ISSUE #2

Teaching and Learning Monthly Newsletter

SHARPLES SCHOOL

October 2026



An October filled with Opportunities!

Welcome to the October edition of the Teaching and Learning Newsletter!

October has brought a brilliant energy across our school community, packed with vibrant celebrations, rich cultural exchanges, and powerful learning opportunities.

This month, we have been celebrating Oracy October alongside Black History Month, placing communication, inclusive dialogue, and diverse perspectives right at the heart of our classrooms.

We were also delighted to welcome visiting pupils from Germany as well as exchange guests from our Romanian partner school,

Looking ahead, the adventure continues as our Year 11 pupils prepare to set off for Spain during the half-term break next week; I am sure it will be another unforgettable trip.

Another unforgettable experience that happened this term was the trip to go and see Barack Obama. It was a fantastic opportunity for our pupils and allowed them to speak passionately about what makes an excellent leader.

All of these events tie directly back to our core mission this year: creating an inclusive learning environment where every voice is heard and every pupil feels a true sense of belonging.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Article on Oracy October

Sharples Shoutouts and Celebrations!

Sharples Staff Section

Resource Share

X / Twitter Links

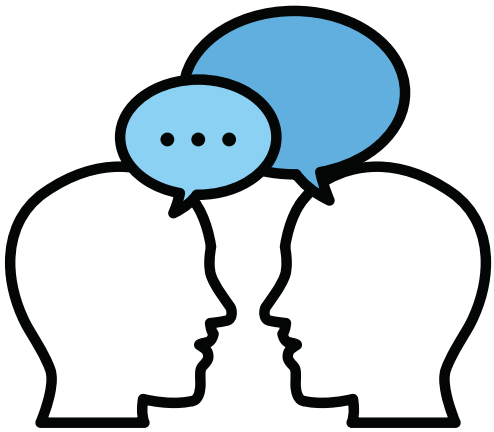
Oracy October - Georgia Kirk

Happy Oracy October, everyone!

As we head into the second half of the term, it is the perfect moment to celebrate how our collective focus on structured talk is making a tangible difference in our classrooms.

Inclusion sits at the heart of everything we do at Sharples, and ensuring every student feels a sense of belonging, confidence, and high expectation is something you deliver day in, day out.

We all know how demanding this time of term can be, and it is easy for talk initiatives to feel like "one more thing" on a busy to-do list. However, high-quality, structured academic dialogue is one of the single most effective leverage points we have as teachers. It allows us to unlock student potential without adding hours to our planning.



Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Sutton Trust consistently highlights that explicit oral language instruction and dialogic teaching can deliver up to +6 months of additional academic progress.

Explicit oracy instruction equips our most disadvantaged learners with the formal academic register they need to thrive.

Oracy isn't just asking students to "talk more." It is about explicit structure, developing fluency, vocabulary, and rhetorical skill so dialogue deepens retention and sharpens critical thinking.

To maintain a consistent, whole-school language around articulate communication, keep encouraging our pupils to use the SPEAK UP framework across all subjects:



By consistently modeling and praising these criteria, we build a culture where every student feels equipped to speak with authority.

Oracy October - Georgia Kirk

Passport to Success: Year 7 Oracy Passports!

There has to be a special shout-out to our Year 7s, who have been throwing themselves into their brand-new Oracy Passports!

Pupils are busy completing mini talk challenges in lessons and form time as they work their way toward earning their Bronze, Silver, and Gold badges. (On a side note: if you've spotted Year 7 pupils walking down the corridors wearing Bronze, Silver, or Gold badges that look less like lapel pins and more like Olympic medals or dinner plates; you aren't imagining things! They came back from the supplier slightly more "jumbo-sized" than planned. On the plus side, there is zero risk of missing who has earned their accolades!)

The enthusiasm from Year 7 in collecting their stamps and proudly displaying their massive badges has been fantastic. Keep encouraging them to get those challenge check-offs signed in your lessons! They are definitely keen to impress!



Spotlight: Oracy in Action Across Departments

It has been lovely to see how departments across Sharples have embedded deliberate talk tactics, active listening, and debate into their daily practice:

English, Drama & Music

Year 8 English: Explored character motives through hot-seating and paired scene performances of *Blood Brothers*.

Year 9 English: Crafted and performed collaborative ensemble spoken poetry.

