

PIRLS 2021:
**Exploring the contexts for reading of
primary school pupils in Ireland**

Vasiliki Pitsia, Sarah McAteer, Gráinne McHugh, and Emer Delaney

Educational Research Centre

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4: Reading Achievement by Class and Teacher Characteristics

As part of PIRLS 2021, teachers of sampled classes were asked to complete questionnaires, as described in Chapter 1. This chapter focuses mainly on class and teacher characteristics, as captured through these questionnaires, and relationships of these characteristics with the reading achievement of pupils in Ireland. Reports from principals of participating schools and participating pupils are also included in the chapter to shed further light on the challenges in reading instruction. Ireland's data for 2021 are compared to those of previous PIRLS cycles in 2011 and 2016, where available, to examine trends.

Organisation of reading instruction, teaching, and assessment

The teacher questionnaire includes a range of questions relating to reading instruction which provide a picture of what reading lessons were typically like for the pupils who participated in PIRLS 2021.

This section examines: time spent on English language instruction, organisation of reading instruction, activities and strategies used in reading lessons, tasks used to help develop comprehension skills, text types used during reading activities, availability and use of resources such as library/reading corner and digital devices during reading lessons, post-reading activities, reading homework, and assessment strategies in reading.

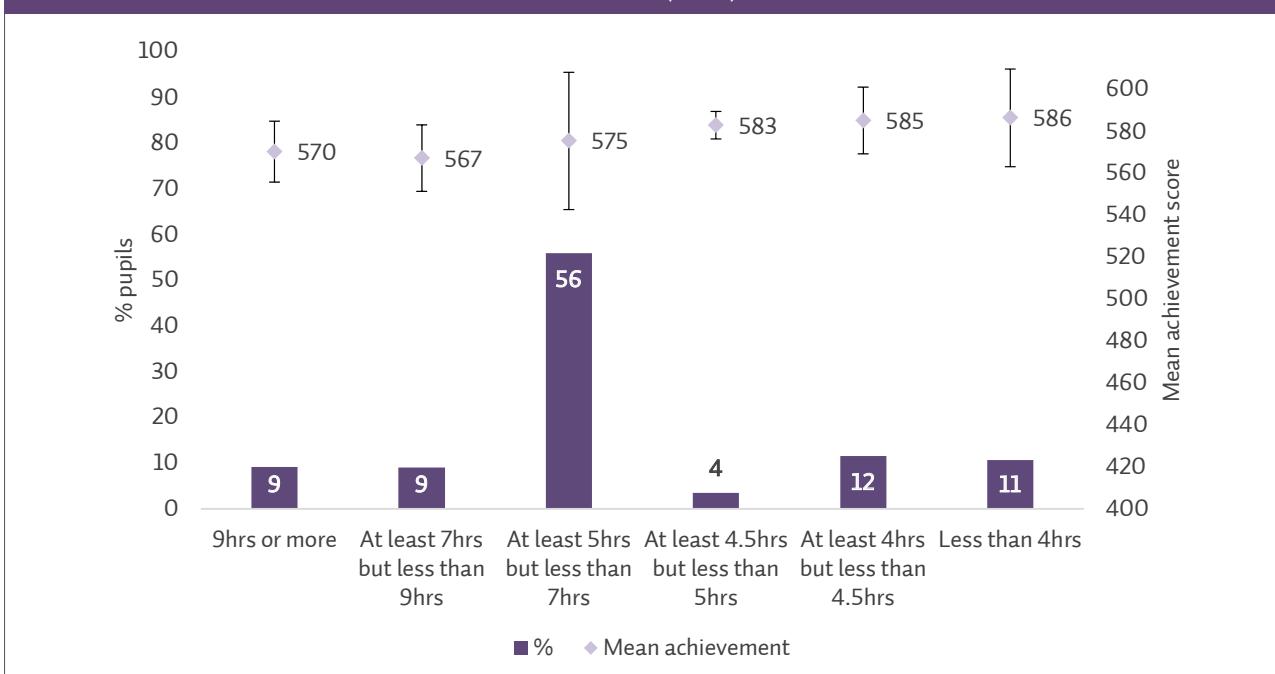
Time spent on English language instruction

Teachers were asked to indicate how much time per week they spent on instruction and activities related to the language of the PIRLS test (i.e., in Ireland's case, teachers were asked how much time they spent on English language instruction and/or activities).²⁶ The question specified that this could include instruction or activities in reading, writing, speaking, listening, literature, and other language skills.

Figure 4.1 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils by the time spent on English language instruction. More than half of pupils (56%) received between five and seven hours of English language instruction per week. Broadly similar proportions (of approximately 10%) were reported for all other categories, with the exception of *at least 4.5 hrs but less than 5 hrs*, where the proportion was less than 5%. None of the mean PIRLS scores were statistically significantly different from that of the *9hrs or more* category, which was used as a reference.

26 To date, the PIRLS test has been administered only in English in Ireland, as to administer it in Irish would require oversampling of Irish-medium schools, which would increase their testing burden. However, questionnaires are provided in both Irish and English for participants in Irish-medium schools.

Figure 4.1: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by time spent on English language instruction, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.1.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

This question was also included in PIRLS 2016. Similar to PIRLS 2021, the majority of pupils (52%) had teachers who reported spending *at least 5hrs but less than 7hrs* on English language instruction (Appendix Table 4.1). The proportions in each of the categories were broadly similar between 2016 and 2021, but there was a decrease of five percentage points in the proportion of the *9hrs or more* category between the two cycles.

Organisation of reading instruction

Teachers were presented with five organisational approaches including teaching reading as a whole-class activity, creating same-ability or mixed-ability groups, providing individualised instruction or assigning pupils to work independently on a plan or goal. They were asked to indicate the frequency (*always or almost always, often, sometimes, or never*) with which they used each of these approaches during reading lessons and/or activities. Table 4.1 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers used the various organisational approaches in reading lessons and/or activities.

Teaching reading as a whole-class activity was the most frequently used approach with almost one-third of pupils (32%) taught by teachers who *always or almost always* taught reading as a whole-class activity and approximately a further half of pupils (49%) who *often* experienced reading as a whole-class activity. All other approaches were less commonly used in Ireland. Group work included two approaches: same-ability groups and mixed-ability groups. Over one-third of pupils (36%) were taught by teachers who created same-ability groups either *often* (27%) or *always or almost always* (8%). Mixed-ability groups were used slightly more frequently (43% of pupils had teachers who used this approach *often* [36%] or *always or almost always* [7%]). Over half of pupils (57%) had teachers who used the approach of having pupils work independently on an assigned plan or goal either *always or almost always* (9%) or *often* (49%), while individualised instruction for reading was used somewhat less frequently in Ireland (35% of pupils had teachers who used this approach *always or almost always* [5%] or *often* [30%]).

