

7 Reading and Speaking Survey

Overview: Over the past 12 years, reading has retained its relative popularity among 12 to 14 school subjects, remaining fourth for year 4 students and sixth for year 8 students. More than 75% of year 4 and year 8 students were positive about reading at school and their own competence in reading. However, reading has declined markedly in preference as a leisure activity, included in the top three preferred activities in 2008 by 21% of year 4 students (compared to 34% in 2000) and 20% of year 8 students (down from 30% in 2000). About 80% of year 4 students were positive about reading in their own time (not in school), but this dropped to 59% of year 8 students (down from 77% in 1996). For students in both years since 1996, fiction and non-fiction books have become less popular reading choices compared to comics and magazines, and 19% fewer year 8 students expressed very positive views about getting a book for a present or looking at books in a bookshop.



Attitudes and Motivation

The national monitoring assessment programme recognises the impact of attitudinal and motivational factors on student achievement in individual assessment tasks. Students' attitudes, interests and liking for a subject have a strong bearing on progress and learning outcomes. Students are influenced and shaped by the quality and style of curriculum delivery, the choice of content and the suitability of resources. Other important factors influencing students' achievements are the expectations and support of significant people in their lives, the opportunities and experiences they have in and out of school, and the extent to which they have feelings of personal success and capability.

Reading and Speaking Surveys

The national monitoring reading and speaking surveys sought information from students about their curriculum preferences and their perceptions of their achievement. Students were also asked about their enjoyment of and involvement in reading and speaking activities, within school and beyond. The surveys were administered in a session which included group and independent tasks, with a teacher reading the survey to year 4 students and available to help with writing. There were five questions that invited students to select up to three choices from lists of eight to ten options, one question that asked for very brief written responses, and 21 questions in a four-or-five option rating format, with students circling the option they preferred.

Students were asked to select their three favourite school subjects from a list of fourteen subjects. Among the year 4 students, physical education was the most popular subject, listed as first, second or third choice by 56% of year 4 students. Mathematics came second (42%), visual arts third (33%), reading fourth (32%) and music fifth (26%). Writing rated sixth (25%), and

technology tenth (12%). The results for physical education, mathematics and reading are similar to those in the 1996 survey, but in 1996 art was first (70%) and music fourth (31%), just ahead of reading. The addition of drama and dance to the list, and the renaming of art as "visual art" might have had a substantial effect on the results for art and music.

For year 8 students, physical education was first in popularity (70%), technology second (47%), mathematics third (35%), visual arts fourth (25%), music fifth (21%), and reading sixth (20%). Twelve years earlier, in 1996, physical education was first (55%), art second (44%), mathematics third (40%), and technology fourth (23%), with music sixth (20%) and reading seventh (19%). Technology clearly has gained ground, while music and reading have maintained their positions.

The students were presented with a list of eight reading activities and asked which they liked doing most at school. They were invited to tick up to three activities. The responses are shown at top adjacent, in order of popularity for year 4 students.

PREFERRED READING ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

	year 4 2008 ('04) ['96]	year 8 2008 ('04) ['96]
silent reading	55 (57) [62]	66 (69) [78]
listening to the teacher reading	47 (51) [61]	33 (42) [58]
reading with a buddy or partner	47 (41) [47]	38 (35) [29]
reading with the teacher	32 (35) [30]	13 (8) [7]
looking at or browsing through books	23 (28) [20]	34 (33) [35]
written work	19 (20) [31]	20 (23) [37]
reading aloud	14 (15) [12]	13 (13) [11]
talking about books	14 (12) [16]	13 (15) [16]



