School 21 Oracy pilot
Alpha*Plus*
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Education Endowment Foundation

Evaluation Summary	
Age range	11 – 12 year olds (Year 7)
Number of pupils	TBC
Number of schools	12

Introduction

The pilot phase of the School 21 Oracy Improvement Programme will assess its suitability to be rolled out more widely – to date the programme has been implemented with one school (School 21) in East London. School 21 is a free school which opened on 2nd September 2013 with a strong commitment to oracy across the curriculum. The pilot phase will evaluate whether the innovation is scalable for use in a wide range of schools in England. Is it that 'School 21' is a particular institution, with a considerable commitment to oracy that means the initial success of this programme might not be generalised to all schools? Or – on the contrary – is it that the oracy materials and approach translate easily to a large number of schools? Further, can schools that are very different from School 21 implement the programme in a manner that is practicable? Finally, in so far as amendments are made by other schools to the oracy programme, do any such changes affect the fidelity of the programme; if they do so, is such an effect only slight (meaning that the core benefits of the programme can be enjoyed widely, even if minor changes are made) or are changes that are made to the programme in wide-scale implementation so substantial as to change the core nature of the scheme?

The intervention is currently defined in terms of a whole-school oracy curriculum and an assessment framework developed with the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge as part of an earlier EEF funded pilot. Further work to the assessment tools and the development of a teacher training package for pilot schools is planned for this next pilot phase.

Intervention

The focus of the intervention is the improvement of oracy as practised in School 21. The logic model below (Figure 1) captures our current understanding of the theoretical foundations of, and rationale for, the intervention. The **inputs** describe the core elements of the intervention i.e. who is doing what to or with whom. The **outputs** might here be conceived as necessary, intermediary outcomes of the intervention in pupils and involve assumptions about the pre-conditions for the intervention to work as expected. The **outcomes** articulate the short and medium term positive changes the School 21 oracy model is seeking to achieve in pupils, whereas the **impact** is about longer term as well as socially important intended changes. Taken together the outputs and impact text boxes explicate the rationale for the intervention.
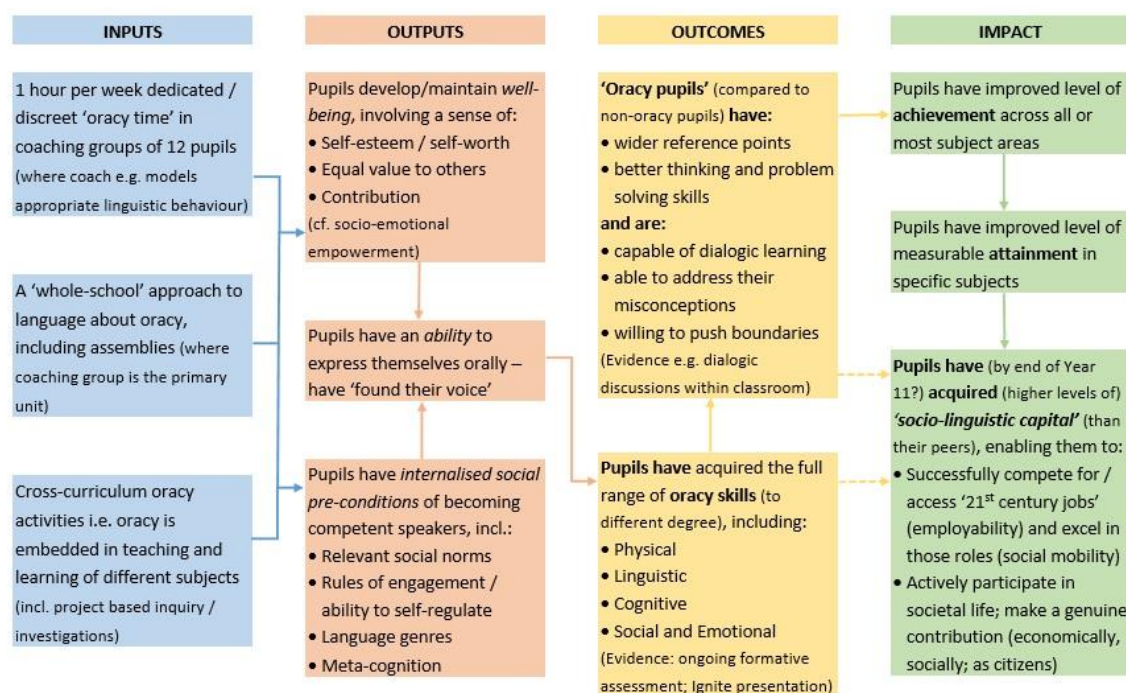
School 21 Oracy – Pupil centred oracy intervention logic model *(draft v1)* created by AlphaPlus Consultancy Ltd

