

# Using ebooks to support reading for pleasure in 2023

A survey of primary school teachers

In partnership with



# Introduction

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This research aims to provide insight into teachers' experiences of, and attitudes to, using digital tools and resources, particularly ebooks, to support children in becoming independent volitional readers.

The many benefits of reading for pleasure are shown in an ever-increasing number of studies ([Cremin, 2023](#)), with regular reading for pleasure associated with everything from better cognitive performance ([Sullivan & Brown, 2013](#)) to greater wellbeing ([Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018](#); [Sun et al., 2023](#)). The emergence of affordable ebook readers in the 2000s offered readers an increased choice of reading opportunities, materials and experiences. However, debates about the different qualities of reading in print or on screen have occupied many researchers and commentators in recent years (see, e.g., [Delgado et al., 2018](#), [Furenes et al., 2021](#), [Troseth et al., 2020](#)), with prominent academics calling for better understanding of, and support for, reading digitally (see, e.g., [Wolf, 2018](#), [Baron, 2021](#)).

Our own research has found that digital reading formats can provide a route into reading for some children and young people. For example, an evaluation of a school-orientated ebook platform found that boys with the lowest levels of reading enjoyment not only enjoyed reading more on screen after taking part, but were also four times more likely to say they enjoyed reading in print ([Picton and Clark, 2015](#)). In 2019, we found that the most engaged readers were more likely to say they read across both print and digital formats, and that more disengaged boy readers and pupils receiving free school meals (FSMs) read fiction digitally compared with their more engaged peers ([Clark and Picton, 2019](#)). This research was cited as part of the government's decision to remove VAT from ebooks ([NLT, 2020](#)).

With children and young people's reading enjoyment levels at their lowest for 18 years ([Clark et al., 2023](#)), it is important to provide access to a diverse range of reading materials and to different reading formats that can encourage and enable all children to read. Our previous research suggested that many teachers lacked the resources and training to support reading for pleasure using digital tools and resources ([Picton, 2019](#)). We were interested to learn more about current experiences of using technology following the increased use of digital platforms

during the educational disruption linked with the COVID-19 pandemic. This new research aims to provide insight into teachers' experiences of, and attitudes to, using digital tools and resources, particularly ebooks, to support children in becoming independent volitional readers.

**“With children and young people’s reading enjoyment levels at their lowest for 18 years, it is important to provide access to reading formats that can encourage and enable all children to read.”**

## Method

516 primary school teachers as well as other school and support staff<sup>1</sup> took part in our online survey between June and July 2023, with 470 responding to a question about using digital tools and resources in the classroom. Of this group, nearly 3 in 5 (56%, n = 263) teachers said that they used digital tools and resources to support literacy in the classroom.

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## Key findings

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11 in 2 (49.1%) respondents were Classroom or Subject Teachers, 3 in 10 (29.7%) were members of Senior Leadership Teams (such as Headteachers, Deputies or Assistant Heads), 1 in 9 (11.6%) were Teaching Assistants, and the remaining 9.5% included Literacy Coordinators, SENCOs and Librarians. As the majority were teaching staff, the report will refer to ‘teachers’ throughout.

## Benefits of digital support for reading for pleasure

- Within the group of teachers who used digital tools, three times as many of those who said their pupils had access to ebooks rated their school's culture of reading for pleasure as 'excellent' compared with those whose pupils didn't have access to ebooks (17.7% vs 5.9%), who instead were twice as likely to say that their reading for pleasure culture was 'average' (22.1% vs 10.4%).
- Teachers had similar expectations and experiences of the benefits of ebook libraries, regardless of whether their pupils had access to one or not. Both groups felt that ebooks could offer children access to a diverse range of books (67.6% of those without ebooks thought this would be a benefit, while 78.1% of those who did have ebooks experienced this as a benefit) and support reading for pleasure in all children (48.5% expected this benefit, while 76.0% experienced this as a benefit).
- While 3 in 10 (29.5%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks felt they could support the home-school connection, more than 1 in 2 (53.3%) teachers whose pupils did have access to ebooks noticed this, suggesting some beneficial impacts of ebooks might become evident with use. As one teacher said, "Some families prefer [books] on iPads, others prefer them online. Having both gives us reassurance that more pupils are reading at home."
- Similarly, while 1 in 4 (22.1%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to an ebook library thought that support for children with limited access to books at home was an important benefit, more than 1 in 2 (53.1%) teachers whose pupils did have access to an ebook library noted this benefit. This is particularly important when 1 in 10 children from lower-income backgrounds said they didn't have a book of their own at home ([Cole et al., 2022](#)).
- Among teachers who used digital tools, teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks felt that they could have the most impact on children's reading enjoyment (87.1%), reading motivation (84.2%) and independent reading (82.4%). This was broadly confirmed by teachers whose pupils did have access to ebooks, who observed that ebooks had the most impact on children's reading enjoyment (91.9%), reading choice (90.7%) and reading motivation (86.6%).
- For teachers whose pupils did not have ebooks, the features of ebooks they would most value included a diverse range of titles and the ability to search for reading material based on personal interests, with more than 4 in 5 (83.8%) teachers saying these were important. 3 in 5 (57.4%) teachers also

valued interactive elements that supported text comprehension, which research has found can support learning outcomes for digital readers (see Furenes et al., 2020).

## Barriers to using ebook libraries: training, confidence and evidence of impact

- The barrier to using ebooks most often identified by teachers who didn't have an ebook library was a lack of CPD or other training, with almost 2 in 3 (64.9%) respondents selecting this. Relatedly, almost half (47.2%) cited staff confidence in using digital tools. In addition, 3 in 5 (59.5%) teachers had practical concerns about the administrative side of setting up and maintaining an ebook library.
- For those whose pupils did have access to ebooks, the top three barriers to their use included staff confidence (45.5%). This group also felt that a lack of information about evidence-based digital tools (41.6%) and concern about the effectiveness of digital tools and resources (39.6%) were important barriers to use.
- These findings contrast with our previous research ([Picton, 2019](#)), which found that poor access to devices, WiFi and finance were the main barriers to using digital tools and resources. The emphasis on training, confidence and evidence of impact is perhaps surprising when confidence in using digital tools might have been presumed to be relatively high post-COVID.
- Our findings suggest that teachers might benefit from improved support and resources around reading digitally and better information about the evidence base. Indeed, 1 in 3 (33.3%) teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks, and 1 in 2 (50.0%) of those whose pupils did not have access to ebooks, said they would be interested in training or CPD to support reading using digital tools, indicating an appetite for greater knowledge and confidence in this area.

## Attitudes to using digital tools and resources to support literacy

- More teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks felt positive about various aspects of reading digitally, while those whose pupils did not have access more often neither agreed nor disagreed with attitudinal statements, perhaps reflecting a reticence to express opinions on aspects beyond their experience. Indeed, a neutral or uncertain attitude was more prevalent among non-ebook users in this survey than a negative or opposed one.
- For example, 9 in 10 (91.2%) teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks agreed: “It is important to offer different reading formats to support children’s reading”, compared with 2 in 3 (66.7%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks. However, five times as many teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks felt neutral about this statement (31.7% vs 6.6%).
- At the same time, the statement “Reading on paper is better than reading on a screen” garnered the most disagreement from both groups, with more than 1 in 2 (53.3%) teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks and 1 in 4 (24.2%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks disagreeing. Again, this suggests that lack of training and information about reading digitally may be a greater barrier to use than attitudes to reading formats.

