

Children and Young People's Reading in Jersey in 2026

Executive Summary

Reading for pleasure, that is, the choice and habit of reading, is associated with a range of benefits for young people, including improved reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing as well as enhanced wellbeing (Sun et al., 2024; Torppa et al., 2020). International surveys consistently document a reciprocal relationship between reading engagement and attainment, with engaged readers outperforming their peers regardless of socioeconomic background (OECD, 2019). Yet globally, the proportion of young people who report enjoying reading and who read regularly continues to fall (Mullis et al., 2023).

Against this worrying backdrop, The Reading Island Network commissioned The Open University's Literacy and Social Justice Centre to undertake two island-wide reading surveys of Key Stage Two and Key Stage Three students (Cremin and Karademir, 2026). The surveys provide a comprehensive evidence base to inform and strengthen reading for pleasure provision across the island. Together, they capture the reading lives of over 4,500 children and young people.

The Surveys

'Reading is an escape to another world.'

KS2

The surveys were undertaken by 7–14-year-olds in school settings, using structured questionnaires. The KS2 survey was completed by 2,480 pupils aged 7–11 years across 24 primary schools. At KS3, the survey gathered responses from 2,022 students aged 11–14 years from the six government-funded secondary schools. The number of boys and girls was broadly similar within each Key Stage.

The surveys were closely aligned, with KS3 students also invited to suggest ways to enrich their school reading communities. Both surveys employed a mixed-methods approach and compared gender, year group and Jersey Premium (JP) eligibility, which was used as an indicator of socioeconomic context.

'There are some books you don't want to stop reading.'

KS3

Key Findings

Reading enjoyment across both Key Stages is mixed. Whilst many students report enjoying reading, a high degree of ambivalence or indifference is also evident. Notably, reading enjoyment declines with age, and gender differences are clear: girls enjoy reading more and read more frequently than boys. Additionally, pupils in high JP% schools read less frequently than those in low JP% schools. Motivation follows a similar trajectory. A significant minority of pupils, disproportionately boys and those in high JP% schools, hold relatively more negative reading attitudes, read irregularly, and are unable to name a favourite book or author, representing cause for concern.

Attitudes to reading

Whilst a substantial proportion of students' report enjoying reading (KS2 39.7%, KS3 38.7%), a slightly larger proportion describe reading as 'ok' (KS2 41%, KS3 39.5%). Around a fifth of all KS2 students report that they 'don't like reading', and when neutral and negative categories are combined, a worrying 60% of KS2 pupils and 61.3% of KS3 pupils do not report the experience of reading as personally enjoyable.

These figures are not merely statistics. This high degree of ambivalence and negativity deserves focused attention. At KS2, the somewhat uncertain 'ok' stance, which is more prevalent in Years 4–6 than Year 3, may represent an early indicator of children's growing detachment from reading. In KS3, students' written responses reflect a stronger degree of disengagement and disinterest which for many leans towards the negative end of the spectrum.

Gender and socio-economic differences

Gender differences in reading attitudes are persistent and substantial at both Key Stages. At KS2, far more girls than boys say they love reading (47.9% compared to 33.6%) and far more boys than girls express negative attitudes (22.8% compared to 11%). By Year 6, approximately one in four boys expresses explicitly negative attitudes towards reading.

At KS3, nearly a quarter of boys actively state they do not like it(24.4%), compared with 18.7% of girls, and only 10.8% of boys ‘really enjoy’ reading, compared to 16.4% of girls. Boys also read far less regularly than girls; 23.1% report they ‘never’ read for enjoyment, compared to 14.7% of girls.

Socioeconomic context, as measured through Jersey Premium (JP%) status, also appears to be associated with reading attitudes and behaviours at both Key Stages, although less clearly than gender.

At KS2, students in high JP% schools show slightly lower reading enjoyment (37% report they love reading compared to 42% in low JP% schools), and are more likely to fall into the very low reading frequency category (15% compared to 10%).

At KS3, students in high JP% schools read regularly at far lower rates than their peers in low JP% schools (13.4% compared to 27.2%). Across both Key Stages, students in high JP% schools are more likely to rely on school as their main reading context, highlighting the importance of school-based reading provision.

These trends should not be seen as fixed reading characteristics of boys or of students in high JP% schools. Research consistently shows that students’ reading identities are shaped by school reading cultures, expectations and practices, as well as the texts available (Cremin et al., 2026).