IMPORTANT THINGS TO BE A GOOD READER

	year 4 2008 ('04) ['96]	year 8 2008 ('04) ['96]
learn hard words	52 (56) [44]	23 (25) [22]
listen to the teacher	36 (31) [29]	14 (14) [9]
concentrate hard	34 (39) [42]	29 (25) [34]
read a lot	34 (35) [32]	36 (39) [35]
go back and try again	31 (35) [45]	23 (31) [42]
sound out words	28 (30) [31]	34 (36) [36]
enjoy reading books	28 (26) [28]	59 (58) [52]
choose the right book	17 (13) [19]	28 (29) [28]
think about what I read	16 (12) [13]	31 (25) [27]
practise doing hard things	15 (14) [12]	7 (8) [6]

Year 4 and 8 students gave similar responses to most of the activities. However, year 4 students expressed much stronger preferences than year 8 students for reading with the teacher. Enjoyment of listening to the teacher reading has declined (especially for year 8 students) since 1996, and written work has declined markedly in popularity for both year 4 and year 8 students over the same period.

Another question asked the students to select up to three “important things a person needs to do to be a good reader”. They were given 10 approaches to choose from. The responses are at the bottom of the previous page, in order of indicated importance for year 4 students.

The results show that year 4 students tend to think about reading as a technical task, requiring learning hard words, concentrating hard and listening to the teacher, whereas year 8 students place less emphasis than year 4 students on listening to the teacher, and more on enjoying reading (especially), choosing the right book and thinking about what they read. These patterns have changed little over 12 years.

In response to a list of seven types of reading material, students indicated up to three which they liked reading in their own time. The responses are shown adjacent, in order of popularity for year 4 students.

The results reveal some important changes of voluntary reading activity between year 4 and year 8. In particular, year 8 students reported a considerably greater focus on reading magazines, and markedly less interest in poetry. Between 1996 and 2008, magazines have increased in popularity substantially for year 4 students and comics for year 8 students, with a corresponding decline in the popularity of books, both fiction and non-fiction.

The students were presented with a list of nine activities that they might do in their spare time, and asked to tick up to three activities that they most liked to do. The responses are shown adjacent, in order of popularity for year 4 students.

Comparative results from the 1996 survey are not included because a change in the ordering of the list of activities between 1996 and 2008 may have differentially affected the results between 1996 and later surveys. The addition of internet-related activities in the latest survey may also have a small impact.

The notable differences between year 4 and year 8 responses are the markedly lower interest of year 8 students in playing video or computer games or doing art, and their higher interest in activities relating to music. Between 2000 and 2008, reading decreased markedly in popularity for both year 4 students (34% to 21%) and year 8 students (30% to 20%). Other noteworthy changes were the increased popularity for year 4 students of playing video or computer games or sport, and decreased popularity of doing art. For year 8 students, music increased markedly in popularity.

Students were also asked if they had a favourite author. Fifty-five percent of year 4 students said “yes” (compared to 62% in 2004 and 69% in 1996), a noticeable decline. There is evidence of a smaller decline among year 8 students, with 47% saying “yes” in 2008, compared to 45% in 2000 and 56% in 1996.

PREFERRED READING MATERIAL IN OWN TIME	year 4	year 8
	2008 ('04) ['96]	2008 ('04) ['96]
story books (fiction)	52 (61) [69]	55 (68) [71]
comics	52 (49) [48]	46 (37) [31]
magazines	46 (42) [26]	63 (72) [64]
books about real things and people (non-fiction)	30 (37) [57]	40 (39) [46]
poetry	29 (33) [38]	15 (17) [19]
newspapers	22 (15) [20]	18 (21) [24]
junk mail	16 (18) [18]	17 (17) [14]



PREFERRED ACTIVITY IN OWN TIME	year 4	year 8
	2008 ('00)	2008 ('00)
play video or computer games	52 (40)	37 (34)
play games or sport	49 (34)	49 (44)
watch TV	37 (44)	33 (41)
play with friends	30 (33)	37 (41)
do art	25 (44)	11 (14)
talk on telephone with friends	23 (26)	25 (33)
music	22 (14)	37 (25)
read	21 (34)	20 (30)
make things	11 (14)	8 (12)
look up things on the internet	9 (-)	11 (-)
communicate on the internet	3 (-)	13 (-)

Responses to the 21 rating items are presented in separate tables for year 4 students (p64) and year 8 students (p65). Some interesting positive features were present in the responses of both year 4 and year 8 students. More than 75% were positive about:

- reading at school
- their own competence in reading;
- their parents' views about their competence in reading;
- looking at books in a bookshop;
- going to a library;
- having their teacher read a story out loud;
- talking to a group in their class.

