Reaching Out with Role Models

Role models and young people's reading

Christina Clark, Sarah Osborne and George Dugdale
National Literacy Trust

April 2009

Registered address:
National Literacy Trust
68 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL

☎ 020 7587 1842
020 7587 1411
contact@literacytrust.org.uk
www.literacytrust.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Our sincere thanks to Slaughter and May for their generous financial contribution to this research.

Many thanks also to the schools that participated in this survey, without whom this study would not have been possible:

Anchorsholme Primary; Anston Park Primary School; Arbourthorne Community Primary School; Beech House School; Bow School; Brixton St Marys; Childwall School; Cippenham Junior School; Clarendon Primary School; Cheddar Grove Primary School; Elgar Community College; Helston Community College; Honiton Primary School; Intake High School; James Brindley High School; John F Kennedy School; King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys; Lady Margaret School; Lawnswood; Mandeville Upper School & Sports College; Mullion School; Northern Junior Community School; The Phil Edwards Pupil Referal Unit; Poole Grammar School; Rugby School; Queen Elizabeth School; Sheffield Park Academy; Stanchester Community College; Stanningley Primary; Thomas Alleyne's High School; Uphall Primary School; Waycroft Primary School; Werneth School; West Thornton Primary School.

Table of contents

Table of figures and tables

Executive summary

Do children and young people have reading role models? If so, do these role models come from their immediate social environment? Or are more distant ones, such as celebrities, also influential? We addressed these questions in a recent survey of 2176 seven to 15-year-olds. The questions were asked as part of a wider survey about children's and young people's role models: who they are, and what qualities children and young people expect them to have.

Children and young people were asked about their reading habits and reading enjoyment, as well as about their notions of success and the types of attributes that they would look for in a role model. Questions were asked about the types of figures that could inspire reading, and how this could be done. For example, by suggesting reading materials, writing materials, reading by example or explaining why reading is important. The findings were then examined according to age, gender, socio- economic background (determined by free school meals – FSM) and whether they enjoyed reading (readers and non-readers).

The findings provide valuable insight for initiatives that aim to use role models to inspire young people, particularly to inspire reading. Overall, 72% of children and young people enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot. Technology-based materials are the most frequently read, with nearly two-thirds of children and young people reading websites every week. Half the sample also reads blogs/networking websites (such as Bebo and MySpace) and emails every week. Secondary pupils read more technology-based materials, such as website and blogs/networking sites, every week than primary pupils. Readers feel more confident about their reading skills and read a wider variety of texts than non-readers.

For most, being successful means being happy, having a good education and having a good job. Only a quarter said that being successful means having lots of clothes, being famous, having a flash car or being good at sports. 76% of children and young people believed that reading will help them to be successful. Though this equates to a large proportion of the group, this finding also signals that there is more work to be done to reach out to the 24% of children and young people who do not recognise the vital link between reading and success. Perhaps unsurprisingly, children and young people who enjoy reading were significantly more likely to view reading as important to success (83.2% vs 56.8%).

Role models and inspiring reading

The study found that 78% of children and young people have a role model. These come predominantly from within the immediate family. A fifth of pupils spontaneously mentioned that their role model is either their mum or dad. Sportspersons, footballers in particular, are the most frequently mentioned role model after the immediate social environment.

More girls than boys have role models (82% vs. 75%). Girls are also more likely to choose role models from within the immediate family, while more boys chose a sportsperson. Primary pupils were more likely to have role models than secondary ones (81.4% vs. 76.5%), and more likely to say that having a role model who likes reading is important (39% vs.16%). Role models from the immediate family figure prominently for all ages, but more secondary than primary pupils say that their role model is a sportsperson or musician. When the data was examined according to allocation of FSMs, role models from the immediate family figured prominently in the choice of both pupils receiving FSMs and those who are not. However, sports figures were particularly prominent for FSM pupils, who were over twice as likely to choose a sports figure as a role model (15% vs 6.5%)

Cultural background, gender, age and celebrity status are largely not important characteristics of a role model. Instead, most choose a role model because of their internal qualities, such as being hard-working, honest and kind/caring. By contrast, only a quarter of children and young people believe that their role model needs to be famous, a reader, good-looking or make lots of money.

When asked about figures that could inspire reading, again the immediate family are the most prominent figures, followed by their friends and teacher. The immediate family are the most important in inspiring reading for both boys and girls, but more boys than girls said that a sportsperson, politician, religious figure or cool kids at school inspire them to read. Primary pupils are generally more likely to say that a range of people are very important people who inspire them to read, while friends at school are prominent in inspiring reading for secondary pupils.

Both children receiving FSMs and those who are not also selected the immediate family as the key figures to inspire reading. However, FSM pupils have a wider range of people who could inspire reading, including other family members, neighbours, adults outside of school (e.g. family friend, youth worker), teachers, cool kids at school as well as politicians, celebrities, musicians, actors/actresses, sportspersons and religious figures. Pupils who do not receive FSM say that their dad inspires them to read, which reflects the fact that FSM pupils are more likely to live only with their mother (34% vs. 16%).

Children who enjoy reading also have a wider range of people who could inspire reading, including other family members, neighbours, adults outside of school (e.g. family friend, youth worker), teachers, while non-readers say that cool kids at school and sportspersons are important figures who could inspire them to read.

Most children and young people said that their role model could promote reading by providing reading recommendations or explaining why reading is important. However, FSM pupils say that the key way that their role model could inspire them to read is to explain to them why reading is important.

Conclusion

This survey highlights the continuing importance of parents in the life of children and teenagers. Parents are not only role models in a general sense but are also the prime figures who can inspire reading. Almost without exception, every breakdown of the data found that family members, normally parents, were the most likely role models for that group of children. For instance, while children on free school meals (FSM) were more likely than those not on free school meals to choose sportsmen and women as their role models, parents were still the most likely to be their role models.

Programmes that aim to work with the already powerful influence of parents, especially on younger children, should therefore work alongside parents and work from a position of parents as knowledgeable partners in the process. These findings are particularly important from a policy perspective, as policies regarding parents and families can be a complex area and the differentiation between interfering and guiding is vital.

However, we should not underestimate the power of using famous role models to underpin the reading messages being promoted. Along with boys, children on FSM and children in primary school were both likely to pick sportspeople as role models. Importantly, this survey reveals that even if a celebrity is not famous because of their reading skills, young people said the materials they recommend would encourage them to read.

Introduction

"Role models are key references for adolescents because they provide a window to the future" (Bryant and Zimmerman, 2003)

Do children and young people have reading role models? If so, do these role models come from their immediate social environment? Or are more distant ones, such as celebrities, also influential? We addressed these questions in a recent survey of 2,176 seven to 15-year-olds. Further questions included in this survey explored children's and young people's general role models, who they are, and the qualities that children and young people are looking for in their role models.

Who or what is a role model? Biskup and Pfister (1999: 204) observed that "the significance of role-models is multifaceted, ambivalent and often difficult to understand and interpret." Indeed, despite its popularity in general and academic discourse, the concept of a role model remains a vaguely defined notion (see Gibson, 2004).

Bryant and Zimmerman (2003: 37) believe that being able to identify role models indicates that "youth believe that these individuals are worthy of imitation in some respect and that their attitudes or values are ones they would like to assimilate." The educational aspect of role models is mirrored in Kemper's (1968: 33) conception: "The essential quality of the role model is that he possesses skills and displays techniques which the actor lacks (or thinks he lacks), and from whom, by observation and comparison with his own performance, the actor can learn."

Overall, a role model is a person, living or fictional, who inspires, either by imitation or by aspiration, and is someone we wish we could be more like (Zirkel, 2002). In line with Hutchings and colleagues (2007), in this research a role model is someone who a person *would like to be like in some way*. This definition allows a variety of individuals to be considered role models, including parents, peers, teachers, community workers and celebrities.

Role models are an important part of numerous aspects of a person's life. For example, Bucher asserts that "models are one of the most important pedagogical agents in the history of education" (1997: 660). Research in areas other than literacy has suggested that the presence or absence of role models can be associated with psychological well-being, problem behaviour and educational or civic engagement. Among other effects, role models have been shown to influence young people's occupational goals and career aspirations (e.g. King and Multon, 1996) and moral beliefs (e.g. Lumpkin, 2008).

Teachers have been shown to influence educational choices among college students (e.g. Basow and Howe, 1980) and trainee teachers (e.g. Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen, 2007), while superstars can affect young adults' self-views (e.g. Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). Female action heroes that are seen as role models have been linked to greater aggressive tendencies (e.g. Greenwood, 2007). Political role models can also influence political participation in young people and adults (e.g. Wohlbrecht and Campbell, 2007). Smoking role models have also been associated with young people's intentions to smoke and actual smoking behaviour (Wiium, Breivik and Wold, 2006).

The use of role models to promote literacy behaviour makes intuitive sense. The assumption is that children who do not read themselves are not likely to realise the value of reading unless they see other people read. Indeed, there are numerous examples of programmes that use role models to boost the aspirations and self-images of a particular target group. For example, Reading Champions, an initiative delivered by the National Literacy Trust (NLT) on behalf of the

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), uses role models to engage pupils with reading. The NLT also works in partnership with the Premier League and the Football Foundation to deliver Premier League Reading Stars, an initiative that uses footballers as reading role models. In February 2008, the DCSF also unveiled a £6 million young leaders scheme to turn young people into positive role models. The aim of the scheme is for young people to champion local and national issues and become positive role models for their communities. July 2008 saw the launch of Reach, a government-backed campaign to inspire under-achieving black males in the UK through the use of role models.

What also seems to come up in numerous academic and non-academic articles, especially those discussing male literacy, is a shortage of role models, particularly male role models, who promote reading as something that is enjoyable. In this context, the reading role model can come from a variety of backgrounds, including family, school, the community and the glitzy world of celebrity.

According to Bricheno and Thornton (2007: 384),

> *The re-emergence of 'role model' solutions as policy prescriptions to remedy boys' so-called underachievement and laddish behaviour (Francis, 2000), requires that past research be reviewed and new research undertaken to see if things have changed over time.*

While there is a vast amount of anecdotal evidence about the motivational role of certain individuals and while research on the related concept of mentors has flourished in recent years, there are only a few studies that have explored the area of role models in the literacy context. Most importantly, while the impact of parental or family reading role models has received at least some attention in the last few years, there has been no research into the effects of celebrity or other more distant role models on the reading behaviour of children and young people.

As a result of these gaps in the literature and because the use of role models, both close and distant, is a large part of the work of the NLT, this survey was designed to explore who children choose as reading role models, and why. Are celebrity role models "too glossily distant to be useful role models" (Walker, 2007: 515) and what is the relative impact of individuals from the direct social environment? Further questions asked whether children tend to choose role models who are of the same gender and ethnic background. The answers to these and other questions will be explored in detail in the following sections.
For a fuller review of the literature on role models in general and literacy in particular see Clark (2008).

Research questions

As part of our project delivery, the NLT uses and promotes role models extensively, either in terms of promoting family engagement with children's literacy, using football players to draw in disaffected boys and families or featuring celebrities who promote reading on posters.

However, this review has identified glaring gaps in the evidence base of the importance of role models in the literacy lives of children, young people, and even adults. These gaps will need to be plugged if we want to further and improve our work using role models to promote reading.

While it is beyond the scope of this survey to address all the gaps in evidence outlined above, we wished to address the following areas:

- Are the role model's background characteristics, such as cultural background, gender and familiarity, important to children and young people?

- What are the qualities that children and young people look for in their role model?
- When it comes to inspiring reading, are parents still the most important influence on the reading behaviour of children and young people or do celebrities and other more distant groups of people also play a role?
- What is the impact of the children's and young people's gender, age, socio-economic, ethnic and family background on their attitudes towards role models?

Methodology

Reading Connects is a NLT initiative, run on behalf of the DCSF, which has built a network to promote reading communities in schools. By the end of October 2008, 4,800 schools had signed up to this ethos. 30 schools were selected from this network based on their location and socio-economic background and invited to take part in this survey. This was an online survey, which was conducted between October and November 2008. 20 of those finally participated in this survey – 10 primary and 10 secondary schools, resulting in 1,435 pupils. A control group of 741 pupils from schools similar in location that are not part of the Reading Connects initiative also participated. The overall sample contained 2,176 pupils.

The analyses in this report are predominantly based on basic descriptive statistics (such as frequency distributions) and two-way cross-tabulations. The data in this study were analysed using SPSS 17.0. Any result for which statistical significance is reported was significant at the conventional probability level of 0.05. This means that the result would be likely to occur by chance only a few times in every 100 cases. In line with Hall and Cole (1999), however, some judgement is needed about the educational significance of these findings.

Comparing our schools to a control group

Before analysing the data outlined in the following chapters, the schools we work with were compared with a control group of pupils who do not take part in any of our initiatives. Because the control group contained a significantly greater percentage of girls and fewer pupils from a free school meals background, a subsample from both groups (350 pupils each) were compared that matched in terms of gender, age and free school meals take-up, using post-stratification sampling weights. No significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of their reading enjoyment, reading confidence and other forms of reading behaviour. There was also no significant difference between our schools and the control group in terms of having a role model and in the types of reading role models they chose. Consequently, the following analyses are based on the sample as whole (N = 2,176).

Role models – general findings

Key findings

- 72% of children and young people enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot. Technology-based materials are the most frequently read, with nearly two-thirds of children and young people reading websites every week. Half the sample also reads blogs/networking websites (such as Bebo, MySpace) and emails every week.
- For most, being successful means being happy, having a good education and having a good job. Only a quarter said that being successful means having lots of clothes, being famous, having a flash car or being good at sports. 76% of children and young people believe that reading will help them to be successful.
- 78% of children and young people have a role model. These come predominantly from within the immediate family. A fifth of pupils spontaneously mentioned that their role model is either their mum or dad. Sportspersons, footballers in particular, are the most frequently mentioned people after the immediate social environment.
- The cultural background, gender, age or celebrity status are not important characteristics of a role model. Instead, most choose a role model because of their internal qualities, such as being hard-working, honest and kind/caring. By contrast, only a quarter of children and young people believe that their role model needs to be famous, a reader, good-looking or make lots of money.
- The immediate family are the most important reading role models for children and young people, with 71% choosing their mother and 62% choosing their father, followed by their friends (39%) and their teacher (37%)
- Most children and young people said that their role model could promote reading by providing reading recommendations or explaining why reading is important.

Sample background

2,176 pupils took part in this survey on reading role models. There were more boys than girls in the sample (55.7% and 44.3%, respectively) and the majority of pupils were 11, 12 and 13 years old (see **Table 1.1**).

Table 1.1: Age

	Percent	N
7	3.8	82
8	3.6	78
9	6.3	137
10	14.7	319
11	17.9	389
12	18.1	394
13	20.0	436
14	13.1	285
15	2.6	56

When asked whether they receive free school meals (FSM), the majority of children and young people said that they do not (79.6%). In line with official figures, 16.2% of children and young people received FSM, while 4.2% did not know whether they did.

They were also asked to indicate their ethnic background. 159 (7.3%) pupils did not want to answer this question. **Table 1.2** shows that the majority of children and young people in our study were from a white British background by a large margin, followed by Asian Pakistani and Asian Indian backgrounds.

Table 1.2: Ethnic background

	Percent	N
White - British	64.1	1395
White - Irish	1.8	39
White – Traveller of Irish heritage	0.4	8
White – Romany or Gypsy	0.7	15
White – any other white background	2.1	46
Mixed – White and black Caribbean	1.9	41
Mixed – White and black African	1.0	21
Mixed – White and Asian	1.5	32
Mixed – other mixed race background	0.8	17
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3.3	72
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4.3	93
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3.1	68
Asian or Asian British – Chinese	1.7	36
Asian or Asian British – other Asian background	0.1	15
Black or black British – Caribbean	1.5	33
Black or black British – African	1.5	33
Black or black British – other black background	0.6	12

Our participants were also asked a question about their family background. **Table 1.3** shows that the majority of children and young people in our study lived with both their mother and father. A fifth of pupils lived only with their mother.

Table 1.3: Family background

	Percent	N
I live with both my mother and father	61.9	1347
I live only with my mother	18.4	401
I live only with my father	1.9	42

	Percent	N
I live with adoptive parents	1.0	21
I live with my foster parents/carers	1.0	21
Other	15.8	344

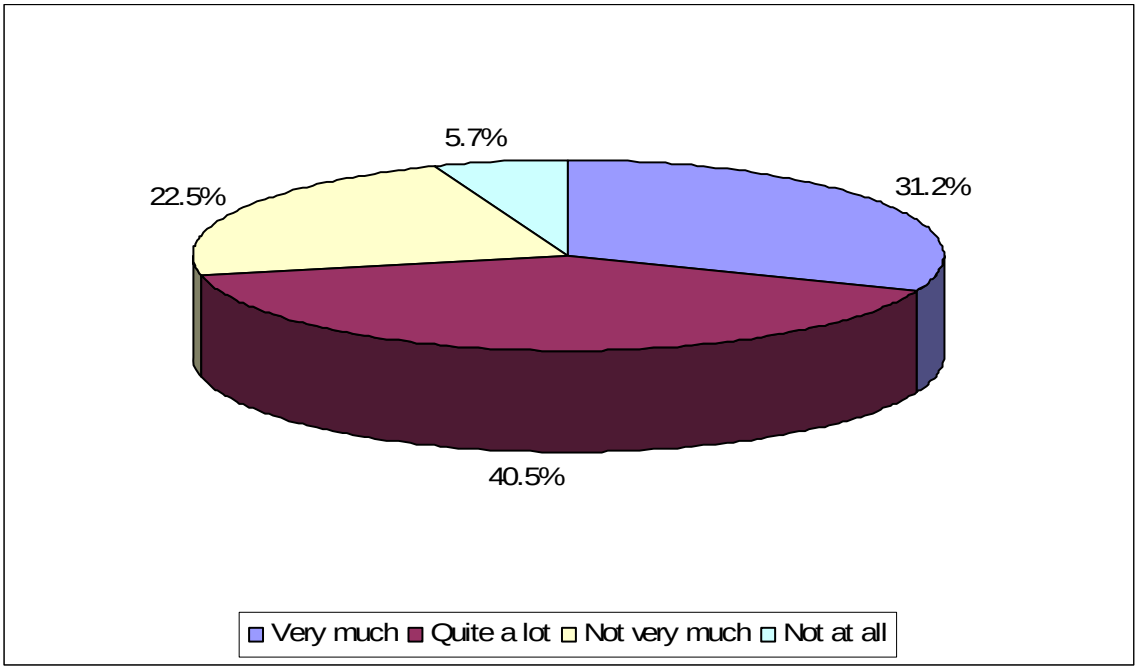
The relationship between these background variables and attitudes towards role models will be described in the following chapters. There were very few significant differences in terms of ethnic background, which did not warrant a separate chapter. This may be due to the small sample sizes for the relevant ethnic groups in this survey. Any differences will therefore be integrated in the following results, where applicable.

Reading behaviour

The majority of children and young people enjoyed reading either very much (31.2%) or quite a lot (40.5%). Only a small percentage of pupils did not enjoy reading at all (see **Figure 1.1**).

These percentages are similar to those found in previous NLT surveys (Clark and Foster, 2005; Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008). In addition, other studies have found similar degrees of enjoyment. For example, the Nestlé Family Monitor (2003) reported that two-thirds (65%) of 11 to 18-year-olds found reading enjoyable, while the PIRLS survey indicated a similar percentage of Year 5 pupils who enjoyed reading either very much or a little (Twist et al., 2007).

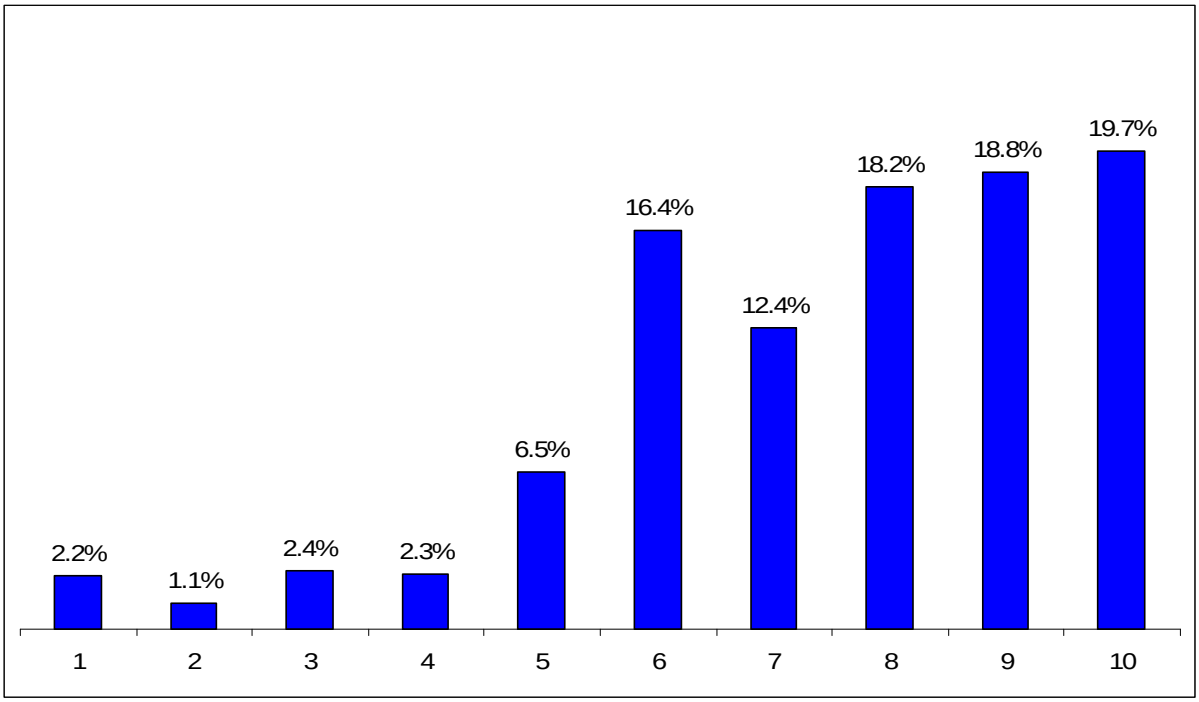
Figure 1.1: Do you enjoy reading?



One of the few significant findings regarding ethnic background showed that pupils from Asian backgrounds enjoyed reading more than pupils from white or black backgrounds. This will be explored in more detail in a future study.

When asked how good a reader they think they are, most children and young people ranked themselves to be proficient readers (see **Figure 1.2**). Though the overall sample rated themselves as more proficient compared to our other surveys, the general pattern is comparable.

Figure 1.2: How good a reader are you?



(1 = Not a very good reader to 10 = Excellent reader)

Children and young people were also asked how often they read different types of materials outside of school (see **Table 1.4**). Consistent with a previous NLT survey (Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008), which showed that magazines, websites, blogs and emails were the most popular materials read outside of class, technology-based materials were the most frequently read ones in the present study. For example, websites were the most frequently read material, with nearly two-thirds of children and young people reading them every week. Approximately half the sample also read blogs/ networking websites (such as Bebo, MySpace) and emails every week. Two-fifths of children and young people also read magazines and fiction books every week. By contrast, a third never read any poetry, graphic novels/comics, or manuals/ instructions.