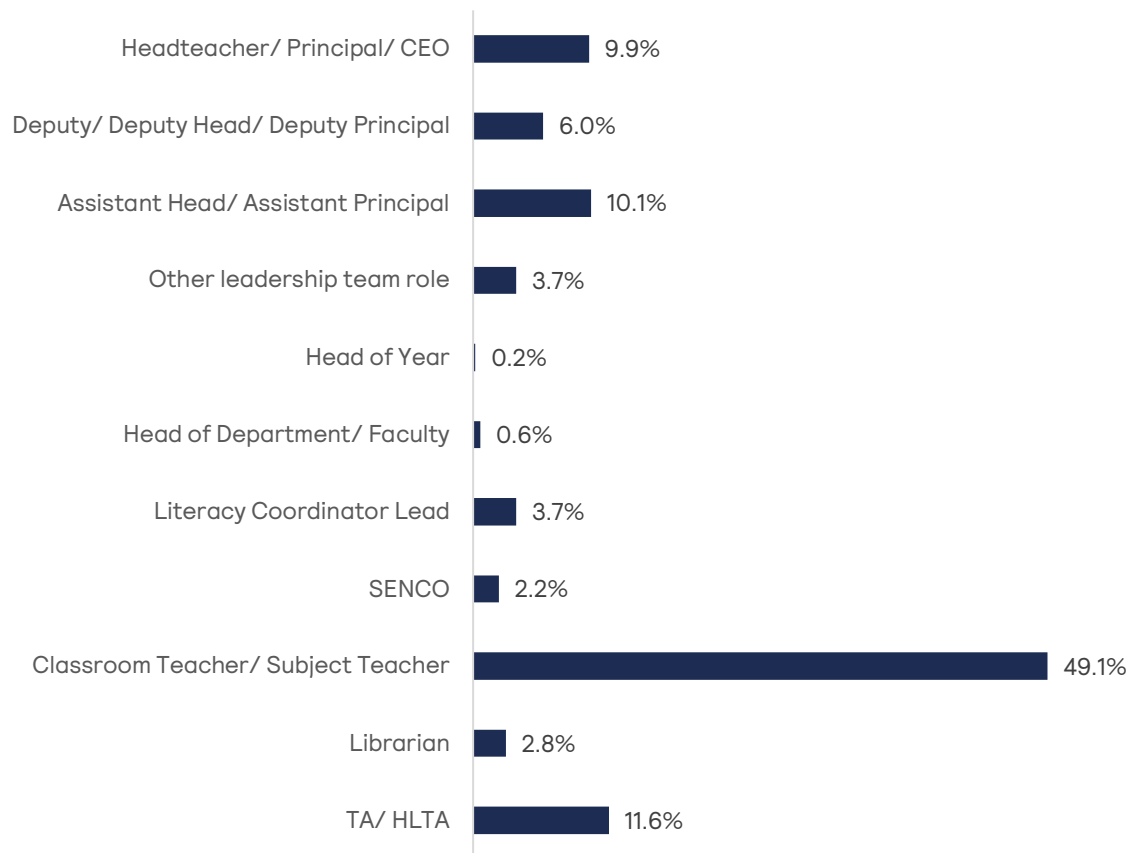
**“Ebooks help to reinforce the same books we are sending home. Some families prefer them on iPads, others prefer them online. Having both gives us reassurance that more pupils are reading at home.”**

# Using ebooks to support reading for pleasure

## Who was surveyed?

516 primary school teachers as well as other school and support staff took part in our online survey between 5 June and 5 July 2023. 1 in 2 (49.1%) respondents were Classroom or Subject Teachers, followed by members of Senior Leadership Teams (3 in 10; Assistant Heads/Principals, Headteachers/Principals, Deputy Heads/Principals or other leadership roles), Teaching Assistants (TAs)/Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs; 1 in 9) and Literacy Coordinators, SENCOs or Librarians (1 in 10; see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Job role in school**

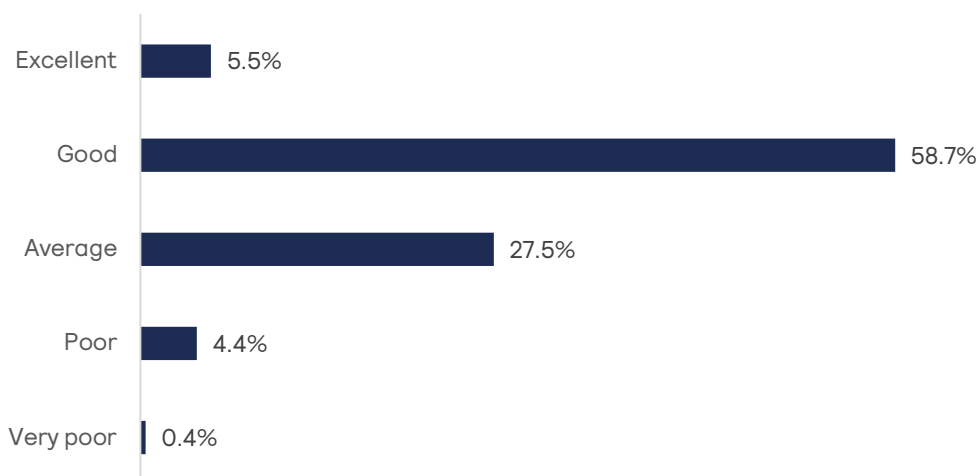


Nearly 1 in 2 (47.4%) respondents had been teaching for more than three years, with 3 in 10 (29.4%) having taught for up to three years. 1 in 12 (8.5%) were Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT), and 1 in 7 (14.8%) were TAs or support staff.

Over 1 in 3 (37%) were teaching children aged three to seven, 2 in 5 (41.0%) taught children aged seven to 11, nearly 1 in 5 (18.6%) taught both age groups, and 1 in 30 (3.4%) didn't teach primary-aged children.

To better understand the degree to which reading for pleasure is promoted across their school, we asked respondents to rate their reading for pleasure culture within their school. 3 in 5 (58.7%) rated the reading for pleasure culture in their school as good, with 1 in 4 (27.5%) rating it as average (see Figure 2). Only 1 in 18 (5.5%) rated their reading for pleasure culture as excellent. Overall, 1 in 20 (5%) rated their reading for pleasure culture as poor or very poor.

**Figure 2: How would you rate the reading for pleasure culture in your school?**



## Who used digital tools to support literacy in the classroom?

More than 1 in 2 (56.0%, n = 263) teachers who answered a question on using digital tools and resources (n = 470) told us that they used digital tools or resources to support literacy in the classroom. 2 in 5 (42.3%, n = 199) didn't and 1.7% (n = 8) said they weren't sure.

Compared with those who didn't use digital resources to support literacy, more of those who did either taught children aged seven to 11 (54.44% vs 28.6%) or both age groups (22.8% vs 12.6%, see Table 1). By contrast, more of those who didn't use



digital resources to support literacy in the classroom taught children aged three to seven (58.8% vs 22.8%).

**Table 1: Age groups taught by whether or not respondents used digital tools to support literacy in the classroom**

Used digital resources	Aged 3 to 7	Aged 7 to 11	Both
Yes	22.8% (n = 60)	54.4% (n = 143)	22.8% (n = 60)
No	58.8% (n = 117)	28.6% (n = 57)	12.6% (n = 25)
Don't know	50.0% (n = 4)	37.5% (n = 3)	12.5% (n = 1)

We were interested to explore teachers' perceptions of their school's culture of reading for pleasure and to what extent this might be associated with the use of digital tools and resources to support literacy in the classroom. Compared with those who didn't use digital literacy tools in the classroom, more teachers who used digital tools and resources rated their school's culture of reading for pleasure as 'excellent' (9.5% vs 0.0%) or 'good' (68.1% vs 48.2%, see Table 2).

**Table 2: Teachers' perceptions of reading for pleasure culture in their school by whether or not respondents used digital tools to support literacy in the classroom**

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
Use digital resources	9.5% (n = 25)	68.1% (n = 179)	18.6% (n = 49)	2.7% (n = 7)	0.4% (n = 1)	0.8% (n = 2)
Don't use digital resources	0.0% (n = 0)	48.2% (n = 96)	38.2% (n = 76)	7.0% (n = 14)	0.5% (n = 1)	6.0% (n = 12)
Don't know	12.5% (n = 1)	12.5% (n = 1)	50.0% (n = 4)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	25.0% (n = 2)

