ORACY STRATEGY

"Every child deserves a voice, and every voice deserves to be heard."
Unknown

Intent

At St Thomas a Becket Primary School, we believe that every child deserves to be heard, understood and equipped with the communication skills needed to flourish both in school and in later life. We recognise that spoken language underpins learning, social interaction, self-expression and wellbeing. Through a carefully planned and progressive approach to oracy, we enable pupils to develop confidence, articulate their thinking, listen actively and engage respectfully with the views of others.

Our oracy curriculum is rooted in evidence-informed practice, drawing upon the principles of Voice 21 and the Education Endowment Foundation. We explicitly teach and develop the four strands of oracy: Physical, Linguistic, Cognitive and Social & Emotional, ensuring children build the knowledge, skills and confidence required to become effective communicators.

At St Thomas a Becket, inclusion is central to our approach. We recognise that some children face additional barriers to communication, including those with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), identified Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) targets, or Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs that may impact their confidence, self-regulation or ability to participate in discussion. We believe that every child can make progress in oracy and we are committed to providing the support, scaffolds and opportunities needed for all pupils to develop their voice. Through targeted interventions, personalised support and high-quality classroom practice, children are supported to become increasingly confident and independent communicators.

We aim for all pupils to leave St Thomas a Becket as articulate, thoughtful and respectful communicators who can express ideas clearly, justify their thinking, challenge appropriately, collaborate effectively and adapt their communication for different audiences and purposes.

Implementation

Oracy is embedded throughout daily teaching and learning and is regarded as every teacher's responsibility. It is not taught as a standalone subject but is woven throughout the curriculum, ensuring high-quality talk supports learning in every classroom.

Our approach is built around seven core oracy principles which are used consistently across the school:

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Me Then You

Teachers model high-quality spoken language before pupils are expected to respond independently. This ensures children hear ambitious vocabulary, accurate language structures and effective communication strategies.

Choral Response

Children regularly respond together, allowing all pupils to rehearse vocabulary, build confidence and actively participate in learning.

Think, Pair, Share

Structured opportunities for discussion allow children to think independently, rehearse ideas with a partner and contribute confidently to wider discussions.

Sentence Stems

Children are explicitly taught progressive sentence stems to help them instigate discussion, build upon the ideas of others and respectfully challenge viewpoints.

Cold Calling

Teachers strategically involve all learners in discussion, promoting equitable participation and ensuring every child is accountable for thinking and learning.

Kung Fu Punctuation

Children use physical actions and oral rehearsal to strengthen sentence construction, fluency and expressive communication, helping to bridge spoken and written language.

Oracy Expectations

Our progression grids provide a clear developmental pathway across the four strands of oracy. Expectations are explicitly taught, revisited and referenced regularly so that children understand what successful communication looks like at each stage of their learning journey.

Explicit Vocabulary Teaching

At St Thomas a Becket Primary School, the explicit teaching of vocabulary is a key component of our oracy curriculum. We recognise that a rich and secure vocabulary underpins children's ability to communicate effectively, understand new concepts and engage confidently in discussion across all areas of learning.

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Vocabulary is carefully mapped and clearly defined across the curriculum, including the seven areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and all National Curriculum subjects. These progressive vocabulary expectations are set out within our curriculum learning progressions, ensuring that knowledge and language build systematically as pupils move through the school.

Teachers explicitly teach subject-specific and ambitious vocabulary as part of daily classroom practice. Within English, vocabulary instruction begins on the first day of a new text. Teachers select a carefully chosen Tier 2 word and teach it explicitly by modelling correct pronunciation, encouraging pupils to repeat the word, exploring its syllables and discussing its meaning. Pupils are given opportunities to practise using the word in context through spoken sentences and discussion. This vocabulary is then revisited each time the text is read to support retention and deepen understanding.

Alongside this focused vocabulary instruction, teachers identify other unfamiliar words that may present a barrier to comprehension. These words are introduced through child-friendly explanations and supported with visual prompts, such as photographs, illustrations or Widgit symbols, enabling all pupils to access the language and meaning of the text. Through this consistent approach, children are supported to acquire, understand and confidently use increasingly sophisticated vocabulary, strengthening both their spoken language and their wider curriculum learning.

A Language-Rich Environment

Creating a language-rich environment is a key priority across the school and begins in our earliest years.

In Skylark Class, carefully planned continuous provision provides purposeful opportunities for children to develop vocabulary, engage in conversation, role play, negotiate, question and explain their thinking. Adults model high-quality language throughout the day, extending children's responses, introducing new vocabulary and supporting children to communicate effectively in a range of contexts.

Where appropriate, children access the NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention) programme to strengthen oral language, vocabulary and listening skills. Targeted support is provided for those identified as requiring additional language development, helping to build strong foundations for future learning.

For pupils with identified speech and language needs, staff work closely with Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) professionals to implement individual targets and strategies within the classroom. Recommendations are incorporated into daily practice so that children can regularly rehearse and apply new communication skills in meaningful contexts. This ensures that intervention is not isolated but forms part of a cohesive approach to developing communication across the school day.