Table 1.4: Frequency of materials read outside of school

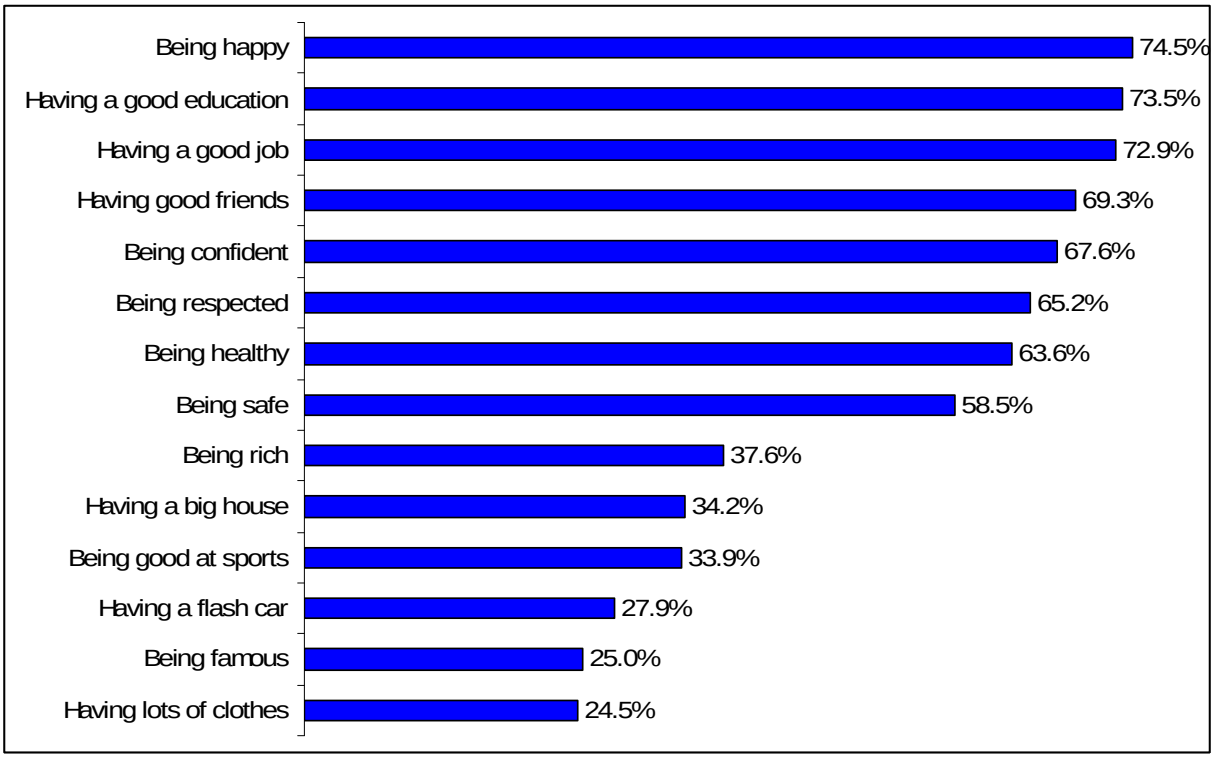
	Every week	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Websites	**62.6**%	14.0%	5.4%	5.8%	12.3%
Blogs/networking websites	**46.4**%	11.4%	6.0%	6.9%	29.2%
Newspapers	**29.8**%	18.8%	10.6%	15.6%	25.2%
Magazines	42.3%	25.3%	11.9%	9.0%	11.5%

	Every week	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Graphic novels/ comics	22.4%	18.2%	13.8%	17.0%	**28.6**%
Emails	**55.3**%	13.8%	7.1%	6.3%	17.4%
Lyrics	**32.0**%	17.9%	10.5%	13.5%	26.1%
Fiction books	**39.9**%	16.9%	11.8%	12.7%	18.7%
Poetry	14.4%	13.9%	14.1%	21.0%	**36.6**%
Non-fiction books	**26.3**%	21.4%	16.0%	16.6%	19.7%
Manuals/instructions	18.6%	17.3%	14.7%	21.0%	**28.4**%

Role models

Contrary to previous studies (e.g. Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 2008), which have shown that children and young people are increasingly pre-occupied with being famous and rich, our findings show that when asked what being successful means to them, the majority of children say that it means being happy, having a good education and having a good job (see **Figure 1.3**). Only a quarter of children and young people said that being successful means having lots of clothes, being famous, having a flash car, while a third said that it means being good at sports or having a big house.

Figure 1.3: What does being successful mean to you?



When asked whether reading helps them to be successful, 75.7% of children and young people agreed that it does, whereas only 7.6% did not (16.7% were unsure whether it would help or not). This compares well with findings from a previous NLT survey (Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008), which showed that most pupils saw reading as more important than other activities in order to do well in life, regardless of whether the pupils saw themselves as readers or not. However, it is counter to a finding from a National Year of Reading survey (2008), which showed that adults from certain socio-economic backgrounds did not equate reading with success. We will explore the impact of socio-economic background, as measured by free school meals take-up, in a later chapter.

Over three-quarters (78.1%) of children and young people said that they have a role model. When asked to name their role model, most pupils spontaneously mentioned their mother or father, followed by other family members (see **Figure 1.4**). Cristiano Ronaldo and Steven Gerrard were the most frequently named celebrites but only by 3% of pupils. This is in line with previous research that has shown that children and young people are more likely to identify role models from their immediate social environment (e.g. Bryant and Zimmerman, 2003).

Similarly, when asked to categorise their role model, most children and young people in the present study indicated that their role model is a family member (see **Figure 1.5**).

Compared to the types of people children and young people choose as their role models, comparatively little is known about why they are chosen. When Anderson and Cavallo (2002) asked children why they looked up to their role models, the children most frequently said that it was because the person was nice, helpful and understanding. When asked to indicate which attributes they think are important for a role model, the majority of children and young people in our survey said that a role model needs to be hard-working, honest and kind/caring (see **Figure 1.6**). By contrast, only a quarter of children and young people believed that a role model needs to be famous, a reader, good-looking or make lots of money.

Figure 1.4: Spontaneous mentions of named role models

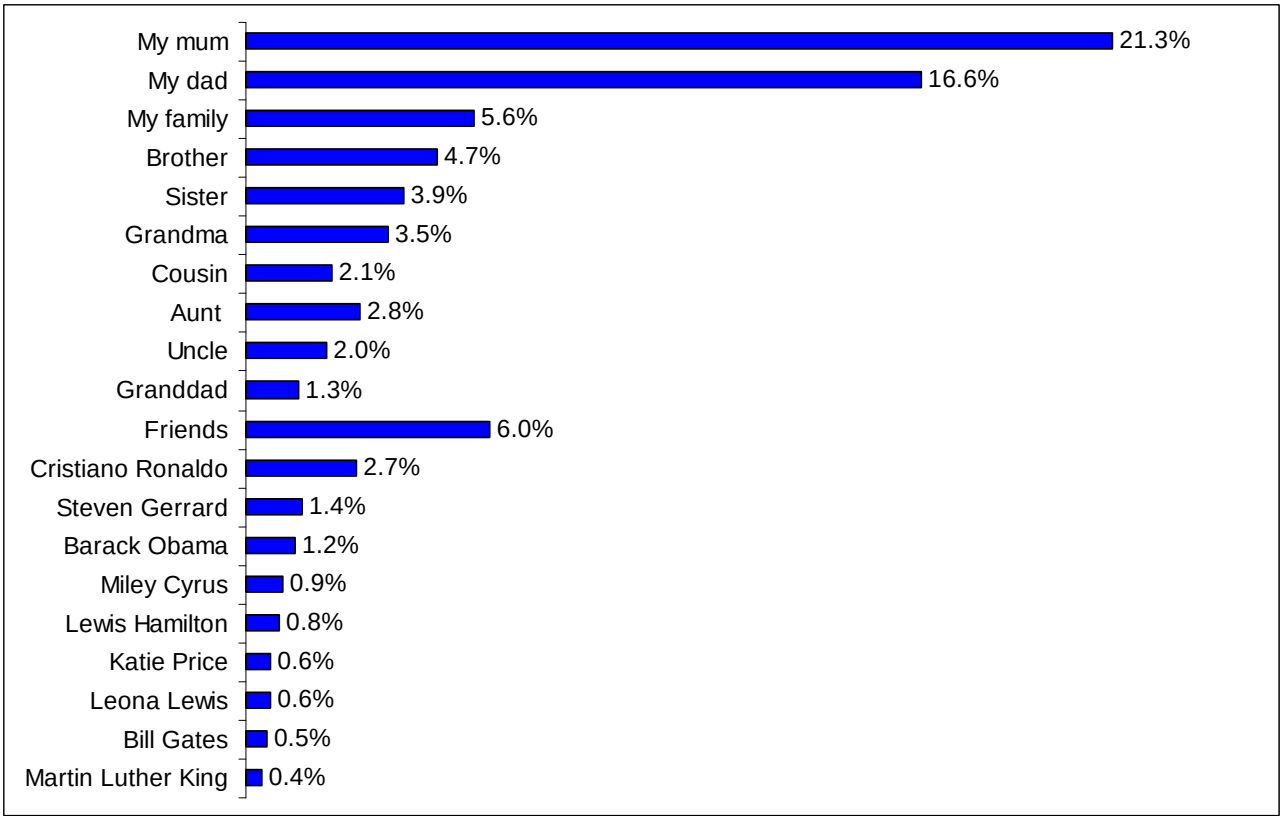


Figure 1.5: Is your role model a …?

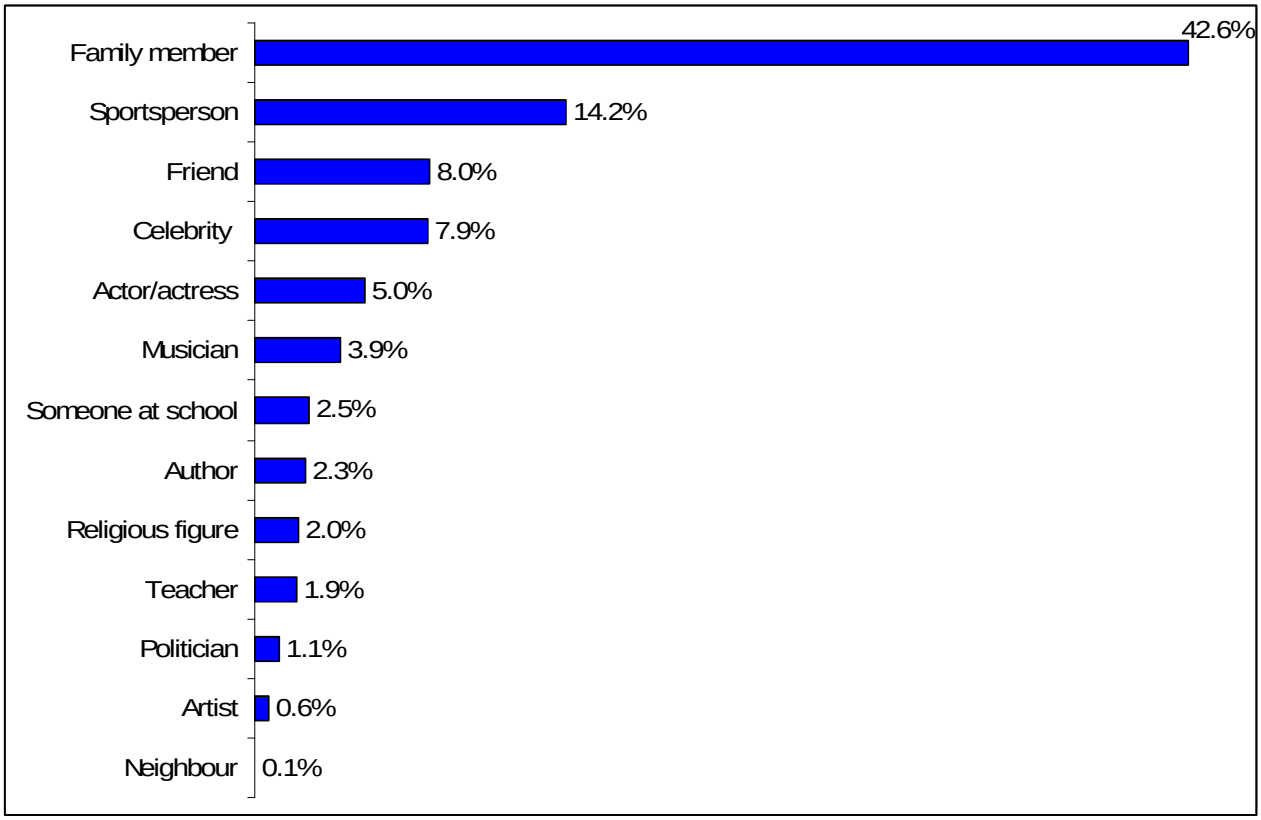
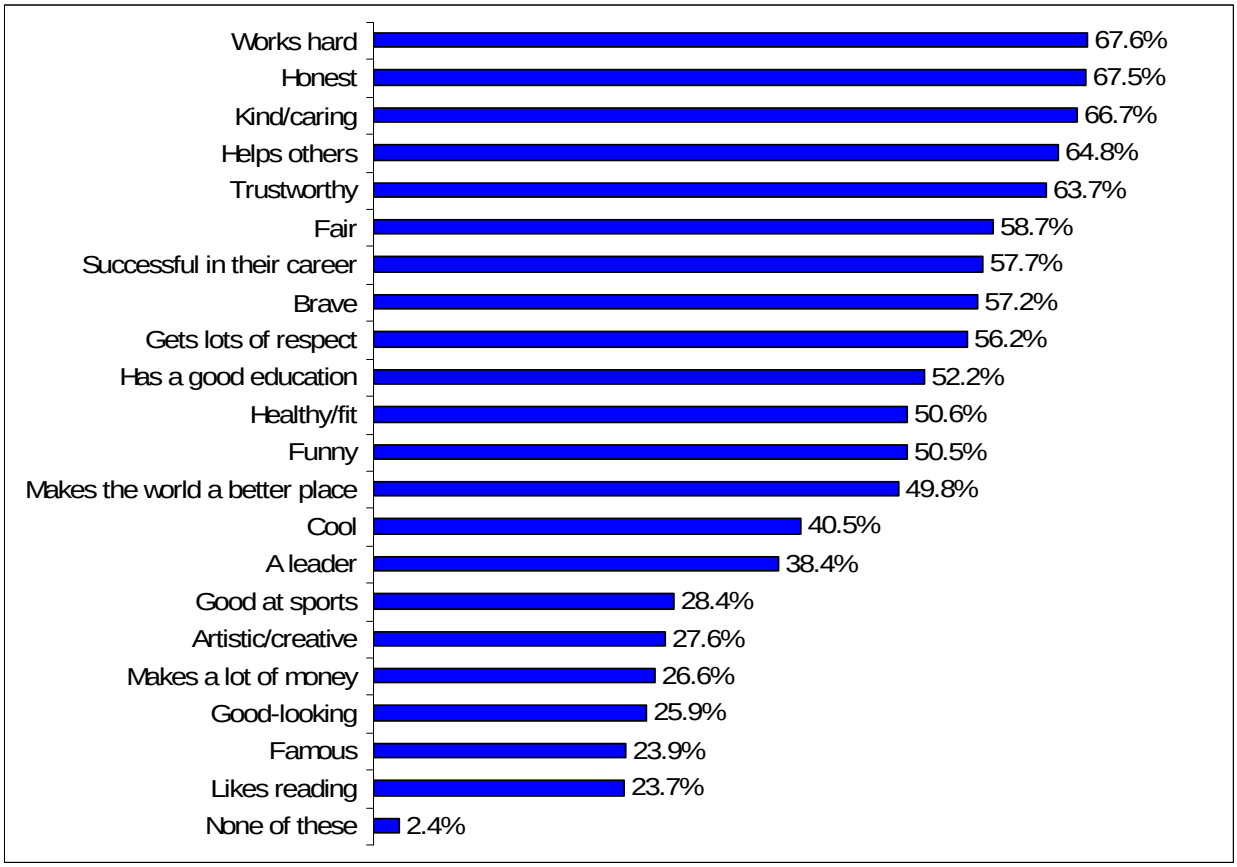


Figure 1.6: Role model attributes



It is also frequently said that children and young people try to emulate people they perceive to be very similar to themselves (e.g. Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). However, data from the present survey do not seem to back up that claim. For example, **Table 1.5** shows that most children and young people disagreed that a role model needs to come from the same culture, be of the same gender believe the same things and be known to them personally. Most also disagreed that a role model needs to be famous. In addition, most children and young people also believed that age doesn't matter (71.8%), compared with 7.1% who believed that it does.1.8% said that a role model needs to be younger, and 14.8% said that a role model should be older (4.6% were not sure about age).

Table 1.5: In order for a person to be a role model for you, do they need to be …?

	Yes	No	Not sure
From the same culture	13.0	76.7	10.4
Of the same gender	18.3	76.1	5.6
Someone you know personally	26.1	65.6	8.3
Famous	16.5	77.0	6.5
Believe the same things as you	24.1	63.9	11.9

People who inspire reading and gender

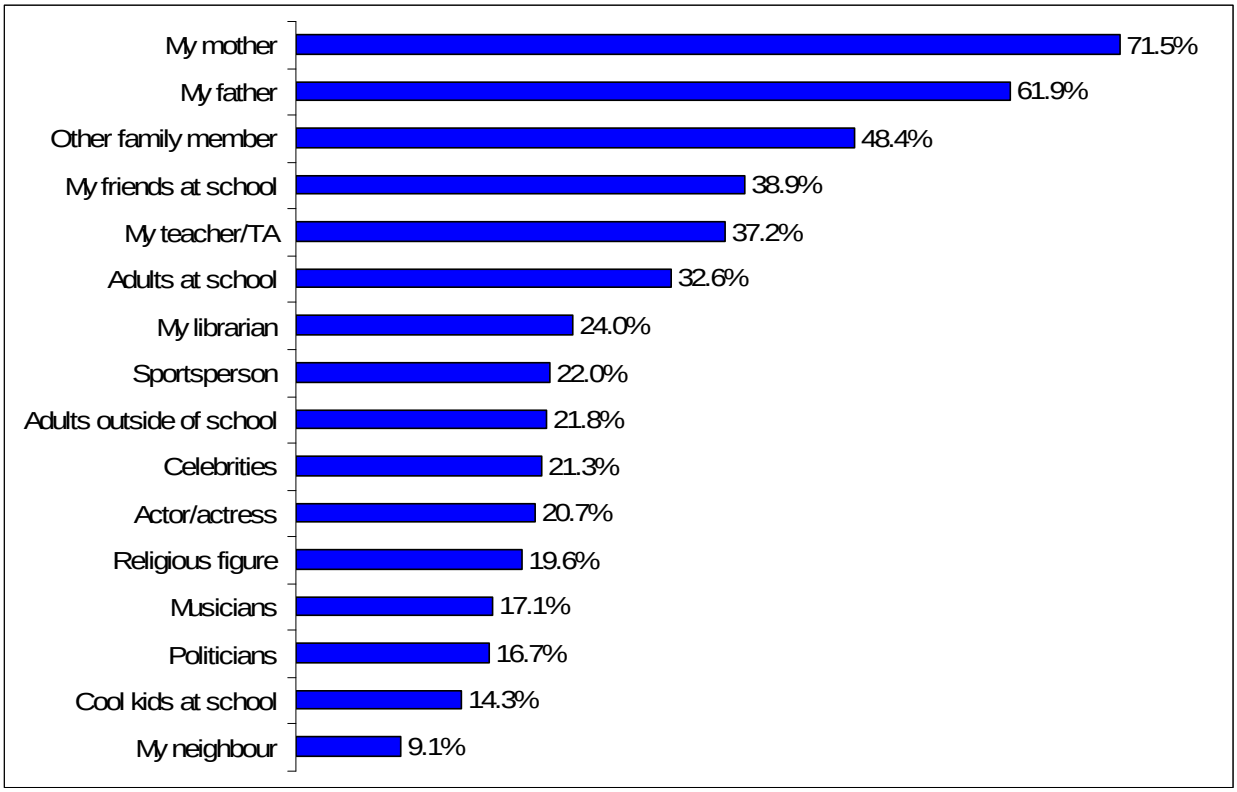
While being a reader did not figure greatly as an important attribute of a role model, we were interested in exploring who the types of people are who inspire children and young people to read. More specifically, we were interested to see to what extent they would choose people from their immediate environment or whether they would say that more distant people act as their reading role models.

Figure 1.7 shows that when asked to indicate how important certain people or groups of people are in inspiring them to read, the immediate family and friends came out as the most important people to promote reading. Neighbours, cool kids at school, politicians and musicians were the types of people who were rated as very important least frequently.

Finally, when asked how their role model could inspire them to read, 55.3% of children and young people thought that they could suggest things they could read, 52.5% said that they could explain why reading is important, 48.4% thought they could write something they could read, and 47.1% said that they should read himself/ herself.

The following chapters will explore these issues in more detail by examining the impact of gender, age, free school meals, and being a reader on children and young people's attitudes towards role models and inspiring reading.

Figure 1.7: Very important people who inspire reading



Gender differences

Key findings

- Girls enjoy reading more than boys (77% vs. 67%) but there are no gender differences in reading confidence.
- Girls and boys have differing understandings of what success means to them. Both boys and girls say that being successful means being happy, having a good education and having a good job. However, significantly more boys than girls choose more showy signs of success, such as being famous and having a flash car. Similar percentages of boys and girls agree that reading helps them to be successful.
- More girls than boys have role models (82% vs. 75%). Both boys and girls choose role models from within the immediate family, but more boys than girls choose a sportsperson (24% vs 4%)
- Boys care more about their role model's cultural background, gender, celebrity status than girls and are more likely to choose someone older.
- Being hardworking, honest and kind/caring are the most important role model attributes for boys and girls. However, boys are significantly more likely than girls to stress the external qualities of their role model, such as being cool, good at sports and making lots of money.
- The immediate family are important in inspiring reading for both boys and girls, but more boys than girls said that a sportsperson, politician, religious figure or cool kids at school inspire them to read.
- More girls than boys said that their reading role model could inspire them to read by suggesting reading materials and by being seen to be reading themselves.

This section provides information about the differences between boys and girls in terms of their reading behaviour, their general attitudes towards role models and their reading role models. These comparisons are based on 1,189 (54.6%) boys and 987 (45.4%) girls**.**

Reading behaviour and gender

Previous studies have shown that girls enjoy reading more than boys. Consistent with this, the present research showed that a significantly greater percentage of girls than boys enjoyed reading very much, while a greater percentage of boys than girls said that they don't like reading very much or not at all (see **Figure 2.1**).

While proportionately more girls than boys enjoyed reading, there were no significant differences in the degree to which boys and girls rated their confidence as readers (see **Figure 2.2**).

In line with previous research (Clark and Foster, 2005; Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008), there were significant differences in the types of materials frequently read by girls and boys. In the present study, proportionately more girls than boys read blogs/ networking sites, magazines, emails and poetry every week (see **Figure 2.3**). By contrast, a significantly greater proportion of boys than girls read newspapers, graphic novels/comics and manuals/instructions every week.

