The Gates
Primary School
Westhoughton

Oracy Policy
July 2026
Miss L Fairhurst

Intent

Rationale

At the heart of our educational vision at The Gates is a commitment to oracy as a fundamental entitlement for all pupils. We recognise spoken language not simply as a precursor to writing, but as a powerful tool for thinking, learning, identity formation and social participation.

We recognise, value and utilise the rich and diverse communicative resources pupils bring to school and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on, share and extend their communicative repertoires. We help pupils develop confidence and self-esteem by showing them that they already have the means and skill to do things with language.

Our approach is grounded in the work of Professor Julia Snell, whose framework positions oracy as learning to talk, through talk and about talk, and in the Voice 21 Oracy Framework, which defines effective communication through the integration of cognitive, linguistic, physical and social and emotional dimensions.

We believe that high-quality classroom talk:

- Deepens understanding and supports cognitive development
- Enables pupils to articulate ideas, challenge thinking and co-construct knowledge
- Builds confidence and a sense of belonging
- Prepares pupils to participate fully in society

Oracy is therefore both a pedagogical approach and an outcome in its own right.

Principles of Equity – A Socially Just Approach to Oracy

Our oracy curriculum is underpinned by a commitment to equity, inclusion and social justice. We recognise that language is deeply connected to identity, power and opportunity, and that schools play a crucial role in addressing linguistic inequalities

We therefore commit to the following principles:

1. We recognise talk as a powerful tool for thinking and learning in itself (not only as a tool that facilitates writing). We understand that teachers and pupils actively contribute to and learn from one another through classroom talk.
2. We value every pupil voice and all contributions no matter how they are communicated (provided they are respectful and do not jeopardise others' sense of safety, belonging and inclusion in the classroom).
3. We recognise diverse language resources (including all accents, dialects and home languages) and multimodal forms of communication as valid resources for learning.
4. We celebrate pupils' differences and focus on what they bring to the classroom rather than what they lack. We encourage pupils to adopt the same equity-based approach in their interactions with others.
5. We understand that our attitudes and beliefs (both conscious and unconscious) inform how we interact with pupils and shape our pedagogic practice. We thus commit to regularly reflecting on our beliefs with colleagues as part of continuing professional development. School leaders create safe,

inclusive and dialogic spaces within which to facilitate these conversations

The Gates Vision and Aims for Oracy

We envision classrooms where oracy is central to learning and where strong, respectful relationships form the foundation for meaningful communication. At The Gates, we are committed to providing a high-quality oracy education that enables every pupil to develop as a confident, thoughtful and effective communicator.

Our aim is to enhance pupils' communication skills across the cognitive, linguistic, physical and social and emotional dimensions, while promoting socially just and inclusive learning experiences. Through this, we support pupils to develop critical awareness of language, identity and power, ensuring they are equipped to participate fully and equitably in society.

To realise this vision, The Gates ensures:

1. Safe, open and inclusive environments: Classrooms are spaces where pupils feel safe and confident to express their views, take risks and make mistakes. Strong, respectful relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils underpin all talk.

2. Co-constructed learning: Learning is co-constructed between teachers and pupils through talk. Teachers build on pupils' interests, experiences and ideas, promoting engagement, curiosity and joy in learning.

3. Space and time for talk: Talk is explicitly planned for, valued and prioritised across the curriculum. It is recognised as an important outcome in its own right, not only as a means to improve writing.

4. Pupil confidence: Pupils develop the confidence to communicate their ideas with clarity and pride in who they are and where they come from, knowing they will be listened to and respected.

Through this approach, we seek to ensure that every pupil leaves our schools able to use their voice with confidence, purpose and impact.