Reading across the years

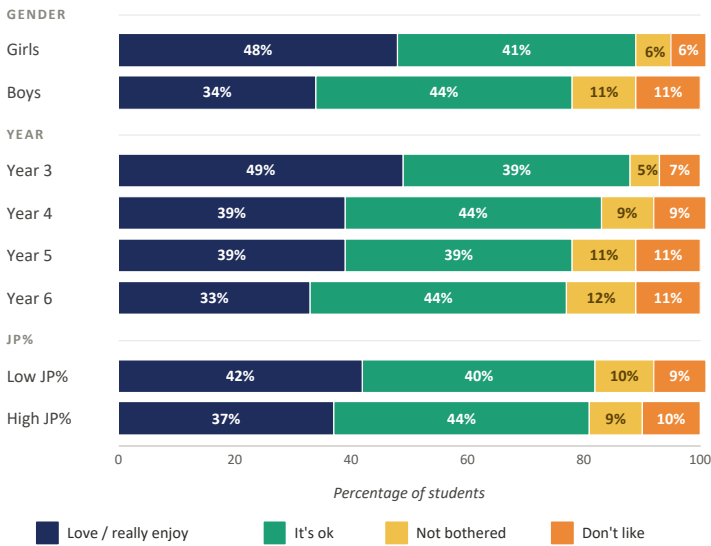
Both datasets reveal a consistent and concerning trajectory: reading engagement declines markedly as children progress through the Key Stages. The proportion of pupils who say they love reading falls over KS2 (from 49.3% Year 3 to 32.9% Year 6). High reading motivation also drops (from 50% Year 3 to 32% Year 6), while low motivation rises over this period.

At KS3, this decline in the desire to read and frequency of reading is compounded. Nearly 40% of KS3 students report reading less by choice than they did in primary school.

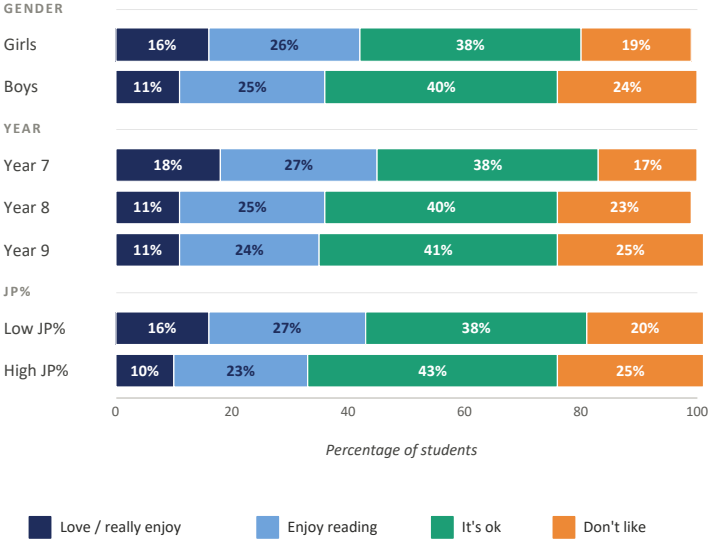
‘Well I do love reading, but I haven’t read in a while because of starting this new school’
KS3

Evidence from the KS3 students suggests this decline is influenced by their busy lives, other interests and curriculum demands, it may also

Reading enjoyment profiles across KS2



Reading enjoyment profiles across KS3



reflect a reduction in reading for pleasure infrastructure in secondary schools.

Readers’ self-concepts also decline across KS2; by Year 6 nearly three in ten pupils do not view themselves as good readers. Strikingly, approximately one in twenty pupils progresses through KS2 without developing a positive reader identity – this figure is consistent across all year groups and warrants attention.

Children’s self-assessments persistently equate being a reader with technical proficiency and fluency, rather than enjoyment or identity. Their notions of what counts as reading, shaped by societal expectations and home and school practices, deserve exploring and widening.

‘I can read fast and pronounce the words’
KS2

Reading frequency

At KS2, reading frequency is relatively strong in absolute terms: approximately 45% of pupils report reading every day, and a further 28% report reading two to three times a week. It is not known if this includes reading homework.

At KS3, volitional reading is not common in most students' lives. Nearly half (48.1%) report they rarely or never read for enjoyment, and fewer than one in five do so regularly. Reading frequency,

as in KS2 declines across KS3; in Year 7, 38.7% rarely or never read for enjoyment, by Year 9, 57.4% rarely or never do so. Students comment there is limited time to read books of their own choosing in school, only 18.5% note such time is available. For many, the barrier does not appear to be aversion to reading in principle, but the absence of time, texts and support.

'If we didn't have so much homework, I would have more time to read.'

KS3

Reading preferences



Top Authors KS2 and KS3

Just over a fifth of all 7–14-year-olds did not name a favourite author, book or poet, potentially affirming their disinterest and disengagement as readers. However, most pupils voice strong and specific reading preferences. At KS2, there was alignment between favourite books and current reading, including *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney, *Dog Man* by Dav Pilkey, *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling, multiple books by Roald Dahl, and *Tom Gates* by Liz Pichon. Nearly a quarter (24%) of children named one of these as their favourite.