Drama & Music: Applied the *"Talk like an Actor"* peer-assessment model and used formal musical registers (Years 8 & 10) to critique compositions and debate melody structure.

STEM & Maths

Science: Year 7 held spirited debates on renewable energy, while Year 10 evaluated radiation safety risks to refine persuasive speaking skills.

Maths: Turn reasoning into dialogue with Year 7 *"Convince Me!"* challenges on factors and multiples, and Year 10 *"Always, Sometimes, Never"* algebraic prompts.

Humanities, RE & PSHCE

History: Year 8 transformed classrooms into courtrooms, analyzing primary evidence to debate the execution of King Charles I.

RE/RS: Year 8 presented on the fairness of the Caste System, while Year 11 engaged in formal, evidence-backed debates on UK euthanasia legislation.

Oracy October - Georgia Kirk

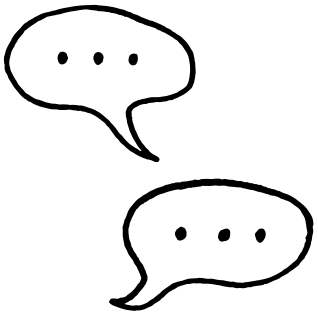
PSHCE: Year 8 examined the real-world impact of democracy by debating the power of voting.

Creative Arts, PE & Languages

Art: Grappled with conceptual enquiry, debating questions like *"Does a portrait need to be realistic?"*

PE: Integrated structured peer-feedback posters into swimming units to help pupils evaluate technical stroke mechanics.

MFL: Embedded daily target-language register routines, choral responses, and paired talk starters across all year groups.



3 Tips for using Oracy Effectively in Lessons

1. Pick One "SPEAK UP" Strand: Select a single focus (e.g., Answering in Full Sentences or Projecting) and relentlessly praise it across all your classes for the next fortnight.
2. Scaffold with Sentence Stems: Display 2–3 stems on your board to lift response quality (e.g., "Building on [Name]'s point, I would add...")
3. PDC Peer Visit: Take 10 minutes during a non-contact period to drop into a colleague's room and observe how they manage group dialogue or structured questioning.

Barack Obama: An Unforgettable Trip

To celebrate Oracy October with a truly extraordinary milestone, we recently hosted an Oracy Competition where pupils were challenged to write and deliver a 3–5 minute speech on the compelling prompt: *What Makes a Good Leader?*

The response was overwhelming, with students across year 7 and year 8 demonstrating incredible rhetorical technique, clarity, and passion.

Narrowing down the entries was a tough task, but 15 exceptional pupils from Year 7 and Year 8 earned a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: a trip to see former US President Barack Obama live at the Co-op Live in Manchester!

Our students represented Sharples with utter distinction. Their conduct and poise were so impressive that members of the public went out of their way to praise their politeness and articulation.

Witnessing one of the world's most renowned orators live in action made for an unforgettable evening and provided our young leaders with inspiration that will last a lifetime!
Thank you for your energy, passion, and commitment to helping our students find their voice. Let’s keep building articulate, confident, and empowered learners across Sharples!



SHARPLES CELEBRATES!



Each month we want to shout out teachers who want to share excellent practice! The first 3 teachers to email n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk with an example of brilliant practice will receive a box of celebrations delivered to their classroom!

		
Sian Cross	James Burrow	Michelle Brown
Sian has been a great addition to the English team and has worked brilliantly to ensure her classes are focused and working brilliantly at all times. Sian circulates constantly to ensure all pupils are engaged and participation is at 100% at all times.	James Burrow has been nominated for all his hard work in teaching RS as a non-specialist. The students he had last year really enjoyed his RS lessons and have shown fantastic prior knowledge!	Michelle has been working brilliantly in the Thrive sessions with Gabriel She is doing an amazing job working one to one and ensuring Gabriel is receiving the support that he needs.
When to see Sian: Mon P5, Tues P4, Weds P1, Thurs P3, Fri P4.	When to see James: Tues P3, Fri P4.	When to see Michelle: Mon P5

Sharples Staff Section



In this part of the newsletter, we want to discover more about the staff at Sharples and the incredible work they do on a daily basis.

Each month, one member of staff will feature and we will discover more about their background and how they ended up at Sharples.