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
1 hour per week dedicated / discreet 'oracy time' in coaching groups of 12 pupils (where coach e.g. models appropriate linguistic behaviour)	Pupils develop/maintain *well-being*, involving a sense of: • Self-esteem / self-worth • Equal value to others • Contribution (cf. socio-emotional empowerment)	'Oracy pupils' (compared to non-oracy pupils) **have:** • wider reference points • better thinking and problem solving skills **and are:** • capable of dialogic learning • able to address their misconceptions • willing to push boundaries (Evidence e.g. dialogic discussions within classroom)	Pupils have improved level of **achievement** across all or most subject areas
A 'whole-school' approach to language about oracy, including assemblies (where coaching group is the primary unit)	Pupils have an *ability* to express themselves orally – have 'found their voice'		Pupils have improved level of measurable **attainment** in specific subjects
Cross-curriculum oracy activities i.e. oracy is embedded in teaching and learning of different subjects (incl. project based inquiry / investigations)	Pupils have *internalised social pre-conditions* of becoming competent speakers, incl.: • Relevant social norms • Rules of engagement / ability to self-regulate • Language genres • Meta-cognition	**Pupils have** acquired the full range of **oracy skills** (to different degree), including: • Physical • Linguistic • Cognitive • Social and Emotional (Evidence: ongoing formative assessment; Ignite presentation)	**Pupils have** (by end of Year 11?) **acquired** (higher levels of) *'socio-linguistic capital'* (than their peers), enabling them to: • Successfully compete for / access '21st century jobs' (employability) and excel in those roles (social mobility) • Actively participate in societal life; make a genuine contribution (economically, socially; as citizens)

Figure 1: Pupil centred oracy intervention logic model (draft)

The intended, 'first order' outcome of the intervention is improved oracy in pupils, where oracy skills involve physical, linguistic, cognitive as well as social and emotional aptitudes and competencies. Improved oracy is believed to result in pupils having wider reference points, better thinking and problem-solving skills, increased ability to engage in dialogic learning in and through which pupils are able to explore the limits of their understanding, address any misconceptions and push the boundaries of current knowledge and conceptions. These skills and abilities are expected to facilitate improved levels of achievement across all or most subject areas and an improved level of measurable attainment in specific subjects ('second order' outcome or impact).

The main purpose of the School 21 oracy pilot is to establish whether, and to what extent, it is plausible that:

- the School 21 model would result in (positive) changes to teaching and learning oracy in other schools

- such changes in oracy translate into improvements at the pupil level (whether in oracy, reasoning skills, attainment in specific subjects, or other)

Initial work for this pilot phase, including agreement on length of time for initial training package and the number of schools to be included (12), has been undertaken. Other substantive aspects of the intervention require further development, refinement and/or clarification, including the oracy curriculum, the assessment tool, training model and descriptors of core elements. This work will be undertaken during the development stage of the pilot in Spring 2016.

During the development phase, the school 21 oracy team is refining the oracy curriculum in light of the findings from the previous pilot evaluation and updated with input from teachers at School 21.

The School 21 is undertaking some refinement of the assessment tool, following the previous pilot phase. In addition Alpha*Plus* will work with School 21 to look at how the assessment tools can best serve the purpose of summative assessment, i.e. pre- and post-intervention measurement, where it has so far been geared towards formative assessment. In addition, the oracy team is developing clear descriptors of core elements (e.g. QA/fidelity markers) of the intervention alongside 'nice to have' elements and reconsidering the current descriptors of the oracy levels.

Finally, School 21 are developing the training and support model, including deciding who will be delivering the training, how the training will be delivered and what type of online and other resources are needed to support implementation. All parties concerned agree on the importance of School 21 being flexible and responding to the evaluation, so that the best training package can be identified.