At KS3, whilst a wider range of authors are mentioned, there was surprisingly close overlap with KS2 favourites, David Walliams, J.K. Rowling, Roald Dahl, Jeff Kinney and Katie Kirby received the most mentions. This may reflect an enduring affection for familiar texts, less awareness of more secondary-phase material and the influence of multimedia adaptations, websites and merchandise linked to these texts.

Genre preferences are clear across both Key Stages, predominantly series fiction and graphic novels at KS2, and series fiction (adventure and humour), graphic novels, manga, fantasy, and horror at KS3. Over a quarter of KS3 students voice dissatisfaction that their school has no librarian, and many called for more books that reflect their identities, languages and lived experience.

The least favourite genres, regardless of Key Stage, are information and factual books, followed by poetry. The reasons given appear to be rooted in the perceived dryness of these forms, their lack of visuals, difficult language and complexity, and may also relate to how pupils encounter these genres in the curriculum.

Reading practices

Across both Key Stages, students appear to experience reading mainly as a solitary activity. When reading conversations occur at KS2, they are more likely to be at home than in school. Mothers are the most frequently named, followed by friends and fathers. Teachers only feature in 5.5% of all KS2 reading conversation mentions. At KS3, the lack of social interaction around reading was also marked.

'I talk to no one, except the person who reads my reading record'

KS2

Despite this, there is strong evidence that talk and reading enjoyment are mutually reinforcing. At KS2, the children who report loving reading are more than twice as likely to chat about it as those who do not (65.9% v 28%). Relaxed conversations about texts can widen reading interests, nurture connections and motivate readers (Cremin et al., 2024; Ivey & Johnston, 2023).

At home nearly half the children at KS2 (45.6%) are read to, mainly by mothers.

The remainder report no one reads to them at home. At KS3, teacher read-aloud is widely reported; 81.5% of students say their teachers read aloud sometimes or regularly.

This may reflect fluency-related reading provision, rather than recreational reading provision. The visibility of adult reading role models at KS3 is more limited: only 45.0% of students sometimes or regularly see adults in school reading for pleasure, 23.5% report never seeing this.

Never chat
about reading
KS2: 43%
KS3: 44%

'Less judgement on the books read by students, more time to read, and more teachers who read for enjoyment themselves to help and support readers in school.'

KS3

Student visions for school reading communities

The children's voices and views offer nuanced insights. At KS2, many share ways to enable reader engagement, including finding the 'right book', reading by choice rather than obligation, and having time and space to become absorbed in texts. At KS3, more than 80% of students offered suggestions for developing their school reading community, reflecting an appetite for change. These included libraries and librarian access, time to read and wider choices.

'Involve students, after all we're the readers, we'd like to have a say'.

KS3

The students' indicated interest in co-developing their school reading cultures and wanted their voices, choices and agency as readers to be respected.

Implications and recommendations

Taken together, the KS2 and KS3 surveys provide a rich, detailed and somewhat concerning picture of reading for pleasure in Jersey. The findings are largely consistent with UK and international trends but carry urgency in the Jersey context, where an island-wide commitment to developing reading cultures is both possible and evidently needed.

Individual schools will wish to analyse their own data, supplementing this with additional tools to draw understanding unique to their contexts. Establishing a complementary staff baseline of knowledge and practice will help leaders shape school improvement plans and plan responsive professional development.

In addition, drawing from the wide Jersey island data, it is recommended that school leaders, teachers, librarians, The Reading Island Network and all those committed to advancing young people's education in Jersey, support each other to:

1. Take responsibility for reading for pleasure, prioritising plans to address students' reading ambivalence, nurturing and sustaining positive reader identities from 7-14+ years.
2. Develop students' agency as readers, supporting text choice, and involving them in shaping reading provision and practice in their schools and other contexts.
3. Ensure access to texts which reflect students' interests, preferences and abilities, through investment in libraries and librarians. In particular nurture more positive attitudes towards information texts and poetry.
4. Widen staff conceptions of reading and being a reader, ensuring the academic and wellbeing benefits associated with recreational reading are understood and rich reading repertoires of contemporary texts for young people are developed.
5. Profile reading for pleasure throughout the school and other environments, physically and socially, making reading visible, invitational and engaging.
6. Ensure staff develop knowledge of young readers' and their practices, paying particular attention to boys, older pupils and those from high JP% schools to plan responsively, using targeted approaches to rekindle engagement.
7. Develop intentional reading for pleasure pedagogies by providing dedicated space and time for students to hear texts read aloud, to read alone and with others, and to converse informally about reading and being readers with peers and interested adults.
8. Profile readers' identities, both staff and students, prompting young people to reflect on their reading at home and school, broadening what counts as reading and enabling staff to participate as authentic reading role models.
9. Share formative information about readers' attitudes, preferences and practices at transitions between classes, and from primary to secondary school enabling sustained provision and attuned support.
10. Create more social, communal and reciprocal reading cultures which involve students and adults from schools, homes and the wider community, nurturing connections and a sense of belonging.

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