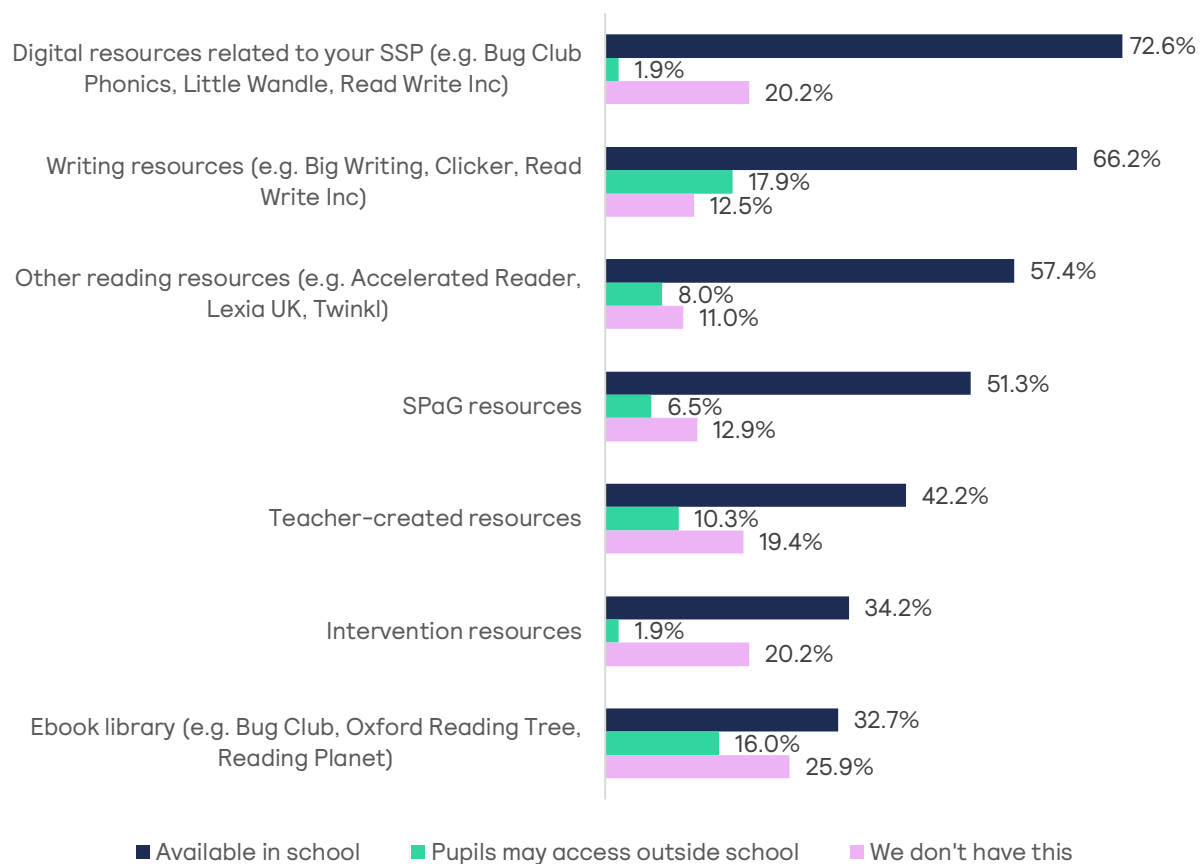
## Available digital tools

Of those who used digital tools to support literacy in the classroom, most said that they used them to support phonics, writing and reading (see Figure 3).

Nearly 3 in 4 (72.6%) teachers who told us that they used digital literacy tools in the classroom said their pupils had access to digital resources relating to systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) at school, while 2 in 3 (66.2%) said their pupils had access to digital writing resources (such as Big Writing, Clicker or Read Write Inc) and 3 in 5 (57.4%) said that their pupils had access to digital reading resources (including Accelerated Reader, Lexia UK or Twinkl) at school. Fewer of these were available to pupils to use at home.

1 in 3 (32.7%) teachers who used digital tools to support literacy in the classroom said pupils had access to an ebook library in school, with 1 in 6 (16.0%) saying that their pupils could also access these outside school.

**Figure 3: Digital resources to support literacy available in schools**



In open-ended comments, some of the teachers told us that offering pupils books in different formats helped them support families’ preferences for reading formats, while others felt that screen-based activities may not be motivating if books weren’t modern and children weren’t offered a choice:

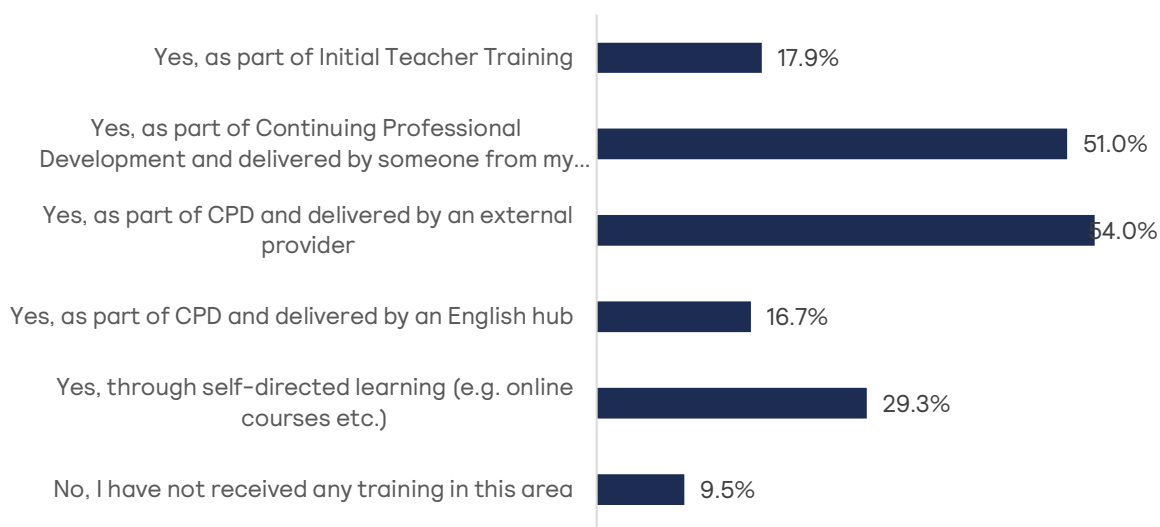
“Ebooks help to reinforce the same books we are sending home ... some families prefer them on iPads, others prefer them online. Having both gives us reassurance that more pupils are reading at home.”

“I do not think that there is any extra interest gained in getting pupils to work more online to further their reading. Most school books are not up-to-date exciting ones; children are not given choices as to what books they would like in their libraries and so consequently they have nothing to look forward to.”

## Training and CPD to support reading for pleasure using digital tools

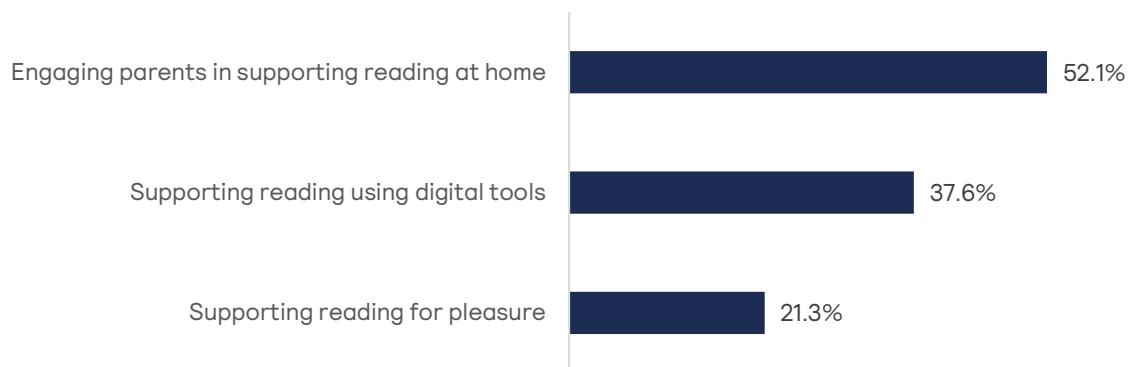
Most (90.5%) of those who used digital tools to support literacy in the classroom had received some form of training on the subject. Figure 4 shows this was most commonly from an external provider (54.0%) or someone from their school or Multi-Academy Trust (MAT; 51.0%). Only 1 in 10 (9.5%) told us they had not received any training related to using technology to support literacy in their classroom.

**Figure 4: Training received by those who use digital resources in the classroom**



When asked what CPD or training they would be interested in, 1 in 2 (52.1%) teachers who used digital tools already said they would be interested in learning more about engaging parents, 2 in 5 (37.6%) expressed an interest in supporting reading using digital tools and just 1 in 5 (21.3%) were interested in CPD supporting reading for pleasure generally (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Interest in training or CPD by those who use digital tools to support literacy in the classroom**



## Teachers whose pupils do and do not have access to an ebook library

We will now focus on two groups of teachers:

- **Digital tool users whose pupils use ebooks in school (32.7%, n = 86) or at home (16.0%, n = 42)**
- **Digital tool users whose pupils don't have access to ebooks (25.9%, n = 68)**

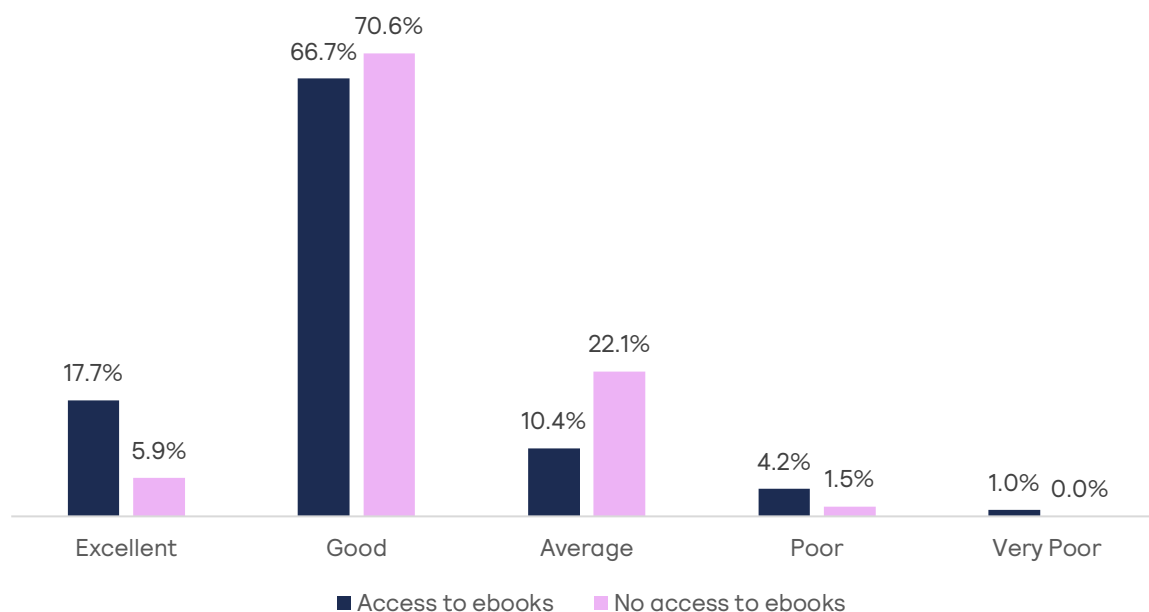
We hope that comparing these groups may provide useful insight into teachers' different experiences in this area, including the benefits of using ebooks (observed or perceived) to support reading for pleasure, barriers to using ebooks, training and confidence around using digital tools, and attitudes towards supporting reading for pleasure using technology<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about this sample (i.e. teaching role, status and age groups taught), please see the appendix