Oracy Frameworks

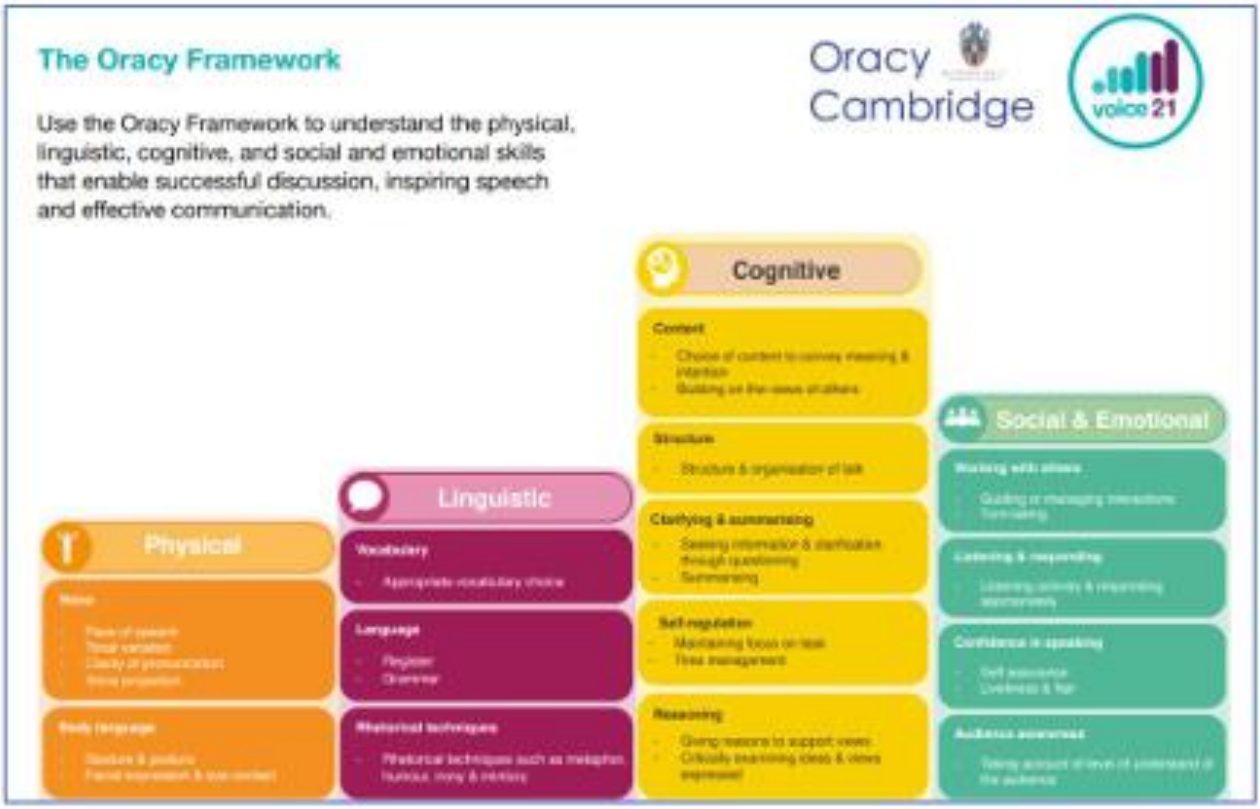
We adopt the Voice 21 framework, which conceptualises effective communication as the integration of four interrelated dimensions:

1. Cognitive (Thinking) – This is about the mental process behind communication. It means planning what you want to say, structuring your thoughts clearly, and being aware of the purpose and context of your words. For example, when explaining something complex, you might deliberately break it down into simpler parts for your listener.

2. Linguistic (Language) – This goes deeper than just "choosing words." It's about language awareness — knowing how tone, vocabulary, phrasing, and even pauses can change the meaning of your message. It also involves adapting your language to your audience (e.g., speaking differently to a child, a colleague, or a large crowd).

3. Physical (Delivery) – Communication isn't just words; it's also how you deliver them. This includes voice projection, pace, clarity, facial expressions, and body language.