Figure 2.1: Do you enjoy reading? By gender

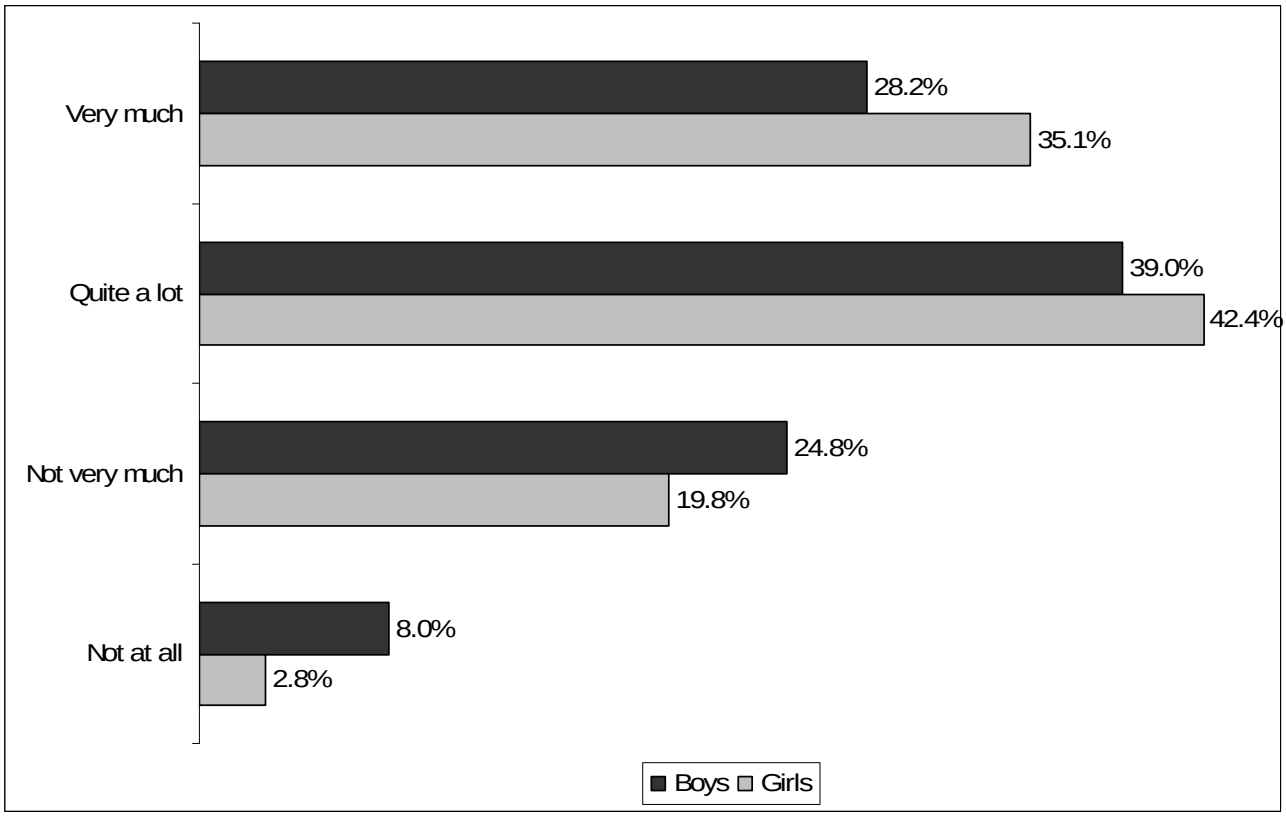
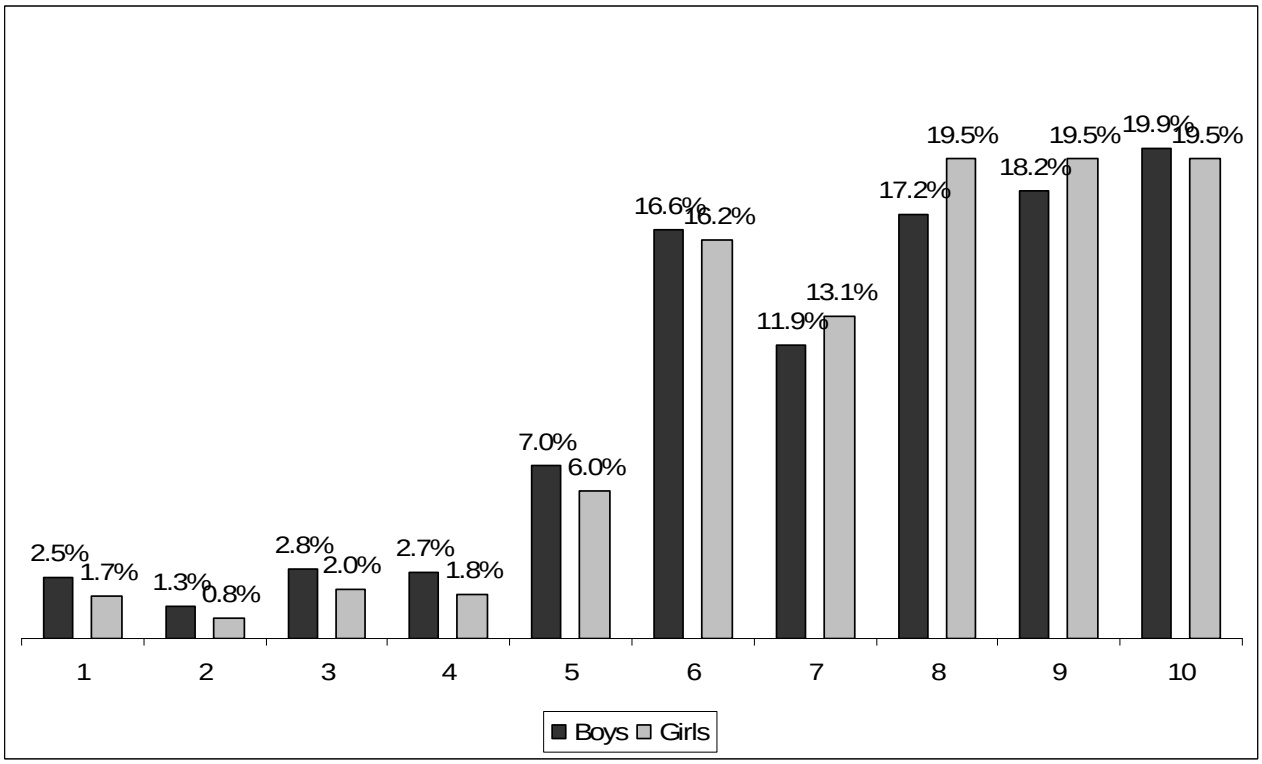
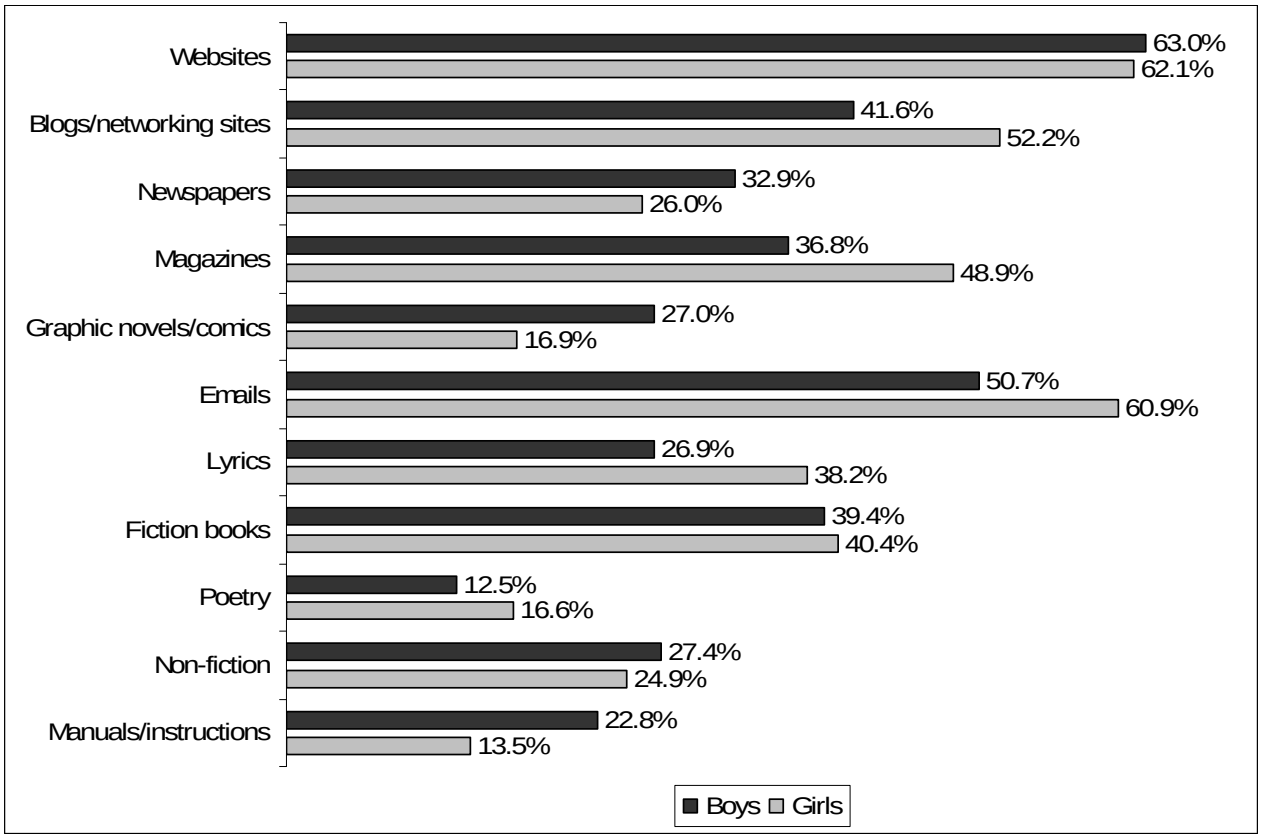


Figure 2.2: How good a reader are you? By gender



(1 = not a very good reader – 10 = excellent reader)

Figure 2.3: Materials read every week by gender



Role models and gender

Figure 2.4 shows that boys and girls have differing understandings of what it means to be successful. A significantly greater percentage of girls than boys said that being successful means being happy, having a good education, having good friends, being confident and being safe. While the majority of boys also chose such invisible forms of success, boys were also significantly more likely than girls to indicate the more showy signs of success. For example, a significantly greater percentage of boys than girls said that being successful means being rich, being good at sports, having a big house, having a flash car and being famous.

There were no significant differences between boys and girls (74.3% and 77.5%, respectively) when asked whether reading will help them to be successful.

In line with previous research (e.g. Bricheno and Thornton, 2007), a greater proportion of girls than boys in the present study said that they had role models (82.2% and 74.7%, respectively). When asked who this person is, a significantly greater percentage of girls than boys indicated that they are family, while a greater percentage of boys than girls said that they are a sportsperson (see **Figure 2.5**). These findings reflect previous research, which has shown that although both boys and girls are more likely to choose relatives as the most important role models, girls tend to choose peers as their second most important influence, followed by musicians, while boys tend to choose footballers (Bricheno and Thornton, 2007). Similar findings that girls chose musicians and boys selected sports figures were made by Freedman-Doan and Eccles (1994) in a US sample.

Figure 2.4: What does being successful mean to you? By gender

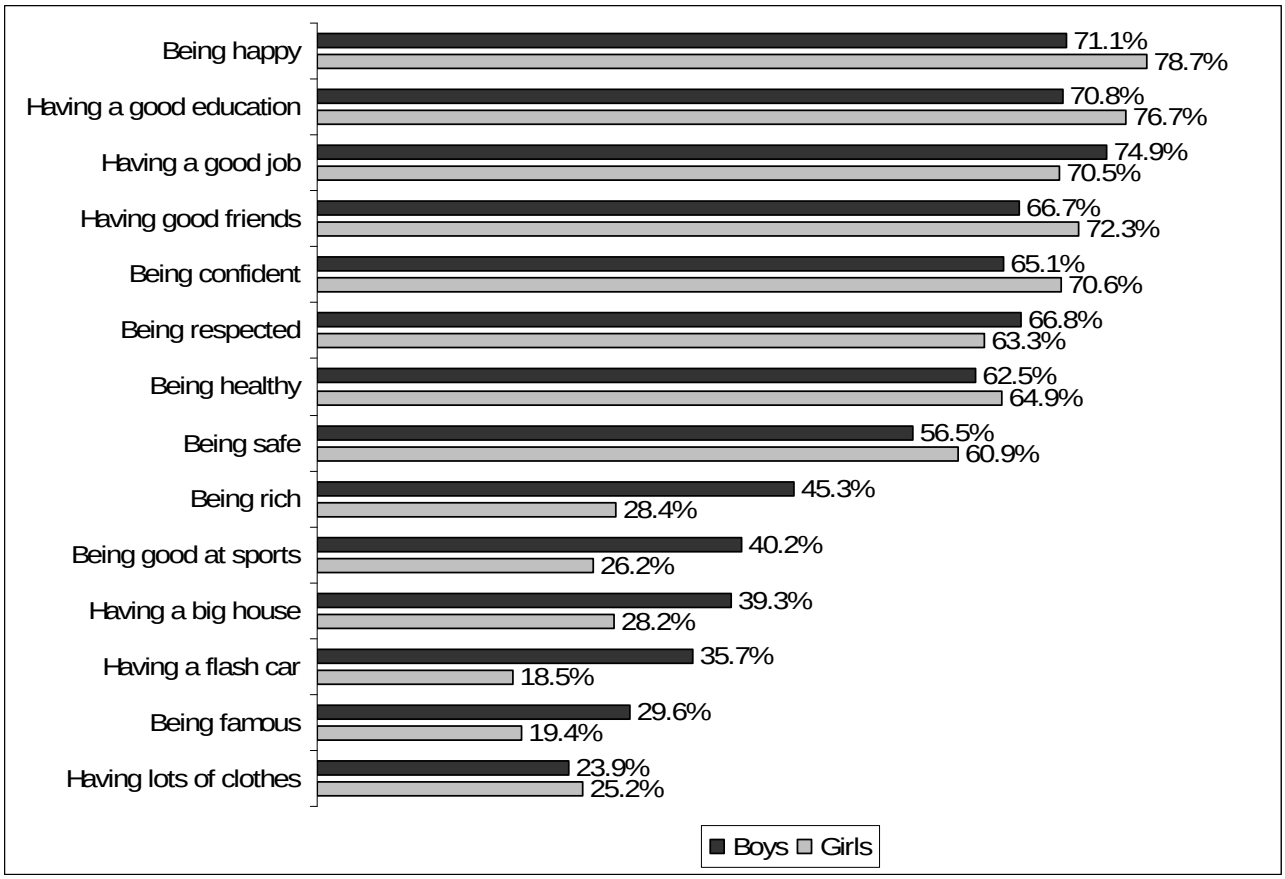
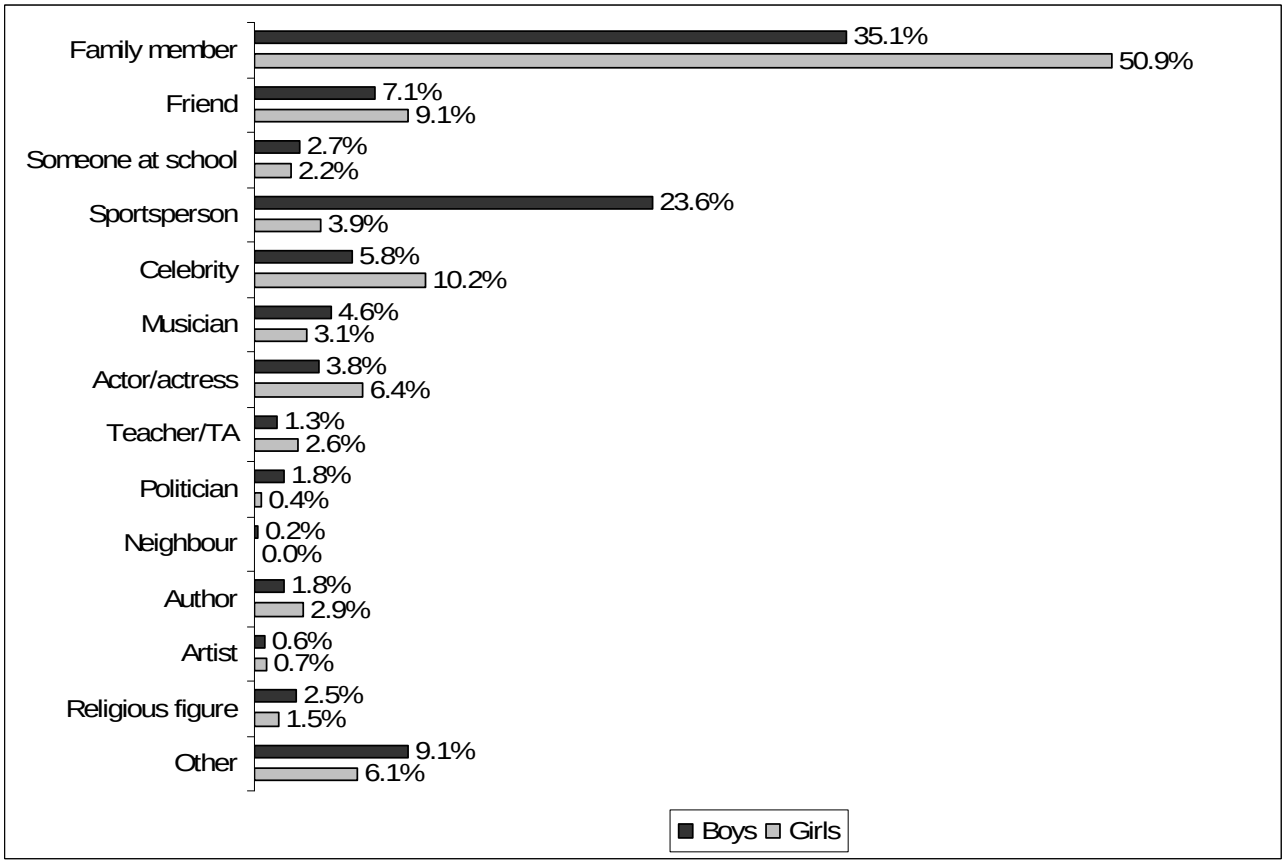


Figure 2.5: Is your role model a …? By gender



It is also frequently said that children and young people try to emulate people they perceive to be very similar to themselves. The present data indicate that this is more true for boys than it is for girls. For example, **Table 2.1** shows that significantly more boys than girls said that their role model needs to be from the same culture as themselves and of the same gender. However, boys were also more likely than girls to say role model needs to be someone who is famous and someone older than they are themselves. By contrast, the role model's cultural background, gender, age, and celebrity status were less important for girls.

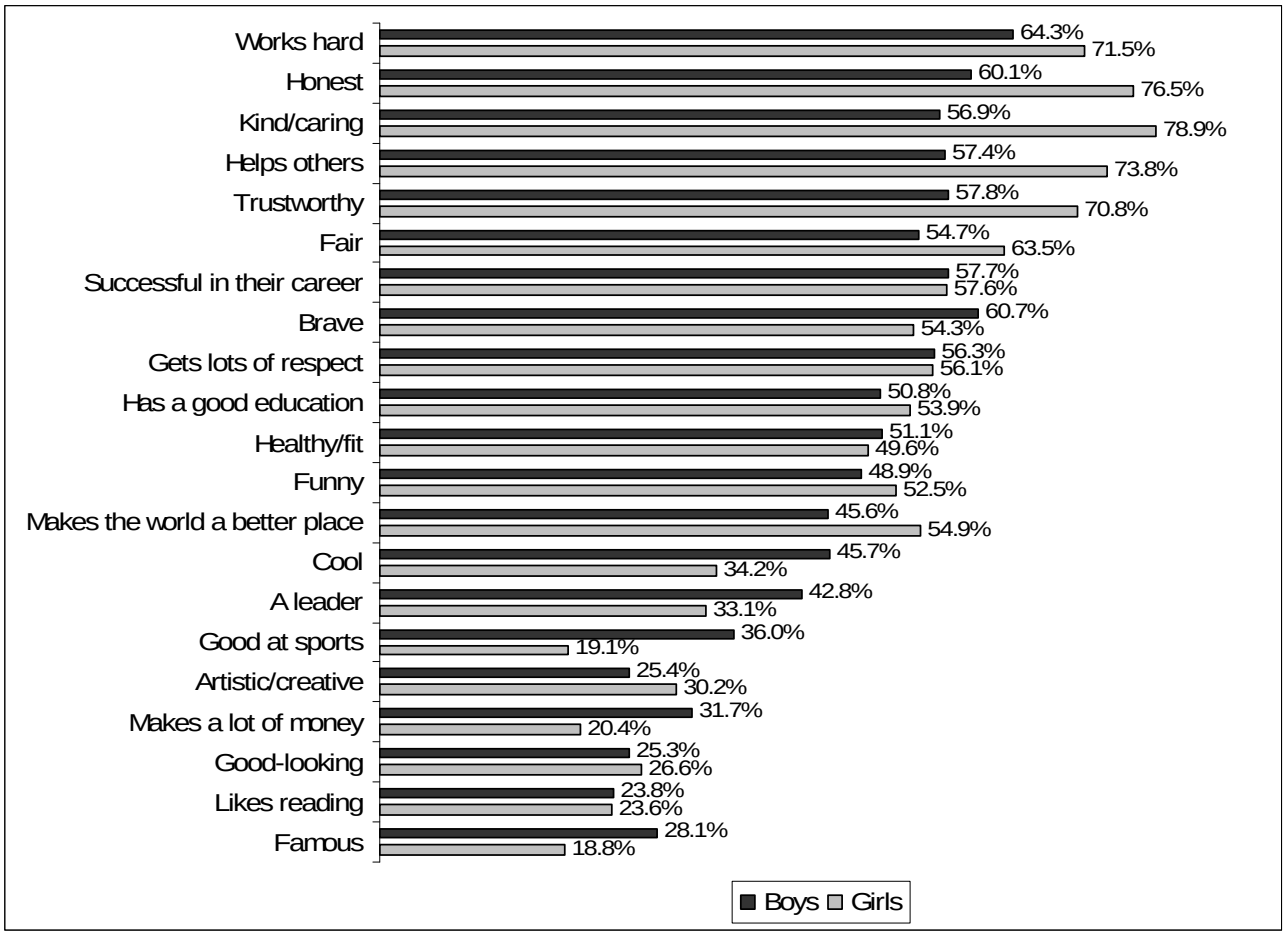
Table 2.1: In order for a person to be a role model for you, do they need to be …? By gender

	Boys %	Girls %
From the same culture		
Yes, definitely	14.6	11.0
No, doesn't matter	74.2	79.6
Not sure	11.3	9.3
Of the same gender		
Yes, definitely	22.2	13.7
No, doesn't matter	71.5	81.7
Not sure	6.3	4.7
Of the same age		
Yes, definitely	7.7	6.4
No, younger	2.0	1.5
No, older	16.6	12.6
Age doesn't matter	68.9	75.3
Not sure	4.9	4.3
Someone you know		
Yes, definitely	25.1	27.5
No, doesn't matter	66.7	64.2
Not sure	8.2	8.3
Someone who is famous		
Yes, definitely	20.4	11.8
No, doesn't matter	72.2	82.7
Not sure	7.3	5.6
Someone who believes the same things as you		
Yes, definitely	25.5	22.8
No, doesn't matter	63.2	64.7
Not sure	11.3	12.8

Previous research has shown that boys and girls attribute their role models with different characteristics. In line with such research, we found clear gender differences in the types of attributes children and young people sought in their role models (**Figure 2.6**).

The graph shows that the majority of both boys and girls say that their role model needs to be hardworking, honest and kind/caring. However, a significantly greater percentage of girls than boys said that their role model is hardworking, honest, kind/ caring, helps others, trustworthy, fair, brave, well-educated, makes the world a better place and artistic/creative. By contrast, a greater percentage of boys than girls indicated that their role models are cool, a leader, good at sports, famous and makes lot of money.

Figure 2.6: Role model attributes by gender



People who inspire reading and gender

Several significant gender differences emerged when they were asked who the very important people who inspire them to read are (**Figure 2.7**). While both boys and girls rated their immediate family as very important people who inspire them to read, a significantly greater percentage of girls than boys said that their friends at school were very important in inspiring them to read. By contrast, a significantly greater proportion of boys than girls said that sportspersons, religious figures, politicians and cool kids at school inspire them to read more.

When asked how their role model could inspire them to read, significantly more girls than boys said that they could suggest reading materials or be seen reading themselves (see **Figure 2.8**).