## Reading for pleasure culture

As shown in Figure 6, three times as many of those whose pupils had access to ebooks rated their school’s reading for pleasure culture as ‘excellent’ compared with those whose pupils didn’t have access to ebooks (17.7% vs 5.9%), who instead were twice as likely to say that their reading for pleasure culture was ‘average’ (22.1% vs 10.4%). Overall, only a very small percentage of both groups rated their school’s reading for pleasure culture as ‘poor’ (4.2% vs 1.5%) or ‘very poor’ (1.0% vs 0.0%).

**Figure 6: Rating of schools’ reading for pleasure culture by ebook access**



Fewer differences were found in teachers’ agreement with other statements relating to reading for pleasure. For example, most agreed that reading for pleasure was promoted across the school regardless of pupils’ access to ebooks: 90.7% of teachers whose pupils did have access agreed compared with 84.7% of those whose pupils did not have access. Similarly, around 4 in 5 felt they had time to deliver reading for pleasure effectively as part of the curriculum regardless of ebook access (83.3% vs 77.1%), and 2 in 5 felt pupils’ reading was restricted by limited library resources or availability of books at home (38.5% vs 36.1%).

## Benefits of an ebook library

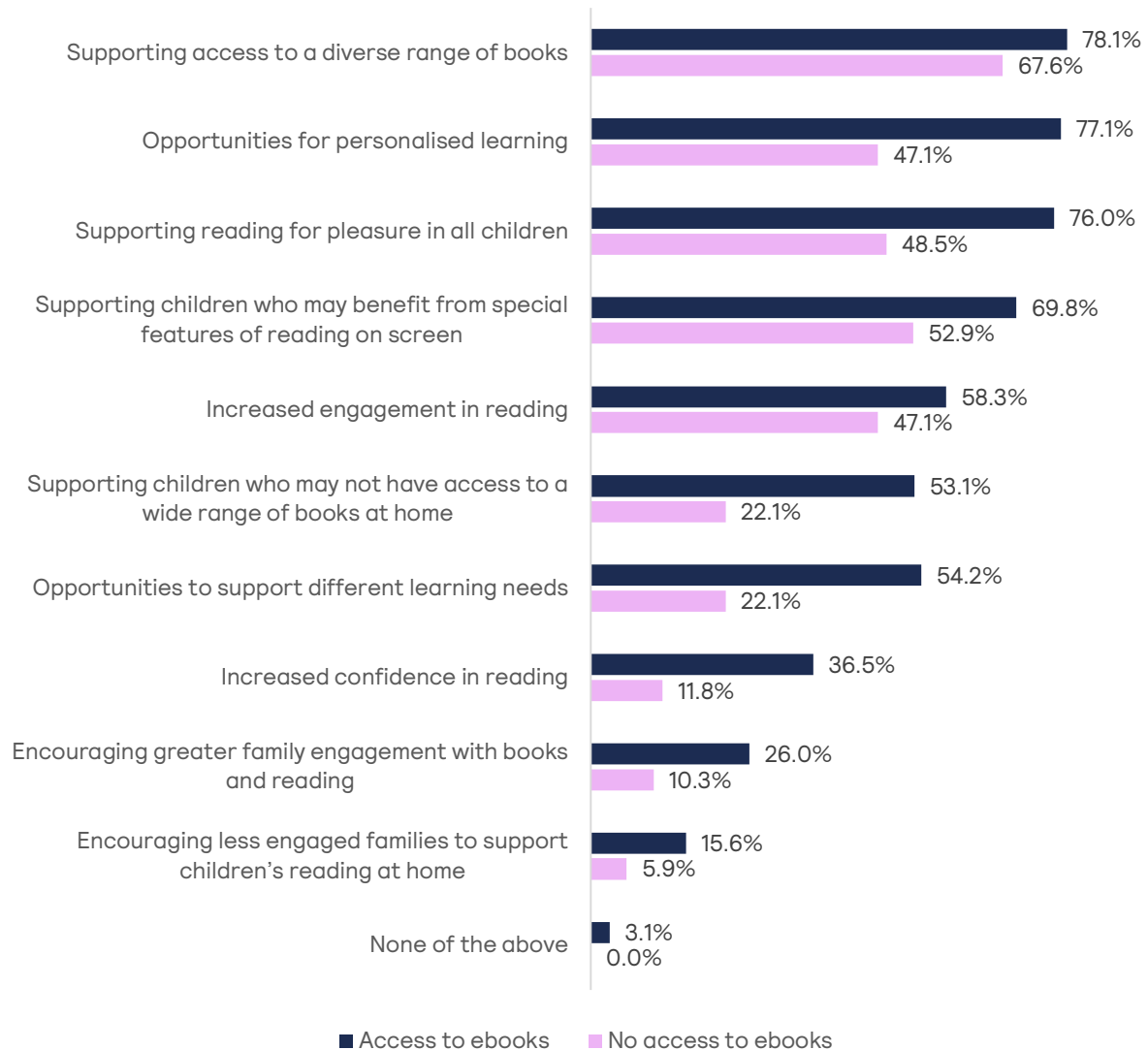
We also wanted to know which, if any, of a variety of suggested benefits teachers whose pupils had access to an ebook library had observed or experienced. Equally, we were interested to learn about which potential benefits teachers whose pupils didn't would consider most valuable.

For teachers whose pupils had access to an ebook library, the three most mentioned benefits included supporting access to a diverse range of books (78.1%), providing opportunities for personalised learning (77.1%) and supporting reading for pleasure in all children (76.0%, see Figure 7). For teachers whose pupils did not currently have access to an ebook library, the most valuable potential benefits were perceived to be supporting access to a diverse range of books (67.6%), supporting children who may benefit from the special features of reading on screen (52.9%) and supporting reading for pleasure in all children (48.5%). This suggests that perceived and experienced benefits are broadly similar, and relate mainly to offering a diverse range of reading material and supporting reading for pleasure in all children.

At the same time, more teachers with first-hand experience of using ebook libraries noticed all of the suggested benefits compared with the percentage of teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebook libraries. While this isn't surprising, it is worth noting that while, for example, 1 in 4 (22.1%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to an ebook library thought that the support for children who might not have access to a wide range of books at home was an important benefit, more than 1 in 2 (53.1%) teachers whose pupils did have access to an ebook library noted this benefit.

