



Oracy *Strategy*

Aims

Oracy is essential to our school mission. Our goal is to create ‘confident communication for life’, an initiative inspired by Talk the Talk, which builds self-assurance in all aspects of a child’s journey. To achieve this, we must model it, teach it, and plan for it explicitly in every lesson.

Our approach to oracy is centred on the concept that ‘reading and writing float on a sea of talk’. (James Britton). We view oracy not as a bolt-on activity, but as a prerequisite for literacy that unlocks the entire curriculum. By prioritising talk, we aim to improve thinking, memory, and writing across all key stages.

Definition

We adopt the definition provided by the Oracy Education Commission, which describes oracy as:

‘Articulating ideas, developing understanding and engaging with others through speaking, listening and communication’

It is proposed as the ‘fourth R’ in education, equal in importance to reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is a set of skills that can be taught, practised and mastered.

A Safe Talk Culture

A safe environment is the foundation of oracy. We agree and enforce ground rules that prioritise respect, active listening and the right to be heard.

Our SWOY Ground Rules are:

- We commit to giving our full attention to whoever is speaking
- Eyes on the speaker, hands still, hearts open
- We allow people time to pause and find their words without interrupting
- Use accountable talk (e.g. I agree with... because...)
- We challenge ideas not people
- Every one should be prepared to contribute

Types of Talk

Staff should choose the talk form that best fits the specific learning objective:

1. Routine Conversation: Daily warm-ups and quick recall.
2. Structured Oracy: Using planned frames, such as Think-Pair-Share or PEEEP, Point, Evidence, Explanation, Example, Point, to ensure all pupils think, speak, and listen.
3. Dialogic Talk: Exploratory sessions where the teacher facilitates as pupils build on each other's ideas.
4. Socratic Method: Probing assumptions and evidence to deepen understanding.

Active Listening

Effective oracy requires active listening. We use the SLANT acronym to help pupils understand the physical requirements of being a good listener:

- S: Sit up straight
- L: Listen carefully
- A: Ask and answer questions
- N: Nod your head
- T: Track the speaker

Strategies for Active Listening

We use specific classroom management techniques to ensure every voice is heard and every ear is tuned in:

- **Think Time:** Always provide a period of silence before expecting a verbal response
- **Defined Roles:** Assigning roles such as Contributor and Questioner during group work
- **No Opt-Out:** If a pupil cannot answer, the teacher models the answer or asks another pupil, then returns to the original student to have them repeat the correct response
- **No Hands Up:** Using random name selectors to ensure all pupils are prepared to speak
- **Partner Check:** Asking a pupil, tell me what your partner just said, to verify listening

Questioning Frameworks

Teachers use structured frameworks to deepen the quality of classroom dialogue.

Prompting Tools

- **Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce:** Pose a question, pause for think time, pounce on a student for an answer, and then bounce that answer to another student for a critique or expansion.
- **TED Prompts:** Tell me more, Explain, Describe.
- **Accountable Talk Stems:** Encouraging pupils to say, I agree because, or, Can you give evidence for that?

Socratic Questioning

To deepen reasoning, we use Socratic methods to:

- **Clarify thinking:** Why do you say that? Could you explain further?
- **Challenge assumptions:** Could this always be the case?
- **Seek evidence:** What prompted you to say that? What is your source?
- **Alternative views:** Could you see this another way?
- **Implications and consequences:** If that is true, what follows?

Think Pair Share Protocol

To ensure high-quality participation, we follow a strict protocol:

- **Think:** A silent 90-second period where pupils write down three bullet points
- **Pair:** Each partner has 60 seconds to speak while the other listens, then they swap roles
- **Share:** The teacher uses a no-hands-up approach to select pupils to share their partner's or their own thoughts

The 3 Vs of Communication

To help students understand how they communicate, we break skills down into the 3 Vs:

1. **Visual:** What the audience sees, including eye contact, posture, and facial expressions
2. **Vocal:** How the voice is used, including volume, pace, pitch, and clarity
3. **Verbal:** The actual words and vocabulary chosen to express an idea

Communication Games

Teaching these skills should be interactive and engaging.

Visual Communication Games:

- 1, 2, 3, Eye Contact: On the count of three, pupils must find a partner's eyes and perform a set move, such as a bob, clap, or stomp
- Slow Motion Freeze: Pupils move around the room and must freeze in a specific pose on command to practice physical control
- Show Me, Show Me: A quick-fire game where pupils use their faces and bodies to express a specific emotion or character

Vocal Communication Games:

- Expert Minute: A pupil must talk for one minute as if they are a world-leading expert on a random topic
- One Smart Fella: Using the tongue twister, one smart fella, he felt smart, to practice articulation
- Tone O: Pupils speak in complete gibberish but must use their tone of voice to convey a specific scene, such as an argument or a celebration

EAL and Oracy

We recognise that many pupils have complex ideas before they have the English vocabulary to express them. They may speak in fragments, use gestures, or utilise home language structures. Our strategy is to respond to the meaning of their communication first. By valuing the intent, we allow confidence and vocabulary to grow naturally.