Figure 2.7: Very important people who inspire reading by gender

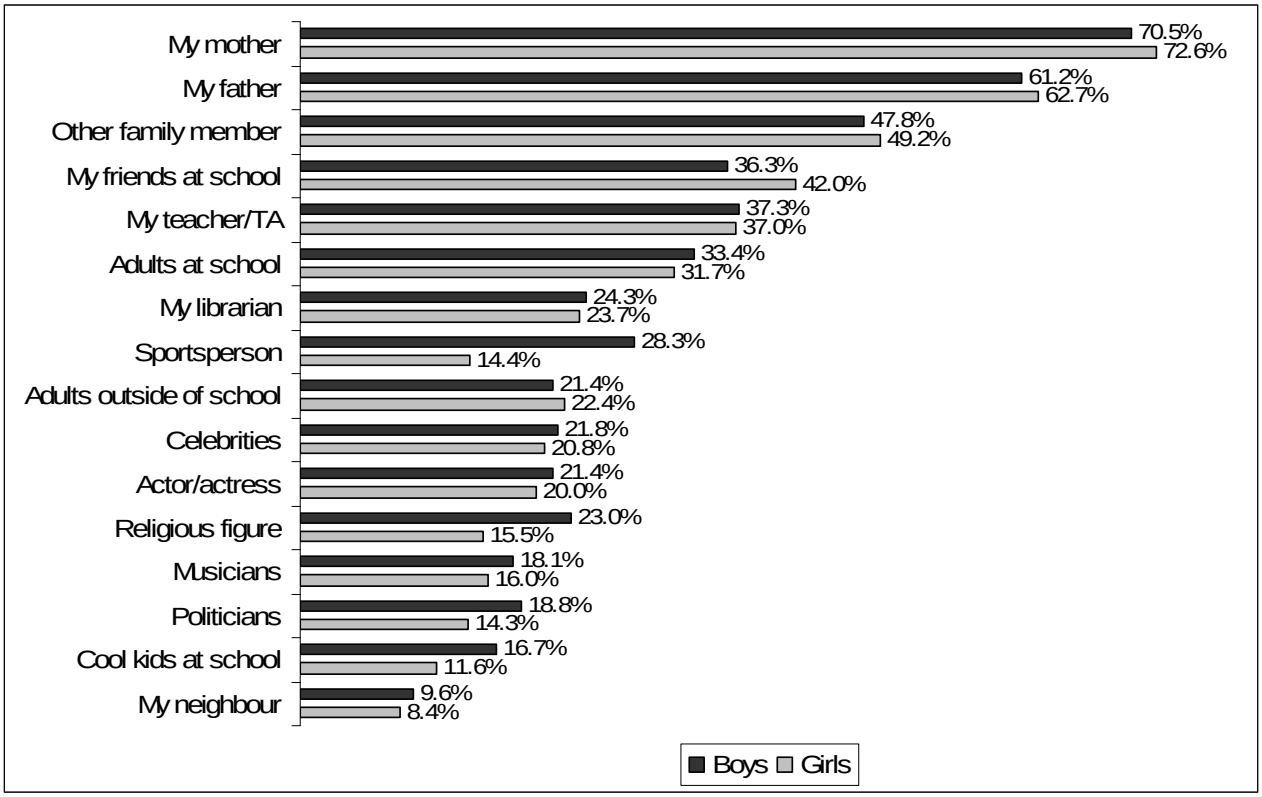
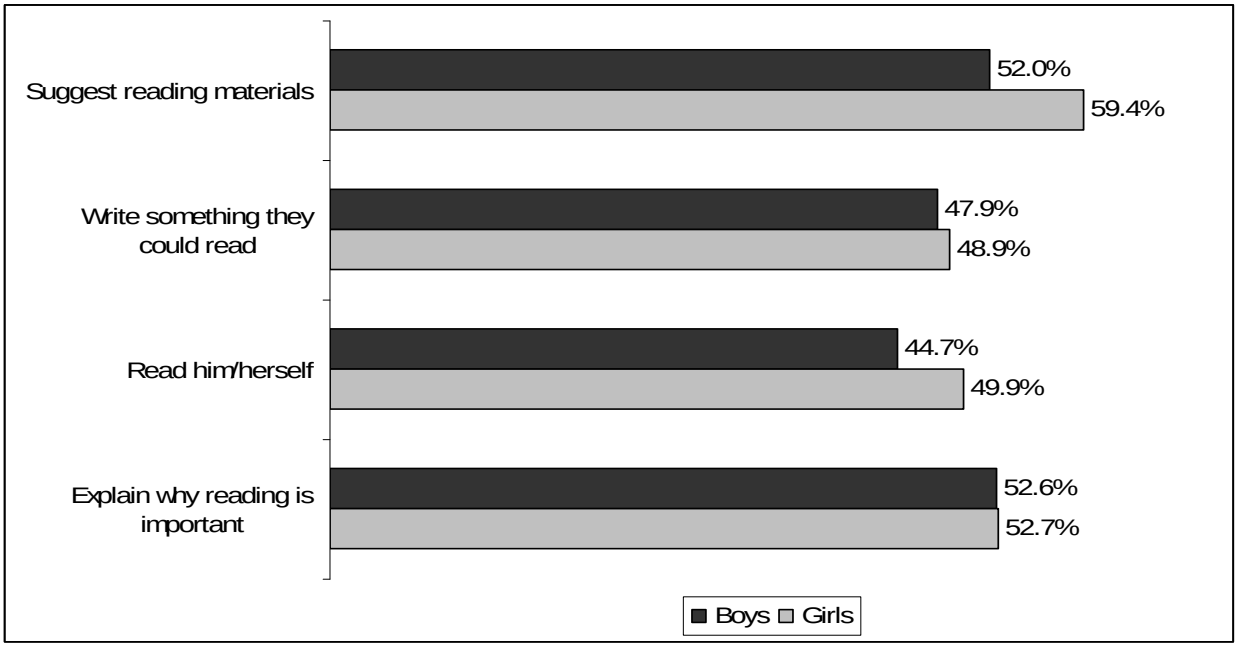


Figure 2.8: How could your role model inspire you to read? By gender



Age

Key findings

- Primary pupils enjoy reading more and feel more confident about their reading skills than secondary pupils.
- Secondary pupils read more technology-based materials, such as websitse and blogs/networking sites, every week than primary pupils.
- Primary and secondary pupils define success differently, with significantly more primary than secondary ones choosing more showy signs of success, such as being famous and having a flash car. Primary pupils were also concerned about being safe.
- More primary than secondary pupils have role models (81% vs. 76%). Role models from the immediate family figure prominently in the choice of both primary and secondary pupils but more secondary than primary pupils say that their role model is a sportsperson (15% vs 12%) or musician (5% vs. 1%).
- Primary pupils are also more influenced by the background characteristics of their role model than secondary pupils.
- More secondary than primary pupils emphasise the internal qualities of their role models, such as being hardworking, honest, trustworthy and helping others. By contrast, more primary than secondary pupils emphasise attributes, such as being brave, good at sports, good looking, famous and having a good education. More primary than secondary pupils also say that having a role model who likes reading is important (39% vs. 16%).
- A wider range of people can inspire primary pupils to read than secondary pupils. Mother and father are particularly important in inspiring reading for primary than secondary pupils (85% and 75% vs. 65% and 56%). Friends are more important in inspiring reading for secondary than primary pupils (52% vs. 28%).
- 61% of primary pupils say that their role model could inspire them to read by explaining to them why reading is important.

Research suggests that as children become adolescents, they rely less and less on parental role models and instead turn to friends, teachers, coaches and others (e.g. Freedman-Doan and Eccles, 1994). According to Freedman-Doan and Eccles (1994), younger adolescents admire characteristics in their role models that were directly related to them (e.g., understands me, does things for me), whereas older adolescents were more likely to admire their role models because of the kind of values and qualities they possess.

To investigate the impact of age on role models and inspiring reading, two broad categories were identified – primary and secondary. The primary category refers to pupils up to upper-key stage 2, while the secondary category includes key-stage 3 pupils. It should be noted that while this crude categorisation may hide some important differences within primary or secondary pupils, it allowed for general age differences to be obtained.

Reading behaviour and age

There were significantly more secondary than primary pupils in this study (32.4% and 67.5%, respectively). Consistent with previous studies, the present survey showed that proportionately more primary than secondary pupils enjoy reading very much (see **Figure 3.1**). Although a greater proportion of primary than secondary pupils also indicated that they were excellent readers (10 out of 10), secondary pupils were significantly more likely to rate themselves to be above average readers (see **Figure 3.2**).

Figure 3.1: Do you enjoy reading? By age

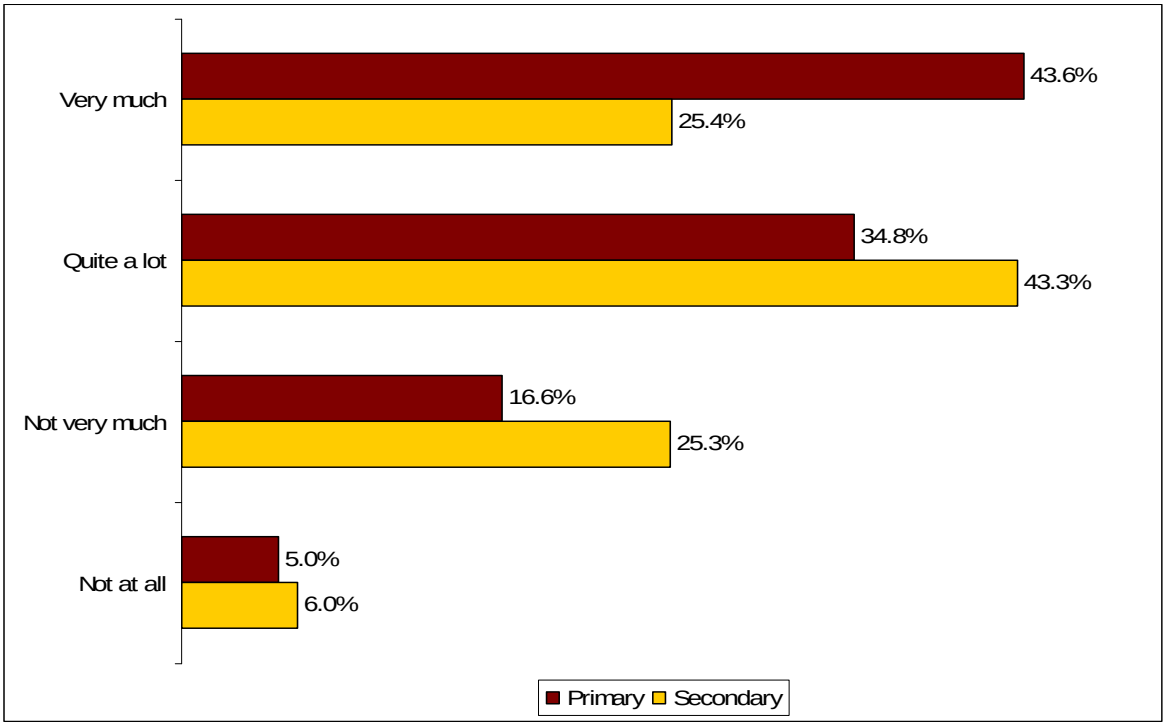
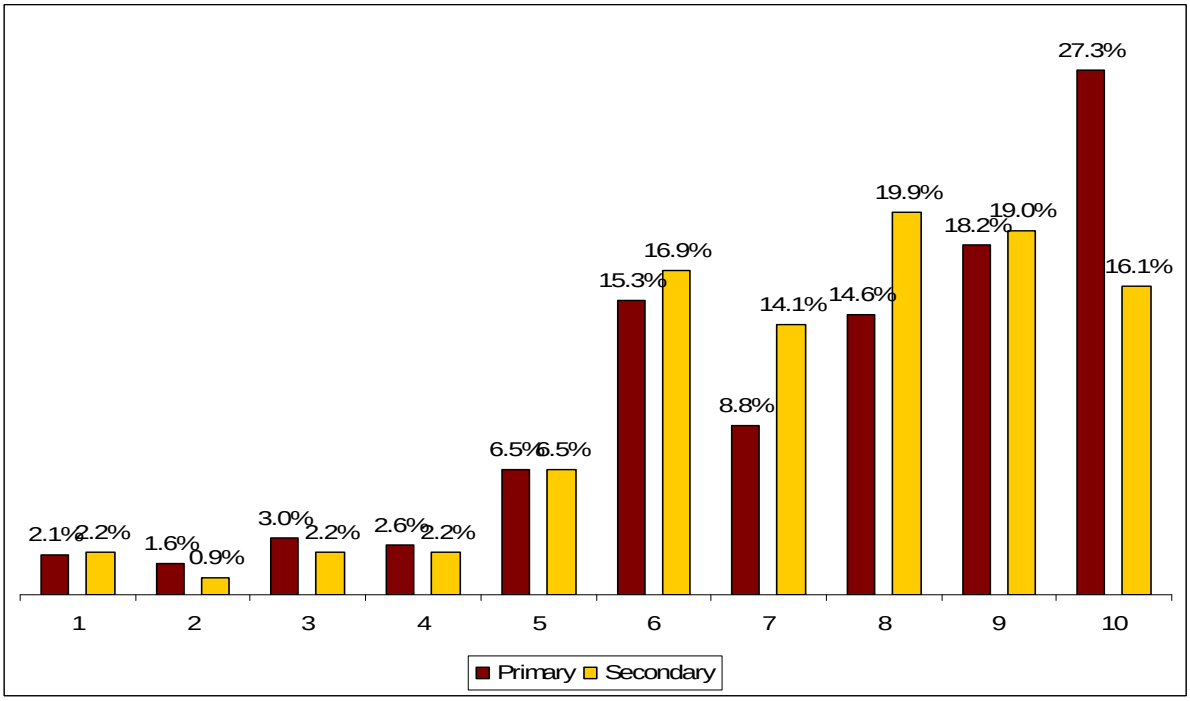


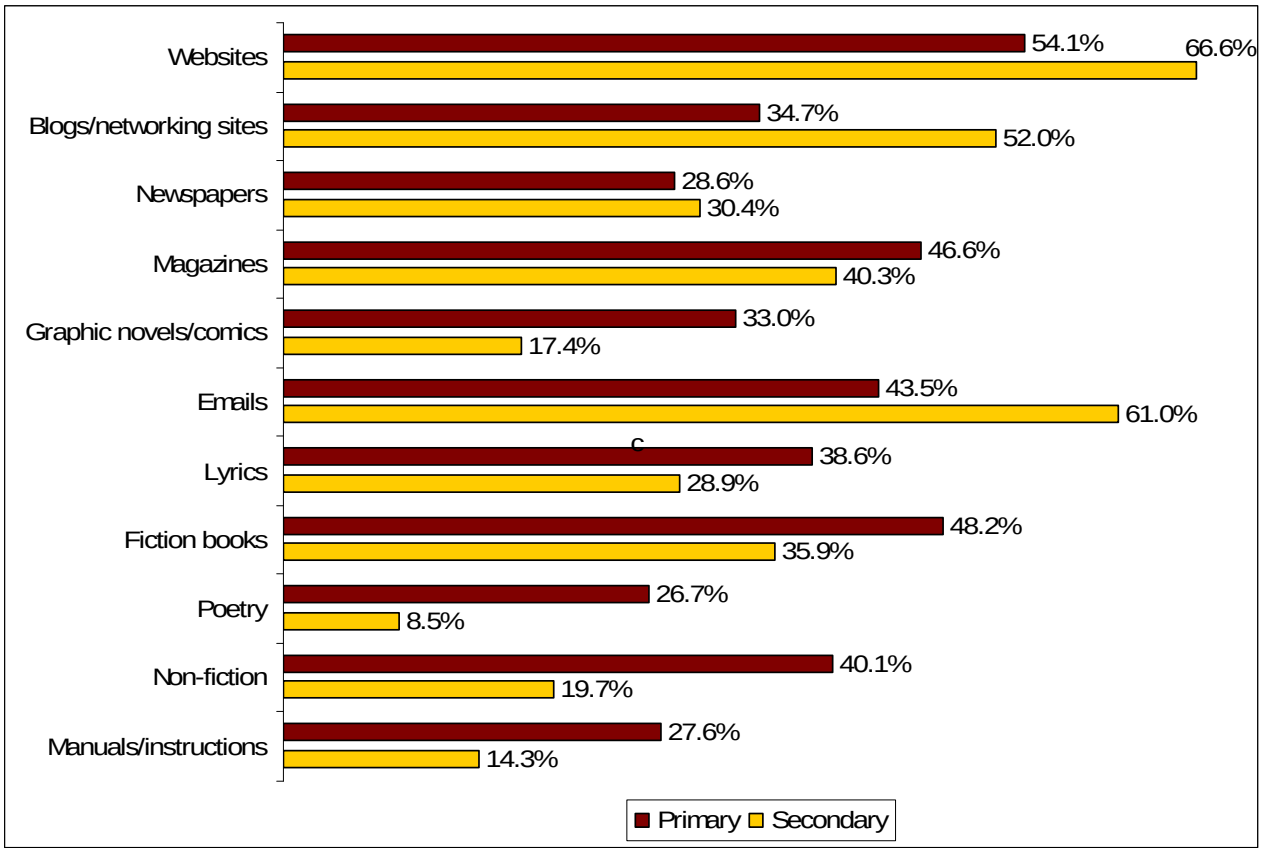
Figure 3.2: How good a reader are you? By age



(1 = not a very good reader – 10 = excellent reader)

A previous NLT survey (Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008) showed that primary and secondary pupils chose to read very different materials outside of school. This finding was replicated in the present study. **Figure 3.3** shows that the reading choices of primary and secondary pupils were significantly different across the board. A significantly greater percentage of primary than secondary pupils said that they read magazines, graphic novels/comics, lyrics, fiction and non-fiction books, poetry and manuals/instructions every week. By contrast, secondary pupils were more likely to choose technology-based materials. A significantly greater proportion of secondary than primary school pupils read websites, blogs/networking sites and emails as well as newspapers every week.

Figure 3.3: Materials read every week by age

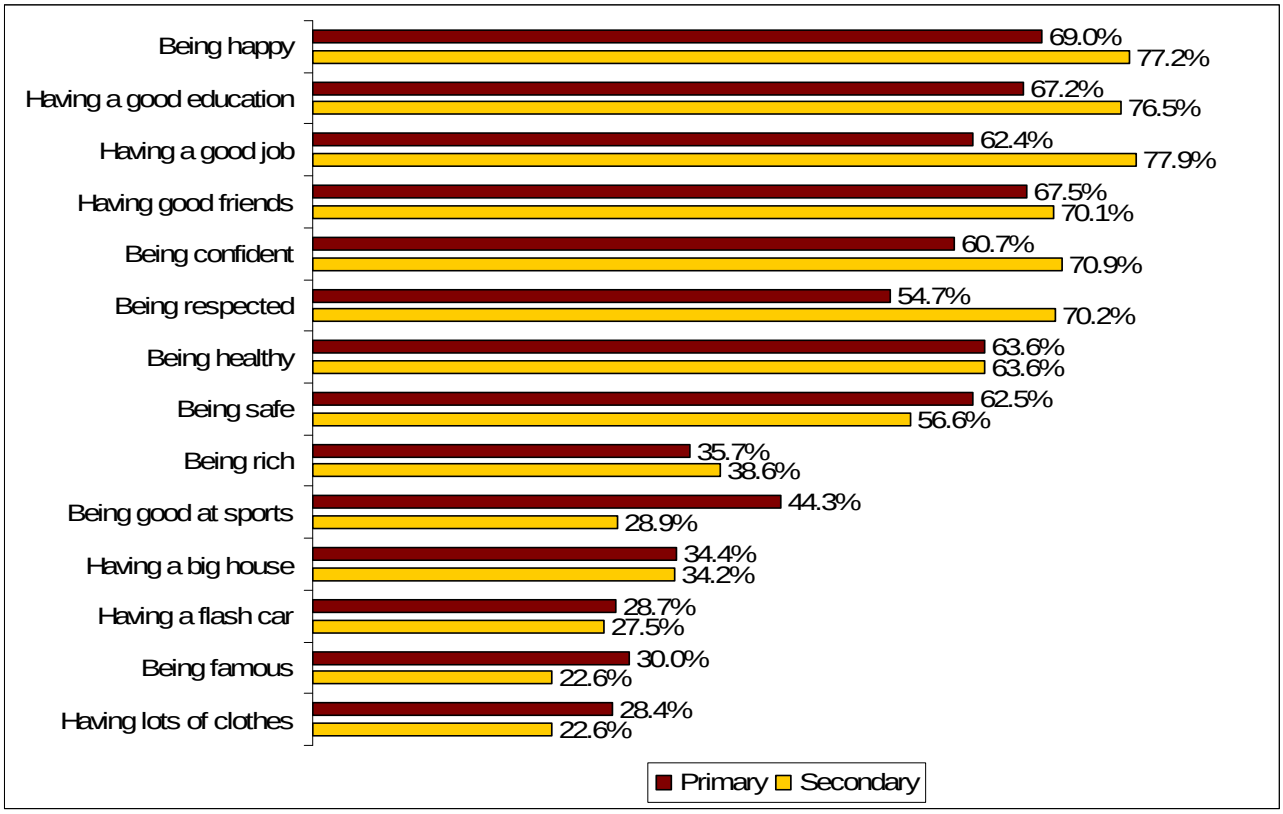


Role models and age

There were also significant differences between primary and secondary pupils in how they defined success (see **Figure 3.4**). Compared to secondary pupils, a significantly greater percentage of primary pupils chose the showy signs of success, such as having a flash car and lots of clothes. They also rated being famous, and being good at sports as signs of success. Primary pupils were also more concerned about being safe than secondary ones. By contrast, a significantly greater proportion of secondary than primary pupils saw being happy, having a good education and a good job, having good friends, being confident and respected as signs of success.

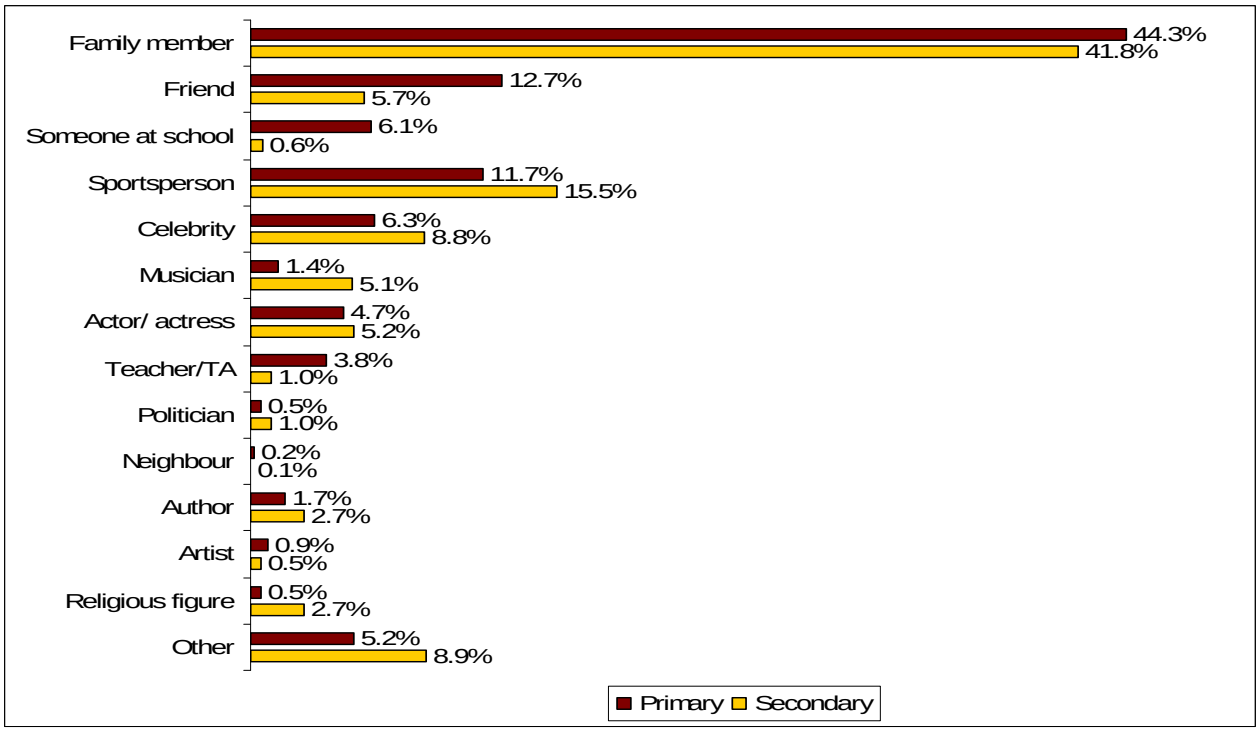
While primary and secondary pupils understood success differently, there were no significant differences between them when asked whether reading will help them being successful, with 76.6% of primary and 74.4% of secondary pupils agreeing that it will help them.

Figure 3.4: What does being successful mean to you? By age



Significantly more primary than secondary pupils had role models (81.4% and 76.5%, respectively). When asked who these role models are most primary and secondary pupils said that it is a member of the family (see **Figure 3.5**). However, primary pupils were more likely to choose friends or someone from their school, while secondary pupils were more likely to say that their role model is a sportsperson or musician.

Figure 3.5: Is your role model a …? By age



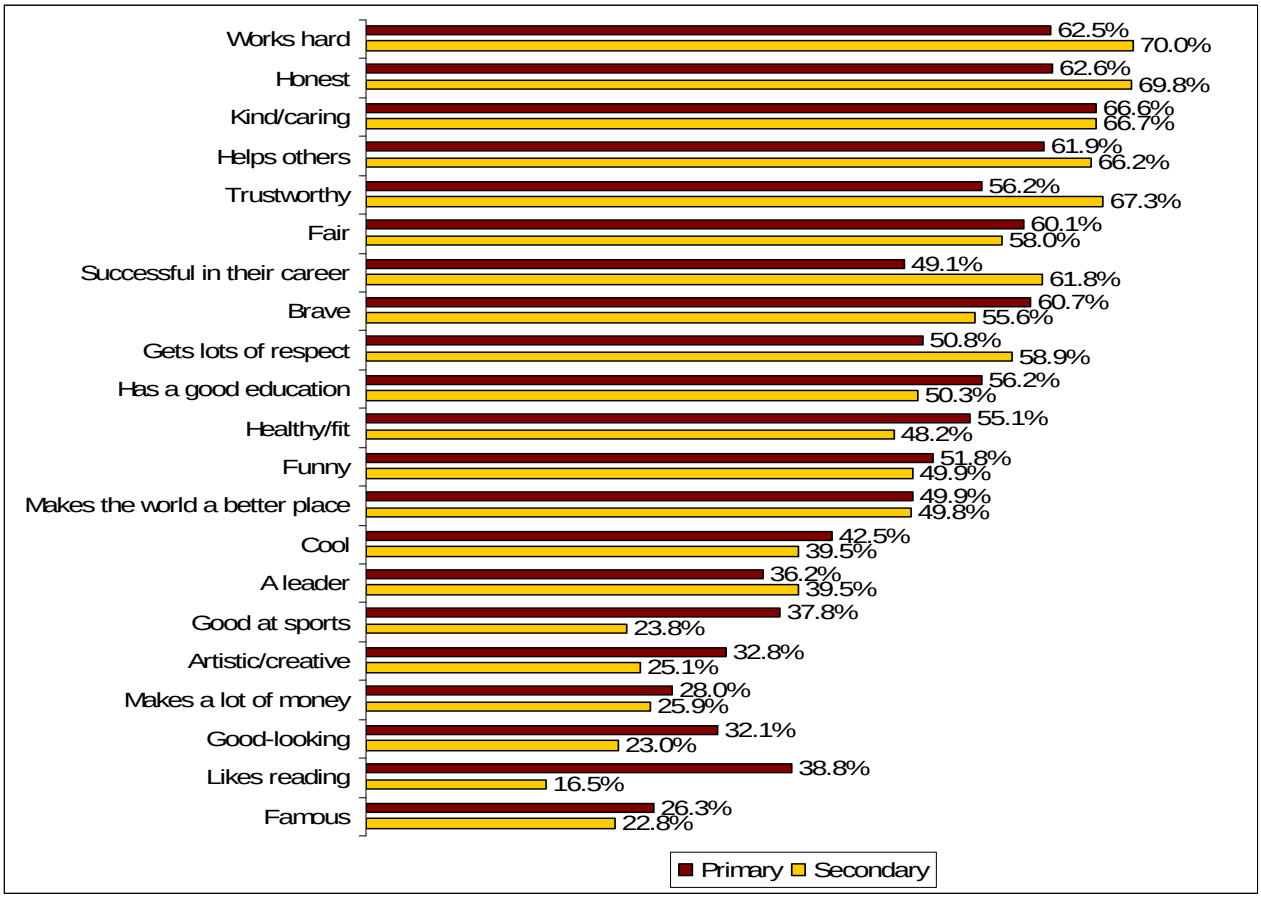
Some primary pupils are also more influenced by the background characteristics of their role model than secondary pupils (see **Table 3.1**). For example, while the majority of primary pupils agree that culture, gender, age and celebrity status do not matter, a significantly greater proportion of primary than secondary pupils said that their role model needs to be from the same culture as themselves, of the same gender and someone who is famous. Almost a fifth of primary pupils feel that role models also need to be older than they are themselves. By contrast, the role model's cultural background, gender, age, and celebrity status did not matter to most secondary pupils.