What Oracy Looks Like at St Thomas a Becket

Children will:

- Speak in full sentences.
- Use ambitious and subject-specific vocabulary.
- Listen actively and respectfully.
- Build on the ideas of others.
- Challenge viewpoints appropriately and respectfully.
- Explain and justify their thinking.
- Adapt their communication for different audiences and purposes.
- Participate confidently in discussions, presentations and collaborative learning.

Teachers will:

- Explicitly teach and model effective communication.
- Provide structured opportunities for purposeful talk in every lesson.
- Use the school's agreed oracy routines consistently.
- Refer regularly to sentence stems and progression expectations.
- Support pupils with SEMH and speech and language needs through tailored scaffolds and intervention.
- Foster an inclusive culture where every voice is valued and every child is encouraged to participate.

Through this approach, we ensure that all children develop the confidence, vocabulary and communication skills to become successful learners, active citizens and compassionate members of their community.

ORACY STRATEGY

1. Progression of Oracy Expectations

	Skylarks	Choughs	Kestrels
Physical	Are you speaking loud enough to be heard? Are you facing who you are speaking or listening to?	Are you thinking about the speed and volume of your voice? Are you using expression to help make your point? Are you using gestures to help make your point?	Are you speaking clearly, with expression? Are you adapting the tone, pace and volume of your voice for different situations? Do your body language and facial expressions match the message you are trying to convey?
Linguistic	Are you trying to use the new words you are learning? Are you speaking in full sentences?	Are you using new and appropriate vocabulary? Are you using sentence stems to link to others' ideas? Are you joining ideas together with words such as and, because and but?	Are you choosing what vocabulary to use and tailoring it to the audience? Are you matching your language to the situation? Are you using a range of persuasive techniques?
Cognitive	Are you thinking about what to say before you say it? Are you asking and answering questions?	Is what you want to say clear and organised so the listener understands? Are you asking relevant questions and responding to others?	Content: Are you being clear about your main points as well as building on the thoughts of others? Structure:

		Are you giving reasons for what you are saying?	How have you organised your talk so that it presents a clear argument or narrative? Are you asking questions to clarify, probe and challenge? Are you responding to what is being said and providing evidence for the points you are making?
Social and Emotional	Are you taking turns to talk and listen? Are you confident to speak in front of others?	Are you taking turns to talk and listen and encouraging others to take part? Are you talking confidently and thinking about your audience?	Are you aware of the group dynamics and actively inviting others to share their opinions? Are you actively listening and responding appropriately? Are you thinking about your audience and adapting your speech appropriately?

2. Progression of Sentence Stems

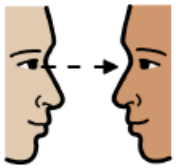
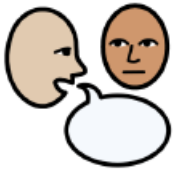
	Skylarks	**Choughs**	**Kestrels**
Instigate	I think…. I will begin with….	I would like to start by saying… In my opinion…	To instigate the discussion… My viewpoint is….

	My idea is…	We haven't yet talked about….	
Build	I also think… I'd like to add… Yes, and…	Building on X's idea…. I agree and I'd also like to add…. X's idea made me think….	To expand upon X's idea… I'd like to elaborate upon… Another thought comes to mind…
Challenge	I don't think… Have you thought about…? I disagree with…	I disagree because… To challenge X, I think…. I understand your point of view, but have you thought about…	To present an alternative viewpoint…. In order to challenge your thinking, have you thought about… I respect and understand your opinion, but have you thought about….?

Appendix A – Partner Talk Visual

Relevant Read Revisit

Partner Talk

	Turn your body
	Face your partner
	One at a time
	Use full sentences or sentence stems
	Listen carefully
	Turn back to the teacher

Relevant Read Revisit

Appendix B – Kung Fu Punctuation

Punctuation Mark	Vocal Cue	Physical Movement
Capital Letter	*Kai Shi!* (begin)	Touch fingertips above head to create an 'A' shape, then bow.
Full Stop (.)	*Yah!*	Execute a sharp forward punch with a closed fist.
Comma (,)	*Huh!*	Extend a flat hand, palm up, and pull smoothly back to the body.
Question Mark (?)	*Hiiiiiiiii Yah!*	Trace a question mark in the air, ending with a forward punch.
Exclamation Mark (!)	*Hi Yah!*	Slice a straight line down in the sky, ending with a forward punch.
Speech Marks (“ ”)	*Grrrr!*	Raise bent arms above head; pull down strongly diagonally to sides.
Brackets ( )	*Shi! Shi!*	Sharply draw curved brackets on either side of your torso.
Apostrophe (')	*(soft) Huh*	Extend one hand high to softly slice an apostrophe shape.
Colon (:)	*Yah! Yah!*	Throw two rapid vertical punches, one stacked on top of the other.
Semi-colon (;)	*Yah! Huh!*	One sharp forward punch, immediately followed by a comma pull-back.
Ellipses (…)	*Yah! Yah! Yah!*	Three rapid punches in a row, travelling horizontally sideways.