Spoken Language (Oracy)

- Speaking and listening are important to the teaching of English and permeates our whole curriculum . They are vital skills for every child.
- At Coley Primary School we encourage effective communication skills for the here and now, and also in readiness for later life. Good oracy also leads to higher order thinking and deeper understanding.
- We're all keen for our children to build their literacy skills at school, and **become confident readers and fluent writers**. But developing a mastery of English isn't just about reading and writing: it's also about becoming a good speaker.
- Here's why – and how to encourage oracy.

What is Oracy?

- Oracy is the ability to express yourself clearly and communicate with others effectively through spoken language.
- 'It's about having the vocabulary to say what you want to say, and the ability to structure your thoughts so that they make sense to others,' explains Billie Dunne, senior programme manager at the National Literacy Trust.
- A key part of oracy is for children to think carefully about the language they're using, and tailor it to their subject, purpose and audience. For example, a Year 6 pupil should understand that they need to use simpler words and sentence structures when explaining the rules of a game to a Reception child than they would if they were with their peers.

What is Oracy?

At Coley Primary School we have adopted a framework for oracy which breaks down the teaching of speaking and listening into four strands:

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Linguistic
- Social and Emotional



What is Oracy?

Oracy involves embracing different speaking skills, **learning through talk and learning to talk,** such as:

- **Discussion:** exchanging ideas with others
- **Instruction/Informing:** telling someone what to do, or explaining facts
- **Recitation**: repeating something aloud from memory e.g. poem
- **Dialogue:** having a conversation with someone, listening and showing an interest in what they say
- Oracy isn't, however, just about being a good talker – or talking lots. It also includes listening to others, and responding appropriately.

Why Oracy Matters

- So much in life depends on being a good communicator, so it's vital that children learn the importance of oracy from a young age.
- *'Good communication and language skills support children's ability to learn, think about and understand the world, and interact with others,'* **National Literacy Trust.**
- Indeed, children who start school with limited communication skills are six times less likely than their peers to reach the expected standards in English at the end of Year 6.
- Good oracy also leads to improved performance in other curriculum areas, including maths and science.

Why Oracy Matters

- Developing early oracy skills isn't just important for children's education, though.
- Children who communicate well are more likely to form good relationships with other children and adults, and may be less prone to behaviour issues as they can express their frustrations verbally rather than hitting out or losing their temper.

Why Oracy Matters

- Focusing on oracy has a big impact on children well into the future.
- *Children who are good communicators are less likely to have mental health problems as adults, possibly because they're more able to express their feelings.* **National Literacy Trust**
- *'Good oracy skills also help them secure employment later in life, with over two thirds of employers rating literacy as one of their three most important considerations when recruiting school leavers,'* **National Literacy Trust**
- *'We believe that embedding oracy into the curriculum is key to improving children's life chances.'* **National Literacy Trust**

Coley Primary School

- At Coley Primary School we promote classrooms rich in talk, in which questions are planned, peer conversations are modelled and scaffolded and the teacher uses talk skilfully to develop thinking. From EYFS to Year 6, children are given opportunities to develop oracy skills and build their confidence in talk for formal and informal situations, both in and outside the classroom.
- We have an embedded oracy curriculum ensuring the children have an opportunity to practice a variety of types of talk and practise the skills needed for different oracy outcomes: exploratory talk; interactive/negotiation; recitation; debate and persuasion; building understanding; to inform/teach and entertainment and expression.

Example activities to develop Oracy

- **Setting ground rules for speaking and listening in class**, such as putting your hand up before speaking, waiting to be chosen, and not interrupting each other.
- **Presentations** on a specified subject, or a subject of their own choosing. These could be individual presentations or in pairs or small groups, in front of their class or the whole school.
- **Discussions** as a pair, small group or whole class, for example about religious beliefs, story plots, or predicting the outcomes of experiments.
- **Hot seating:** a drama technique where one child sits in the 'hot seat,' and the other children ask them questions to answer in character.
- **Exploring a text through performance** – not just re-enacting what actually happens in the book, but also acting out what characters might do or say in a particular situation.

Example activities to develop Oracy

- **Giving oral book reviews** to the rest of the class, and then taking questions.
- **Debates**, with one group of pupils for and another against a certain topic or question, such as, 'Is it right to bully a bully?'
- **Putting on assemblies** e.g. Harvest, attended by the rest of the school and often parents.
- **School council meetings**, where council members collect questions and concerns from other pupils and present them to their fellow councillors and teachers.
- **Group work**, where communication and listening to each other are essential.
- And much, much more…

Promoting Oracy at Home

- Try some of these techniques to help your child become a more confident communicator, in school and at home.
- **Read aloud to your child** *'Reading aloud to your child, well beyond the age they can read for themselves, combines the benefits of talking, listening and storytelling within one activity that helps children build their vocabulary, learn to express their thoughts, and understand the structure of language,'* **National Literacy Trust**
- **Record a video diary** Many children aspire to being vloggers or YouTube stars, so encourage them to start a video diary, either to chart their everyday life or to record special occasions like birthdays and holidays. Please remember our guidelines about online safety and keep these within the family rather than broadcasting them online.
- **Play word games** Games like 20 Questions, Articulate, Guess Who? and I Spy are great for helping children use descriptive language and think critically about what they're saying.