Table 3.1: In order for a person to be a role model for you, do they need to be ..? By age

	Primary %	Secondary %
From the same culture		
Yes, definitely	18.5	10.3
No, doesn't matter	65.8	81.9
Not sure	15.8	7.8
Of the same gender		
Yes, definitely	25.6	14.9
No, doesn't matter	65.6	81.1
Not sure	8.8	4.0
Of the same age		
Yes, definitely	14.3	3.6
No, younger	3.6	1.0
No, older	17.0	13.7
Age doesn't matter	58.6	78.0
Not sure	6.2	3.8
Someone you know		
Yes, definitely	34.4	22.2
No, doesn't matter	53.4	71.4
Not sure	12.2	6.4
Someone who is famous		
Yes, definitely	22.2	13.8
No, doesn't matter	68.3	81.1
Not sure	9.5	3.4
Someone who believes the same things as you		
Yes, definitely	25.7	23.4
No, doesn't matter	59.2	66.2
Not sure	15.1	10.5

There were also clear age differences in the types of attributes children and young people sought in their role models. While internal qualities, such as being honest and caring, are important to both age groups, **Figure 3.6** shows that a significantly greater percentage of secondary than primary pupils said that their role model is hardworking, honest, kind/caring, trustworthy, successful in their career, helps others and gets a lot of respect. By contrast, a greater percentage of primary than secondary pupils emphasised attributes, such as being brave, healthy/fit, good at sports, good looking, famous and having a good education. Primary pupils were more than twice as likely as secondary pupils to say that having a role model who likes reading is important.

Figure 3.6: Role model attributes by age



People who inspire reading and age

Figure 3.7 shows that primary pupils are generally significantly more likely to say that a range of people are very important reading role models who inspire them to read. A significantly greater percentage of secondary than primary pupils said that friends at school are very important role models who inspire them to read. This finding fits in with previous studies (e.g. Freedman-Doan and Eccles, 1994), which have shown that older children turn away from parental role models and look towards their friends for guidance.

Finally, when asked how their role model could inspire them to read, there was one significant difference between primary and secondary pupils, with significantly more primary than secondary pupils saying that their role model could explain why reading is important (see **Figure 3.8**).

Figure 3.7: Very important people inspiring reading by age

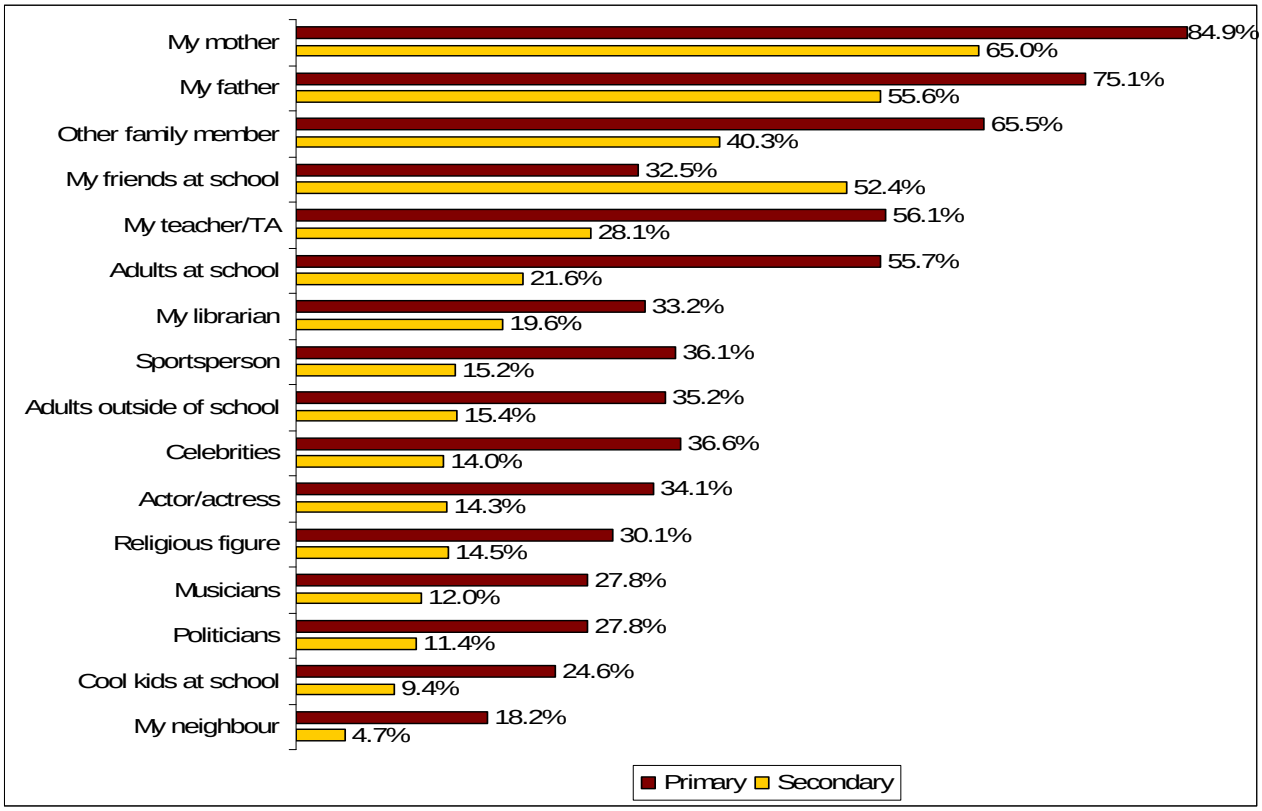
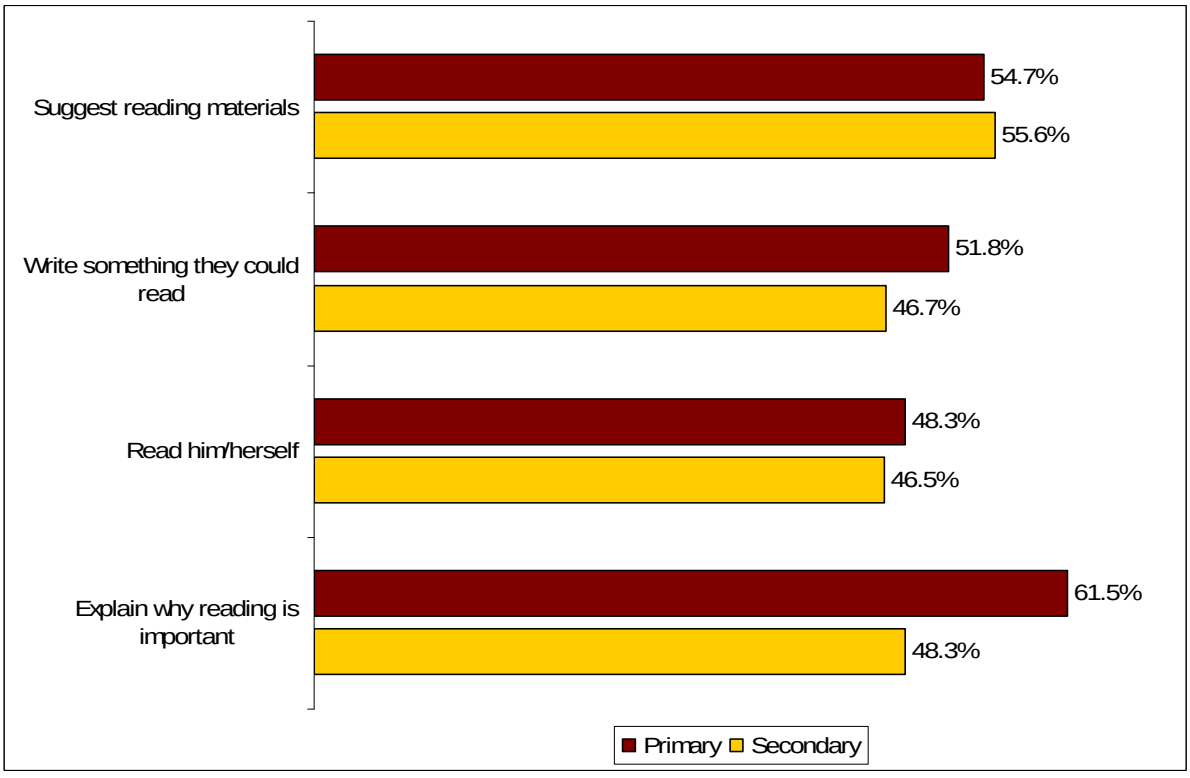


Figure 3.8: How could your role model inspire you to read? By age



Socio-economic differences

Key findings

- Pupils not receiving free school meals (FSM) enjoy reading more and feel more confident about their reading skills than pupils receiving FSMs.
- Pupils not receiving FSMs read more technology-based materials, such as websites and blogs/networking sites as well as fiction every week than pupils who receive FSMs, who read more poetry.
- Although both groups of pupils say that being successful means being happy, having a good education and a good job, significantly more FSM pupils than those not receiving meals choose showy signs of success, such as being famous, having a big house and a flash car.
- More FSM pupils have role models (85% vs. 77%). Role models from the immediate family figure prominently in the choice of both groups of pupils. Friends and sportspersons are role models for FSM pupils as are religious figures, while more pupils who do not receive FSM choose their role models from the music world.
- FSM pupils are more influenced by the background characteristics of their role model than pupils not receiving meals.
- Being hardworking, honest and kind/caring are important role model attributes for both groups of pupils. However, significantly more FSM pupils choose their role model because they are brave, famous, good at sports, cool and make a lot of money.
- The immediate family are important reading role models for both groups of pupils. FSM pupils have a wider range of reading role models, include family members, teachers and cool kids at school. Significantly more pupils who do not receive FSM say that their dad inspires them to read (62% vs. 48%).
- 56% of FSM pupils say that their role model could inspire them to read by explaining to them why reading is important.

While age and in particular gender differences have been explored in previous studies, less is known about the potential impact of socio-economic background on views about role models in general or reading role models in particular.

For example, Bricheno and Thornton (2007) did not find any significant differences between pupils' responses about their role models in socially advantaged and disadvantaged areas. But it appears that these researchers did not actually ask children about their socio-economic background but rather analysed their data in terms of the school's geographical location.

Some important notes on the background characteristics of pupils who receive FSM in this sample

Many low-income households have fewer print resources available at home than those from higher income brackets (e.g. Clark and Foster, 2005). Consequently, a lack of access to books and other reading materials may result in children not being exposed to the cognitive and linguistic experiences that books and other texts provide (for a detailed account of the relationship between poor literacy skills and social inclusion, see Dugdale and Clark, 2008). Indeed, a previous analysis by the NLT showed that pupils from lower socio-economic

backgrounds read less and hold more negative attitudes towards reading than pupils from more advantaged backgrounds (Clark and Akerman, 2006).

There are several ways in which information about socio-economic background can be gathered from the children themselves, including asking them about the occupation of the main earner within the family or deducing their social standing from the postcode of their address. However, each of these methods is problematic, especially when used with younger children.

In line with previous NLT studies, self-reported take-up of free school meals (FSM) was used as a crude indicator of socio-economic status. It should be noted, however, that the use of free school meals as an indicator of socio-economic background may be misleading as it excludes pupils whose parents are not in receipt of income support but who are on low incomes. However, all schools are treated equally within this measure, which allowed for broad comparisons between intake characteristics.

16.0% (N = 348) of pupils said that they receive FSM while 78.5% (N = 1709) do not. A greater proportion of FSM pupils were boys compared with pupils not receiving meals (62.9% and 53.7%, respectively). FSM pupils were also significantly more likely to live only with their mother compared with pupils who do not receive meals (33.8% and 15.6%, respectively) or to live only with their father (4.2% vs. 1.6% of non-FSM pupils). Pupils not receiving meals were significantly more likely to live with both their mother and their father compared with FSM pupils (65.8% and 41.2%, respectively). There were no significant differences between the groups in terms of age.

There were significant differences in the ethnic background of FSM pupils and those who do not receive meals (see **Table 4.1**), with a greater percentage of pupils not receiving meals coming from a white ethnic background, while a greater proportion of those who receive FSMs come from an Asian or black background.

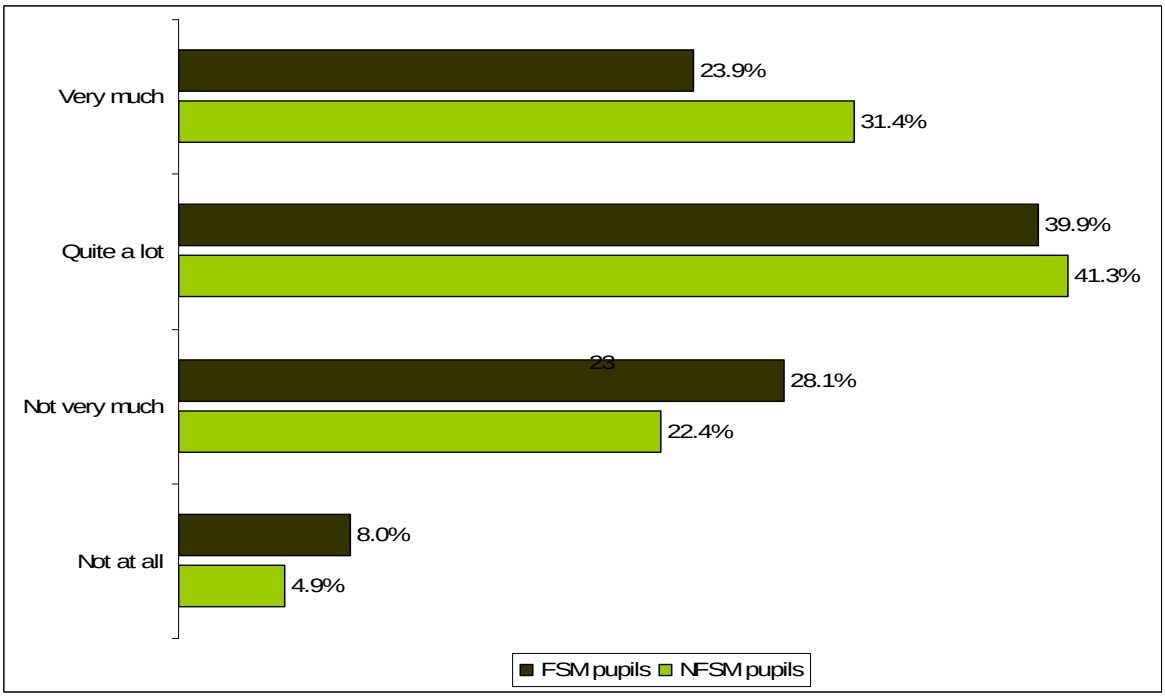
Table 4.1: FSM uptake by ethnic background

	FSM pupils %	NFSM pupils %
White	61.2	81.1
Asian	23.7	13.6
Black	15.1	5.3

Reading behaviour and FSM uptake

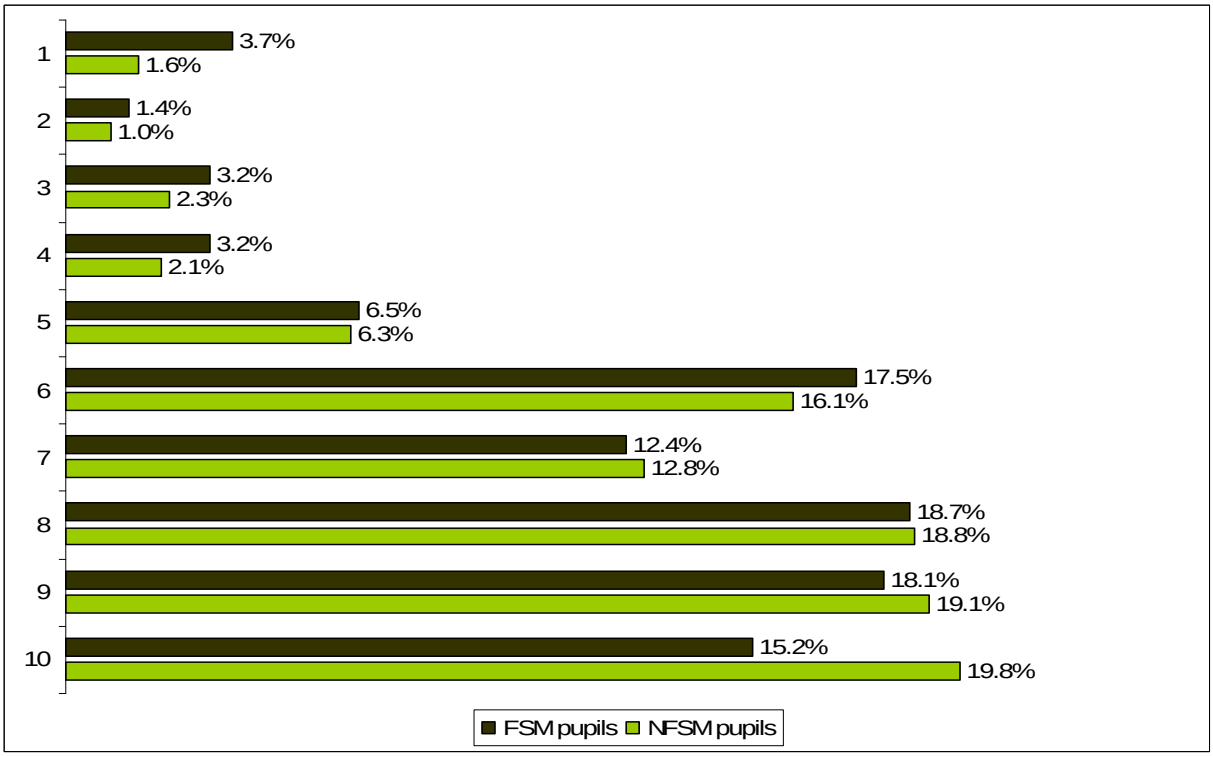
There is some suggestion in the research literature and from a previous NLT survey (Clark and Foster, 2005) that children and young people from deprived backgrounds do not enjoy reading as much as children from more privileged stratas (e.g. Neuman and Celano, 2001). Consistent with this research, the present study shows that a significantly higher proportion of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM pupils) stated that they do not enjoy reading at all compared with pupils who do not receive free school meals (NFSM pupils; see **Figure 4.1**).

Figure 4.1: Do you enjoy reading? By FSM uptake



There was also a relationship between self-reported reading proficiency and free school meal uptake. Compared with pupils receiving FSMs, a greater proportion of pupils who did not receive FSMs reported themselves to be above average proficient readers (see **Figure 4.2**). This finding replicates a pattern of responses reported in a previous NLT survey (Clark and Foster, 2005).

Figure 4.2: How good a reader are you? By FSM uptake

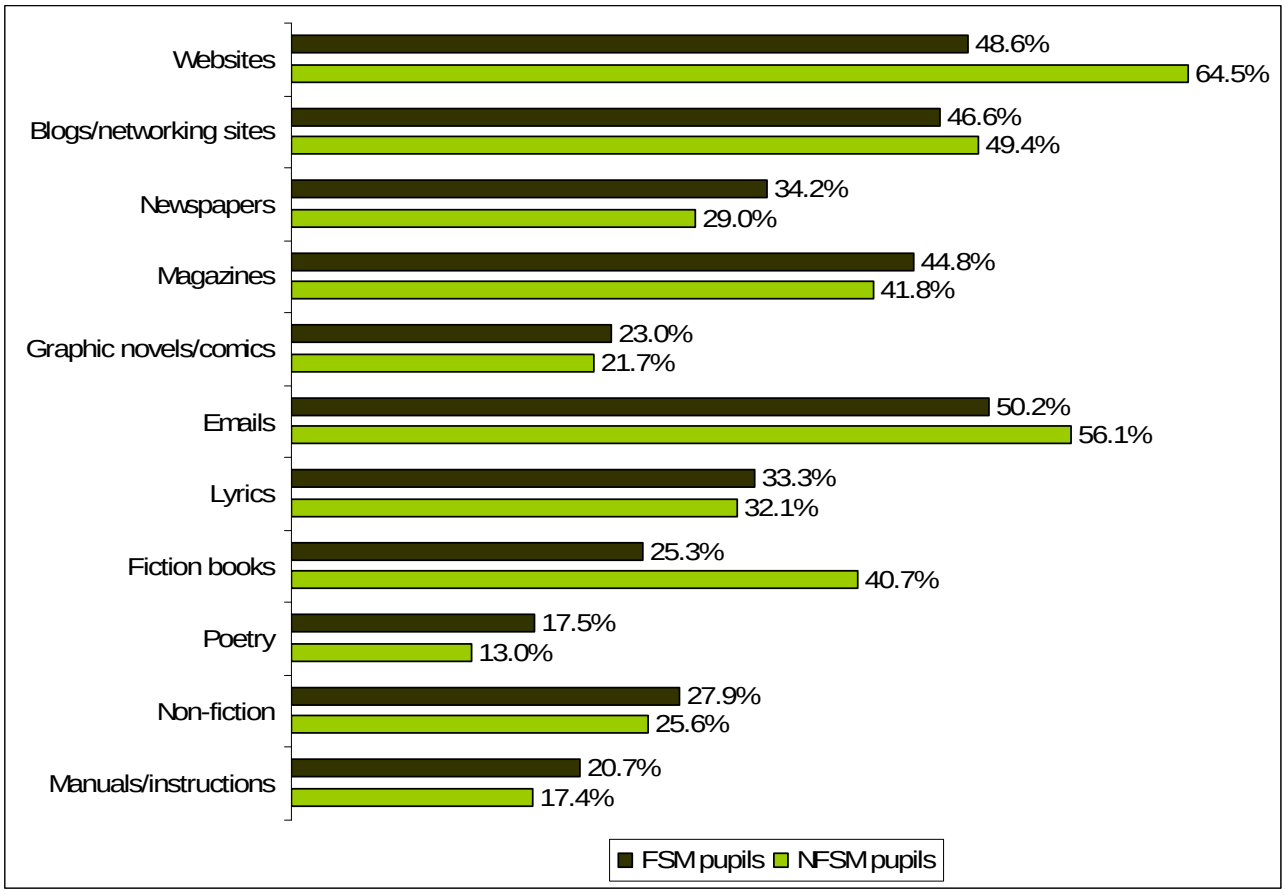


(1 = Not a very good reader – 10 = Excellent reader)

Figure 4.3 shows some significant differences in the types of reading materials read weekly between pupils receiving and not receiving FSMs. In particular, a greater percentage of pupils not receiving FSMs said that they read websites, emails and fiction books every week. By contrast, a greater percentage of pupils receiving FSMs said that they read newspapers and poetry.

However, some of these differences may be the result of varying access to certain resources, such as computers. For example, a previous NLT survey (Clark and Foster, 2005) found that compared with pupils receiving FSMs, a significantly greater percentage of pupils not receiving FSMs indicated that they have a computer at home.