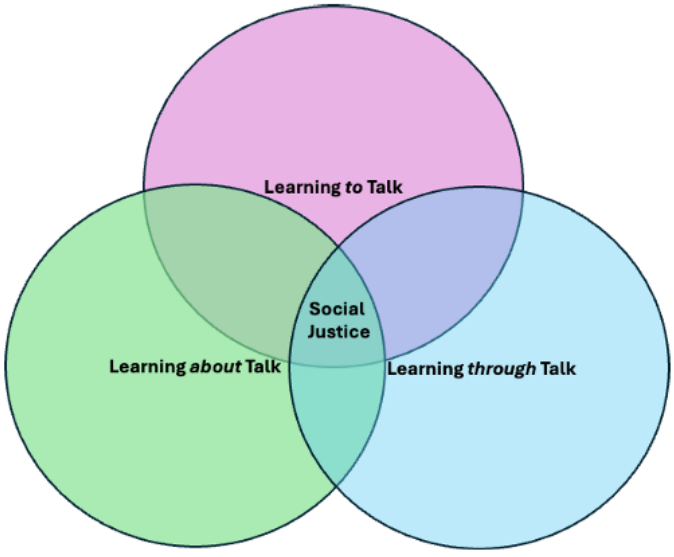
4. Social and Emotional (Connection) – This is about interaction and empathy. It means being aware of others, listening actively, responding appropriately, and feeling confident that your perspective matters. It also requires emotional intelligence — understanding your own feelings and those of others to keep communication respectful and engaging.



<u>Oracy as Learning to, Through and About Talk</u>

Drawing on the work of Professor Julia Snell, our approach to oracy is structured around three complementary strands:

- Learning to talk - The explicit teaching of speaking and communication skills, enabling pupils to become flexible, creative and effective communicators across contexts.
- Learning through talk - The use of dialogic teaching approaches to deepen thinking, understanding and learning across the curriculum.
- Learning about talk - Developing pupils' and teachers' understanding of language itself, including critical awareness of how language relates to identity and society.



Across these strands, we design learning experiences that attend to four key dimensions identified in

Professor Julia Snell's framework:

1. The structural (or 'skills') dimension empowers pupils to develop the linguistic skills and proficiencies that will help them to learn curricular content and become better communicators at school and beyond.
2. The intellectual dimension ensures pupils gain new knowledge about language and are able to relate it to the world around them.
3. The relational dimension helps pupils make sense of their own language, communicative experiences and identities and how these relate to others.
4. The critical dimension helps pupils develop critical consciousness so that they can practice critical thinking, and name, understand and address linguistic inequalities and injustices.

Implementation

Approaches at The Gates

At The Gates, there is a consistent approach to the teaching of oracy, informed by Voice 21 and Professor Julia Snell.

Oracy is explicitly taught and embedded within the curriculum. Teachers model high-quality talk and use clear scaffolds, including sentence stems and vocabulary instruction, so pupils can articulate ideas with increasing precision. Talk is planned as part of learning, with structured opportunities such as partner discussion and questioning to support thinking and understanding.

There are clear, consistent routines for talk across classrooms, including expectations for listening, turn-taking and building on others' contributions. Strategies such as choral response and guided discussion ensure high levels of participation, with all pupils encouraged to contribute.

Inclusion is integral. Teaching is adapted so all pupils can access and succeed in talk, supported by appropriate scaffolds, additional thinking time and targeted support where needed. Classrooms provide a safe environment in which pupils are confident to contribute and take risks. Opportunities to present and perform enable pupils to apply their oracy skills in a range of contexts.

Oracy includes learning through talk, that is, the use of talk-based (or 'dialogic') pedagogies to shape and enhance pupil thinking and learning across the whole curriculum. During whole-class discussion, teachers ask open questions designed to stimulate subject-specific dialogue. In addition, teachers probe pupil responses, pushing them to explain their own thinking, and build on, challenge or clarify others' ideas.