The intervention will be implemented with year 7 teachers and pupils in the pilot schools, as the year 7 oracy curriculum is the most developed at School 21. An oracy lead will be identified at each pilot school. A training and support programme will then be delivered to the oracy leads in order to facilitate the adoption and use of the oracy approach. Whilst the training is focused on the oracy leads, oracy is envisaged to involve whole-school activity. Thus, there is an expectation that the wider year 7 team will be trained by their oracy lead colleague and become the team of oracy champions at the school. Furthermore, because school senior-leadership team (SLT) buy-in and support for the intervention is deemed important, one or two SLT members from each school will be offered one day's training on oracy before implementation begins. It has been suggested that more training would be offered during the year at least to the oracy leads.

The School 21 oracy curriculum does not include 'off the shelf' lesson plans. Instead, it is made up of dedicated oracy time, cross-curriculum oracy activities, and a 'whole-school' approach to language about oracy. It is envisaged that the 'non-negotiable' core of the intervention will be a (approx.) one hour dedicated oracy lesson per week. Also, teachers are expected to incorporate (increased amount of) oracy in the curriculum in all or most subjects taught to year 7 pupils. The schools would be encouraged to find a way of introducing oracy to, and practising it as, whole school, e.g. through assemblies. The implementation of the oracy programme is supported by an assessment tool.

Methodology

Research questions

The pilot, and the evaluation thereof, has three key aims. They are to establish evidence to support the theory of change, feasibility and readiness for trial of the School 21 oracy model and 'package' in a range of different schools. The findings will be presented in the final report on the pilot and will help inform EEF's decision about whether or not to go to trial, i.e. to undertake a full impact study. The questions the pilot evaluation is designed to answer are:

Evidence to support theory of change

1. To what extent is it plausible that the School 21 model would result in (positive) changes to teaching and learning oracy across a school?

2. To what extent is it plausible that any changes in teaching oracy translate into improvements at the pupil level (in oracy, reasoning skills, attainment or other)?

3. To what extent do we see changes in pupils' oracy on pre and post measures of oracy?

Feasibility

4. To what extent are schools able to deliver the School 21 curriculum, assessment and training 'package'? (Cf. What does the 'school ready' look like?)

5. Are the quality assurance / fidelity markers appropriate?

6. Is the process of identifying gaps in quality assurance appropriate?

7. How appropriate is the use of hubs as a means of rolling out the programme?

Readiness for trial

8. Is there a School 21 curriculum, assessment and training 'package' that could be rolled out to schools (with minimal modifications)?

9. Is the School 21 oracy measurement a valid and reliable tool for use in future trials?

Evaluation Design

As this intervention is at the pilot stage of EEF's activity pipeline, it is important to understand the intervention within the context of School 21 as well as how the intervention is expected to translate to other school contexts. Our approach to evaluation is to work initially with the School 21 oracy programme team to explicate the theory of change underpinning the intervention and articulate it through a logic model. (The first version of School 21 pupil centred oracy intervention logic model is included in the 'Intervention' section of this protocol.) We also think that it is important to elucidate how the intervention is expected to translate to other schools, and have created an initial 'pilot school centred' logic model to convey our current understanding (Figure 2). We expect to revise this logic model through an iterative process as we reach increasing clarity on:

- the underlying assumptions that have shaped the intervention at School 21, in this case the oracy programme, and what is meant by an 'oracy culture'

- the underlying assumptions about how the intervention will translate to other schools, and how the programme of training for other schools is expected to support implementation in other school contexts

- what the expectations are for teaching and learning – how school leaders and teachers are expected to interpret the programme and translate this into teaching and learning activities and embed 'oracy' within a whole-school approach, any motivational effect on students of recognising achievement and impact on learning from making 'oracy skills' explicit

- how the programme fits with other parallel interventions/programme outcomes and negative or positive implications – for example other interventions for Pupil Premium pupils,