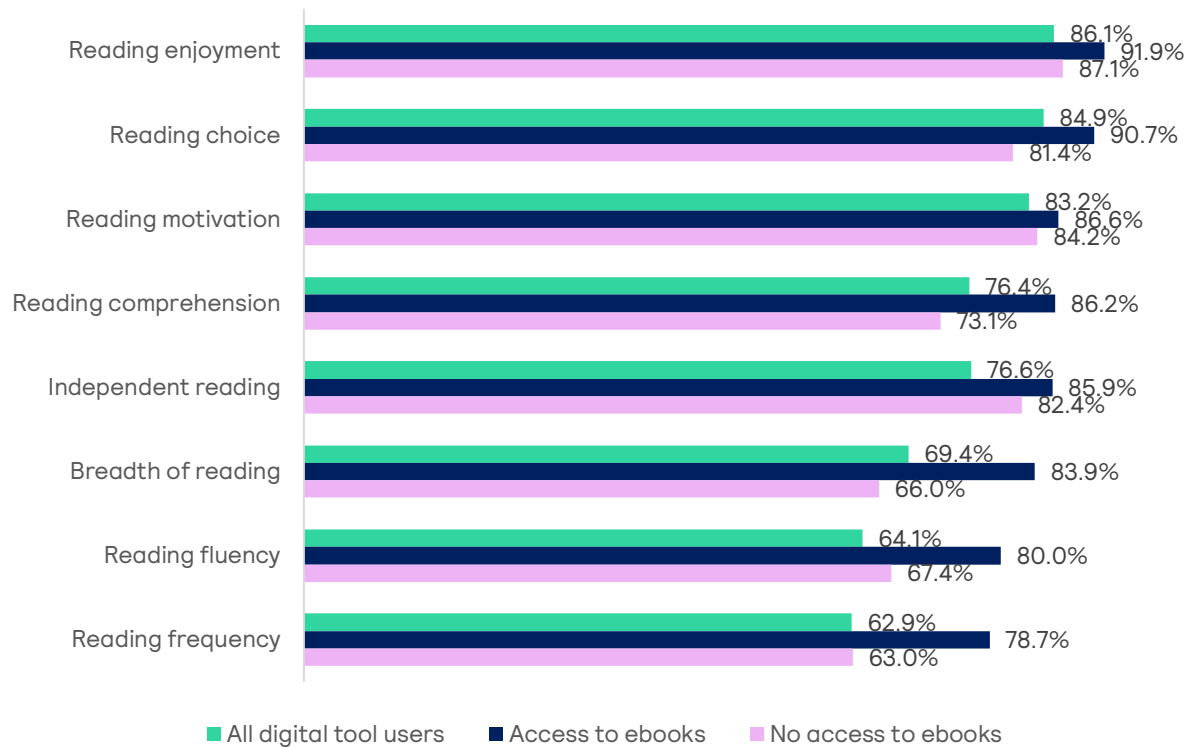
Our previous research found that 1 in 10 children from lower-income backgrounds said they didn't have a book of their own at home ([Cole et al., 2022](#)). So it is important to recognise this support for widening access to books for all children, particularly those who may have limited access to books of their own. Similarly, three times as many teachers whose pupils had access to an ebook library said that it increased reading confidence (36.5% vs 11.8%) and twice as many said that it provided an opportunity to support different learning needs (54.2% vs 22.1%) and encourage greater family engagement with books and reading (26.0% vs 10.3%). Greater family engagement has been shown to impact positively on children becoming independent readers ([Clark, 2007](#)).

**Figure 7: Benefits of using an ebook library**



Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that an ebook library could have a positive impact on a range of outcomes relating to literacy. Most of the schools whose pupils had access to an ebook library said that it impacted reading enjoyment, reading choice, reading motivation and reading comprehension (see Figure 8). The perceived possible impact of ebook libraries was equally high among those schools whose pupils didn't have access to one, with most saying that ebook libraries could impact reading enjoyment, motivation and independent reading. It is perhaps worth noting that an impact on reading frequency was the least frequently mentioned potential impact for both groups.

**Figure 8: Percentage agreement that an ebook library can have an impact on a variety of literacy outcomes by whether or not their pupils had access to an ebook library**



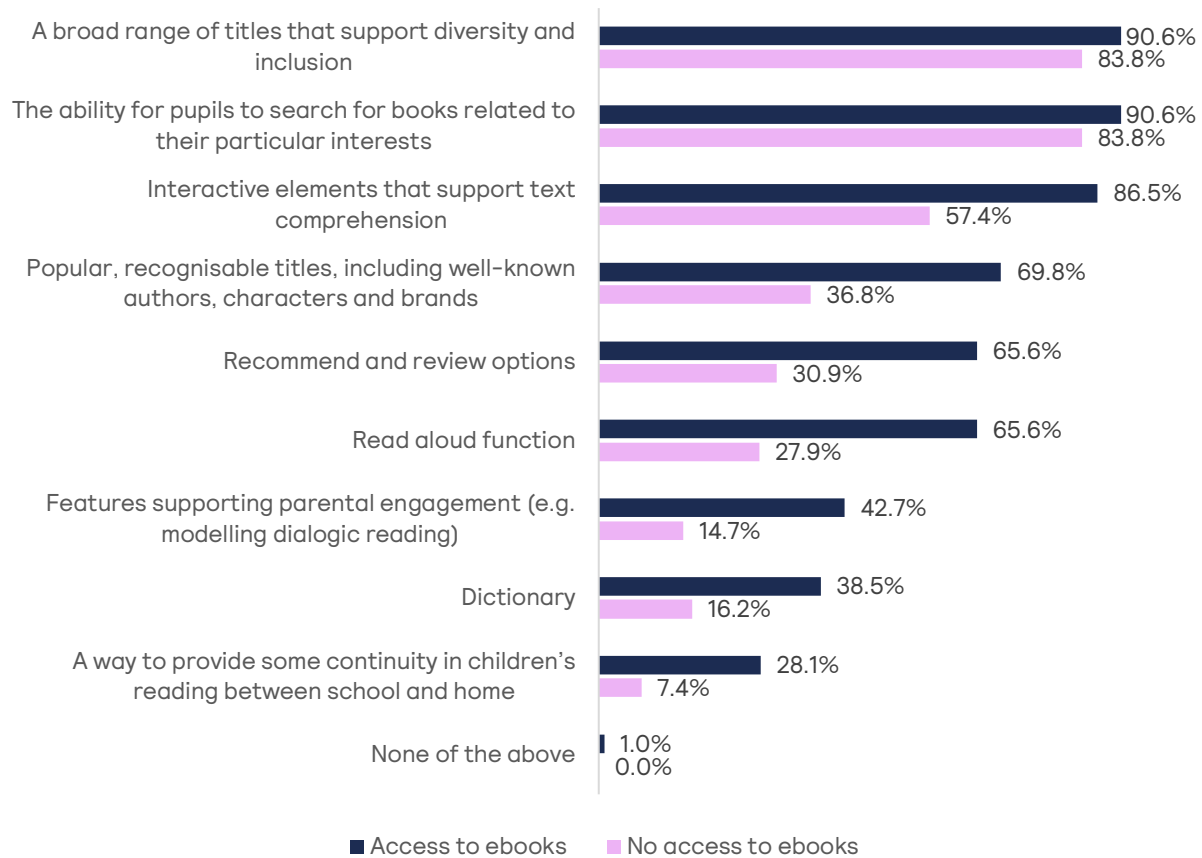
Teachers were also asked about which specific features of an ebook library might make it a useful resource for the children they worked with.

Offering a diverse range of titles came out on top for those whose pupils didn't have access to an ebook library, with more than 4 in 5 (83.8%) saying this would make an ebook library a useful resource for them (see Figure 9). The same percentage (83.8%) felt that features supporting reading based on personal interests would be valuable, while the third most popular feature selected was interactive elements that support text comprehension (57.4%). As a note, research has found that, with 'story-congruent' enhancements like this, digital books can outperform paper books in supporting learning outcomes (see [Furenes et al., 2021](#)).

Other features they might look out for in ebook libraries included popular or well-known titles, which 2 in 5 (40.5%) selected as a useful resource; social reading functions such as recommend and review options, selected by 1 in 3 (32.4%); and a read-aloud function, which 3 in 10 (29.7%) chose. Fewer (19.5%) felt the potential to provide continuity between reading at school and at home was useful, and the lowest percentage (17.6%) felt a dictionary or features supporting parental engagement (see [Troseth et al., 2020](#)) would be useful.



**Figure 9: Teachers' percentage agreement of an ebook library's beneficial features by whether or not their pupils had access to an ebook library**

