed 463 Year 5 students in 55 Voice 21 Oracy Schools across England and Wales**, generating an average school oracy score.

Students in our most established schools have the highest scores: **50% higher** than in new Voice 21 Oracy Schools.





Oracy underpins learning

On average, oral language approaches have a high impact on pupil outcomes of

6 months' additional progress.¹



Oracy is one of the key components of teaching and learning as it helps pupils to gain a better understanding of their learning, and it helps the teacher to plan lessons that support better quality talk.

TEACHER, SELBOURNE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Oracy improves career readiness

83% of business leaders believe that strong spoken language skills unlock more opportunities for career progression in their sector.³



You cannot do any job without speaking or listening, making it very important in future life.

YEAR 7 STUDENT, CHELSEA ACADEMY



Oracy promotes wellbeing and a sense of belonging

More than a third of children

don't feel they belong at school.² A culture of oracy can help.



The moment when our children realise that everyone is listening to them is really powerful. It helps them understand that they are a valued and important member of our community.

CHRIS BARRATT, HEAD TEACHER, SUMMERHILL ACADEMY

We're growing the national movement for oracy.

80+
accredited
**Voice 21 Oracy
Centres of
Excellence**

are inspiring
change across the
education system.



4 local networks led
by Oracy Centres of
Excellence:

Oracy North-West, the **Coventry Oracy Hub**, **Jersey Oracy Network** and **Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub**, reaching more schools, building regional momentum, and expanding the oracy movement across the country.

And advocating for a system that prioritises oracy.

**We have served as secretariat
for the Oracy All-Party
Parliamentary Group (APPG),**

which published its inquiry report,
Speak for Change, in 2021, bringing oracy
into the national consciousness.

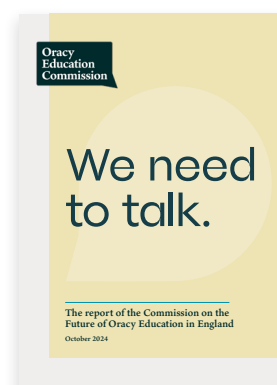
**In 2024, we hosted
the Oracy Education
Commission**

which started a national conversation
about oracy and created a blueprint
for embedding oracy within curriculum
and assessment reforms.



68
mentions of oracy
in Parliament
since 2015

6391
downloads of the
Oracy Education
Commission's
landmark report,
We need to talk





398 educators joined the Great Oracy Exhibition in 2024,

setting the direction for the future of oracy education through powerful student performances and opportunities to share and celebrate best practice.

Just 10 years ago, oracy was a relatively unfamiliar concept in schools.

Today, it's embedded in school structures.

1 in 10 schools now have a dedicated Oracy Lead, a role that didn't exist a decade ago.

234 attendees at the 2025 Speaking Summit,

triple the attendance from its start in 2017. Each year shapes the national conversation on oracy for the year ahead.



Let's build on the momentum we've created — and the movement we've grown — to put oracy at the heart of education for every child

Take an early look at our 2025–30 strategy. We want to create an Oracy Generation of young people who have had speaking, listening and communication skills woven throughout their entire school careers.

Excellence

We will continue to support schools to deliver a high-quality oracy education and become Voice 21 Oracy Centres of Excellence. This means each year, more children in the most economically disadvantaged communities will find their voice to thrive in school, work and life. These Centres will exemplify high-quality oracy education and provoke systemic change.

Evidence

As demand for oracy education grows, so does the need to add to the robust research and evidence base. We will invest in generating and sharing insights on both the impact and implementation of oracy education. This will inform practice, influence policy and set the standard for the system.

Every Child

To ensure oracy is part of every child's educational experience, we will extend our reach beyond Voice 21 Oracy Schools. We will work collaboratively to build capacity across the system to deliver a high-quality oracy education for every child.



**A generation of
children ready to
use their voices,
be heard and
shape the future.**

Thank you

A heartfelt thank you to all of the teachers and school leaders we've had the privilege of working with over the past ten years. Your dedication, energy and belief in the power of oracy have transformed the educational experiences of so many children and young people.

We're also deeply grateful to our supporters — your trust and generosity have made this work possible.