- the context for the intervention – identifying any moderators likely to affect the inputs.
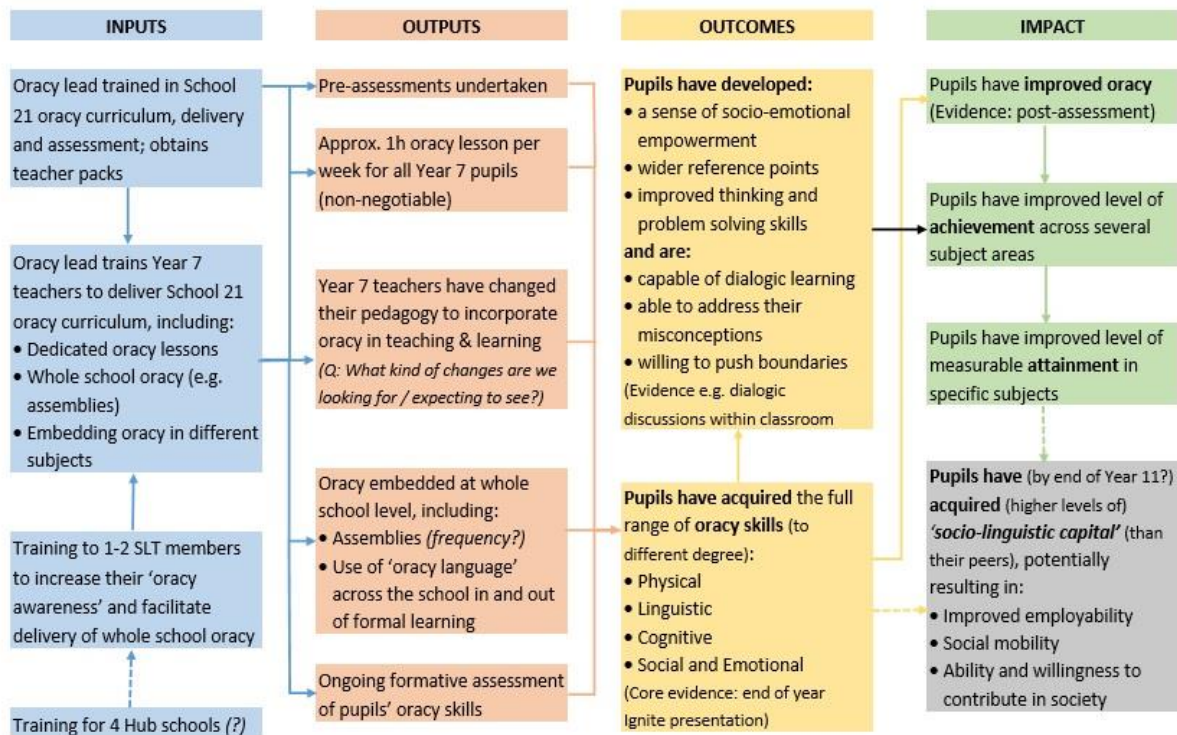
School 21 Oracy – Pilot school centred oracy intervention logic model *(draft v1)* created by Alpha*Plus* Consultancy Ltd

Figure 2: Pilot school centred oracy intervention logic model (draft)

The theoretical premises of the evaluation are that this type of pilot evaluation exercise needs to:

- understand and describe the input at the socio-genetic level – the purpose of oracy in the development of speaking and listening skills and wider key skills, such as reasoning, within a subject-based curriculum

- understand and describe the output (the processes/ mechanisms of change) – what 'engagement' with the programme looks like (micro-genetic level of activity) and classroom level outcomes

- define and measure individual pupil outcomes ontogenetic level) – learning and development

How each of these is covered is explained in the sections below.

Process evaluation

Process evaluation focuses on defining, monitoring and understanding the intervention and its implementation – what it looks like in practice and to what extent the intervention largely meets the programme developers' intention, or not. Understanding any variation in the intervention across the 12 pilot schools will help to determine how the programme translates across different contexts. The *process* may vary between schools or between teachers/ classes in terms of, for example, dosage (how much time is taken up by the programme in school/ out of school), the level and type of support from teachers (teaching and learning is teacher- or student-led/ acquisition or transmission pedagogies), the type of activities students are undertaking. While variation can be accepted as 'realistic' and monitored purely to be able to describe the intervention in practice, the pedagogic approach chosen by teachers will impact on the learning.

By applying a process evaluation methodology, we would wish to know at least the following:

- To what extent does the School 21 oracy model (theory and practice) entail anything different to what the pilot schools are already doing?

- To what extent has the training package changed the pedagogy of teachers in the pilot schools?

- What does the programme look like in practice in the pilot schools – how does this differ, if at all, to the programme in School 21 and across the pilot schools? Are we seeing, for example, support to develop oracy skills as well as their assessment?

- What are pilot-school teachers' perceptions of 'how' and 'why' the programme is making a difference, if at all, and to what extent this might be different depending, for example, on student groups or school subject?

- What are the enablers and barriers to implementation of the programme (whole-school systems/ behaviours, individual teaching practice/ different students groups) – strategy and practice?