Less positive features common to year 4 and 8 students were that significant percentages:

- did not know how good their teacher thought they were at reading (but this has improved very substantially since 1996);
- said they received little or no comment from their teacher about what they were good at or needed to improve at;
- said they had very limited opportunities to read to others at school;
- clearly disliked reading out loud to their whole class.









There were substantial differences between year 4 and year 8 students on some questions. Our experience with previous NEMP surveys (in all subjects) has shown that year 8 students are less inclined than year 4 students to use the most positive rating category. The comparisons used here are based on the percentages in the top two categories. The most noteworthy differences between year 4 and year 8 responses were that:

- 24% more year 4 students liked getting a book for a present;
- 23% more year 4 than year 8 students liked reading in their own time – not at school.









Looking at the most positive and least positive categories in each rating scale, there were some noteworthy changes from 1996 to 2008:

- 16% fewer year 4 and year 8 students were very positive about their teacher reading a story aloud;
- 15% fewer year 4 and 19% fewer year 8 students were very positive about getting a book for a present;
- 19% fewer year 8 students were very positive about looking at books in a bookshop;
- 14% fewer year 8 students were very positive about going to a library;
- the percentage of students who were very positive about how good they were at reading increased by 12% for year 4 and 11% for year 8.

YEAR 4 READING AND SPEAKING SURVEY 2008 (2004) [1996]

1. How much do you like reading at school?	47 (47) [50]	38 (38) [40]	9 (11) [8]	6 (4) [2]	
2. How good do you think you are at reading?	44 (42) [32]	47 (47) [56]	7 (9) [11]	2 (2) [1]	
					<i>don't know</i>
3. How good does your teacher think you are at reading?	39 (42) [33]	38 (27) [23]	4 (7) [7]	2 (1) [0]	17 (23) [37]
4. How good does your Mum or Dad think you are at reading?	69 (68) [62]	18 (17) [22]	4 (4) [3]	2 (1) [1]	7 (10) [12]
	heaps	quite a lot	sometimes	never	
5. Does your teacher tell you what you are good at in reading?	16 (14)	22 (26)	49 (52)	13 (8)	
6. Does your teacher tell you what you need to improve at in reading?	14 (12)	22 (16)	51 (54)	13 (18)	
7. How often do you read to others at school?	15 (11)	21 (22)	47 (51)	17 (16)	
					
8. How much do you like reading in your own time – not at school?	57 (60) [56]	24 (22) [29]	10 (11) [10]	9 (7) [5]	
9. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	60 (64) [75]	29 (24) [19]	7 (9) [3]	4 (3) [3]	
10. How do you feel about looking at books in a bookshop?	62 (60) [68]	26 (31) [23]	10 (7) [6]	2 (2) [3]	
11. How do you feel about going to a library?	65 (63) [72]	23 (30) [21]	8 (5) [5]	4 (2) [2]	
12. How do you feel about the stories/books you read as part of your reading programme at school?	44 (45) [47]	40 (38) [40]	10 (13) [9]	6 (4) [4]	
13. How do you feel when your teacher reads a story out loud?	62 (60) [78]	26 (28) [16]	9 (6) [3]	3 (6) [3]	
14. How do you feel about how well you read?	60 (59) [53]	32 (31) [38]	5 (7) [7]	3 (3) [2]	
15. How do you feel about reading in a group in the classroom?	35 (39) [43]	31 (36) [38]	19 (15) [12]	15 (10) [7]	
16. How do you feel when you are asked to read out loud to the teacher?	31 (34) [36]	37 (34) [34]	21 (19) [16]	11 (13) [14]	
17. How do you feel when asked to read out loud to the class?	27 (27) [26]	26 (24) [26]	23 (25) [20]	24 (24) [28]	
18. How much do you like talking to your whole class?	38 (31) [32]	33 (34) [39]	19 (23) [17]	10 (12) [12]	
19. How much do you like talking to a group in your class?	50 (49) [57]	32 (33) [29]	14 (12) [11]	4 (6) [3]	
	heaps	quite a lot	sometimes	never	
20. How often do you get to talk to your whole class?	13 (10) [10]	16 (15) [25]	62 (70) [61]	9 (5) [4]	
21. How often do you get to talk to others in your class?	37 (36) [45]	33 (35) [31]	25 (27) [22]	5 (2) [2]	