Promoting Oracy at Home

- **Talk about their day** Ask your child, 'What did you do today?' and they'll often claim they can't remember, so find different ways to talk about what they've been up to. Eating your evening meal as a family is a good way to encourage conversation, while older kids are often more chatty in the car, where they feel less like they're being interrogated.
- **Phone a friend (or relative)** Persuade your child to take a break from text and WhatsApp and develop their speaking skills by making an actual phone call. *'Encouraging them to speak to different family members on the phone or on a video call will build confidence,'* **National Literacy Trust**
- **Go on a nature/listening walk** This is a great pre-phonics activity for young children, who can be encouraged to listen carefully to the sounds they hear – from traffic to birdsong – and describe them. They can also describe the natural sights they see, such as trees, animals and birds and the sky.
- **Sign them up for a club** Joining extracurricular clubs is a good opportunity for your child to talk with different people outside the home or school environment. Many of them also involve taking instructions (such as being coached in sporting techniques or to complete science or art projects), and introduce them to different vocabulary relating to their new hobby.

Promoting Oracy at Home

- The noisy classroom has a range of games and ideas to try at home with your children aiming to keep kids talking.

https://noisyclassroom.com/category/keep-kids-talking/



Words for Life

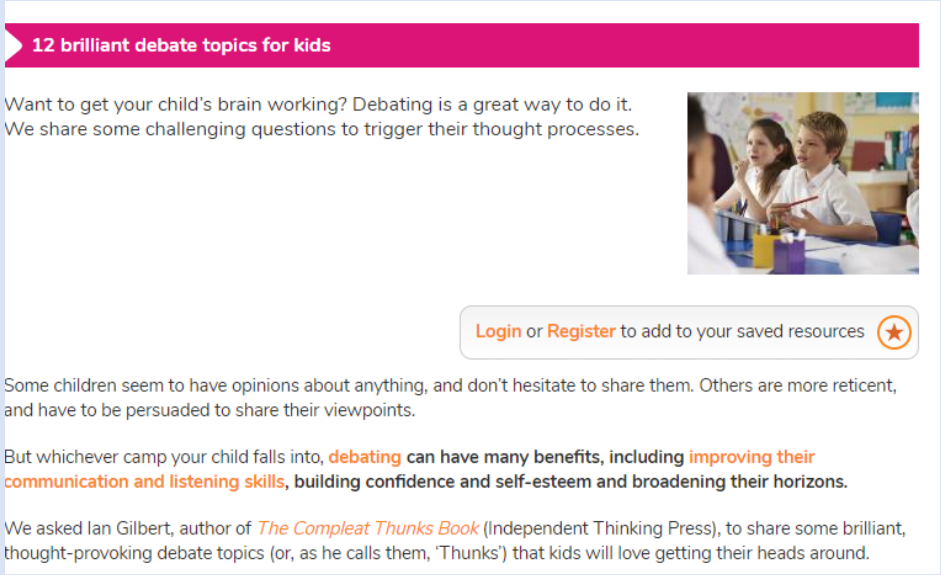
- The National Literacy Trust's **Words for Life** programme has lots of great tips and activity ideas to encourage speaking, reading and writing skills in children from birth to 11 years.

http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/



Debate topics and other useful information

- https://www.theschoolrun.com/debate-topics-for-children



12 brilliant debate topics for kids

Want to get your child's brain working? Debating is a great way to do it. We share some challenging questions to trigger their thought processes.

Login or Register to add to your saved resources

Some children seem to have opinions about anything, and don't hesitate to share them. Others are more reticent, and have to be persuaded to share their viewpoints.

But whichever camp your child falls into, debating **can have many benefits, including improving their communication and listening skills, building confidence and self-esteem and broadening their horizons.**

We asked Ian Gilbert, author of *The Compleat Thunks Book* (Independent Thinking Press), to share some brilliant, thought-provoking debate topics (or, as he calls them, 'Thunks') that kids will love getting their heads around.

- https://www.theschoolrun.com/help-develop-your-childs-communication-skills
- https://www.theschoolrun.com/improving-childrens-listening-skills