- What else, if anything, might school leaders and teachers have needed to know about the programme and support for implementation which was not included in the training package?

- Is implementing the programme (or parts of the programme) feasible for the schools e.g. in terms of the cost implications (such as teacher time, additional resources)? Is this considered worthwhile by the pilot schools?

It has been agreed that Alpha*Plus* will have three main contact points with pilot schools: during the autumn term (initial implementation and establishing starting points of different schools), beginning of the spring term (emerging changes to pedagogy/ perceptions of student progress) and at the end of the first year of the programme (changes in school culture/ behaviour, pedagogy, perceptions of student progress and readiness for further implementation). The visits will be face-to-face to enable the researchers to maximise the number of school leaders and teachers interviewed and to allow for some classroom observations. We will also use naturally occurring data where possible, for example, schemes of work and lesson plans.

Largely qualitative data will be collected and analysed using the following methods:

- Semi-structured interviews with school leaders, oracy leads and teachers

- A short (10 minute) questionnaire taken by oracy leads during the training/planning period and repeated at the end of the first year. (This would be a questionnaire to consider individuals' perceptions of how far they have travelled in relation to the change process and an 'oracy culture'.)

- Analysis of schemes of work/ lesson plans

The agreed timetable for Alpha*Plus* visits to pilot schools to undertake interviews is as follows:

Date	Stage	Activity
Late September 2016	Baseline / pre-intervention test	Alpha*Plus* visit 50% of schools
January 2017	Feedback point 1	Alpha*Plus* visit 50% of schools

| June 2017 | Feedback point 2 | Alpha*Plus* visit all schools |

It should be noted that School 21 will be undertaking some semi-structured interviews at the schools, which Alpha*Plus* is not visiting, in late September 2016 and January 2017.

Measurements of oracy

It would be beneficial if this pilot could be used to assess the validity and reliability of the assessment tool for use in any future trial. This aspect of the evaluation would involve establishing the ideal measurement for oracy:

> The previous evaluation of School 21 developed a bespoke assessment tool. An outstanding question is whether the School 21 assessment tool (as amended) provides a measure that can reliably and validly capture progress in oracy.

> If the School 21 oracy assessment does function validly and reliably, can it ALSO be used with control schools without 'biasing them' to teach oracy differently than they would normally do? For example, if the School 21 assessment requires teacher assessment, then teachers will need to be trained to use it. Training teachers in assessing oracy will also train them in teaching oracy. This will 'contaminate them' as a potential control group.

> It would also be useful to establish which area(s) of the curriculum (e.g. mathematics attainment, English attainment, non-verbal reasoning ability) are likely to show the largest gains in attainment as a result of being taught using the School 21 curriculum.

This is additional work which will be undertaken alongside the pilot evaluation. We propose in the table below the different analytical methods we could use:

Facet of validity or reliability	Question to be resolved	Analytical methods proposed to resolve issue
Validity		
Curriculum coverage/ content evidence of validity	- Which facets of the oracy curriculum are covered by the assessment tool? - Are they covered equally, and/or sufficiently?	- Desk review of assessment documents. e.g. syllabus, test blueprint, etc. - Judgement of content experts.
Potential for 'test method effect'	- If the assessment involves teachers making assessment judgements, can it ALSO be used with control school teachers without 'biasing them' to teach oracy differently than they would normally do? - If the School 21 assessment requires teacher assessment, then teachers will need to be trained to use it? Will such assessment training affect teachers' understanding and approach to oracy pedagogy?	- Desk review of assessment documents (e.g. mark scheme, assessor training materials) - Observation of assessment sessions. - Gathering teachers' experiences/opinions via qualitative technique (e.g. verbal protocol analysis, or post-hoc interview)
Reliability		
Reliability facet: between schools	Does the instrument provide stable/robust measurement? Is this measurement replicable across instances (e.g. if 12 or more schools use this instrument to measure progress in oracy, will their measures mean the same thing across the instances?)	Generalisability study (g-study) using 'school' as a facet of variance.