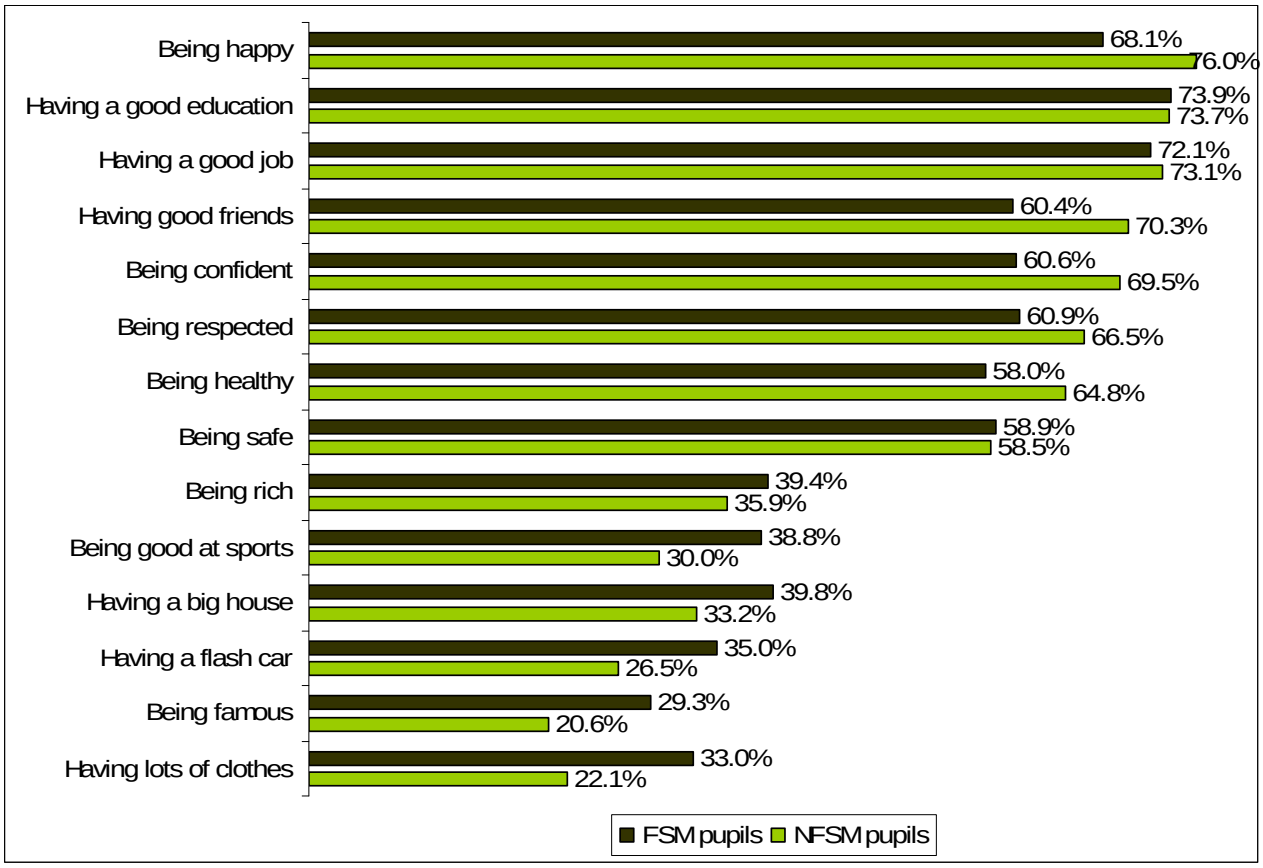
Figure 4.3: Materials read every week by FSM uptake



Role models and FSM uptake

Although both groups of pupils stressed that being happy, having a good education and a good job are signs of success, there were also significant differences between pupils who receive FSM and those who do not in terms of their understanding of success (see **Figure 4.4**). A significantly greater percentage of pupils who do not receive FSM than those who do said that success means being happy, being confident, having good friends, being respected and being healthy. By contrast, pupils who receive FSMs are more likely than those not receiving meals to stress more materialistic forms of success. For example, a significantly greater proportion of FSM pupils said that being successful means being famous, having a big house, having a flash car, having lots of clothes and being good at sports.

Figure 4.4: What does being successful mean to you? By FSM uptake

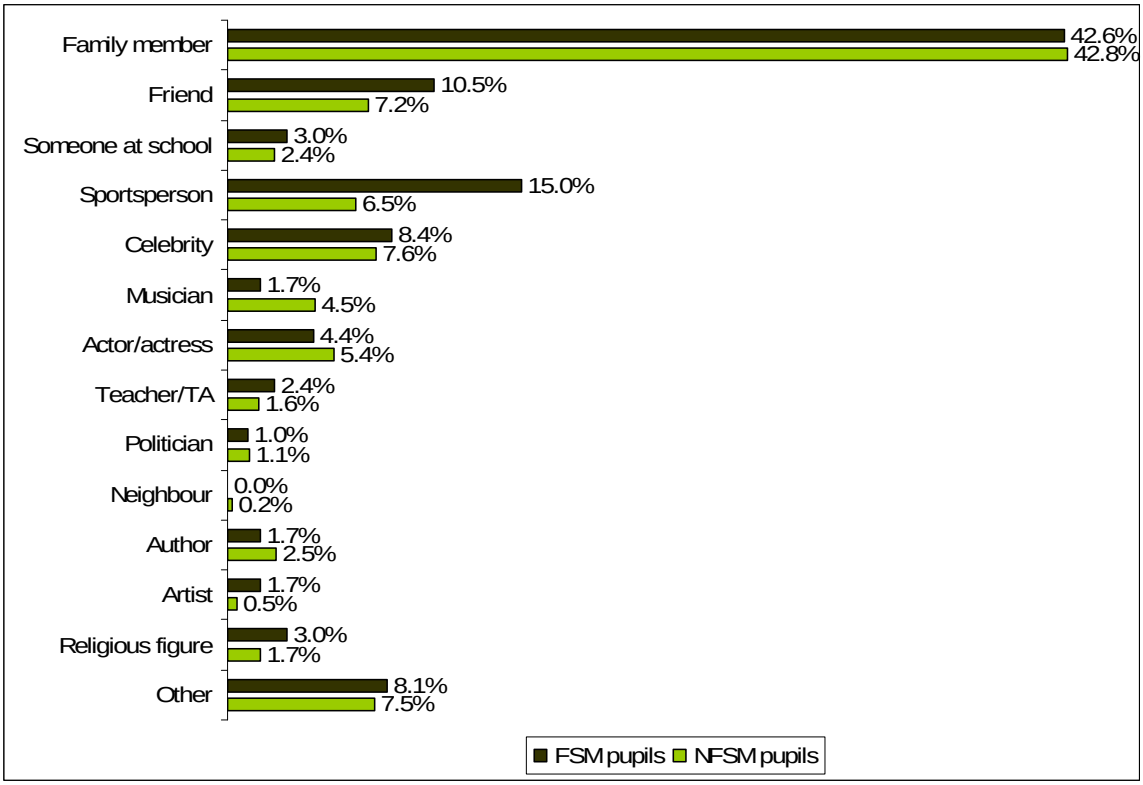


However, there were no significant differences when asked whether reading helps them to be successful, with almost equal percentage of FSM pupils and non-FSM ones saying that it does (75.0% and 76.0%, respectively).

When asked whether they have a role model, a significantly greater percentage of FSM pupils than those who do not receive meals said that they do (85.1% and 77.2%, respectively). For both groups, these role models came from their family (see **Figure 4.5**). However, friends were more likely to be role models for FSM pupils as were religious figures, while more pupils who do not receive FSM chose their role models from the music world. FSM pupils were more than twice as likely to chose sports people as role models.

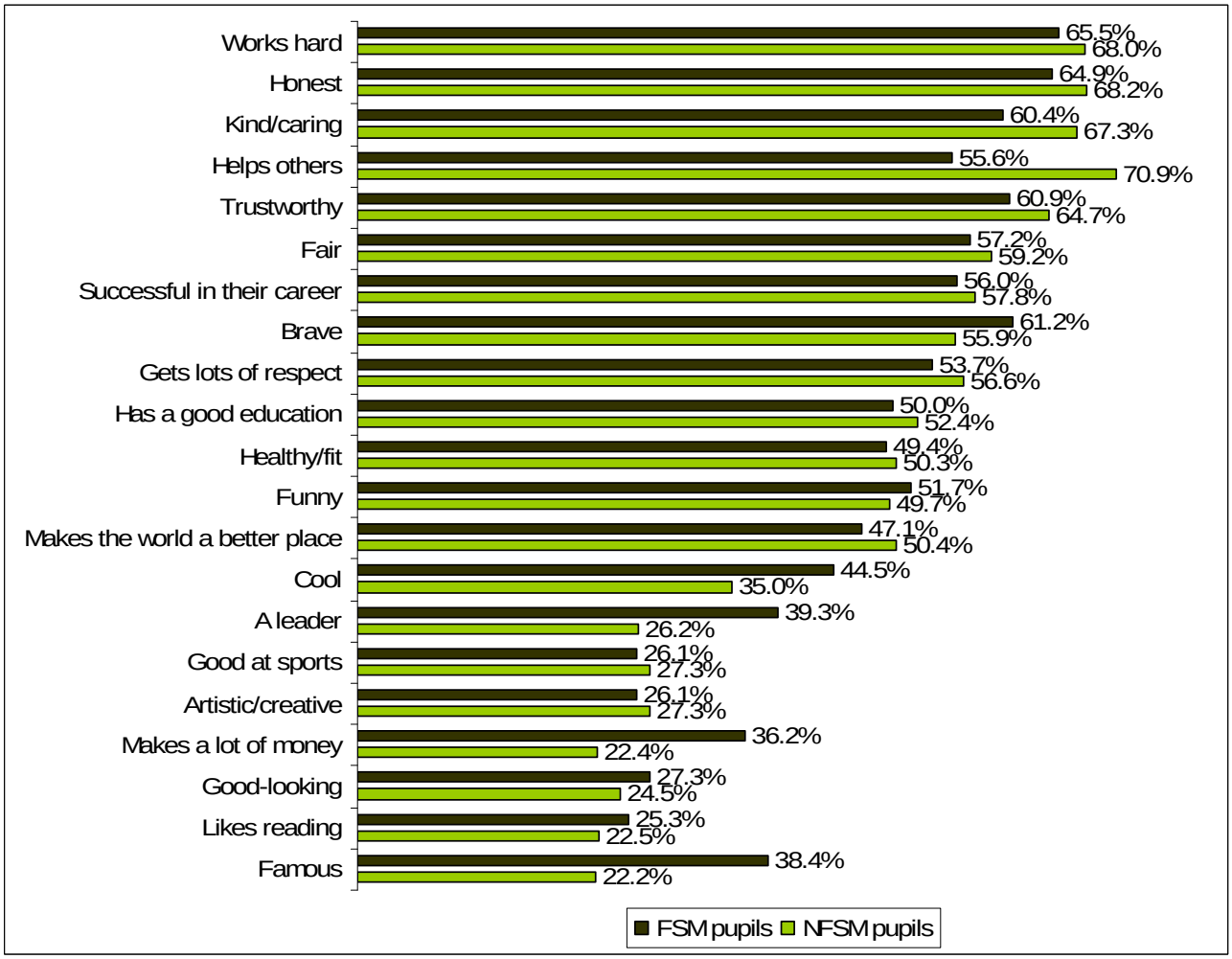
There were also some significant differences between FSM pupils and those not receiving meals when they were asked to identify the important characteristics in their role models (see **Figure 4.6**). A significantly greater percentage of FSM pupils than those not receiving meals said that their role model is brave, famous, good a sports, making lots of money and cool. By contrast, proportionately more pupils not receiving FSM said that their role model helps others and is kind / caring.

Figure 4.5: Is your role model a …? By FSM uptake



.

Figure 4.6: Role model attributes by FSM uptake



Background characteristics of the role model are more important to pupils who receive FSM than those who do not. **Table 4.2** shows that a significantly greater percentage of pupils on FSMs say that their role model needs to be from the same culture, of the same gender, someone they know personally, and someone who believes the same things as they do. However, for a greater percentage of FSM pupils the role model also needs to be someone famous and someone who is older than they are.

Table 4.2: In order for a person to be a role model for you, do they need to be …? By FSM uptake

	FSM pupils %	NFSM pupils %
From the same culture		
Yes, definitely	16.1	11.8
No, doesn't matter	71.6	79.0
Not sure	12.4	9.2
Of the same gender		
Yes, definitely	24.4	16.9
No, doesn't matter	69.3	78.1
Not sure	6.3	5.1
Of the same age		
Yes, definitely	10.6	6.0
No, younger	3.7	1.2
No, older	19.5	13.6
Age doesn't matter	60.6	75.1
Not sure	5.5	4.1
Someone you know		
Yes, definitely	36.2	23.9
No, doesn't matter	53.4	68.9
Not sure	10.3	7.3
Someone who is famous		
Yes, definitely	19.5	15.3
No, doesn't matter	71.8	78.8
Not sure	8.6	5.9
Someone who believes the same things as you		
Yes, definitely	27.6	23.4
No, doesn't matter	57.8	65.8
Not sure	14.7	10.8

People who inspire reading and FSM uptake

Several significant differences emerged between pupils receiving FSM and those who do not when they were asked who the very important people are who inspire them to read (see **Figure 4.7**). Both groups rated their immediate family as very important people who inspire them to read, but the percentage doing so was significantly greater among pupils receiving FSMs. A significantly greater proportion of pupils receiving FSM also said that other family members, neighbours, adults outside of school (e.g. family friend, youth worker), teachers, cool kids at school as well as politicians, celebrities, musicians, actors/actresses from film and TV, sportspersons and religious figures inspire them to read. By contrast, a significantly greater percentage of pupils who do not receive FSM said that their dad inspires them to read. Perhaps this finding is not surprising considering that fewer FSM pupils in this sample come from a family where the father is present.

When asked what practical thing their role model could do to inspire them to read, a greater percentage of pupils receiving FSMs than those not receiving meals said that they could explain why reading is important (see **Figure 4.8**).

Figure 4.7: Very important people who inspire reading by FSM uptake

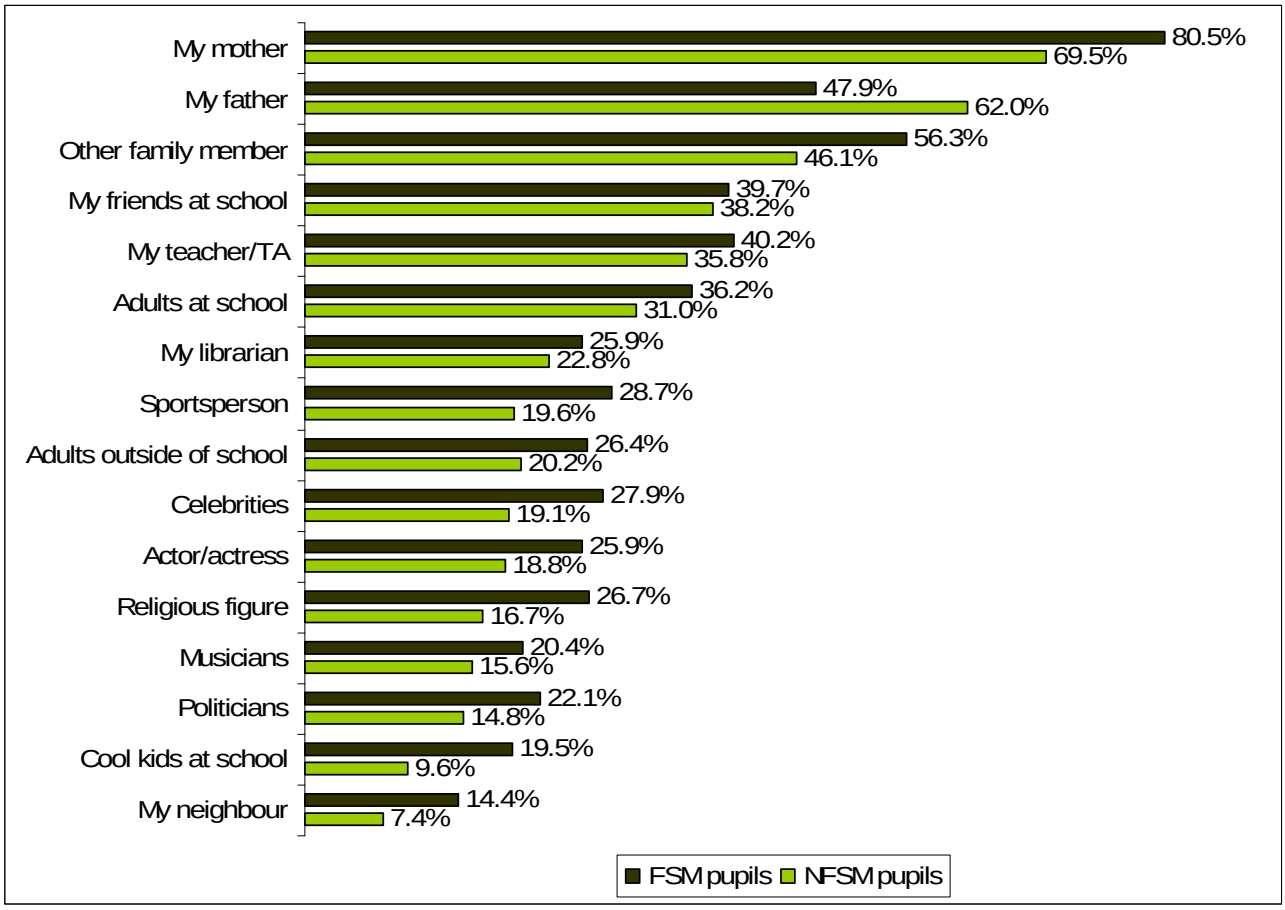
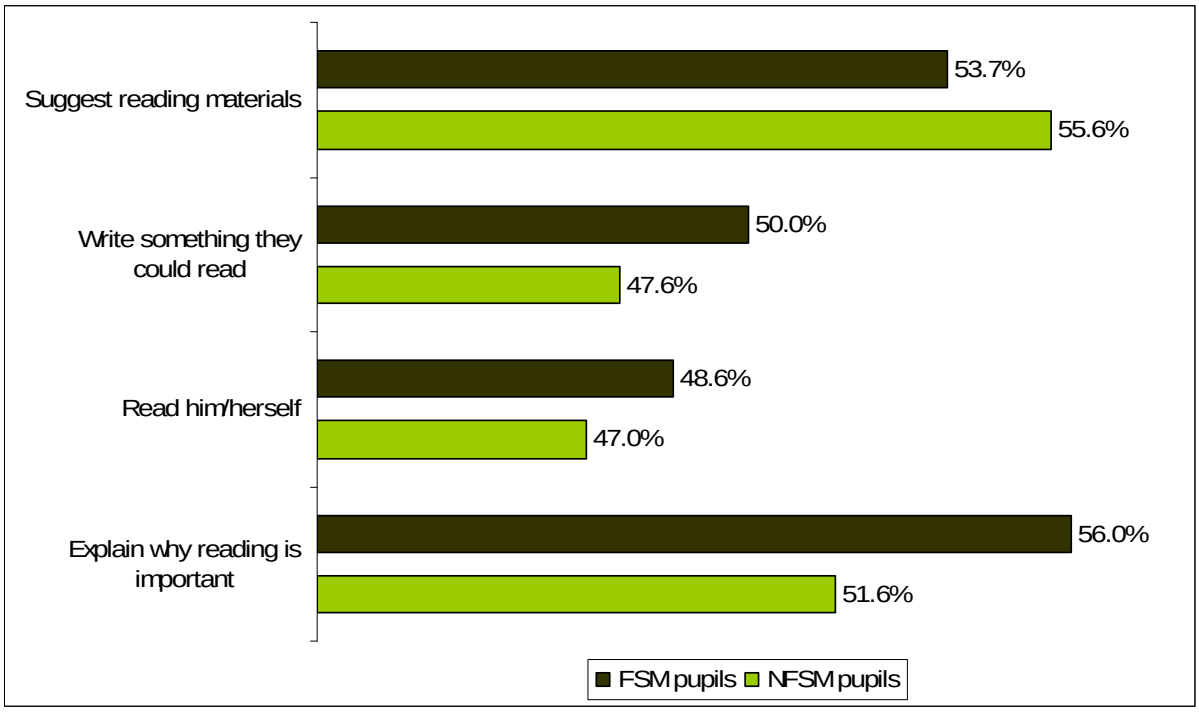


Figure 4.8: What could your role model do to inspire you to read? By FSM uptake



Being a reader

Key findings

- Readers feel more confident about their reading skills and read a wider variety of texts than non-readers.
- Significantly more non-readers choose showy signs of success, such as being famous, having a big house and a flash car. Readers tended to be more reflective, saying that being successful means being happy, confident and having good friends. Readers are more likely to say that reading helps them to be successful than non-readers (83% vs. 57%).
- More readers have role models (80% vs. 72%). Role models from the immediate family figure prominently in the choice of both groups of pupils. More non-readers than readers choose their role model from the sports world (20% vs. 12%), while more readers than non-readers choose authors as their role models (3% vs. 0%).
- Non-readers are more influenced by the background characteristics of their role model than readers.
- Non-readers choose their role model because they are famous, good at sports, cool and make lots of money. By contrast, readers say that their role model helps others, is fair, trustworthy and kind/caring.
- The immediate family are important reading role models for both groups of pupils. Readers have a wider range of reading role models, including other family members, neighbours, teachers and adults outside of school (e.g. family friend, youth worker), while non-readers say that cool kids at school (25%) and sportspersons (32%) are important reading role models for them.
- Readers are more likely than non-readers to say that their role model could encourage them to read more by making reading suggestions, writing something that they could read, explaining why reading is important and being seen reading themselves

For the purpose of the following analyses, pupils were classified as either “Readers”, i.e. those who said they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot, and “Non-readers”, i.e. those who said that they enjoy reading a bit or not at all. Overall, the majority of the sample was classified as a reader (71.8%), with 28.2% being non-readers.

There were several differences between readers and non-readers in terms of their background characteristics. There were more reading boys (51.1%) than reading girls (48.9%). The proportion of pupils receiving FSMs was greater among non-readers (19.4%) than readers (16.0%). Non-readers also tended to be older than readers (see **Table 5.1**). A greater percentage of pupils from a white background were non-readers (80.1%) than readers (75.4%), while a greater percentage of pupils from Asian backgrounds were readers (17.4%) than non-readers (12.7%). There was an equal spread in pupils from black backgrounds in terms of being readers (7.2%) and non-readers (7.1%).