This month, Matthew Fowlds has kindly detailed more about his experience into teaching.

1. When did you start working at Sharples?

I completed (ish!) my PGCE in 2020 and started at Sharples in September of that year. I was very fortunate to have secured my job before lockdown, although I certainly didn't anticipate quite how unusual my first few months of teaching would be!

2. Why did you want to go into teaching?

After graduating from university, I was unsure what I wanted to do. I lived in Spain and Italy for a few years, and teaching English was a way of funding that adventure. When I returned to the UK, training to become a science teacher seemed like the obvious choice.

3. Where did you study and was there a module / topic that you were really passionate about during your time at university?

I completed an integrated Master's in Chemistry at the University of Liverpool. My favourite topics were organic chemistry, thanks to an inspirational lecturer, and materials science. My fourth-year research project focused on low molecular weight hydrogelators, which contain around 99% water but have the properties of a solid.

I also particularly enjoyed retrosynthesis, which involves working backwards from a desired molecule to work out how it could be made from simpler starting materials. On reflection, retrosynthesis is actually quite similar to the way I plan my teaching: start with the big concept you want students to understand, then break it down into the component parts that need to be put together.

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4. What is the best part of your job?

I would be lying if I didn't say results day!

Seeing students open their envelopes and realise that all their hard work has paid off is incredibly rewarding. I'm also particularly proud when students go on to study science at college and beyond.

Sherjeel was in my first form at Sharples. Those lucky enough to see his speech to Y7 at the start of this term will understand why I was quite emotional watching him demand the attention of the entirety of year 7s and instilling in them the belief that they can achieve all they can.

It is not all about the top sets, though. I managed to catch up with two of my former students from a set 8 class during a progress evening, and they informed me they were off to university to study midwifery and radiography! Seeing where students go after leaving school, and knowing that you played a small part in helping them get there, fills me with a huge amount of pride.

5. What are you most passionate about in terms of teaching and learning?

Data. Of all shapes and sizes!

I think gathering as much useful information as possible is one of the best ways to identify where improvements can be made. That might mean looking at past exam data to honestly identify areas of weakness, using assessment data to inform targeted questioning, or using whole-class questioning techniques rather than selecting individual students.

If I ask one student a question, I get one piece of information. If I question the whole class effectively, I can get 30 times as much information and use it to adapt my teaching.

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6. What are the non-negotiables in your classroom?

Don't lie. Either to me or to yourself.

If students give up, they are effectively telling themselves that they can't do something before they have really tried. If students fall short of expectations, I am much more understanding when they are honest with themselves and with me.

I don't expect students to know everything, but I do expect them to be honest about what they do and don't understand so that we can do something about it.

7. If you could share one element of best practice with the rest of the staff, what would it be?

Know the specification and past exam questions inside out.

Knowing exactly what students need to know, how that knowledge can be assessed, how questions are likely to be worded and what is required to gain the marks is essential. It allows you to work backwards from the assessment and make sure that the teaching genuinely prepares students for what they will eventually be asked to do.

8. How do you ensure high expectations are consistent in lessons?

"Don't shrug your shoulders at me!"

Students are expected to give an answer to every question. If they genuinely feel they can't answer, they should still tell me something about the question or explain what they do know.

I think a lack of confidence often leads to blank whiteboards and "I dunno" responses when students actually have some understanding. By expecting everyone to have a go, I can often uncover that understanding and then build on it.

Resource Share

Each month, a different member of staff will provide a link to a resource that can be adapted for other lessons.



Jim wants to cover his garden with grass seed.
Work out an estimate for how much it will cost Jim.





https://x.com/teacherhead/status/2104463875550986731?s=46&t=FKJE4qMjKGpckKbVUqG1Pg

This link provides key summaries to Educational books driven by evidence informed practice.

Maths Oracy Tasks

The Maths team have worked relentlessly over the last few years to ensure their curriculum is grounded in real life, practical skills. Students are learning in real time how the mathematical problems they are solving will help them in the real world. They have also ensured Oracy and Guided Reading are a core part of the curriculum The task that has been shared by Angela showcases his and is a credit to the team. They regularly aim to give students opportunities to:

- explain and justify their mathematical thinking
- use mathematical vocabulary accurately
- ask and answer questions
- talk about how and why, rather than simply give an answer

CLICK HERE!

Click here to access the resource!