Allan & Gill Gray Foundation
 Allen & Overy Foundation
 Bain & Company
 Big Change
 The British Academy
 The Considered Ask
 The Draper's Charitable Fund
 The Dulverton Trust
 Education Endowment Foundation
 The Fidelity Foundation
 Gwyneth Forrester Trust
 Impetus
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 John Horseman Trust
 Leathersellers' Company Charitable Fund
 Minton Charitable Trust
 The Mohn Westlake Foundation
 NESTA
 Oxford University
 SHINE
 St John's Foundation



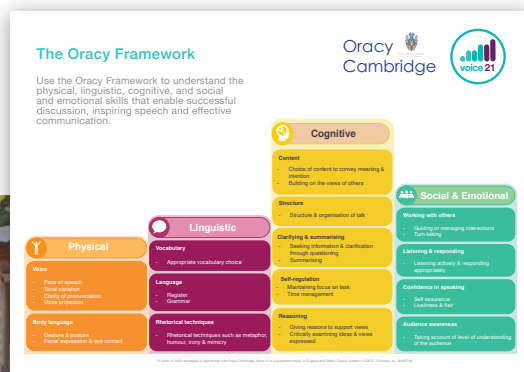
- 1 Education Endowment Foundation (2023). Oral Language Interventions. London: Education Endowment Foundation
- 2 Ingram, J., Stiff, J., Cadwallader, S., Lee, G., & Kayton, H. (2023). PISA 2022: National report for England. Department for Education
- 3 You Gov polling, 2024. Commissioned by Voice 21 on behalf of the Oracy Education Commission.

10 Milestones in 10 Years

2015

The Oracy Framework developed

As part of an EEF Pilot in partnership with Voice 21 and Oracy Cambridge, the Oracy Framework was developed, demystifying oracy and empowering teachers to teach their students this important skill.



Filton Avenue Primary School

2023

Sir Keir Starmer announces oracy as a priority in education agenda

In a speech outlining Labour's Opportunity Mission, Sir Keir Starmer – now the UK's Prime Minister – announced that oracy would be a key part of his government's education agenda.



2024

We Need to Talk report is published

A panel of experts, led by Geoff Barton, CBE, and hosted by us, worked collaboratively over six months to produce a landmark report. This influential document presented key recommendations to the new government on how to deliver on its manifesto pledge to prioritise oracy in education.



“

We will weave oracy through a new national curriculum that finally closes the gap between learning and life, academic and practical, vocational skills, school and work

SIR KEIR STARMER

2016***The State of Speaking in our Schools published***

The State of Speaking in Our Schools highlighted that, whilst most teachers felt that oracy was critically important for their students, the majority had not received any training in oracy over the last three years. We set out to change this.

**2017****National Oracy Leaders Programme launched, in conjunction with Oracy Cambridge**

We launched our first programme – National Oracy Leaders – to build leadership capacity for oracy in schools and launch a movement to raise the status of oracy in schools across the UK.



First cohort of National Oracy Leaders

2020**Voice 21 Oracy Schools launched**

We launched Voice 21 Oracy Schools, our flagship school development programme. This long-term partnership model enables us to work closely with schools to embed high-quality oracy education and meet the Oracy Benchmarks through tailored training, expert support, and practical resources.

**2019*****The Oracy Benchmarks published***

Our Oracy Benchmarks set the standard for high-quality oracy education, offering a clear framework for schools to develop and assess their oracy provision.



We Need to Talk launch event

**2024****Oracy included in the terms of reference of curriculum and assessment review**

Oracy is formally incorporated into the terms of reference for the government's comprehensive review of curriculum and assessment, chaired by Professor Becky Francis, with a report expected in Autumn 2025.

2025**Launch of our new strategy: an oracy generation!**

In Autumn 2025, we will officially launch our new strategy, outlining our vision and plan for the next decade to empower a generation of children who are equipped to use their voices, be heard, and shape the future.

“

It has been the single most impactful initiative on children's behaviour, enthusiasm for learning and their confidence

HEAD OF SCHOOL, CHARTER ACADEMY

“

Our school-wide focus on oracy has led to significant improvement in students' confidence to advocate for themselves

SENIOR LEADER, THE HAYFIELD SCHOOL

“

Oracy has made me more confident in speaking in front of the class. I feel proud sharing my ideas with everyone

YEAR 6 STUDENT, SAMARÈS SCHOOL

“

Every voice is valued, every voice is heard, every voice is respected

TEACHER, NEWSOME ACADEMY

“

Pupils can articulate their emotions and are more actively engaged in their learning

SENIOR LEADER, KEW WOODS PRIMARY SCHOOL

“

Your voice is your power

YEAR 4 STUDENT, CHARTER ACADEMY

“

Oracy underpins all we do at Leigh and it has raised the standards of teaching

MIDDLE LEADER,
LEIGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

“

Oracy is important because it is good to share ideas and we can learn from each other

YEAR 6 STUDENT, FINHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

“

Students are learning to work together and listen to each other's points of view

TEACHER, WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