Teaching and Learning of Oracy

Using the Voice 21 Oracy Framework as a foundation, we have created a progressive framework of speaking and listening expectations that outlines the development of oracy skills from one year group to the next. This progression supports teachers in planning high-quality opportunities for talk, identifies the skills pupils need to acquire at each stage, and ensures a consistent approach to the teaching and assessment of oracy across the school. Through this framework, pupils are supported to develop as confident, thoughtful and effective communicators. Further information can be found in the Oracy Progression Document.

At The Gates, we maintain high expectations through the consistent use of agreed oracy routines across all classrooms. These include:

- The use of Talk Tokens to support equitable participation and turn-taking during group and whole-class discussions.
- Encouraging pupils to 'think aloud' to explore, develop and clarify their ideas.
- Regular sharing of stories across the school to promote reading for pleasure and develop language

and communication skills.

- Using fluency, expression and intonation to model high-quality reading aloud across the curriculum.
- Explicitly promoting oracy through the English curriculum and throughout the writing process.
- The regular teaching of reading fluency through strategies such as echo reading, choral reading and paired reading.
- Pupils are encouraged to use The Gates' Talk Toolkit to support purposeful discussion, active listening and confident communication.
- Kagan Learning structures, such as Quiz, Quiz, Trade and Rally Robin, are embedded throughout the curriculum to encourage pupil collaboration, discussion and engagement.
- Providing opportunities for pupils to orally rehearse sentences before writing.
- Explicitly modelling active listening behaviours, including maintaining eye contact and demonstrating engagement.
- The implementation of Teach Active approaches across core subjects to promote purposeful talk, collaboration and active participation in learning.

Impact

Pupils will speak confidently and purposefully, using a wide and precise vocabulary, articulating and justifying their ideas, listening and responding thoughtfully to others, and adapting their talk to different audiences and contexts.
Leaders use a range of evidence to evaluate the quality and impact of oracy. This includes:

- Lesson visits and learning walks, focusing on the quality of classroom talk, consistency of routines and levels of pupil participation.
- Gathering pupils' views on their confidence, participation and experiences of talk across the curriculum.
- Work scrutiny and curriculum evidence, identifying how talk supports thinking, vocabulary development and understanding over time.
- Assessment of oracy, using structured frameworks, including those informed by Voice 21, to assess pupils' progress across the cognitive, linguistic, physical, and social and emotional dimensions.
- Monitoring engagement of all groups of pupils to ensure equitable access and outcomes. For example, reflect on: Who talks the most, teacher or pupils? Do some pupils talk more than others? What teaching contexts/scenarios encourage pupils to talk? Whose ideas are the ones on which pupils build? Whose ideas are ignored or discounted? Who participates in directing the interaction? How are power relations realised in the classroom?
- Performance and presentation opportunities, evaluating pupils' ability to apply oracy skills in a range of contexts and audiences.
- Staff development and consistency, reviewing the impact of professional development on teacher practice and the consistent implementation of agreed approaches.

This range of evidence enables leaders to identify strengths, address variation and ensure that oracy is securely embedded across all schools.

Professional Development, reflection and sustainability

High-quality oracy provision depends on the ongoing development of staff knowledge, understanding and practice. As such, continuing professional development (CPD) and structured opportunities for reflection are central to the successful implementation and sustainability of this policy.

We recognise that developing expertise in teaching to, through and about talk requires time, collaboration and critical engagement with research and practice. CPD is therefore not seen as a one-off event, but as a sustained process that is embedded within the everyday work of schools.

We are committed to the following:

- Ongoing Professional Development: Staff engage in regular, high-quality CPD focused on oracy.
- Collaborative Professional Dialogue: Schools create structured opportunities for staff to reflect together on classroom talk, share practice and engage in professional enquiry. This may include coaching, peer observation and joint planning.
- Critical Reflection on Practice and Beliefs: Staff are supported to reflect on their own assumptions about language, communication, identity and participation, recognising how these influence classroom interactions and pupil outcomes.

Use of Evidence and Research: Professional learning is informed by current research, including the work of Professor Julia Snell and Voice 21.