Table 4.1: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by organisation of class instruction (2021)

	Always or almost always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Teach reading as whole-class activity	32	585	49	578	20	560	0	~
Create same-ability groups	8	559	27	566	48	583	17	585
Create mixed-ability groups	7	579	36	575	45	575	12	588
Use individualised instruction for reading	5	580	30	571	53	577	12	589
Pupils work independently on an assigned plan or goal	9	582	49	576	36	577	7	570

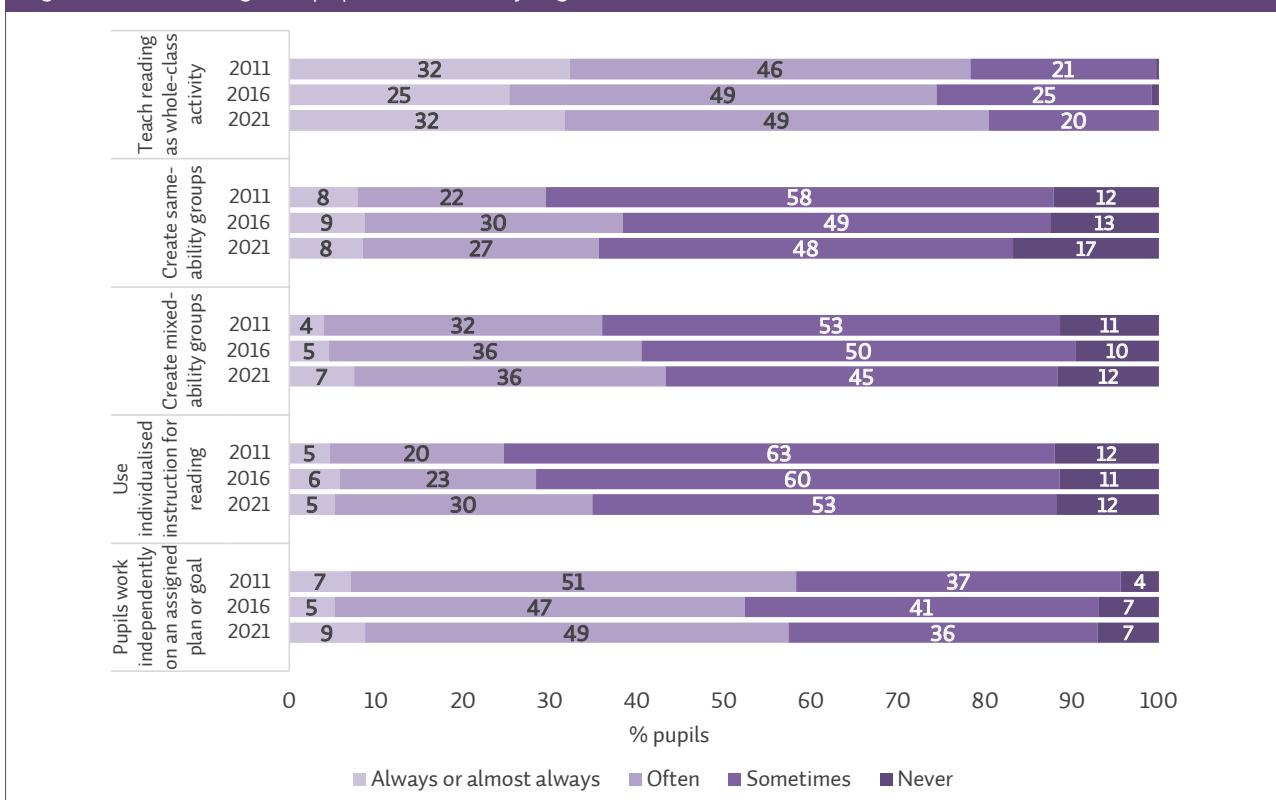
Source: Appendix Table A4.2.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Figure 4.2 presents the percentages of pupils by the frequency with which their teachers used the various organisational approaches in reading instruction and/or activities in 2011, 2016, and 2021. Whole-class instruction has consistently been the most frequently used approach. Between 2011 and 2016, there had been a decrease (though not statistically significant) in the percentage of pupils whose teachers *always or almost always* used whole-class instruction for reading (Delaney et al., 2022). This trend did not hold in 2021 where the proportion is similar to that observed in 2011. On the other hand, the frequency of both creating mixed ability groups and using individualised instruction for reading has increased slightly over time (from 2011 to 2021).

Figure 4.2: Percentages of pupils in Ireland, by organisation of class instruction (2011, 2016, 2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.2.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Activities and strategies used in reading lessons

Teachers were asked two questions relating to the activities and strategies used during reading lessons. Firstly, teachers were presented with the following range of reading activities: *Read aloud to pupils; Ask pupils to read aloud; Ask pupils to read silently on their own; Teach pupils strategies for decoding sounds and words; Teach pupils new vocabulary systematically; Provide opportunities for pupils to develop fluency; Teach or model skimming or scanning strategies; Teach digital literacy skills*. They were asked to indicate the frequency with which they completed each of the activities (*every day or almost every day, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, or never or almost never*). Secondly, teachers were asked to indicate the proportion of reading lessons which included specific teaching and learning strategies including providing reading materials which match pupils' interests, linking new content to pupils' prior knowledge, and encouraging pupil discussions of texts.

Table 4.2 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers completed various activities during reading lessons. Approximately three-quarters of pupils were taught by teachers who read aloud to pupils (71%), asked pupils to read aloud (79%), and asked pupils to read silently on their own (74%) on a daily or near-daily basis. Almost all pupils experienced these activities at least once or twice a week. The next most frequently used activities included a new addition in PIRLS 2021, providing opportunities for pupils to develop fluency (45%, *every day or almost every day*), and teaching pupils new vocabulary systematically (37%, *every day or almost every day*). Teaching strategies for decoding sounds and words and teaching or modelling skimming or scanning strategies were less likely to be used on a daily or near-daily basis (24% and 15%, respectively), while teachers of just over half (53%, respectively) reported doing these on a roughly weekly basis. Another new addition to this question in PIRLS 2021 was the activity of teaching digital literacy skills. Less than one-tenth of pupils in Ireland (9%) had teachers who completed this on a daily or near-daily basis, while one-fifth (20%) of pupils had teachers who *never or almost never* taught digital literacy skills. Across all these activities, with the exception of teaching digital literacy skills, very small proportions of pupils were taught by teachers who *never or almost never* completed these activities.