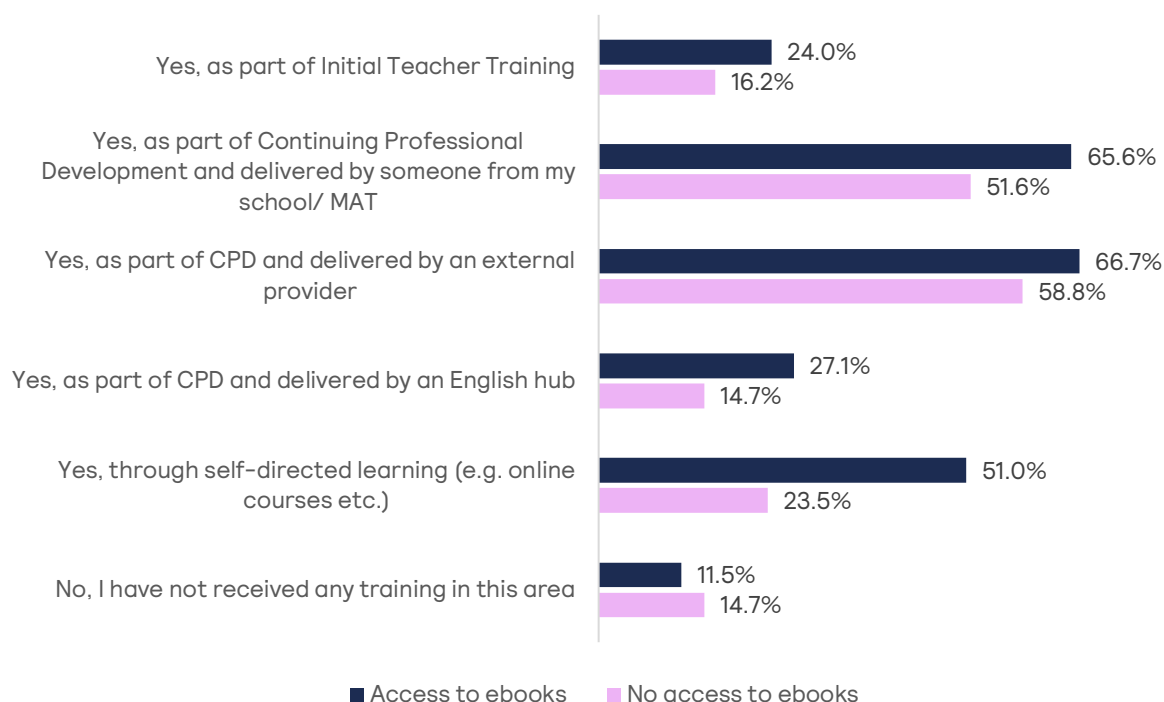


## Training and CPD in using digital tools to support reading for pleasure

We were interested in exploring teachers' experiences of training around using digital tools and resources to support literacy in the classroom. As shown in Figure 10, 1 in 9 (11.5%) of those whose pupils had access to ebooks shared that they hadn't received any training around technology to support literacy compared with 1 in 7 (14.7%) of those whose pupils didn't have access to ebooks. This means that almost 9 in 10 (88.5%) teachers with ebook access and more than 8 in 10 (85.3%) teachers without ebook access had received some form of training related to using technology to support literacy in the classroom. Overall, more respondents whose pupils had access to ebooks shared that they had received each type of training compared with those whose pupils didn't have access to ebooks.

The most common form of training was CPD delivered by an external provider (66.7% for those with ebook access vs 58.8% for those without ebook access), followed by CPD delivered by someone internally (65.6% vs 51.5%). The least common was CPD delivered by an English hub: 1 in 4 (27.1%) of those whose pupils had access to ebooks had received this form of training compared with around 1 in 7 (14.7%) of those whose pupils didn't have access to ebooks. Interestingly, more than twice as many teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks reported learning about using technology to support literacy through self-directed learning such as online courses (51.0% vs 23.5%), suggesting personal interest may have motivated some teachers to find out more about this area.

**Figure 10: Training received by those who use digital resources to support literacy by whether or not their pupils had access to an ebook library**

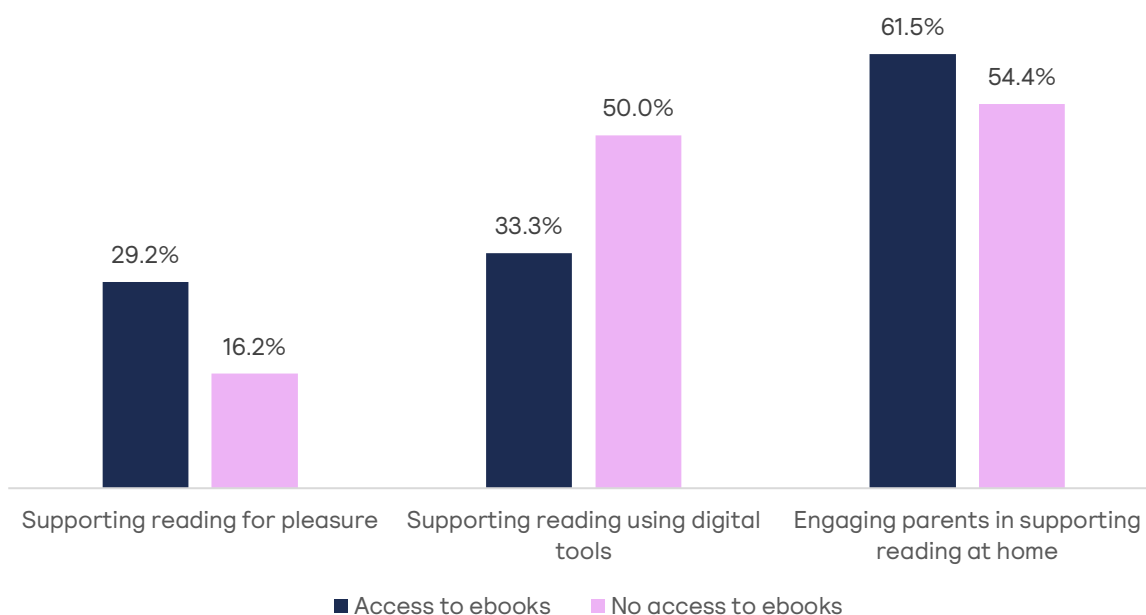


Teachers were also asked if they would be interested in three specific areas of CPD or training: reading for pleasure, supporting reading using digital tools, and engaging parents in supporting reading at home.

More of those whose pupils had access to ebooks said they would be interested in training/CPD to support reading for pleasure in their school (29.2% vs 16.2%, see Figure 11). Comparatively fewer of those whose pupils had access to ebooks said they would be interested in training/CPD to support reading through digital tools (33.3% vs 50.0%). This may reflect that those with ebook access already felt that they understood how to use digital tools. Finally, a similar percentage of both

groups said that they would like training for engaging parents in supporting reading at home (61.5% vs 54.4%), suggesting that this was a key priority for respondents regardless of whether they had ebook provision or not.

**Figure 11: Interest in training or CPD by those who use digital tools to support literacy in the classroom by whether or not their pupils had access to an ebook library**



## Confidence in using digital tools to support reading for pleasure

We also found differences in respondents' confidence by whether or not pupils in their school had access to ebooks (see Table 3). 9 in 10 (90.3%) respondents whose pupils had access to ebooks agreed that they felt confident using digital tools to support reading for pleasure in schools, compared with 86.4% of those whose pupils did not have access to ebooks.

Compared with levels in school, confidence in using digital tools to support reading for pleasure outside of school was lower for both groups. 8 in 10 (79.1%) respondents whose pupils had access to ebooks agreed with this, compared with just over 3 in 5 (63.5%) respondents whose pupils did not have access to ebooks.

Finally, while 3 in 4 (73.9%) teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks agreed that they felt well-informed about supporting reading using print and digital formats, only half (50.0%) of teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks said the same. Overall, confidence in using, and awareness of how to use, digital tools was higher for those whose pupils had access to ebooks. Additionally, confidence in using digital tools was greater in school than outside of school for both groups.

**Table 3: Confidence using digital tools to support reading for pleasure in and out of school by ebook access**

		Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
I am confident using digital tools to support reading for pleasure in school	Access	90.3%	6.5%	3.2%	0.0%
	No access	86.4%	7.6%	3.0%	3.0%
I am confident using digital tools to support reading for pleasure outside school	Access	79.1%	11.0%	8.8%	1.1%
	No access	63.5%	25.4%	7.9%	3.2%
I feel well-informed about supporting reading using print and digital formats	Access	73.9%	15.9%	10.2%	0.0%
	No access	50.0%	37.1%	12.0%	0.0%

## Barriers to using ebooks to support reading for pleasure

Given that not all respondents said that they engaged in technology to support literacy in the classroom, we were interested to identify any barriers to using ebooks specifically to support reading for pleasure. Overall, we saw some variability in the barriers selected by whether or not the respondent had pre-existing ebook access.

