

Schools risk pupils losing the joy of reading by prioritising monitoring and attainment over enjoyment and choice, new whitepaper establishes

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A whitepaper, released today by leading EdTech digital publisher Twinkl, establishes that reading for pleasure risks being marginalised in UK schools by assessment pressure, rigid tracking, and a growing mismatch between the books schools provide and the formats young people want to read, despite most schools now having dedicated reading spaces.

The findings of ***Beyond Infrastructure: The State of Reading Culture in UK Schools 2026*** – which has been released to support the National Year of Reading 2026 – are based on in-depth analysis of data gathered from over **500 educators across the UK** and indicate a growing concern that children are disengaging from reading as schools prioritise monitoring and attainment over enjoyment and choice.

The whitepaper outlines a number of key observations, including:

- **81.6%** of schools now have dedicated reading space, marking significant progress.
- **41.9%** of educators cited a lack of time as being the biggest barrier to reading for pleasure.
- **47.5%** of schools feel poorly equipped to provide audiobooks.
- **22.3%** of schools lack access to visual storytelling formats, such as manga and graphic novels.
- Only **12.5%** of educators said they currently have the autonomy to prioritise pupils' interests when selecting books.
- **77.1%** of pupils still share book recommendations socially, highlighting the continued importance of reading as a shared experience.

The whitepaper also highlights growing concerns around boys' reading engagement, with educators pointing to a mismatch between what pupils want to read and the formats schools are currently set up to provide.

Nicola Romaine, Twinkl's National English Lead and author of the report, said: *"We have reached an important milestone where the physical infrastructure for reading is largely in place. The next challenge is cultural. If reading becomes dominated by assessment, tracking and pressure, pupils begin to associate books with performance rather than pleasure."*

She added: *"We can't keep talking about reluctant readers while ignoring the formats many children actually enjoy. Audiobooks, manga and digital reading aren't distractions from literacy. For some pupils, they're the gateway into it."*

The whitepaper outlines three key priorities for school leaders to focus on:

- Empowering teachers to champion reading through protected book discussions.
- Expanding reading beyond traditional books with audio, digital and graphic formats.

- Replacing rigid tracking with more relaxed, enjoyable reading experiences.

The analysis also warns that strict home-reading monitoring can place unnecessary pressure on families, particularly where parents lack confidence with reading themselves. Instead, the whitepaper calls for schools to create more space for independent reading, wider choice and informal conversations about books, alongside greater investment in inclusive and digital formats.

The full whitepaper: [*Beyond Infrastructure: The State of Reading Culture in UK Schools 2026*](#), is available to download subscription free from the Twinkl website.

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Notes to Editor

- Twinkl surveyed more than **500 UK educators in February 2026** as part of research for *Beyond Infrastructure: The State of Reading Culture in UK Schools 2026*.
- Respondents included classroom teachers, senior leaders, SEND professionals and headteachers across EYFS, primary, secondary and specialist settings.
- The report was produced to support the *National Year of Reading 2026* and explores the evolving challenges facing reading for pleasure in UK schools.

About Twinkl

[Twinkl](#) was founded in 2010 by husband and wife Jonathan and Susie Seaton, with a mission 'to help those who teach'. The company provides high quality learning materials and educational services, which are all teacher-created and checked.

Today, Twinkl offers over 1.5 million resources via its website, with new content added daily. These range from classroom content and assessments, to AI tools and augmented reality games. Twinkl is used and trusted by schools and educators across the UK, and in over 200 countries and regions around the world - including primary and secondary school teachers, nursery workers and parents.