Table 4.2: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers completed certain activities during reading lessons (2021)

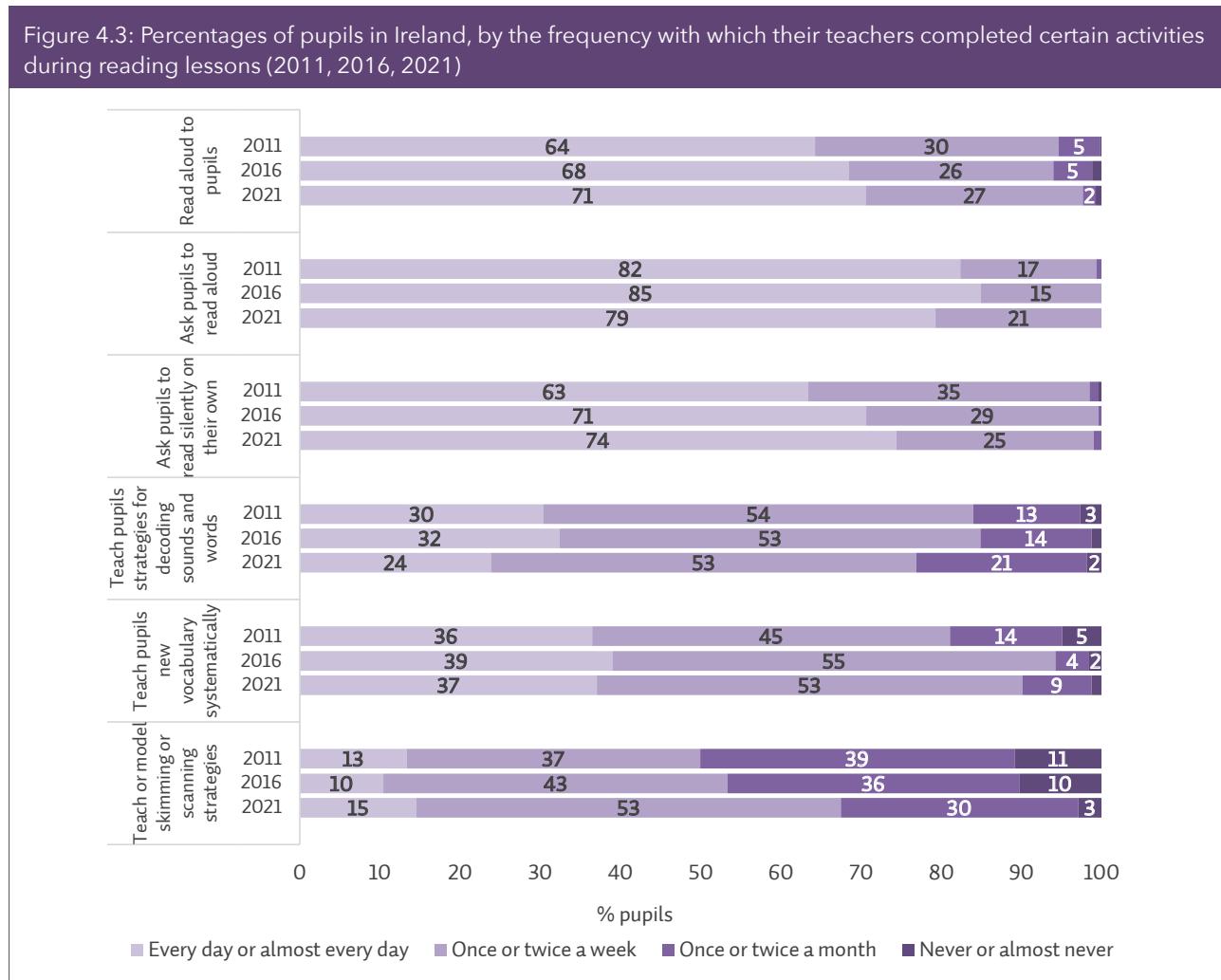
	Every day or almost every day		Once or twice a week		Once or twice a month		Never or almost never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Read aloud to pupils	71	575	27	582	2	~	1	~
Ask pupils to read aloud	79	577	21	580	0	~	0	~
Ask pupils to read silently on their own	74	578	25	575	1	~	0	~
Teach pupils strategies for decoding sounds and words	24	570	53	578	21	582	2	~
Teach pupils new vocabulary systematically	37	575	53	580	9	570	1	~
Provide opportunities for pupils to develop fluency	45	574	49	580	5	583	1	~
Teach or model skimming or scanning strategies	15	575	53	574	30	583	3	590
Teach digital literacy skills (e.g., reading, writing, and communicating using digital tools and media)	9	576	30	568	41	579	20	588

Source: Appendix Table A4.3.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Figure 4.3 presents the percentages of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers completed certain activities during reading lessons in 2011, 2016, and 2021.²⁷ The activities of reading aloud to pupils, asking pupils to read aloud, and asking pupils to read silently on their own were frequently completed across each of the PIRLS cycles with the majority of pupils taught by teachers who completed these activities at least weekly. The frequency with which teachers taught pupils strategies for decoding sounds and words at least weekly was generally steady between 2011 and 2016 but decreased between 2016 and 2021. Teaching pupils new vocabulary systematically, on at least a weekly basis, increased between 2011 and 2016 but this trend reversed between 2016 and 2021, as it decreased, although not to the proportions reported in 2011. Conversely, the proportion of pupils whose teachers taught skimming or scanning strategies at least weekly has increased across cycles (50% in 2011, 53% in 2016, and 67% in 2021), with the steeper increase between 2016 and 2021, highlighting that this appears to be an area of increasing focus for teachers.