Facet of validity or reliability	Question to be resolved	Analytical methods proposed to resolve issue
Reliability facet: between assessors unreliability	• Do assessors judge students' ability in a consistent way? • How do assessors' judgements demonstrate properties of: consistency, severity vs. leniency, bias/differential functioning by person (or identifiable group of persons), halo effect, use of the whole scoring scale?	G-study and/or Winsteps Facets analysis
Impact on measurement error on evaluation of progress	What is the effect of measurement error on input and output scores? For example, if there is substantial measurement error that affects both input and output scores, does this make it difficult to assess students' progress in oracy?	• Calculation of the standard error of measurement (SEM). • Exploration of different approaches to calculating the SEM. • Exploration of approach to handling SEM (e.g. if it is the same on both wings can it be discounted?)

In particular, as assessment researchers, our natural approach is to scrutinise the validity and reliability of any assessments used[1]. Validity and reliability are generic properties of 'good assessment', but researchers can choose to focus on particular facets or aspects of each. What amounts to sufficient and suitable evidence to consider an assessment (and its use) sufficiently reliable and/or valid depends upon context. For example, if an assessment is used low stakes to help teachers' judgements of students' progress, then it probably doesn't matter so much if the instrument does not provide consistent measurement between judges and/or centres. However, if the use is to provide scores for a highly quantitative comparison such as a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT), then it is essential that an improvement of X score units in school 1 means the same thing as a rise of X score units in school 2.

It is in that context that we propose the analyses set out above. We have not, in fact, seen the adapted assessments tools that will be used in this trial, but we believe that by answering the questions set out in the table we would be able to come to a considered view as to the suitability of the assessment instruments to support their intended use in an RCT. We believe that the questions in this table are the key questions to support our endeavour.

The 'validity' and the 'reliability' sections of the table pertain essentially to the oracy assessments and how they are used.

Summary of methods and tools used

Evidence to support theory of change will be measured using:

- Oracy assessment pre- and post-intervention attainment outcomes

- Pilot school teacher perceptions of change in pupils', for example, well-being, confidence (interview data)

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[1] We would argue, in fact, that researchers who use tests in their projects can tend to pay insufficient heed to the reliability and validity of assessments they use. The disciplined way in which the validation of educational assessment is carried out (for example by exam board research departments) can bring substantial insight to generic educational research programmes that employ tests.

- Pilot school teacher perceptions of change in pupils' overall attainment – progress in different subjects (interview data)
- Pilot school oracy lead perception questionnaire
- (potentially) oracy baseline assessment of year 7 (2015/16 academic year) and key stage 2 demographic and attainment data
- Year 7 (2016/2017 academic year) key stage 2 demographic and attainment data

Feasibility will be measured using:

- School 21 and pilot school senior leaders, oracy leads and head of year 7 perceptions of feasibility, including costs and widespread use of oracy assessment tool (interview data and oracy lead questionnaire)
- Analysis of oracy assessment 'reliability' and conditions required for widespread use and potential additional use of key stage 2 attainment data (and/ or other standardised test)

Readiness for trial will be measured using:

- School 21 and pilot school oracy leads and head of year 7 perceptions of the extent to which the School 21 'package' could be rolled out (interview data and school demographic data – to consider any difference in viewpoints)
- Analysis of 'reliability' of oracy assessment tool
- Analysis of most appropriate area(s) of the curriculum to detect a gains in attainment

Sampling and recruitment

It has been agreed that the pilot will be conducted in 12 schools. School 21 is developing minimum requirements for a school to take part in the pilot (i.e. minimum requirements of a School 21 oracy school).

The criteria for the overall sample of schools discussed so far include the following:

- The schools should be varied, but preferably have a high proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and/or be school with a large attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others.
- Most of the schools should be enthusiastic to take part, i.e. have a genuine commitment to introducing / integrating oracy, to allow us to see the intervention in action. (Here 'most' rather than 'all' because it will be useful to a have a mix of schools to understand challenges of implementation.)
- School 21 will aim to get a range of schools from across the country, but with the aim of going to schools that are fairly accessible from London and that are clustered in geographic areas (for ease of delivery).
- While it might help to have a few schools in London, the others could be in the North East, or Manchester, or anywhere that is accessible by rail from School 21.
- School 21 is keen to recruit the schools to regional or local 'hubs' of three to form mutually supportive groups. Whilst the schools would be located close together, the hubs would preferably not be 'pre formed' but formed synthetically by School 21 to help with the readiness for trial.

At the selected pilot schools, the whole Year 7 cohort would be expected to be involved in the oracy improvement programme.

It has been agreed that School 21 will work together with Alpha*Plus* to develop recruitment materials, including the memorandum of understanding and consent letters.

