



SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION: THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR ORACY

Links to the Curriculum and Assessment Review and SEND white paper

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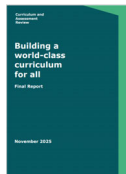
WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

- Oracy is now defined broadly to include spoken language, listening, non-verbal communication, sign language and AAC (Curriculum and Assessment review, 2025).
- National reforms emphasise early identification, consistent assessment and equitable access to support.
- School readiness targets highlight the importance of communication skills as a core developmental priority.
- Oracy is positioned as a key driver of attainment, inclusion and long-term life outcomes.



SYSTEM REFORM AND ORACY

- Curriculum and Assessment Review final report, November 2025 includes:
 - Oracy should be embedded as a core curriculum component
 - Assessment of oracy should be improved and made more consistent
 - Teacher training and professional development should include oracy



➤ Oracy is essential for learning, inclusion, and life chances — and the system must treat it as such.



UNPICKING ORACY

- Purposeful, confident and effective spoken communication.
- Includes active listening, reasoning, collaboration and the ability to influence others.
- Strongly linked to reading, academic progress, social development and employability.
- Requires pupils to express ideas clearly, respond appropriately and engage in dialogue.



FOUR DIMENSIONS OF ORACY?

- Physical** – pitch, tone, clarity, body language.
- Linguistic** – vocabulary, grammar, register, precision.
- Cognitive** – structuring ideas, reasoning, perspective-taking.
- Social & Emotional** – confidence, interaction, adaptability.



➤ These dimensions rely on underlying speech, language and communication development.

THE SLC FOUNDATIONS FOR ORACY

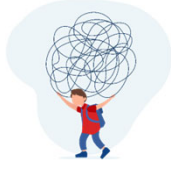
Oracy depends on pupils having:

- Attention and listening skills.
- Understanding of spoken language.
- Narrative skills to organise ideas.
- Intelligible speech sound production.
- A broad and flexible vocabulary.
- Grammatical competence.
- The ability to use inference in conversation.

➤ Without these foundations, pupils cannot fully access oracy-supportive teaching.

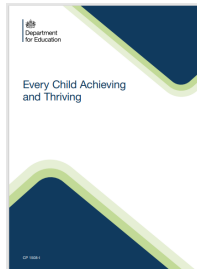
WHAT ABOUT THOSE PUPILS WITH SLCN?

- SLCN remains the most common area of need in primary schools.
 - Many pupils with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties have underlying, unidentified language needs.
 - Large proportions of vulnerable groups (including disadvantaged children and looked after children) present with significant, but previously unrecognised, SLCN.
- When language needs go unnoticed, pupils struggle with discussion, reasoning, group work and expressing ideas — all core to oracy.



SYSTEM REFORM AND SEND

- School and Local Authority inclusion plan
 - Links to Ofsted focus on inclusion
 - Early identification
 - Mainstream inclusion
 - Digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs)
 - Tiered support model
 - Experts at hand
 - Major investment (£7bn+)
- Consultation closes 18.05.26



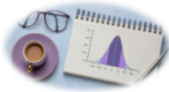
SCREENING: IDENTIFYING BARRIERS EARLY

- Screening at the start of each key stage helps identify pupils who may struggle with communication or oracy.
- Early identification prevents escalation into wider learning or emotional difficulties.
- Screening data supports planning at pupil, class, school and trust level.
- Early action ensures pupils can access oracy-supportive teaching from the outset.



ASSESSMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF NEED

- Assessment clarifies the specific language barriers affecting oracy.
- Enables personalised support plans and targeted teaching.
- Supports collaboration between teachers, SENCOs, TAs, parents and therapists.
- Provides measurable data to track progress and demonstrate impact.



INTERVENTION: STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION FOUNDATIONS

- Working on the following areas will support oracy:
 - Phonological awareness.
 - Vocabulary development.
 - Verbal comprehension.
 - Verbal reasoning.
 - Narrative structure and sequencing.
 - Speech sound production.
- Interventions should be evidence-based, needs-focused and designed to transfer learning back into classroom talk.

PRACTICAL CLASSROOM STRATEGIES (1/2)

- ✓ **Start early**
Prioritise communication and language from the earliest stages (and continue throughout).
- ✓ **Identify and respond**
Use screening and assessment to understand barriers to oracy.
- ✓ **Bridge intervention and classroom practice**
Ensure pupils apply new skills in discussions, presentations and group work.
- ✓ **Create communication-friendly environments**
Encourage contributions, reduce pressure, and model supportive interactions.





PRACTICAL CLASSROOM STRATEGIES (2/2)

- ✓ **Teach listening explicitly**
Active listening underpins collaboration and comprehension.
- ✓ **Model effective communication**
Use clear language, respectful responses and structured talk.
- ✓ **Provide structured opportunities**
Debates, paired talk, group reasoning, presentations.
- ✓ **Reflect and adapt**
Support pupils to evaluate their communication and adjust teaching accordingly.



TECHNOLOGY AND ORACY

- Digital tools streamline identification, assessment and monitoring.
- Technology supports consistent practice across schools and trusts.
- Enables efficient tracking of progress and impact.
- Helps reduce inequalities in access to support.



WHOLE-SCHOOL, PLACE-BASED APPROACH

- Oracy development is influenced by the whole school environment.
- Provision should reflect local needs while maintaining consistent standards.
- Standardised assessments allow comparison to specific age population, supporting accurate identification.
- A whole-school approach ensures communication is valued across the curriculum.



THE IMPACT



Strong communication skills lead to:

- ✓ Increased confidence and engagement.
- ✓ Improved academic progress.
- ✓ Better social relationships and emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ Greater readiness for future learning and employment.

TIME TO THINK

- Which pupils struggle with oracy in your setting?
- Could underlying communication needs be contributing?
- How robust are your current identification and support processes?
- What might you change or strengthen?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Oracy relies on strong speech, language and communication foundations.
- Many pupils have unidentified SLCN that affect oracy (screening is vital).
- Early identification, assessment and intervention are essential.
- National reforms reinforce the importance of consistent, evidence-based practice.
- Every adult contributes to a communication-supportive school culture.



THANK YOU

- Questions and discussion.