Table 5.1: Being a reader and age

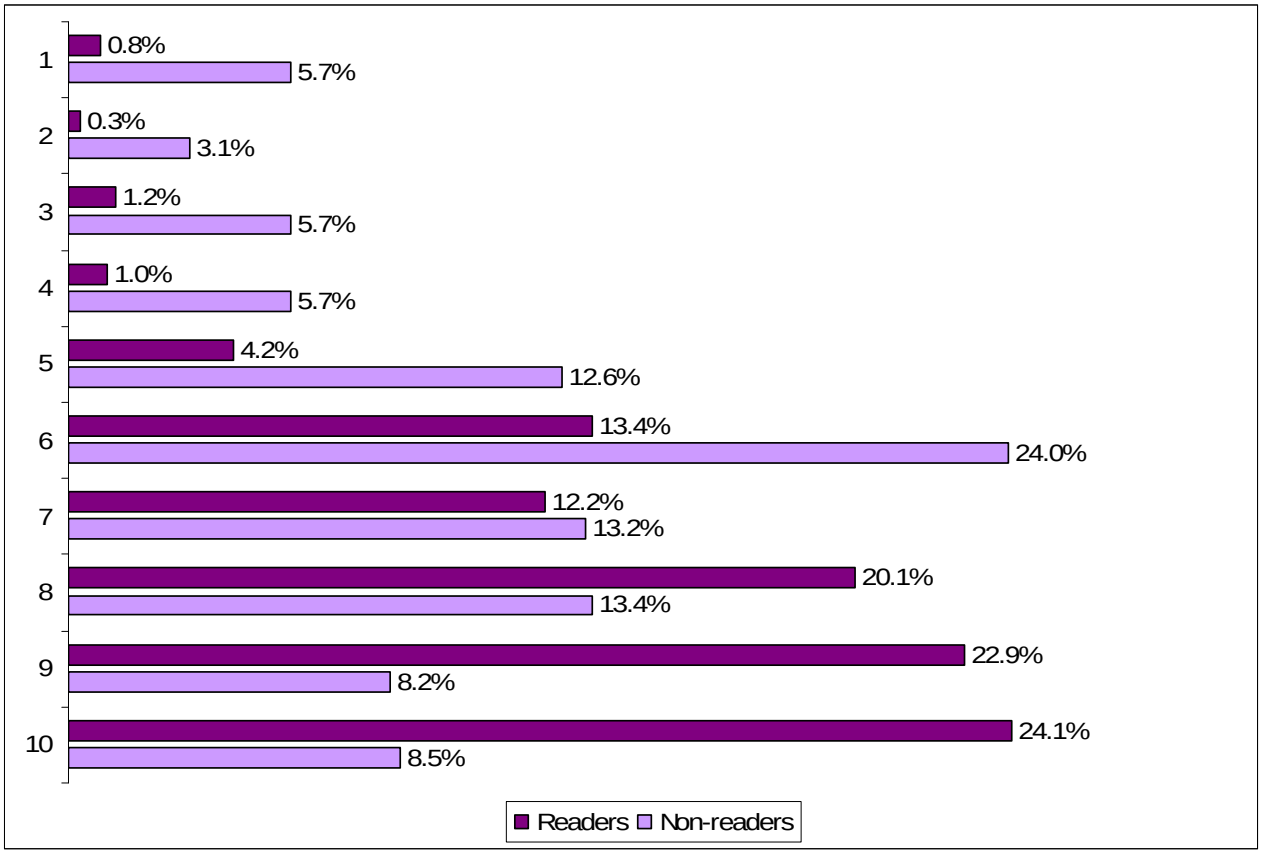
	Reader %	Non-reader %
7	3.6	4.1
8	3.8	3.1

	Reader %	Non-reader %
9	7.2	4.1
10	16.3	10.5
11	18.4	16.6
12	18.7	16.6
13	18.0	25.1
14	11.6	16.8
15	2.4	3.1

Reading behaviour and being a reader

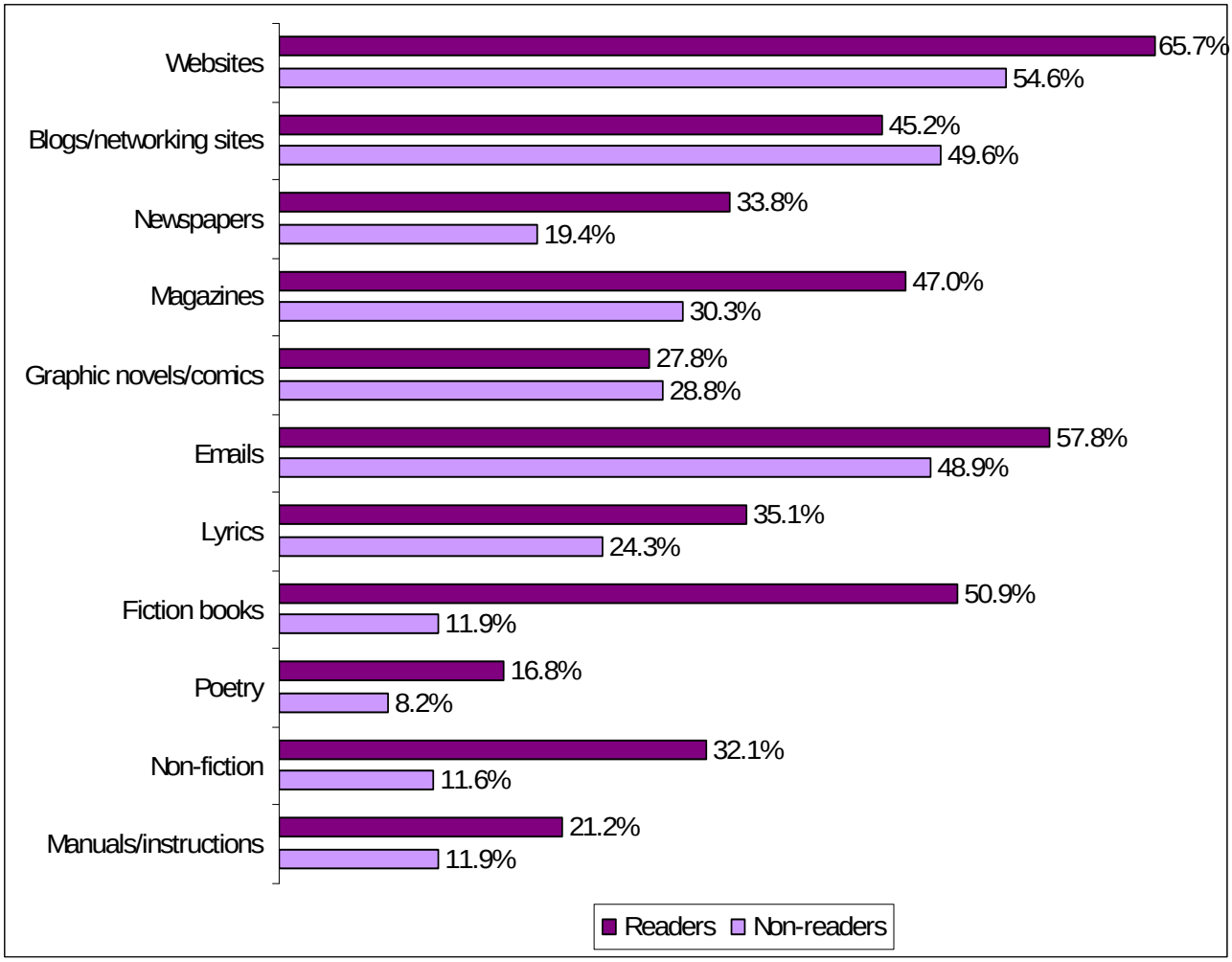
Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was also a relationship between self-reported reading proficiency and being a reader. Compared with non-readers, a greater proportion of readers reported themselves to be above average proficient readers (see **Figure 5.1**). This finding is similar to a pattern of responses reported in a previous NLT survey (Clark and Foster, 2005).

Figure 5.1: How good a reader are you? Readers versus non-readers



There were significant differences in the types of reading materials read weekly between readers and non-readers, with readers generally reporting reading a wider range of materials than non-readers (see **Figure 5.2**). However, non-readers were significantly more likely than readers to say that they read blogs/networking sites on a weekly basis.

Figure 5.2: Materials read every week by readers versus non-readers



Role models and being a reader

There were also significant differences between readers and non-readers when asked what being successful means to them (see **Figure 5.3**), with readers generally showing a greater degree of inner reflection than non-readers. For example, a significantly greater percentage of readers than non-readers said that success means being happy, having a good education, having good friends and being confident. By contrast, a significantly greater percentage of non-readers said that being successful means being rich, being famous, having a flash car, having a big house and having a lot of clothes.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a significantly greater percentage of readers than non-readers said that reading will help them to be successful (83.2% and 56.8% respectively).

When asked whether they have a role model, a significantly greater percentage of readers than non-readers said that they do (80.4% and 72.1%, respectively). **Figure 5.4** shows that readers were more likely to draw on role models from their immediate social environment, while non-readers were more likely to say that their role model is a sportsperson.

Figure 5.3: What does being successful mean to you? Readers versus non-readers

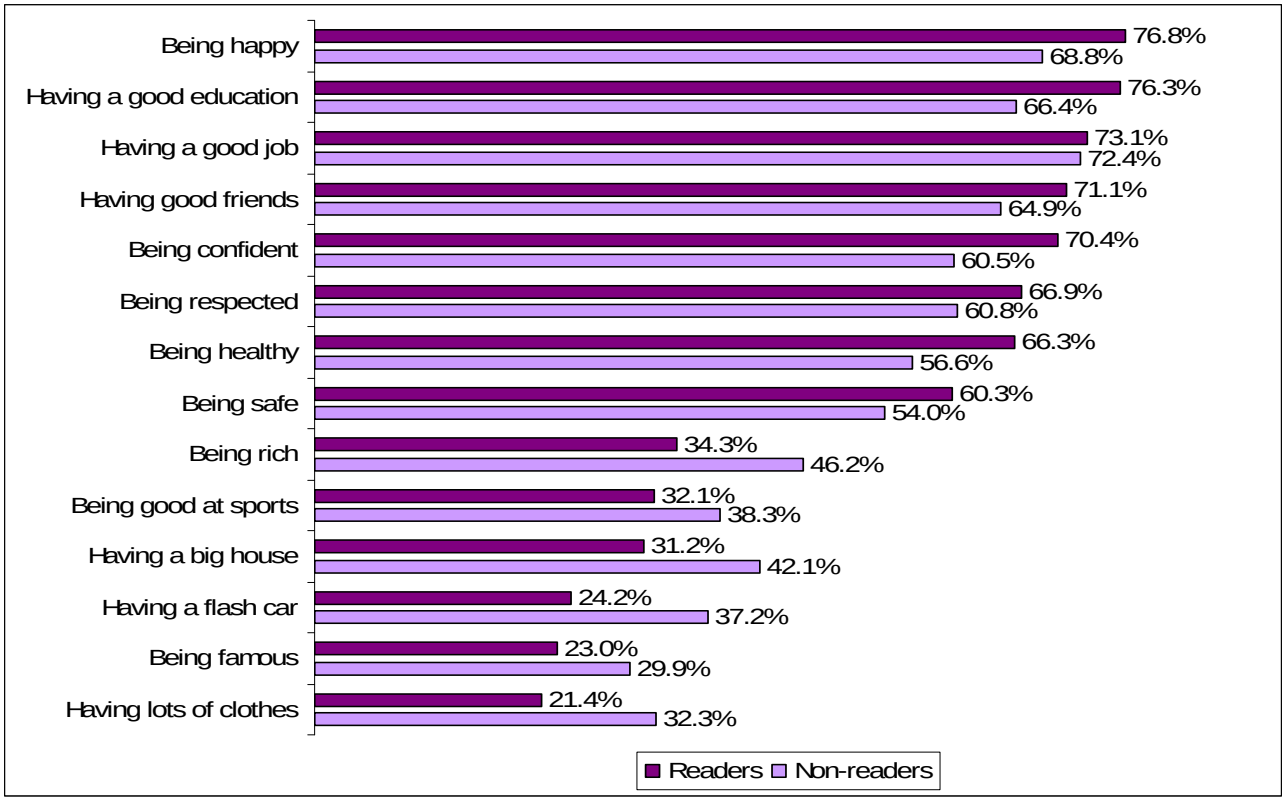


Figure 5.4: Is your role model a …? Readers versus non-readers

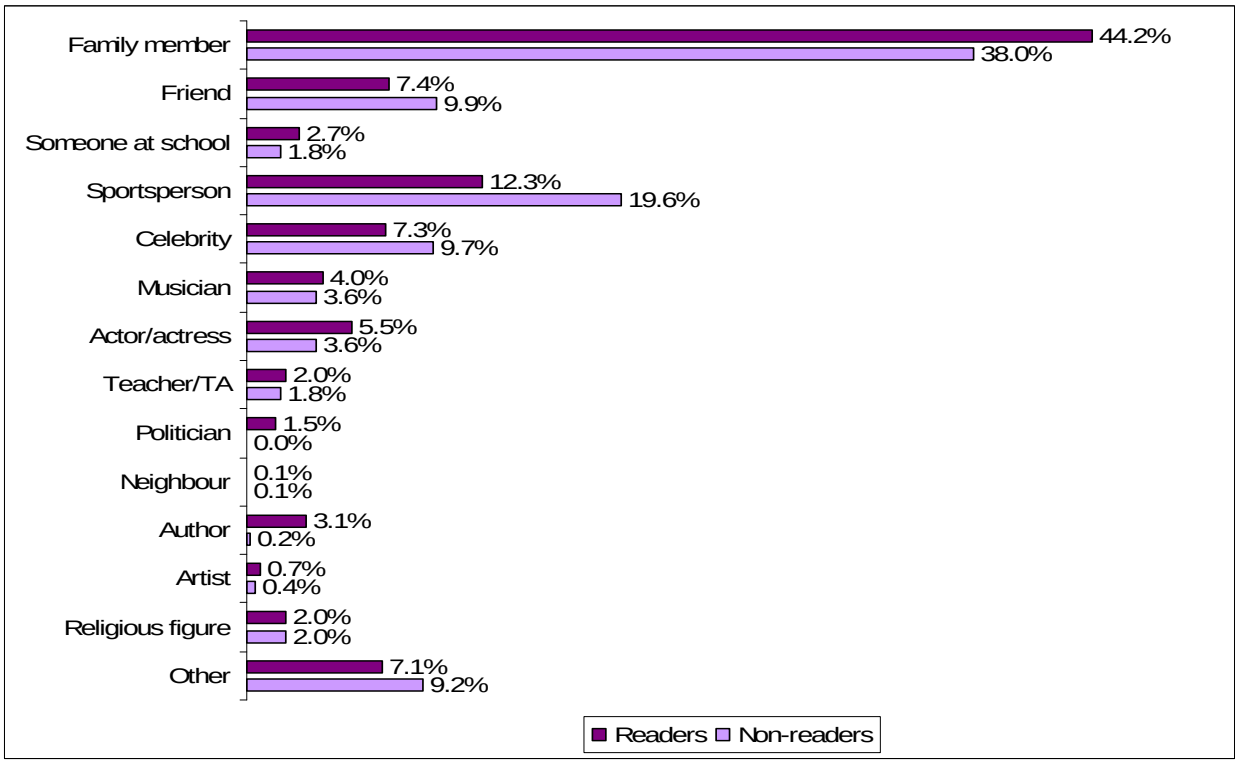
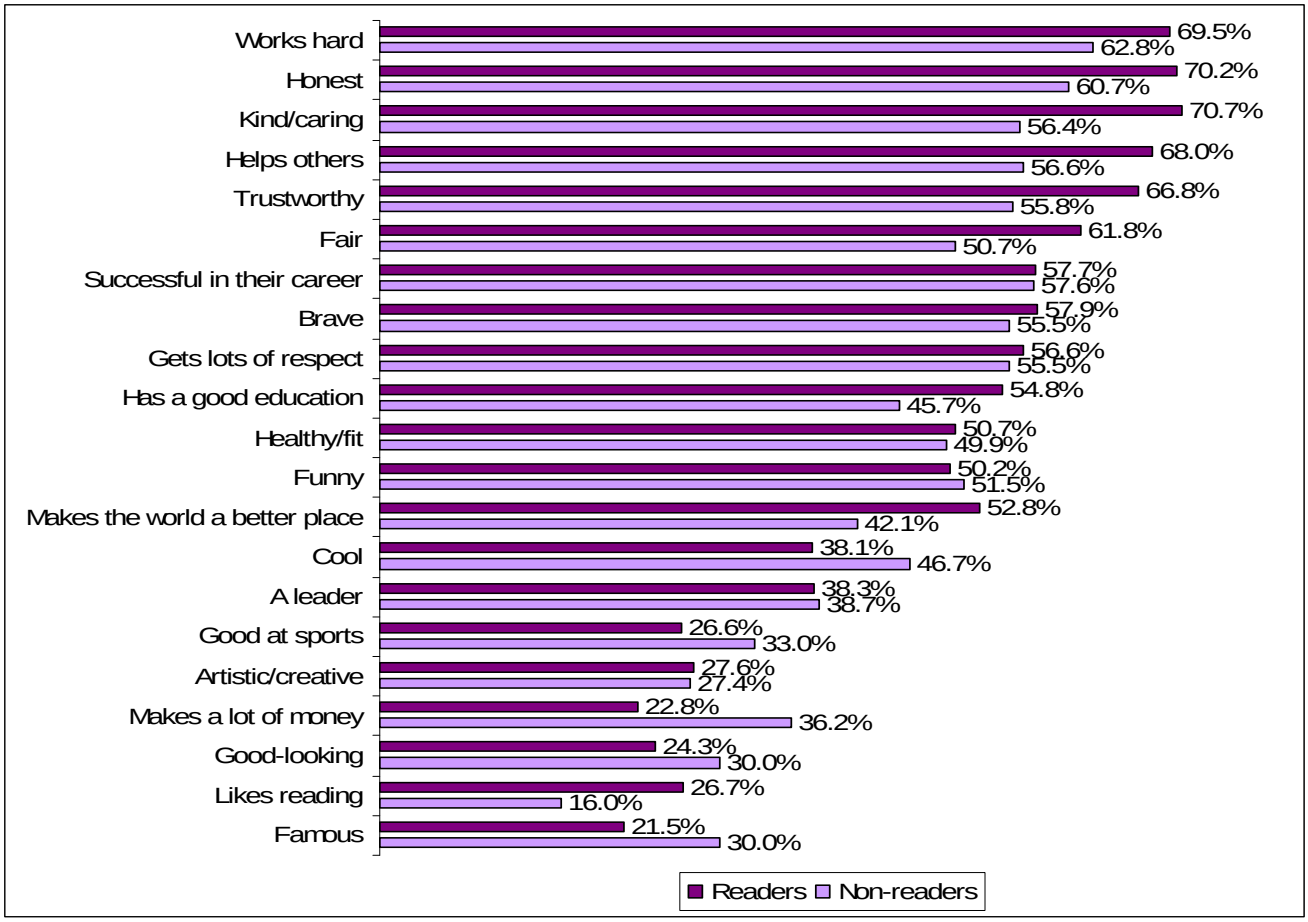


Figure 5.5 shows that there were also significant differences between readers and non-readers in the types of characteristics they felt were important for someone to be their role model. A significantly greater percentage of readers than non-readers thought their role model needs to be hard-working, trustworthy, fair, honest, kind/ caring, have a good education, help others,

make the world a better place and like reading. By contrast, non-readers were more likely to say that their role model needs to be famous, good looking, good at sports, cool and make lots of money.

Figure 5.5: Role model attributes by readers versus non-readers



Background characteristics of the role model are more important to non-readers than readers. **Table 5.2** shows that a significantly greater percentage of non-readers say that their role model needs to be from the same culture and of the same gender. For a greater percentage of non-readers the role model also needs to be someone famous and someone who is older than they are.

Table 5.2: In order for a person to be a role model for you, do they need to be …? Readers versus non-readers

	Readers %	Non-readers %
From the same culture		
Yes, definitely	11.3	17.1
No, doesn't matter	79.2	70.1
Not sure	9.5	12.7
Of the same gender		
Yes, definitely	17.1	21.4
No, doesn't matter	78.2	70.6
Not sure	4.6	8.0
Of the same age		
Yes, definitely	5.9	10.1
No, younger	1.4	2.8

	Readers %	Non-readers %
No, older	13.6	17.6
Age doesn't matter	75.5	62.3
Not sure	3.6	7.2
Someone you know		
Yes, definitely	25.7	27.4
No, doesn't matter	66.8	63.3
Not sure	7.9	9.3
Someone who is famous		
Yes, definitely	14.1	22.7
No, doesn't matter	80.2	68.8
Not sure	5.8	8.5
Someone who believes the same things as you		
Yes, definitely	23.8	28.0
No, doesn't matter	64.7	61.8
Not sure	11.5	13.2

People who inspire reading and being a reader

When asked who inspires them to read, readers were significantly more likely to draw on a greater range of reading role models than non-readers (see **Figure 5.6**). For example, a significantly greater percentage of readers than non-readers chose people from their immediate social environment as those who would inspire them to read, such as their mother, followed by their father. While the majority of non-readers also chose people who can inspire reading from the immediate family environment, a larger percentage of non-readers than readers named cool kids at school and sportspersons as important in inspiring reading.

Figure 5.6: Very important people who inspire reading by readers versus non-readers

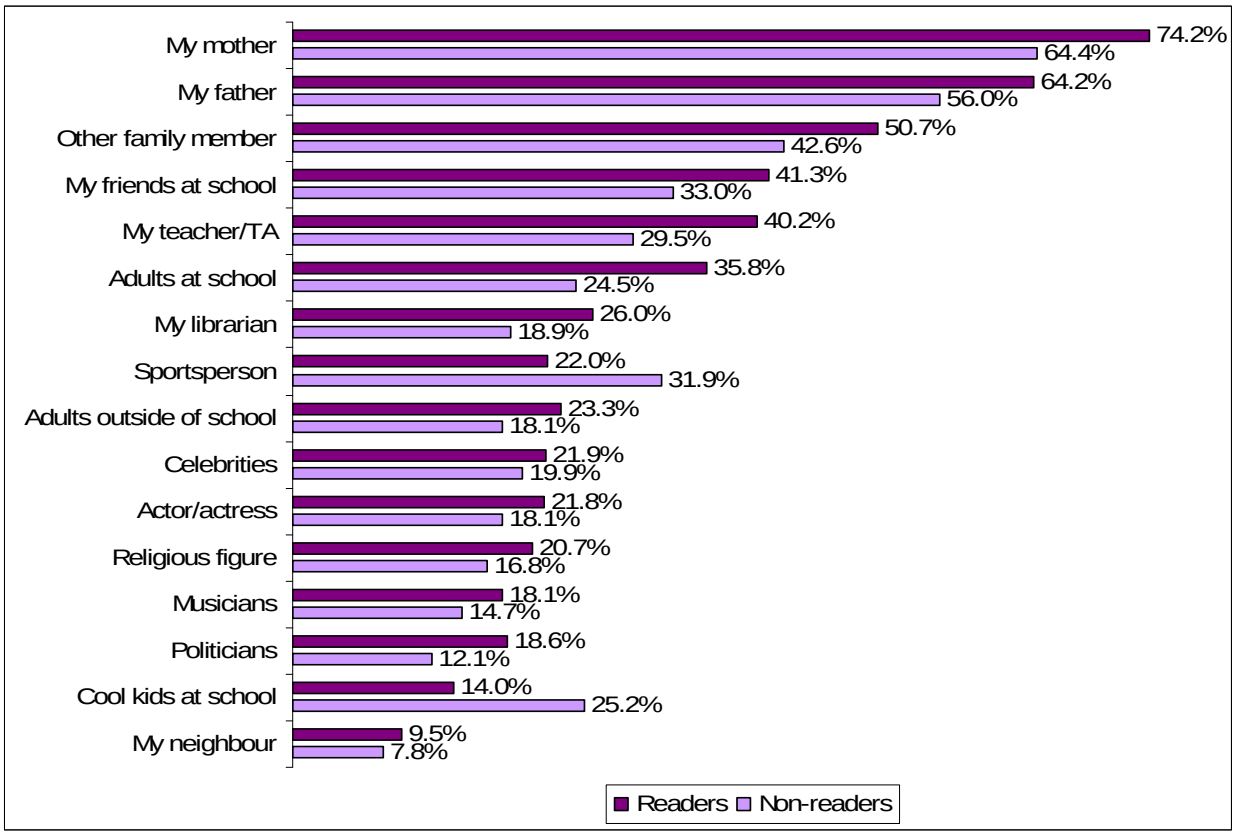
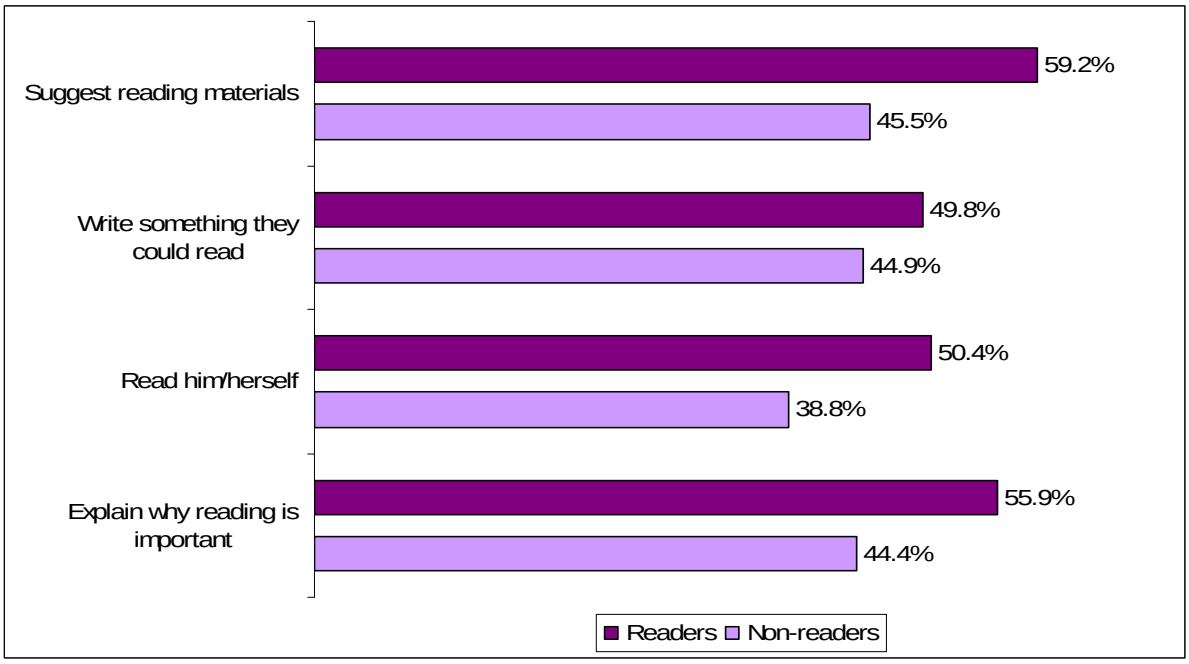


Figure 5.7 shows that readers were significantly more likely to be encouraged to read by a variety of actions compared to non-readers.

Figure 5.7: How could your role model inspire you to read? Readers versus non-readers



Discussion

This survey has highlighted the continuing importance of parents in the lives of children and teenagers. Parents are not only role models in a general sense but also the prime people to inspire reading. Contrary to popular perceptions, celebrities do not figure significantly as role models for young people. However some celebrities, particularly sports people, can be used to engage pupils who are not engaged readers.

The main purpose of this survey was to explore whether parents and other family members are the most important influence on children and young people's reading behaviours or whether the media-saturated environment, which has elevated celebrities to role model status, has an equal or more significant impact. We were also keen to explore the extent to which the relative importance of these role models varies with gender, age (primary vs secondary school pupils), socio-economic background and whether they are a reader (defined as enjoying reading) or not.