Costs

Costs will be determined in terms of in addition to 'business as usual'. For example, time for training teachers (if this is over and above usual CPD activity), hard copies of training materials (photocopying), co-ordination of oracy programme (oracy lead time where this does not replace other activity).

Ethics and registration

Professor Roger Murphy (associate director) chairs Alpha*Plus*' Ethics and Quality Assurance Board and will have responsibility for signing off the research and evaluation design and research instruments. Alpha*Plus* have an 'ethics' questionnaire which will be completed and signed off as part of the research and evaluation design.

Personnel

Name	Roles	Responsibilities
Jenny Smith	Project manager / lead evaluator	Responsible for all aspects of the evaluation; researcher in process evaluation strand
Dr Anna Grant	Senior researcher / evaluator	Contributing to all aspects of the evaluation 'life cycle'; researcher in process evaluation strand
Dr Hilary Emery	Advisor: teacher training	'Critical friend' teacher training
Naomi Horrocks	Advisor: teacher training qualitative researcher	'Critical friend' teacher training; contributing to process evaluation
Andrew Boyle	Assessment lead/ quantitative researcher	Leading work on assessments and suitable measurements for the pilot
Prof Neil Mercer	Advisor: oracy	Advisor: oracy
Dr Ayesha Ahmed	Advisor: oracy assessment	Advisor: oracy assessment
Dr Dougal Hutchison	Senior statistician	Advising on statistical analysis of quantitative outcome data
Prof Roger Murphy	Chair Ethics and Quality Assurance Board	Sign-off ethics protocol and research instruments
Saad Rafiq	Junior statistician	Statistical analysis

Risks

No.	Risk	Mitigation
1.	Decision re choice of constructs to be assessed proves controversial, and gives one or more stakeholders grounds to challenge the research.	Research design includes as many stakeholders as possible in decision making as early as possible. In particular, close relationship with School 21, and involvement of Ayesha Ahmed and Neil Mercer of Cambridge University as Alpha*Plus* associates. Such involvement makes it more likely that decisions will be understood, achieve consensus, etc.

2.	If the research design merely treats intervention/control as a binary variable (yes/no), then we will have lost information about how much pupils progress in oracy.	Use an oracy assessment if it is reasonable to do so.
3.	Schools are unable or unwilling to either administer new assessments, and/or provide background/ demographic information on pupils.	Consider practicability as an important criterion in choice of assessment tools and data collection design. (Use extant sources of data – e.g. national pupil database) if possible. *Also, note how this risk may conflict with risk no. 2.*

Data protection statement

The evaluation of the School 21 oracy pilot is carried out under contract on behalf of the EEF by Alpha*Plus* Consultancy Ltd (www.alphaplusconsultancy.co.uk), which is an educational consultancy. For the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998, EEF is the data controller for this project and is responsible for ensuring that all personal data collected as part of the evaluation is processed in compliance with the Act. Alpha*Plus* are responsible to EEF as data processors in a way that is compliant with the Data Protection Act.

No school or individual will be identified in any report arising from this evaluation. The information collected will be used for research purposes only and no information that can identify individuals will be used for any other purpose without the permission of the individual concerned. Any personal data collected will be destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act when it is no longer required.

Timeline

Date	Activity
January 2016	AlphaPlus and School 21 teachers have met and identified priorities within the oracy programme for the purpose of developing the teacher training materials and further development of assessment tool
February 2016	School 21 has refined the oracy curriculum
March 2016	Alpha*Plus* and School 21 have refined assessment tool
Easter 2016	School 21 has recruited schools to pilot
Easter 2016	School 21, with support from Alpha*Plus,* has developed School 21 'package', prioritising elements of the framework that schools need for buy in at recruitment (e.g. training time, timetabling requirements)
Summer 2016	School 21 has supported pilot schools to identify and train oracy leads in schools 'Baseline' oracy assessment of year 7 (2015/16 cohort) – pilot schools
Early September 2016	School 21 has trained Year 7 teachers in pilot schools
Late September 2016	Baseline / pre-intervention test: AlphaPlus visit 50% of schools
January 2017	Feedback point 1: AlphaPlus visit 50% of schools
June 2017	Feedback point 2: AlphaPlus visit all schools
June 2017	Post-intervention test undertaken by pilot school Year 7 pupils
July 2017	AlphaPlus present initial findings to EEF and School 21
November 2017	AlphaPlus submit final evaluation report to EEF