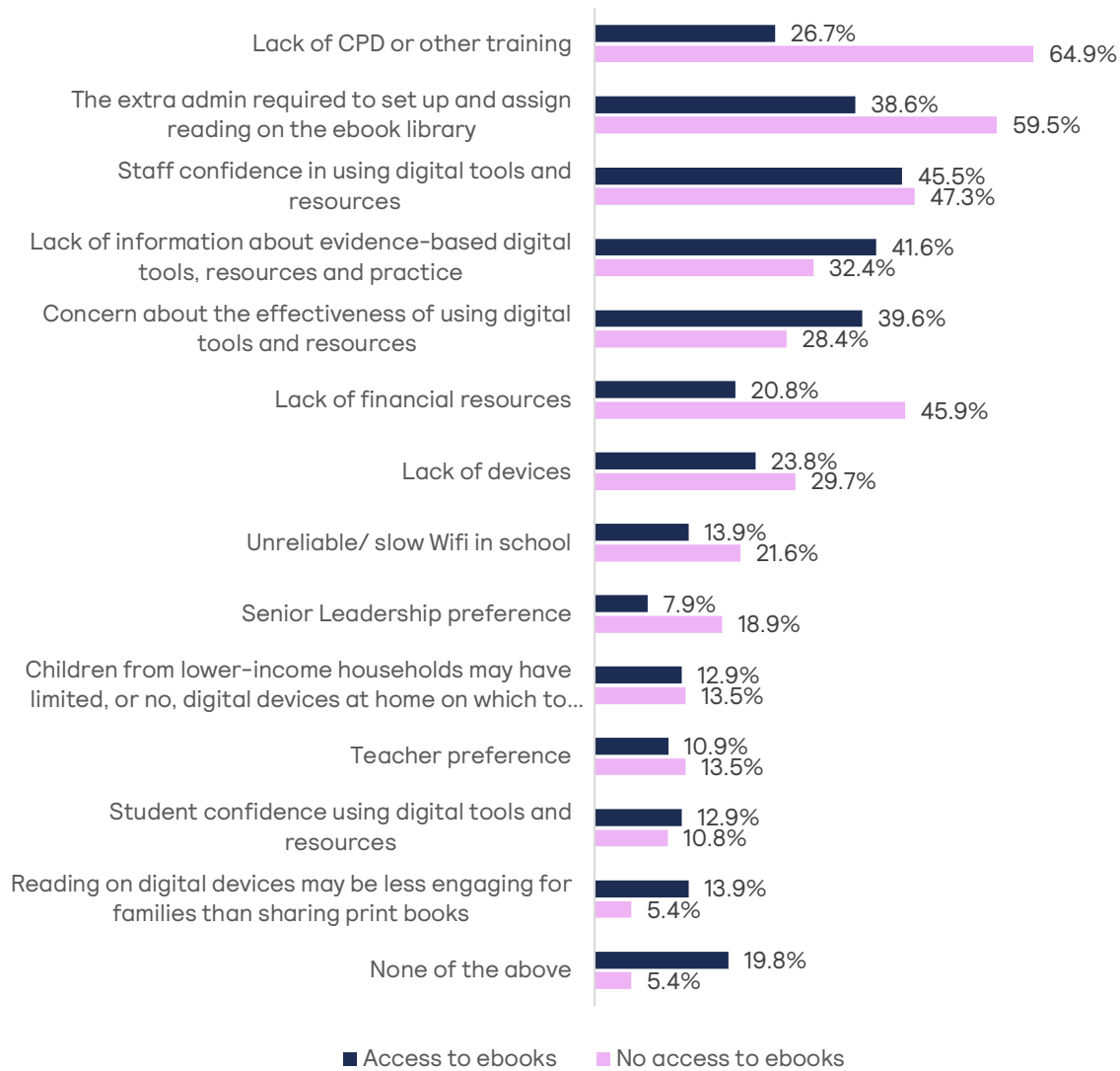
When asked about barriers to using technology (see Figure 12), such as an ebook library to support reading for pleasure in school, the top three barriers selected by those whose pupils had access to ebooks were:

- Staff confidence in using digital tools and resources (45.5%)
- Lack of information about evidence-based digital tools, resources and practice (41.6%)
- Concern about the effectiveness of using digital tools and resources (39.6%)

The top three barriers selected by those whose pupils did not have access to ebooks were:

- Lack of CPD or other training (64.9%)
  - This is not too surprising given that this group had previously cited a desire for further CPD in this area (see Figure 12)
- The extra admin required to set up and assign reading on the ebook library (59.5%)
- Staff confidence in using digital tools and resources (47.3%)
  - This was higher than the percentage who felt financial resources were a barrier (45.9%), which was one of the top three barriers (along with lack of, or outdated, hardware, software and WiFi) chosen by teachers in our previous survey of teachers' use of technology to support literacy (Picton, 2019)

**Figure 12: Barriers to using technology, such as an ebook library, to support reading for pleasure in school by whether or not their pupils had access to ebooks**



## Attitudes towards print and digital resources

Teachers were also invited to share their opinions on a number of statements relating to attitudes to using print and digital resources to support reading. As shown in Table 4, more teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks felt positively about various aspects of reading digitally while more teachers whose pupils did not have access expressed a neutral opinion about most statements, perhaps reflecting fewer opportunities to form an opinion or a reticence to express an opinion about some aspects of using ebooks that may have been beyond their experience.

For example, more than 9 in 10 (91.2%) agreed that it was important to offer different reading formats to support children's reading compared with 2 in 3 (66.7%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks. In addition, while just 1 in 15 (6.6%) ebook users felt neutral about this, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, five times as many teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks felt neutral (31.7%), suggesting less certainty about offering digital reading formats to children in this group.

Similarly, while 9 in 10 (88.0%) teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks felt that digital tools could help engage children with reading, this decreased to 3 in 5 (60.7%) of those whose pupils did not have access to ebooks. Again, there was significantly less certainty in the latter group, with 2 in 5 (37.7%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this statement, perhaps reflecting a lack of opportunity to observe this either way.

The statement with the most neutral responses overall, however, related to the sense of engagement felt when reading on digital devices compared with print books. A similar proportion (around 1 in 3) of teachers whose pupils did and did not have access to ebooks agreed that reading on digital devices could feel less engaging than reading in print. At the same time, 3 in 5 (60.0%) teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks and almost 1 in 2 (46.7%) teachers whose pupils did have access neither agreed nor disagreed that reading on digital devices could feel less engaging.

Teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks were most likely to feel neutral about whether they could support a home-school connection, with almost 2 in 3 (63.9%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this. However, 1 in 2 (53.3%) of those whose pupils did have access to ebooks agreed that they could support a home-school connection, suggesting this aspect of ebooks may become clearer with direct experience.

The statement "Reading on paper is better than reading on a screen" garnered most disagreement from both groups, with more than half (53.3%) of teachers whose pupils had access to ebooks disagreeing and a quarter (24.2%) of teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks disagreeing. At the same time, slightly more teachers whose pupils did have access to ebooks agreed (17.4% vs 14.5%).

Overall, attitudes to using ebooks were less negative among non-ebook users than might have been predicted, with a neutral or uncertain attitude more prevalent than a negative or opposed one. This suggests a lack of training and information about reading digitally may be a greater barrier to use than attitudes to reading formats.

**Table 4: Teachers' agreement with attitudinal statements by whether or not pupils have access to ebooks**

		Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
It is important to offer different reading formats to support children's reading	All digital tool users	73.5%	23.2%	1.9%	1.4%
	Access	91.2%	6.6%	2.2%	0.0%
	No access	66.7%	31.7%	0.0%	1.7%
Digital tools can help children to engage with reading	All digital tool users	69.2%	26.1%	2.9%	1.9%
	Access	88.0%	6.5%	5.5%	0.0%
	No access	60.7%	37.7%	0.0%	1.6%
Reading on digital devices can feel less engaging than sharing print books formats	All digital tool users	37.1%	51.4%	9.1%	2.4%
	Access	35.9%	46.7%	16.3%	1.1%
	No access	33.3%	60.0%	5.0%	1.7%
Ebooks can support home-school connection	All digital tool users	33.6%	55.0%	2.8%	8.5%
	Access	53.3%	37.8%	5.5%	3.4%
	No access	29.5%	63.9%	1.6%	6.8%



		Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Reading on digital platforms is becoming more important in society	All digital tool users	35.2%	45.7%	9.2%	11.1%
	Access	51.7%	34.8%	6.7%	6.7%
	No access	27.1%	52.5%	13.6%	6.8%
Reading on paper is better than reading on screen	All digital tool users	18.3%	46.8%	32.1%	2.8%
	Access	17.4%	27.2%	53.3%	2.2%
	No access	14.5%	58.1%	24.2%	2.2%

## Discussion

The percentage of children and young people who tell us that they enjoy reading, and read for pleasure daily, has been on a downward trend in recent years, with reading enjoyment at its lowest level in 15 years. It is therefore imperative that we explore every way possible to support children's reading, and we hope that these new insights into teachers' experiences and perceptions of using ebooks contribute to the evidence base around digital support for reading for pleasure at school and at home.

Perhaps most notably, our survey found that within the group of teachers who used digital tools, three times as many of those who said their pupils had access to ebooks rated their school's culture of reading for pleasure as 'excellent' compared with those whose pupils didn't have access to ebooks. While this may reflect that these schools offered pupils an extensive variety of reading formats and experiences, the survey did not allow us to explore this further and more research would be needed to gather more information in this area.

At the same time, whether or not their pupils had access to ebooks, many teachers recognised that ebook libraries could increase the range of diverse books and support children in choosing reading material to suit their personal interests, both of which are known to increase reading motivation ([Picton & Clark, 2022](#), [Clark & Phythian-Sence, 2008](#)). Teachers who had experience using ebooks to support pupils' reading for pleasure also noted positive impacts on children's reading enjoyment, choice and motivation, and more than half found they could support the connection between reading at school and at home.

Other key findings related to barriers to using ebooks, which were perhaps less related to attitudes than might have been expected. For example, among teachers whose pupils did not have access to ebooks, more disagreed than agreed that reading on paper was better than reading on screen. Our previous research exploring teachers' use of technology to support literacy took place before the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, many teachers had to use digital platforms to support learning during school closures, and we might have presumed that confidence in using digital tools to support reading may have increased.