Source: Appendix Table A4.3.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

The second question relates to the frequency with which teachers used various teaching and learning strategies during reading lessons. Table 4.3 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers used the various strategies during reading lessons. Most pupils in Ireland had teachers who reported

²⁷ The trend figure here and other trend figures in this chapter include only those questions which have been asked consistently across PIRLS cycles.

encouraging pupil discussions of texts either in *every or almost every lesson* (84%) or *about half the lessons* (13%). Over half of pupils had teachers who, in *every or almost every lesson*, encouraged pupils to deepen their understandings of the text (65%), provided materials appropriate for the reading levels of individual pupils (61%), and linked new content to pupils' prior knowledge (52%). Encouraging pupils to read texts with multiple perspectives and giving individualised feedback to each pupil were the least-frequently used strategies, although over half of pupils had teachers who reported using these in *about half the lessons* or more (53% and 55%, respectively). Across all strategies, very small proportions of pupils (1% or less) were taught by teachers who reported *never* using the different strategies. The only exception to this is the case of encouraging pupils to read texts with multiple perspectives, where a slightly larger proportion (5% of pupils) were taught by teachers who reported *never* doing this.

Table 4.3: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers used certain strategies during reading lessons (2021)

	Every or almost every lesson		About half the lessons		Some lessons		Never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Provide reading materials that match the pupils' interests	24	578	44	577	32	575	0	~
Provide materials that are appropriate for the reading levels of individual pupils	61	574	22	581	16	580	1	~
Link new content to pupils' prior knowledge	52	577	35	578	13	575	0	~
Encourage pupils to deepen their understandings of the text	65	579	27	572	8	573	0	~
Encourage pupil discussions of texts	84	578	13	568	3	576	0	~
Encourage pupils to challenge the opinion expressed in the text	42	584	35	572	23	571	0	~
Encourage pupils to read texts with multiple perspectives	22	587	32	569	42	579	5	564
Give pupils time to read books of their own choosing	45	577	22	573	32	580	1	~
Give individualised feedback to each pupil	17	576	38	574	43	579	1	~

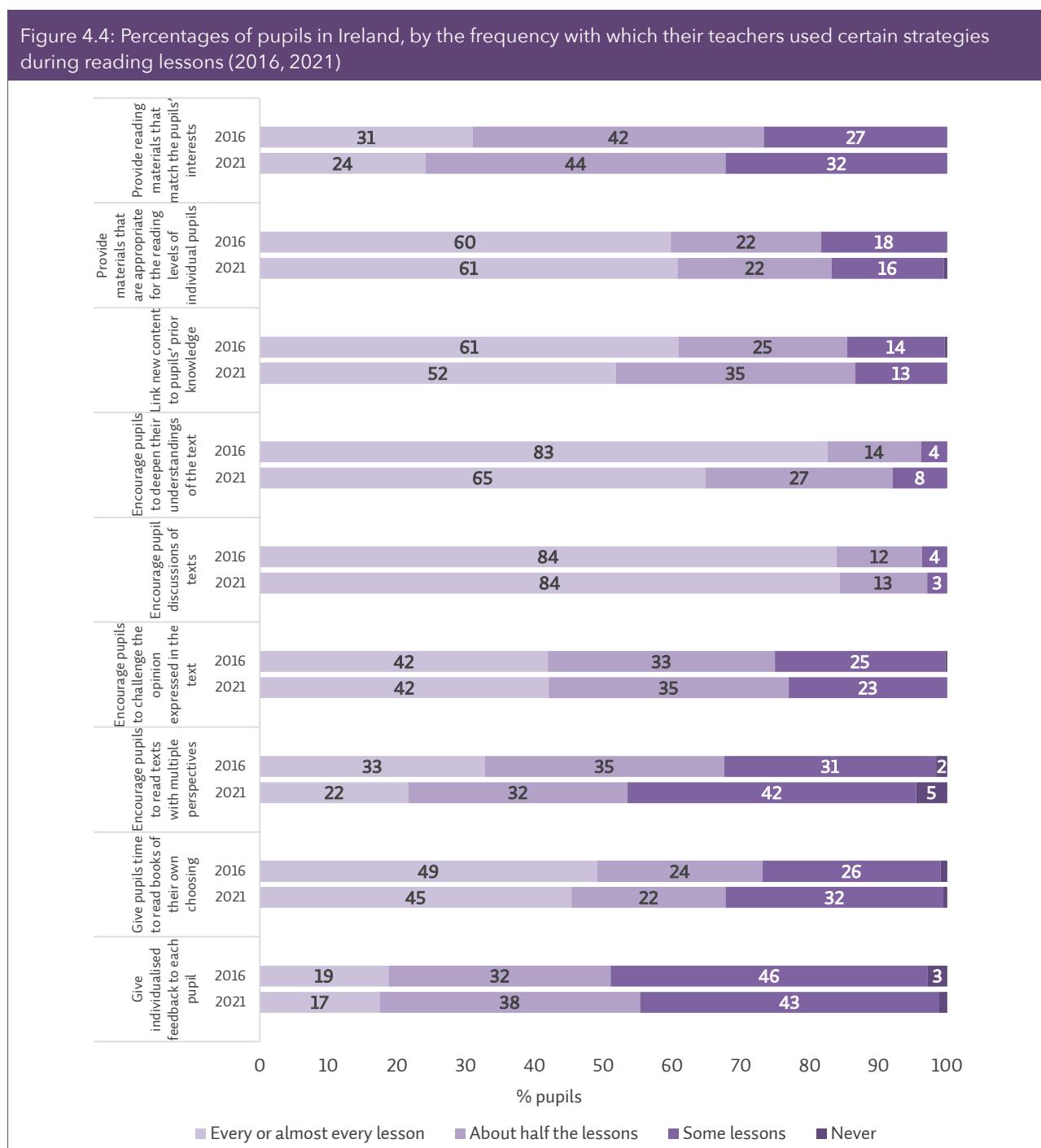
Source: Appendix Table A4.4.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Figure 4.4 presents the percentages of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers used certain teaching and learning strategies during reading lessons in 2016 and 2021.²⁸ The trend was very consistent for three activities: providing materials that are appropriate for the reading levels of individual pupils, encouraging pupil discussions of texts, and encouraging pupils to challenge the opinion expressed in the text. The proportion of pupils whose teachers reported linking new content to pupils' prior knowledge in at least half the lessons was broadly similar across both cycles (85% in 2016 and 87% in 2021), but the proportion whose teachers reported completing this activity in *every or almost every lesson* decreased from 61% in 2016 to 52% in 2021. There was a decrease between 2016 and 2021 in the frequency with which other strategies were used, including providing reading materials that match the pupils' interests, encouraging pupils to deepen their understanding of the text,

encouraging pupils to read text with multiple perspectives, and giving pupils time to read books of their own choosing.