The findings of this survey have strong implications for the way in which government, professionals and organisations such as the National Literacy Trust, go about encouraging children and young people to read through using role models. In the following sections we discuss the potential actions that we all could take to ensure that every child and young person has a relevant person who can inspire reading in their life.

Please note, in this discussion the term children refers to children aged 7-11 and the term young people refers to young people aged 11-15. This is in line with the ages of the primary and secondary pupils who took part in this survey.

The centrality of family role models

The most prominent finding of this survey is the centrality of parents in the lives of children and young people. In line with previous research (Bryant and Zimmerman, 2003; Wohlford et al. 2004), we have shown that children and young people are more likely to identify role models, and the people who inspire them to read, from their immediate social environment.

What is perhaps surprising is the degree to which children and young people choose role models from the circle of family and friends. Most children and young people have a familial role model, regardless of their age, gender and socio-economic status. Children tend to choose role models that they find relevant and with whom they can compare themselves (Lockwood and Kunda, 2000; Wood, 1989), and it probably comes as no surprise that parents and other family members are important role models for children, especially young children.

Contrary to popular perceptions of the importance of celebrities in the lives of children and teenagers, we found that few children and young people chose role models from the realm of celebrities. This is contrary to studies, such as a recent survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (March 2008) that explored the influence of celebrities on pupils. Surveying over 300 teachers, this study showed that 70% of teachers believe that celebrities act as role models and influence pupils' aspirations for their future. Sports and pop starts were believed to be the most influential role models, followed by models and film stars.

Parents are the first teachers and role models for their children, and therefore have a strong influence on their learning. The evidence about the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general, and their children's literacy activities in particular, is overwhelming. Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance at school (Fan and Chen, 2001) in both primary and secondary schools (Feinstein and Symons, 1999), leading to higher academic achievement, greater

cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioural problems at school (Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons et al., 2001).

There is plenty of evidence across subject areas to show that parents are important role models for their children. For example, parental attitudes towards smoking and parental smoking habits strongly impact on young people's smoking attitudes and habits (e.g. Smith and Stutts, 1999). Similarly, parents have been found to be more important role models in their adolescents' purchasing behaviour than more distant celebrities (e.g. Martin and Bush, 2000). Our study also clearly shows that parents and the immediate family are the prime reading role models.

The importance of parents in inspiring reading is evidenced by the fact that children of high-frequency readers are far more likely to read for fun every day than children whose parents are not high-frequency readers. The Kids and Family Reading Report (2006) found that 53% of children whose parents are high-frequency readers are reading books for fun every day; however, among children whose parents are low-frequency readers (reading two to three times a month or less), only 15% read for fun daily. Parents who are high-frequency readers are more likely to see themselves as responsible for encouraging their children to read than parents who are low-frequency readers (60% compared with 46%).

Children who come from language-rich home environments, where parents and other family members model reading activities, show higher levels of reading knowledge and skills at the start of nursery (Nord, Lennon, Liu and Chandler, 2000) and throughout primary school (Wade and Moore, 2000). There is also ample evidence that parents who promote reading as a valuable and worthwhile activity by reading themselves have children who are motivated to read for pleasure. Parents modeling reading must be in the open to promote children's and young people's reading (Weems and Rogers, 2007). Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills (Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich and Welsh, 2004), but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991).

Reader development work with non-readers

The report shows that both readers and non-readers stated that being happy, having a good education and having a good job were the most important indicators of success. However, a significantly greater percentage of readers than non-readers thought that reading would help them achieve that success. This reinforces the need to raise awareness of the relationship between reading and being successful, a message particularly promoted during the 2008 National Year of Reading. Practitioners working with children and young people need to emphasise the message, in practical ways, that enjoying reading will make you better at it and equip you with an armoury of knowledge that will help you get a better job and make more money in the future, ambitions which the non-readers in particular aspired to.

Every child and young person needs to have someone who inspires them to read. What do the findings of this report mean in reality for practitioners? Non-readers were less likely to have role models, but when they did have role models or listed people who could inspire them to read, their parents were the most likely candidates. This re-iterates the need for practitioners to work with all parents to support them in getting involved in their child's education, so that all children and young people consider their parents to be able to inspire them to read and that their parents are aware of their role as such.

However, practitioners may not have the capacity to work with all parents in such a targeted way. If it is only possible to work with a small group of parents, we would advocate practitioners undertaking this survey with the children/young people they work with and identifying the non-readers and those who don't consider their parents to be their role models. Work could then initially be targeted at this group of children/young people and their parents.

The children and young people identified above are also highly likely to be those who consider sportspeople to be their reading role models. In conjunction with the family reading projects that practitioners run, we would also suggest using the motivational power of sports personalities to engage children and young people. A good place to start is contacting a local football club, which is likely to have a community department of some kind that may run literacy programmes. There are also a number of national and local initiatives, such as the National Literacy Trust's Reading The Game, which use famous sportspeople, particularly footballers, to motivate children and young people to read. For more information visit www.readingthegame.org.uk.

As well as sportspeople and family members being identified as important people who can inspire reading, peers (especially those who have kudos) are recognised as important by a significant number of non-readers. Practitioners may want to consider setting up a project for non-readers which integrates peer mentoring. Schemes such as Reading Champions and buddying projects have proven very successful with schools. Visit www.readingchampions.org.uk for examples of best practice.

When considering which role models to use or nurture, it is worth practitioners bearing in mind that while most children and young people don't think it is important for their role model to come from the same background as them, or to be of the same age or gender, non-readers were significantly more likely to believe this than readers. This re-emphasises the point made above that involving family members (parents or siblings) can be particularly effective to encourage non-readers to read. In addition, when practitioners are recruiting reading volunteers, booking author/speaker visits or pairing up buddies, it is important to identify whether the non-readers would prefer their role models to be like them and recruit the relevant person/people based on this information.

Furthermore, as well as their background, age and gender, it is also worth thinking about the qualities of role models. Non-readers, like readers, thought that internal attributes, like being caring, were most important for someone who was a role model. However, non-readers were also significantly more likely than readers to think that more materialistic or superficial qualities were important for a role model such as making lots of money or being cool.

This also correlates with the finding that non-readers were significantly more likely than readers to consider more materialistic signs of success as important to them, particularly being rich or having a flash car. Practitioners might like to think of a national/local celebrity who embodies these qualities (particularly a sportsperson) and consider how their influence could be used as part of their reader development work with non-readers. This could range from a successful businessman to a local footballer.

Whether it is parents, peers, staff or celebrities, how could these people contribute effectively to reader development work, particularly work with non-readers? The findings of this report show that, in general, readers were significantly more likely to appreciate how someone they look up to could encourage them to read. For example, non-readers were significantly less likely than readers to think that a role model suggesting reading materials, reading him/herself or explaining why reading is important would encourage them to read. To a certain extent, this is to be expected because as a reader, you are more likely to know how someone could help you to do something you are already interested in, than someone who isn't switched on to the idea in the first place.

It is also worth noting that in one category non-readers were quite similar to the readers in their responses. Non-readers were nearly as likely as readers to think that reading something written by their role model would encourage them to read. This could be explained by the fact that non-readers are more likely to consider their role models to be people who are often authors of autobiographies, i.e sportspeople or other celebrities. This finding has an important implication for the use of autobiographies as a tool to encourage non-readers to read. The current trend for

celebrity/sporting autobiographies means that there is a wide range available on the market and they are a good starting point to hook children and young people into reading.

In addition, out of all the possible suggestions, a role model could encourage them to read simply by reading themselves. The conclusion that one could draw from this is that non-readers are more likely to respond to practical activities/suggestions led by the reading role model than those that which rely on passive influence.

The impact of socio-economic differences

Consistent with other research, this study shows that a significantly higher proportion of children and young people receiving free school meals (FSM) stated that they do not enjoy reading at all compared with children and young people who do not receive free school meals (NFSM). Practitioners may want to run this survey and identify if this is the case for the children/young people they work with. As a result of this correlation, many of the findings, and therefore the associated practical implications for working with children and young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, are similar to those for non-readers. These include:

- Family members are most likely to be the people who can inspire children and young people to read, but these children and young people are also more likely to consider sports people to be their role models than their NFSM counterparts.
- Internal attributes, such as being caring, and the equivalent signs of being successful, such as being happy, are the most important role model qualities for all children and young people. However, FSM children and young people are more likely to consider showy qualities or signs of success as more appealing. Examples which are particularly pertinent to FSM children and young people are making a lot of money, having a flash car and being famous.
- Having the same background characteristics as your role model is more likely to be important to FSM children and young people than their NFSM counterparts.

For practical ideas related to these findings, refer back to the practical ideas suggested for non-readers above.

However, there were some interesting findings which are unique to FSM children and young people. The first of these is that FSM children and young people were significantly less likely to consider their father as an important person who can inspire reading, and more likely to consider their mother in this role than NFSM children and young people. This emphasises the need for practitioners to deliver specific activities and support for the fathers of these children and young people, who are also more likely to not live with their children than fathers of NFSM children and young people. Family reading projects that reach out to parents in general tend to reach mothers. Therefore, specific programmes, which are accessible by fathers and appeal to them directly, are far more likely to have any impact. Reading Champions (www.readingchampions.org.uk) provides guidance on specifically targeting dads who can also be nominated as Reading Champions, just like the children and young people, and rewarded with badges and certificates in the same way.

It is also very interesting to discover that FSM children and young people are significantly more likely to have role models than NFSM children and young people. Therefore, identifying who their role models are is important as they could be key levers to encouraging them to read. As previously mentioned, practitioners may like to find this out by getting their children/young people to complete the survey. Copies are available online from www.literacytrust.org.uk/research. Alternatively, practitioners could hold a session with a target group of their children/young people and get them to talk about people they look up to.
As well as being more likely to have role models, FSM children and young people were also more likely to know how they could inspire them to read. This is very interesting as, when

looking at the comparisons for age, gender, FSM and readers, the FSM group are the only demographic who report reading less than their counterparts. At the same, they are more likely to have a clearer idea as to how they could be inspired to read. They respond particularly positively to the idea of their role models explaining why reading is important to them. Therefore, supporting the parents of these children and young people to feel empowered, so that they can talk about reading in the home and explain to their children why it is important is crucial in helping children and young people who come from a socially disadvantaged background to enjoy reading more.

The impact of gender

Previous studies have shown that girls enjoy reading more than boys. Consistent with this, this research showed that a significantly greater percentage of girls than boys enjoyed reading very much, while a greater percentage of boys than girls said that they don't like reading very much or not at all.

Again, practitioners may want to run this survey and identify if this is the case for the children/young people they work with. As a result of this correlation, many of the findings, and therefore the associated practical implications for working with boys, are similar to those for non-readers. These include:

- Girls are much more likely to list people that are important in inspiring reading, so we need to make sure that every boy has a role model, either at home or in school. Family members are most likely to be considered to be the children's/young people's role models, but boys are also significantly more likely to consider sportspeople to be their role model than their female counterparts.
- Internal attributes, such as being caring, and the equivalent signs of being successful, such as being happy, are the most important role model qualities for all children and young people, but boys are more likely to consider showy qualities or signs of success as more appealing. Examples which are particularly pertinent to boys are being rich, being good at sports, having a big house and a flash car and being famous.
- Having the same background characteristics as your role model is more likely to be important to boys than their female counterparts.

For practical ideas related to these findings, refer back to the practical ideas suggested for non-readers above.

Interestingly, when asked about their role models, boys were a lot less likely to name family members. However, when they are asked the same question but specifically about inspiring reading, they were nearly as likely as the girls to think it should be a member of their family. It seems, therefore, that boys may respond more favourably to their parents becoming important figures who inspire reading than their role models in general. This offers a real opportunity for practitioners to involve the boys' family members in projects which focus on reading specifically and to nurture these boys' parents as people who can inspire their children to read.

The impact of age

The findings of this report, which relate to the age of the child or young person and their role models, also have significant practical implications for practitioners. Children are more likely to have role models than young people and those role models are more likely to be their family members. However, young people are much more likely to consider their friends at school to be their most powerful influence.

Therefore, when practitioners are considering developing any of the role model projects mentioned above, they should consider the age of the children/young people as a major factor. Practitioners working with children (as opposed to young people) in particular need to think about developing their work to support these children's parents in inspiring children to read. The Reading Connects family involvement toolkit features many practical ideas and case studies for supporting parents and can be downloaded from www.readingconnects.org.uk. Practitioners working with young people, on the other hand, may prefer to consider developing peer mentoring projects, such as buddying programmes.

In addition, those working with young people need to consider the practical consequences of the young people being a lot less likely to be influenced by someone whom they would consider likes reading. While those working with children may find that people coming in to talk specifically about reading proves popular, this may not be the case for practitioners working with young people. The findings suggest that these young people would respond more favourably to someone who talks about reading within the backdrop of a very successful career such as a businessman or a military officer.

It is also worth noting that the findings showed children will probably be more receptive to the use of celebrity icons as part of reading activities and appreciate their attributes more than young people. For practitioners working with young people, our suggestion would therefore be to use celebrities who the young people appreciate for their achievements, as opposed to their visible displays of wealth, which according to the findings, children may respond to more positively.

Policy implications

Education and literacy policy is increasingly looking outside the classroom in an effort to raise the literacy levels of pupils in the UK. The family, community influences and a child's early years experience have all become more prominent in policy documents in recent years, as research has shown that these factors play a key role in child development. Many organisations, including the National Literacy Trust, have used role models to motivate pupils.

However, this document provides new and significant insights into role models. From a policy perspective, it highlights areas that need to be considered in policy development, including some that may be slightly uncomfortable territory for policy makers.

The factor that recurs throughout is the importance of family, something which is already prevalent in many literacy schemes and policies. Almost without exception, every breakdown of the data found that family members, normally parents, were the most likely role models for that group of children. For instance, while FSM children were more likely than those not on FSMs to choose sportsmen and women as their role models, parents were still most likely to be their role models.

Despite the growing number of successful family reading schemes and the recognition of the importance of the family in policy initiatives such as *Every Parent Matters* and *The Children's Plan*, calling for the involvement of family can still be a difficult area for government. Being seen to interfere in people's home lives is something that the government is understandably concerned about. However, there is also an understanding that parents do need advice and support in many situations. The differentiation between interfering and guiding is vital and often the most successful policies are those that work from a position where the parent knows and is being helped, rather than a position where the parent has to be taught.

The fact that all groups of children choose their parents as the most likely people to inspire reading allows for two inferences. The first is that many parents are already inspiring their

children to read, and probably use many of the support tools that are on offer, for example, *Booktrust* packs and local libraries. The second is that even though some parents are not currently inspiring their children to read, their position as a parent gives them some weight in this area. For instance, boys were less likely to consider their family as role models than girls, but responded far more favourably to their parents as important in inspiring reading. Policies that aim to work with the already powerful influence of parents, especially on younger children, should work alongside parents and work from a position of parents as knowledgeable partners in the process.

Obviously, there are times where children do not their parents or other family members as their role models. In these instances, sportspeople were the most common other group selected, followed by friends, then celebrities and actors/actresses. When asked about who encouraged them to read more children chose friends than anyone they didn't know. Despite this, over 20% of children, including significantly more boys than girls, picked a sportsperson as their role model. Boys were also more likely to value demonstrable signs of wealth and success, such as big houses and fast cars. Along with boys, children on FSM and children in primary school were both more likely to pick sportspeople as role models. Importantly, the present study reveals that even if a celebrity is not famous because of their reading skills, young people said the materials they recommend would encourage them to read.

Existing projects such as the National Literacy Trust's Reading The Game use the influence and reach of sporting figures to inspire young people. However, this is less well established in policy. The success of existing projects as well as the lessons learned from this research should convince policy makers that models who can inspire reading also exist outside the family and have the ability to reach some young people for whom family interventions may not be as effective.

The Government already has existing policies relating to communities; work with sportspeople in particular, but celebrities as well, should relate to these policies. Sports clubs often have a longstanding and unique relationship with the communities around their ground, and this relationship can be vital in developing community-wide approaches. There are many examples of good practice around the country and, given the growing understanding of the importance of enjoyment in young people's learning, involving sports teams can become hugely beneficial as they have both the individuals who can act as role models as well as an activity many young people enjoy.

This document contains many interesting and significant findings, many of which may be able guide policy decisions in the future. The two listed above, family role models and the role of sports people and clubs are the two, which, given the current policy climate, should resonate most with policy makers.

Conclusion

Overall, although role models play an important part in children and young people's lives, the use of "distant" role models needs to be part of an ongoing programme of support. Fleeting media images of sporting role models reading may not be enough to ensure that such role models contribute to a change in reading behaviour or reading attitudes, but need to be supported by long term campaigns and grass roots activities.

Based on the findings of this report, we would encourage adopting a multi-faceted approach to using role models to encourage children and young people to enjoy reading more. An approach that encompasses the needs of children and young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds will have a particular impact.

Drawing upon role models from the child or young person's immediate social environment will have the biggest and most sustainable influence. Developing family reading activities that empower participants will have a sustainable impact on the reading behaviours of future generations and will be particularly effective when working with children. Peer mentoring reading programmes will also have a significant impact on both the mentor and mentee in a variety of ways and will be particularly effective when working with young people.

However, we should not underestimate the power of using famous role models to underpin the messages being promoted to non-readers. Boys will respond particularly well to sportspeople encouraging them to read. Translating the positive reading messages and the kudos that footballers exude into practical reading activities could make a real difference.

References

Anderson, K.J. & Cavallaro, D. (2002). Parents or pop culture? Children's heroes and role models. *Childhood Education*, Spring, 161-168.

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (March 2008). Accessed press release on 1 April 2008 at http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/10%20March%202008%20-%20ann%20conf%20-%20Culture%20of%20celebrity1%20final.pdf.

Basow, S.A. and Howe, K. (1980). Role-Model Influence: Effects of Sex and Sex-Role Attitude in College Students**.** *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* **4**, 558 – 574.

Biskup, C. & Pfister, G. (1999). I would like to be like her/him: Are athletes role-models for boys and girls? *European Physical Education Review*, **5**, 199-218.

Bricheno, P. & Thornton, M. (2007). Role model, hero or champion? Children's views concerning role models. *Educational Research*, **49**, 383-396.

Bryant, A.L. & Zimmerman, M.A. (2003). Role models and psychosocial outcomes among African American Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, **18**, 36-67.

Bucher, A. (1997). 'The Influence of Models in Forming Moral Identity', *International Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 27 No. 7.

Clark, C. (2008). *Britain's next top model*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Clark, C. and Akerman, R. (2006). *Social inclusion and reading*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Clark, C. & Foster, A. (2005). *Children's and young people's reading habits and preferences: The who, what, why, where and when*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Clark, C., Osborne, S. & Akerman, R. (2008). *Young people's self-perceptions as readers: An investigation including family, peer and school influences*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Dee, T.S. (2005). A teacher like me: Does race, ethnicity or gender matter? Paper presented to the AERA 2005 conference. Montreal.

Dugdale, G. and Clark, C. (2008). *Literacy changes lives: An advocacy resource*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Eccles, J.S. (1987). Gender roles and women's achievement-related decisions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, **11**, 135-172.

Ehrenberg, R.G., Goldhaber, D.D. & Brewer, D.J. (1995). Do teachers' race, gender, and ethnicity matter? Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, **48**, 547-561.

Fan, X. & Chen, M. (2001). Parental Involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, **13**, 1-22.

Feinstein, L. & Symons, J. (1999). Attainment in secondary school. *Oxford Economic Papers*, **51,** 300-321.

Fraser, B.P. & Brown, W.J. (2002). Media, celebrities, and social influence: Identification with Elvis Presley. *Mass Communication and Society*, **5**, 183-206.

Freedman-Doan, C.R. & Eccles, J.S. (1994). *Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio? An examination of adolescents' heroes and identity formation*. Paper presented at the Sixth Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence MArch. Boston, MA.

Galbo, J.J. (1984). Adolescents' perceptions of significant adults: A review of the literature. *Adolescence*, **19**, 951-970.

Gest, S.D., Freeman, N.R., Domitrovich, C.E. & Welsh, J.A. (2004). Shared book reading and children's language comprehension skills: the moderating role of parental discipline practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, **19**, 319-336.

Gibson, D.E. (2004). Role models in career development: New directions for theory and research. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, **65**, 134-156.

Greenwood, D.N. (2007). Are female action heroes risky role models? Character identification, idealization, and viewer aggression. *Sex Roles*, **57**, 725-732.

Hall, C. and Cole, M. (1999). *Children's reading choices*. London: Routledge.

Hutchings, M., Carrington, B., Francis, B., Skelton, C., Read, B. & Hall, I. (2007). Nice and kind, smart and funny: What children like and want to emulate in their teachers. *Oxford Review of Education*, 1-23.

Kemper, T.D. (1968). Reference groups, socialization and achievement. *American Sociological Review*, **33**, 31-45.

King, M.M. and Multon, K.D. (1996). The effects of television role models on the career aspirations of African American junior high school students. *Journal of Career Development*, **23**, 111 – 125.

Lockwood, P. & Kunda, Z. (1997). Superstars and me: Predicting the impact of role models on the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **73**, 91-103.

Lockwood, P. & Kunda, Z. (2000). Outstanding role models: Do they inspire or demoralize us? In A. Tesser, R.B. Felson et al. (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on self and identity* (pp. 147-171). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lockwood, P., Jordan, C.H. & Kunda, Z. (2002). Motivation by positive or negative role models: Regulatory focus determines who will best inspire us. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **83**, 854-864.

Lockwood, P., Marshall, T.C. & Sadler, P. (2005). Promoting success or preventing failure: Cultural differences in motivation by positive and negative role models. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **31**, 379-392.

Lucey, H. (2001). Social class, gender and schooling, in B. Francis & C. Skelton (Eds.), *Investigating gender: Contemporary perspectives in education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lumpkin, A. (2008). Teachers as role models teaching character and moral virtues. *Joperd*, **79**, 45-49.

Lunenberg,M., Korthagen, F. & Swennen, A. (2007). The teacher educator as a role model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, **23**, 586-601.

Martin, C.A. & Bush, A.J. (2000). Do role models influence teenagers' purchase intentions and behavior? *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, **17**, 441-454.

Martino, W.J. (2008). Male teachers as role models: Addressing issues of masculinity, pedagogy and the re-masculinization of schooling. *Curriculum Inquiry,* **38**, 189–223.

Melhuish, E., Sylva, C., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Taggart, B. (2001). *Social, behavioural and cognitive development at 3-4 years in relation to family background. The effective provision of pre-school education, EPPE project*. DfEE: London: The Institute of Education.

National Kids' Day survey (2007). What 10-year-olds want. Accessed on 20 February 2008 from www.lutonfirst.com.

nfpSynergy (2007). *Typical young people … A study of what young people are really like today*. London: nfpSynergy.

Nestlé Family Monitor (2003). *Young people's attitudes towards reading*. Croydon: Nestlé.

Neuman, S.B. & Celano, D. (2001). Access to print in low-income and middle-income communities: An ecological study of four neighborhoods. *Reading Research Quarterly*, **36**, 8-26.

Rowe, K. (1991). The influence of reading activity at home on students' attitudes towards reading, classroom attentiveness and reading achievement: An application of structural equation modelling. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, **61**, 19-35.

Scholastic (2006). *The 2006 Kids and Family Reading Report*. London: Scholastic.

Smith, K.H. & Stutts, M.A. (1999). Factors that influence adolescents to smoke. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, **33**, 321-357.

Tinklin, T., Corxford, L., Ducklin, A. & Frame, B. (2001). *Gender and pupil performance in Scotland's Schools*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Executive Education Department.

Twist, L., Schagen, I. and Hodgson, C. (2007). *Readers and Reading:the National Report for England 2006* (PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). Slough: NFER.

Vescio, J.A., Crosswhite, J.J. & Wilde, K. (2004). The impact of gendered heroism on adolescent girls and their sport role models. A paper presented at the Pre-Olympic Congress, International Congress on Sport Science, Sport Medicine and Physical Education. August 2004. Thessaloniki.

Wade, B. & Moore, M. (2000). A sure start with books. *Early Years*, **20**, 39-46.

Walker, B.M. (2007). No more heroes any more: The 'older brother' as role model. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, **37**, 503-518.

Weems, D.M. & Rogers, C. (2007). America's next top model: Parent behaviors that promote reading. *Child Education*, **Winter 2007-2008**, 105-106.

Wiium, N., Breivik, K. & Wold, B. (2006). The relationship between smoker role models and intentions to smoke among adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolesce nce*, **35**, 551-562.

Wohlford, K.E., Lochman, J.E. & Barry, T.D. (2004). The relation between chosen role models and the self-esteem of men and women. *Sex Roles*, **50**, 575-582.

Wolbrecht, C. & Campbell, D.E. (2007). Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models. *American Journal of Political Science,* **51**, 921–939.

Zirkel, S. (2002). "Is there a place for me?": Role models and academic identity among white students and students of color. *Teachers College Record,* **104**, 357-376.