YEAR 8 READING AND SPEAKING SURVEY 2008 (2004) [1996]

					
1. How much do you like reading at school?	28 (31) [31]	51 (50) [55]	16 (16) [12]	5 (3) [2]	
2. How good do you think you are at reading?	29 (29) [18]	56 (54) [56]	13 (15) [23]	2 (2) [3]	
3. How good does your teacher think you are at reading?	24 (21) [10]	39 (37) [27]	8 (7) [8]	4 (3) [1]	25 (32) [54]
4. How good does your Mum or Dad think you are at reading?	38 (40) [27]	38 (33) [35]	6 (8) [9]	3 (1) [2]	15 (18) [27]
5. Does your teacher tell you what you are good at in reading?	<i>heaps</i>	<i>quite a lot</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>never</i>	
6. Does your teacher tell you what you need to improve at in reading?	5 (6)	17 (16)	60 (59)	18 (19)	
7. How often do you read to others at school?	6 (7)	23 (18)	54 (52)	17 (23)	
8. How much do you like reading in your own time – not at school?	2 (4)	12 (10)	49 (61)	37 (25)	
9. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?					
10. How do you feel about looking at books in a bookshop?	31 (37) [39]	28 (36) [38]	25 (17) [18]	16 (10) [5]	
11. How do you feel about going to a library?	26 (35) [45]	39 (38) [39]	24 (20) [13]	11 (7) [3]	
12. How do you feel about the stories/books you read as part of your reading programme at school?	33 (39) [52]	42 (37) [37]	18 (19) [9]	7 (5) [2]	
13. How do you feel when your teacher reads a story out loud?	39 (40) [53]	37 (41) [32]	19 (15) [12]	5 (4) [3]	
14. How do you feel about how well you read?	19 (21) [24]	45 (49) [52]	27 (23) [18]	9 (7) [6]	
15. How do you feel about reading in a group in the classroom?	35 (41) [51]	40 (41) [36]	19 (13) [10]	6 (5) [3]	
16. How do you feel when you are asked to read out loud to the teacher?	36 (39) [30]	49 (45) [49]	12 (12) [18]	3 (4) [3]	
17. How do you feel when asked to read out loud to the class?	22 (31) [26]	34 (35) [41]	28 (25) [24]	16 (9) [9]	
18. How much do you like talking to your whole class?	21 (24) [19]	36 (35) [36]	27 (24) [25]	16 (17) [20]	
19. How much do you like talking to a group in your class?	18 (18) [13]	25 (29) [25]	28 (23) [23]	29 (30) [39]	
20. How often do you get to talk to your whole class?	30 (29) [17]	30 (37) [41]	27 (21) [28]	13 (13) [14]	
21. How often do you get to talk to others in your class?	44 (51) [51]	39 (35) [39]	14 (13) [8]	3 (1) [2]	
	<i>heaps</i>	<i>quite a lot</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>never</i>	
	8 (11) [3]	20 (22) [30]	65 (61) [65]	7 (6) [2]	
	42 (47) [50]	34 (35) [37]	22 (17) [12]	2 (1) [1]	