Source: Appendix Table A4.4.

Notes. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix. Wording changed slightly for two items between 2016 and 2021: *Encourage pupils to develop their understandings of the text* changed to *Encourage pupils to deepen their understandings of the text*; *Use multiple perspectives (among pupils and texts) to enrich understanding* changed to *Encourage pupils to read texts with multiple perspectives*.

Tasks used to help develop comprehension skills

Table 4.4 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers assigned various types of tasks to help them develop comprehension skills. Based on teachers' reports, the tasks which were completed on a daily or near-daily basis by the majority of pupils were locating information within the text (70%), identifying the main ideas of what they have read (69%), explaining or supporting their understanding with

text-based evidence (58%), and making predictions about what will happen next in the text they are reading (56%). Other commonly used tasks were pupils comparing what they have read with experiences they have had, comparing what they have read with other things they have read, and making generalisations and drawing inferences based on what they have read. Tasks including evaluating and critiquing the style or structure of the text, determining the author's perspective or intention, and self-monitoring their reading were reported by teachers to be used more on a weekly or monthly than on a daily basis. Finally, tasks to develop digital comprehension skills were used less frequently than any of the other tasks, with almost one-third and a quarter of pupils, respectively, having teachers who asked them on at least a weekly basis to determine whether a website is useful for a specific purpose and to evaluate the credibility of a website (a new addition in PIRLS 2021), and more than one-third and approximately half of pupils having teachers who *never* or *almost never* asked them to complete these tasks.

Table 4.4: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers assigned certain tasks to help develop comprehension skills (2021)

	Every day or almost every day		Once or twice a week		Once or twice a month		Never or almost never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Locate information within the text	70	577	29	578	2	~	0	~
Identify the main ideas of what they have read	69	577	27	576	4	587	0	~
Explain or support their understanding with text-based evidence	58	578	35	575	6	579	1	~
Compare what they have read with experiences they have had	41	578	50	576	8	579	2	~
Compare what they have read with other things they have read	30	579	54	575	12	583	3	569
Make predictions about what will happen next in the text they are reading	56	577	37	575	7	588	0	~
Make generalisations and draw inferences based on what they have read	38	583	47	574	14	569	1	~
Evaluate and critique the style or structure of the text they have read	13	574	50	579	31	576	6	572
Determine the author's perspective or intention	13	585	47	575	33	579	6	564
Self-monitor their reading (e.g., recognise when they don't understand)	26	580	43	574	21	578	9	582
Determine whether a website is useful for a specific purpose	2	~	28	568	35	583	35	577
Evaluate the credibility of a website	2	~	21	573	29	576	48	580

Source: Appendix Table A4.5.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Figure 4.5 presents the percentages of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers assigned these tasks in the last three cycles of PIRLS. The frequency with which the tasks to help develop comprehension skills were used was generally consistent or increasing between 2011 and 2021. Based on teachers' reports, the proportion of pupils asked on at least a weekly basis to compare what they have read with other things they have read has increased between 2011 and 2021 (68% in 2011, 82% in 2016, and 85% in 2021), while the proportion asked to determine the author's perspective or intention increased between 2011 (52%) and

2016 (62%) and remained generally similar between 2016 and 2021 (60%).

Figure 4.5: Percentages of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers assigned certain tasks to help develop comprehension skills (2011, 2016, 2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.5.

Notes. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix. Wording changed slightly for two items in 2021: *Explain or support their understanding of what they have read* (2011, 2016) changed to *Explain or support their understanding with text-based evidence* (2021); *Describe the style or structure of the text they have read* (2011, 2016) changed to *Evaluate and critique the style or structure of the text they have read* (2021).

Text types used during reading activities

In the teacher questionnaire, one question asked about the types of texts used during reading lessons (Table 4.5). Teachers were asked how often (*every day or almost every day, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, or never or almost never*) pupils read various types of text (in print or digitally). The options were split into two categories: literary reading materials and informational reading materials. Literary reading materials included: *short stories* (e.g., *fables, fairytales, action stories, science fiction, detective stories*), *longer fiction books with chapters, plays, and poems/poetry* (the latter being a new addition in PIRLS 2021). Informational reading materials included: *non-fiction subject area books or textbooks, longer non-fiction books with chapters, non-fiction articles that describe and explain about things, people, events or how things*

work (e.g., newspaper articles, brochures), and non-continuous texts (e.g., diagrams, maps, illustrations, photographs, tables).

In Ireland, teachers gave pupils literary reading materials more frequently than informational reading materials in reading lessons. Among the literary reading materials, one-third of pupils had teachers who used short stories (33%) and/or longer fiction books with chapters (34%) *every day or almost every day*. Short stories were used in reading lessons at least weekly by teachers of almost 90% of pupils. Plays were used much less frequently as two-third of pupils (66%) had teachers who *never or almost never* used such texts in reading lessons. The new addition in this category in PIRLS 2021, poems/poetry, was used by teachers of almost all pupils (99%) on at least a monthly basis. Over one-third of pupils (38%) had teachers who used poems/poetry *once or twice a week*, while a very small proportion (2%) had teachers who reported using them *every day or almost every day*.

Among the informational reading materials, non-fiction subject area books or textbooks were most likely to be used daily or near-daily (37%), followed by non-continuous texts (12%), non-fiction articles that describe and explain about things, people, events, or how things work (8%), and longer non-fiction books with chapters (7%). Over one-fifth of pupils (22%) had teachers who *never or almost never* used longer non-fiction books with chapters.