However, our findings indicate that training, confidence and evidence for the effectiveness of digital tools are important barriers to using ebooks, with many teachers feeling they lack the necessary support and information to use tools such as ebooks effectively to support reading for pleasure in children growing up in the digital age. This suggests a need to empower teachers with better resources while strengthening the information and evidence base, including case studies from schools already using digital tools successfully to support children's reading for pleasure, both in and outside of school.

**Ebook libraries encourage reading for pleasure. However, many teachers lack the support and information to use ebooks effectively to support reading for pleasure in children growing up in the digital age.**



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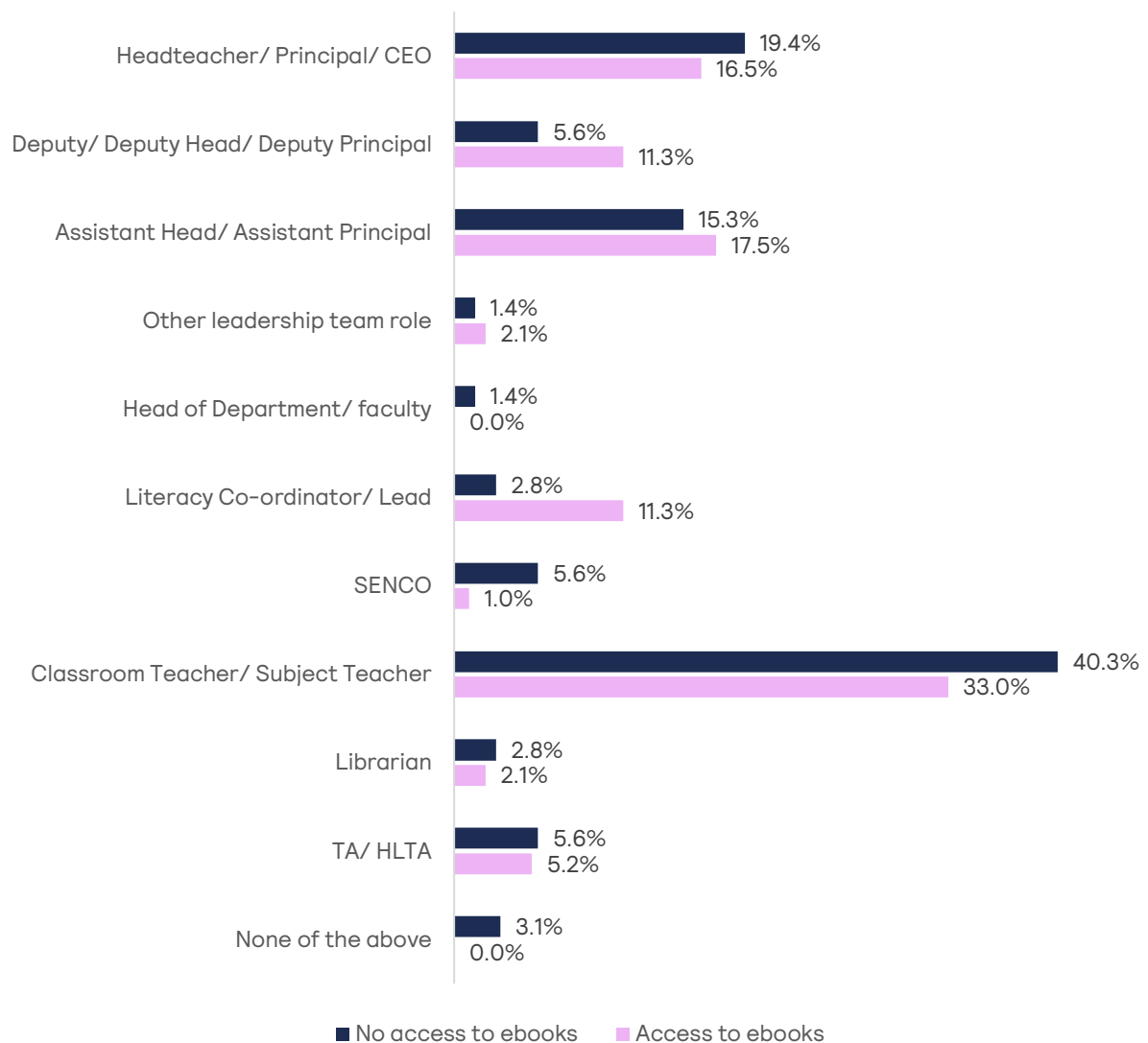
**Within the group of teachers who used digital tools, three times as many of those whose pupils had access to ebooks rated their school's culture of reading for pleasure as 'excellent' compared with those whose pupils didn't have access to ebooks.**

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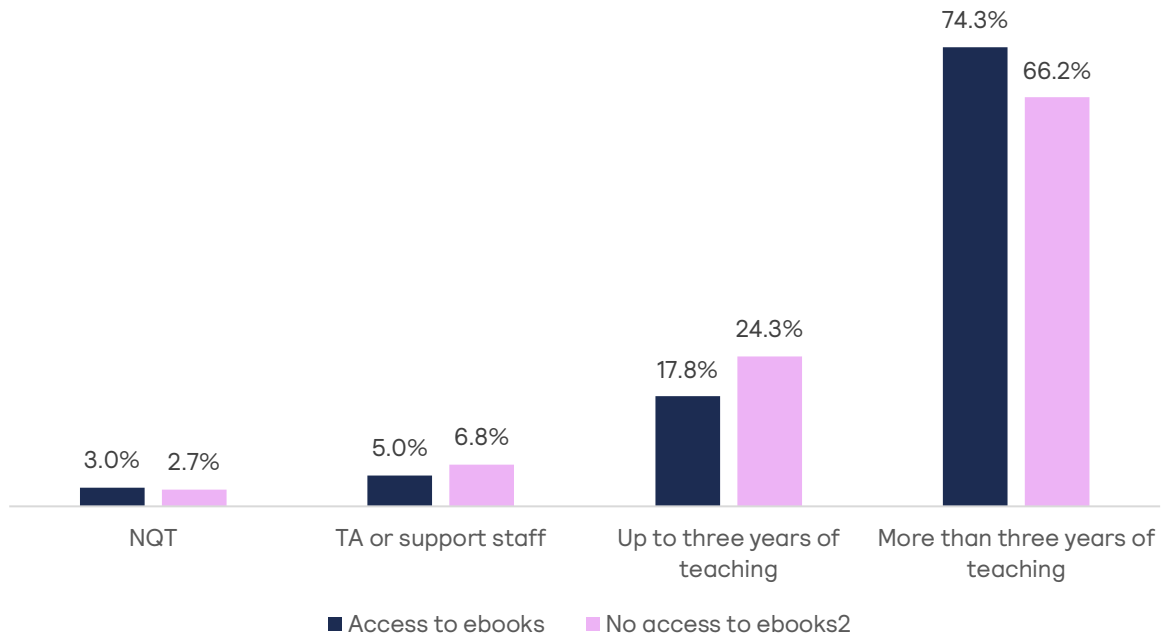
# Appendix

Job roles and teaching status within the group of teachers who used digital tools and resources to support literacy and whose pupils did or did not have access to ebooks are shown in Figures 13 and 14.

**Figure 13: Job role of respondents by ebook access of pupils**



**Figure 14: Teaching status by ebook access of pupils**



Age groups taught within this group of teachers are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Age group taught by ebook access of pupils**

	Access to ebooks	No access to ebooks
3- to 7-year-olds	22.8% (n = 23)	12.2% (n = 9)
7- to 11-year-olds	45.5% (n = 46)	68.9% (n = 51)
Both age groups	31.7% (n = 32)	18.9% (n = 14)

**Table 6: Potential benefits of ebooks by ebook access of pupils**

		Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Reading enjoyment	Access	91.9%	7.1%	0%	0%
	No access	87.1%	0%	0%	12.9%
Reading choice	Access	90.7%	6.2%	3.1%	0%
	No access	81.4%	3.4%	1.7%	13.6%
Reading motivation	Access	86.6%	8.2%	5.2%	0%
	No access	84.2%	0%	0%	15.8%
Reading comprehension	Access	86.2%	9.6%	4.3%	0%
	No access	73.1%	9.6%	0%	17.3%
Independent reading	Access	85.9%	9.1%	3.0%	2.0%
	No access	82.4%	2.0%	0%	15.7%
Breadth of reading	Access	83.9%	9.7%	5.4%	1.0%
	No access	66.0%	14.9%	0%	19.1%
Reading fluency	Access	80.0%	12.6%	7.4%	0%
	No access	67.4%	8.7%	2.2%	21.7%
Reading frequency	Access	78.7%	11.7%	9.6%	0%
	No access	63.0%	13.0%	2.2%	21.7%

## About the National Literacy Trust

Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions.

Literacy is a vital element of action against poverty and our work changes life stories.

Visit [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) to find out more, donate or sign up for a free email newsletter. You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

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