Table 4.5: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers used various text types in reading lessons (2021)

		Every day or almost every day		Once or twice a week		Once or twice a month		Never or almost never	
		%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Literary	Short stories (e.g., fables, fairy tales, action stories, science fiction, detective stories)	33	584	54	576	10	564	2	~
	Longer fiction books with chapters	34	581	35	572	27	579	4	575
	Plays	0	~	4	575	30	577	66	577
	Poems/poetry	2	~	38	580	60	575	1	~
Informational	Non-fiction subject area books or textbooks	37	579	47	575	14	580	2	~
	Longer non-fiction books with chapters	7	587	32	578	38	573	22	579
	Non-fiction articles that describe and explain about things, people, events, or how things work (e.g., newspaper articles, brochures)	8	590	39	578	44	574	9	575
	Non-continuous texts (e.g., diagrams, maps, illustrations, photographs, tables)	12	586	45	581	37	568	5	585

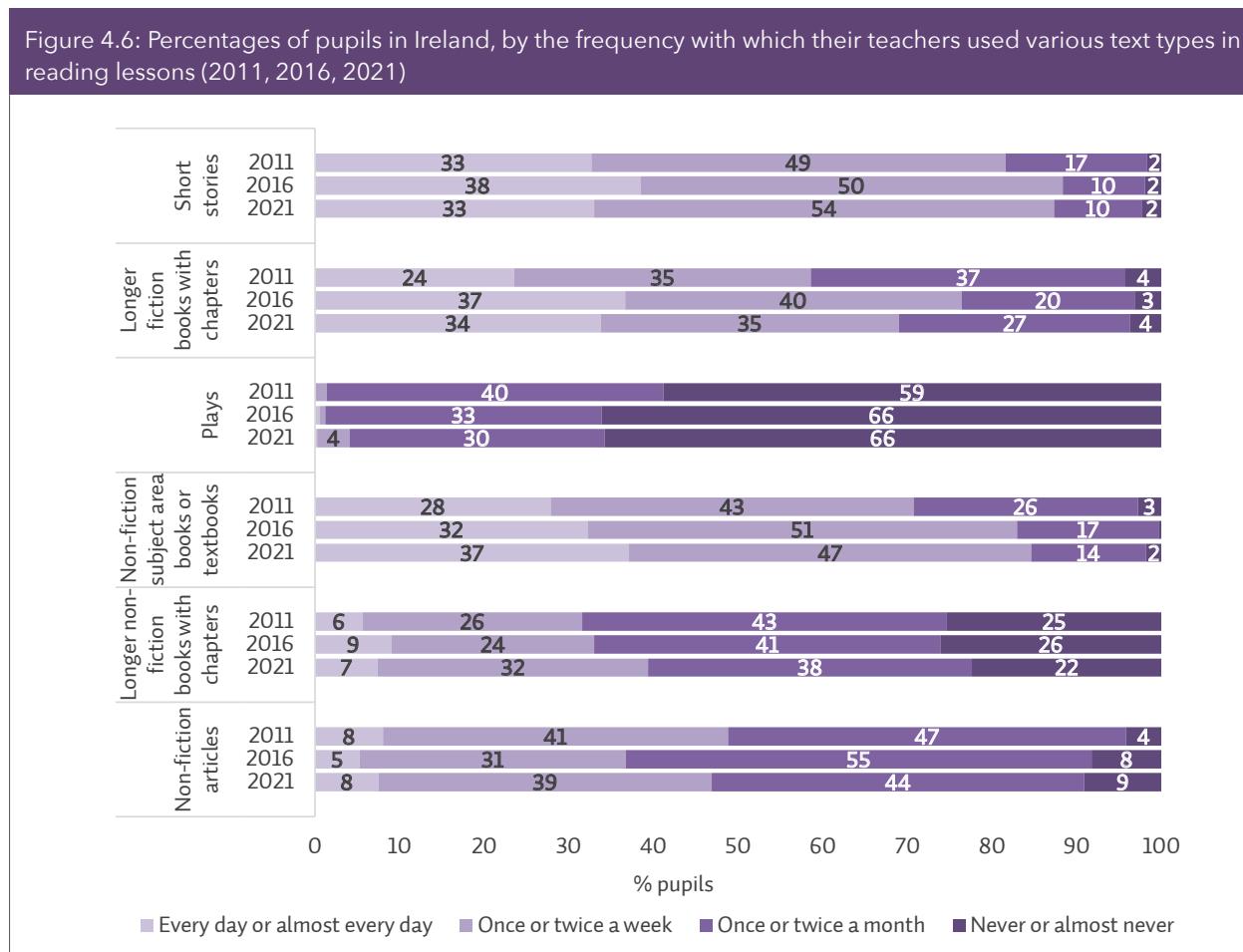
Source: Appendix Table A4.6.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Teacher responses about three text types in the literary reading materials category and three text types in the informational reading materials category were collected across the last three cycles of PIRLS. Figure 4.6 presents the percentages of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers used these various text types in reading lessons in 2011, 2016, and 2021. Overall, the proportions were generally similar across cycles. Short stories, longer fiction books with chapters, and non-fiction subject area books or textbooks were used most commonly across 2011, 2016, and 2021. Plays were used least commonly in each of these years. The use of non-fiction articles on at least a weekly basis decreased statistically significantly between 2011 and 2016, but this change has reversed as the use increased statistically significantly between

2016 and 2021, with proportions in 2021 similar to those reported in 2011.



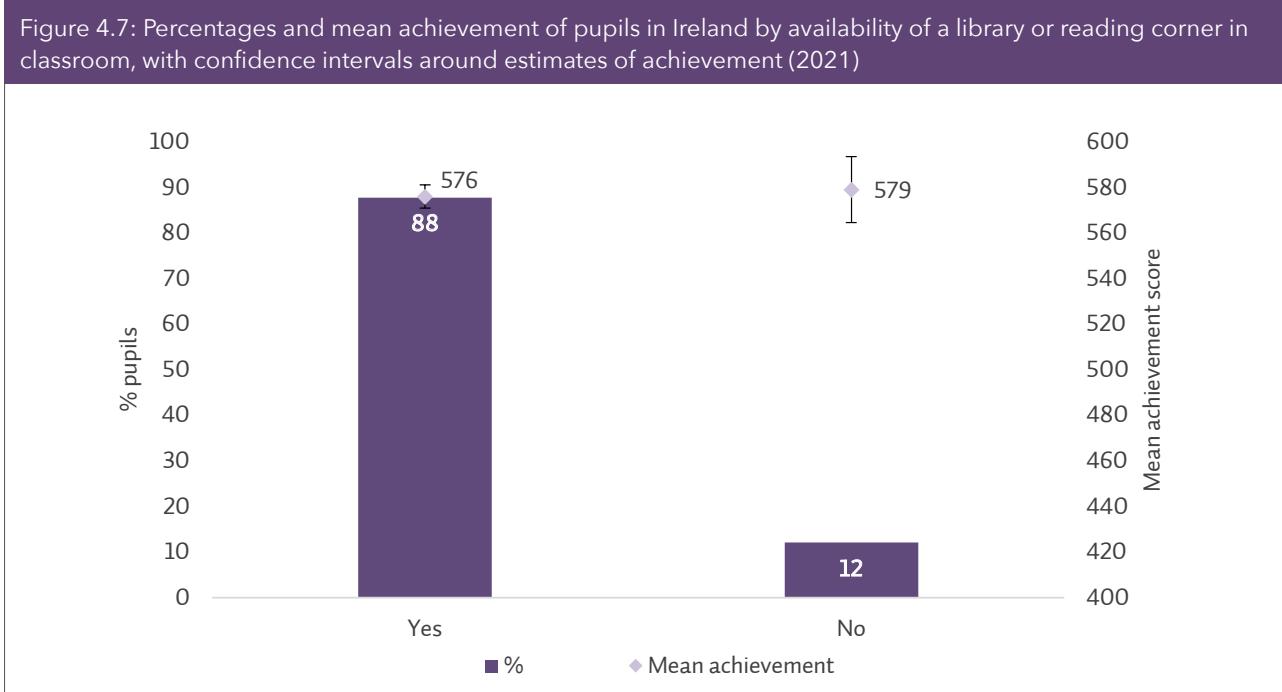
Source: Appendix Table A4.6.

Notes. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix. Wording for the last category has been shortened for the purposes of the graph.

Availability of library or reading corner

The teacher questionnaire included a question about whether classrooms had a library or reading corner. Figure 4.7 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils by whether their teachers reported having a library or reading corner available in their classroom. Based on teachers' reports, the majority of pupils (88%) had a library or reading corner available in their classrooms. Mean PIRLS scores were not statistically significantly different based on whether or not pupils had a library or reading corner available in their classrooms. In 2011 and 2016, proportions of pupils who were taught by teachers whose classrooms had a library or reading corner, 98% and 96%, respectively, were statistically significantly higher than the proportion reported in 2021, but this may be due, at least in part, to COVID-19 restrictions on library usage at the time of PIRLS testing.

Figure 4.7: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by availability of a library or reading corner in classroom, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.7.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Among those pupils who had a library or reading corner available in their classrooms, 59% were reported by their teachers to use the library or reading corner during class time *every day or almost every day*, while a further 38% were reported using it *once or twice a week* (see Appendix Table A4.7). Again, among those pupils who had a library or reading corner available in their classrooms, two-fifths (41%) had teachers who reported having *more than 100* books in their classroom library, while more than one-third (35%) had teachers who reported having *51-100* books in their classroom library.

Use of digital devices during reading lessons

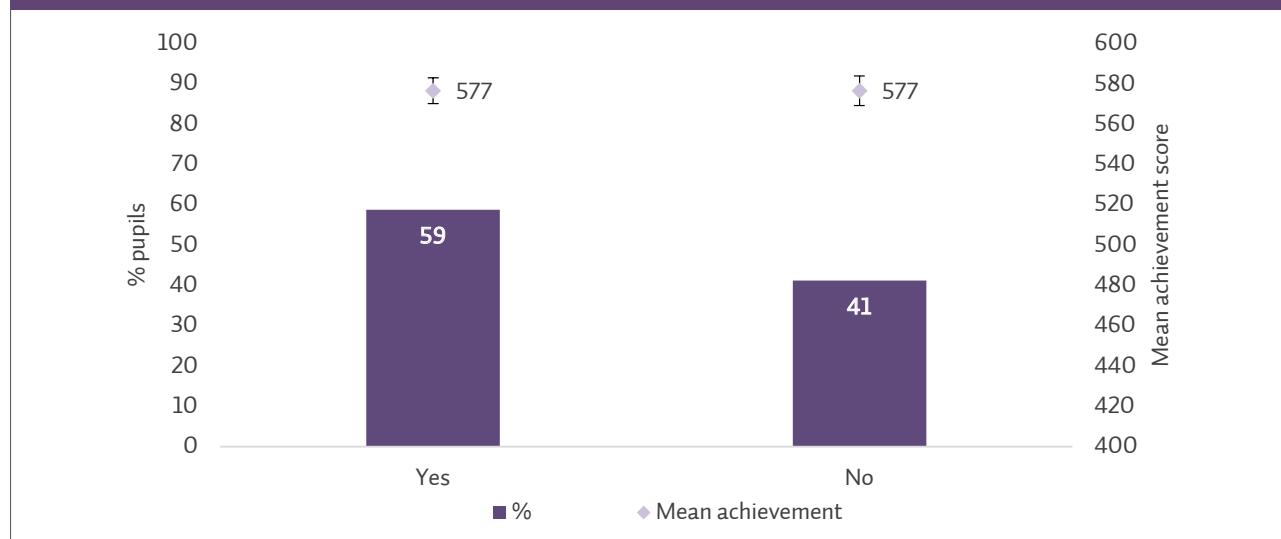
Teachers were asked questions relating to the use of digital devices during reading instruction. Firstly, teachers were asked whether pupils in their class had digital devices (e.g., desktop computers, laptops, or tablets) available to use during reading lessons. Subsequent questions were asked to those who reported having digital devices available to use during reading lessons including the level of access to these devices, the frequency of use, and the frequency with which devices were used for different activities.

Figure 4.8 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by whether they had access to digital devices during reading instruction. Almost three-fifths of pupils had digital devices which were available to use during reading lessons, while their availability was not statistically significantly associated with reading achievement. One-fifth of pupils (21%), who had a digital device available to use during reading lessons, were provided with a digital device by their school. More than half of pupils who had digital devices available to use during reading lessons (59%) had devices that pupils could share, while almost all pupils who had digital devices available during reading lessons (88%) had devices that the class could use sometimes.

When asked about the frequency with which pupils used these digital devices when doing reading activities with the whole class, the most common responses were *at least once a week* (35% of pupils who had devices available) or *once or twice a month* (37% of pupils who had devices available). More than half of pupils (53%) who had devices available during reading lessons used these devices to look up facts and definitions on at least a weekly basis, while over

one-third of pupils (36%) often used these devices to do a research project on a particular topic or problem. Lower proportions of pupils who had devices used them to read digital texts (27%), write stories or other texts (22%), and create a presentation or communication (17%) on at least a weekly basis.

Figure 4.8: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by availability of digital devices during reading instruction, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.8.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

It has previously been reported that, in 2016, the proportion of pupils who had access to digital devices during reading lessons (39%) decreased statistically significantly from 2011 (56%) (e.g., Delaney et al., 2022). This trend has reversed in 2021, but the proportion with access to devices (59%) still remains similar to the proportions reported 10 years ago (in 2011).

Post-reading activities

Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency (*every day or almost every day, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, or never or almost never*) with which they asked pupils to complete different activities after they had read something. Post-reading activities provide teachers with the opportunity to assess the learning and understanding of pupils and to allow pupils to further synthesise their learning (Department of Education and Skills, 2011b). Table 4.6 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers assigned post-reading activities in 2021. Answering oral questions or orally summarising what they had read was the activity most likely to be completed *every day or almost every day* (78%). Approximately two-fifths of pupils were taught by teachers who reported that they asked pupils daily or near-daily to write something about or in response to what they had read (40%) and talk with each other about what they had read (40%). A small proportion of pupils had teachers who reported assigning a written quiz or test about what they had read on a daily or near-daily basis (4%). Creating a multi-modal response was the activity used least frequently. Almost half of pupils were taught by teachers who reported *never or almost never* assigning this activity.

Table 4.6: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers assigned certain post-reading activities (2021)

	Every day or almost every day		Once or twice a week		Once or twice a month		Never or almost never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Write something about or in response to what they have read	40	577	50	574	10	588	0	~
Answer oral questions about or orally summarise what they have read	78	576	20	581	2	~	0	~
Talk with each other about what they have read	40	578	45	574	12	579	3	596
Take a written quiz or test about what they have read	4	577	33	576	44	576	19	579
Create a multi-modal response (e.g., image, audio, text, video, performance)	0	~	13	578	39	579	48	574

Source: Appendix Table A4.9.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Figure 4.9 presents the percentages of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers assigned post-reading activities, as reported in the last three cycles of PIRLS (2011, 2016, and 2021). Proportions of pupils being asked to *answer oral questions or orally summarise what they have read* remained generally stable across the PIRLS cycles. There has been a steady increase across cycles in the proportion of pupils whose teacher assigned post-reading activities of talking with each other about what they have read (25% in 2011, 34% in 2016, and 40% in 2021) and writing something about or in response to what they have read (27% in 2011, 32% in 2016, and 40% in 2021) on a daily or near-daily basis.

Figure 4.9: Percentages of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which their teachers assigned certain post-reading activities (2011, 2016, 2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.9.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

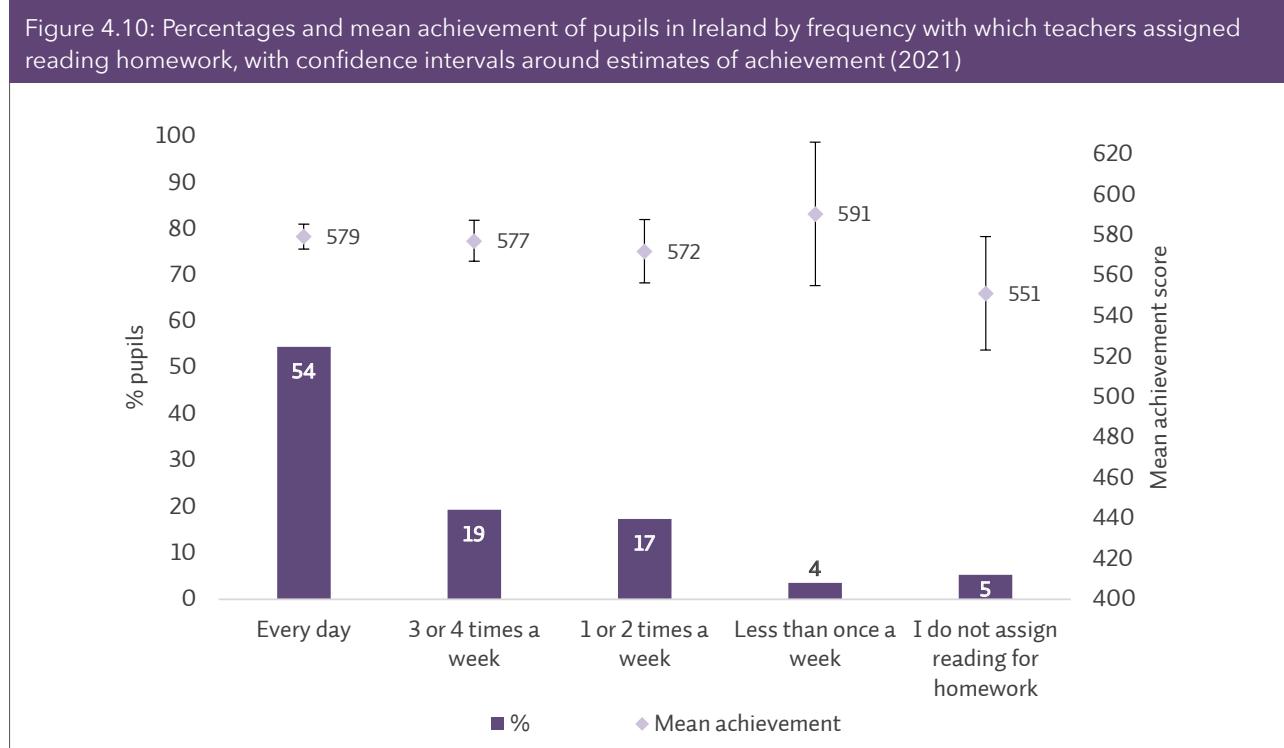
Reading homework

Teachers were asked three questions relating to reading homework. Firstly, they were asked to indicate how often they assigned reading as part of homework, choosing from the following options: *I do not assign reading homework, less than once a week, 1 or 2 times a week, 3 or 4 times a week, or every day*. Secondly, they were asked to indicate the time they expected their pupils to spend on homework involving reading (*15 minutes or less, 16-30 minutes, 31-60 minutes, or more than 60 minutes*). Finally, teachers were asked to indicate how often they completed certain activities with the reading homework assigned to the class. These included correcting assignments and giving feedback to pupils, discussing the homework in class, and monitoring whether or not the homework was completed.

Figure 4.10 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers assigned reading homework in 2021. More than half of pupils (54%) had teachers who assigned reading homework *every day*. Almost one-fifth of pupils, respectively, had teachers who assigned reading homework *3 or 4 times a week* (19%) and *1 or 2 times a week* (17%). Only 5% of pupils had teachers who did not assign reading for homework. The mean PIRLS achievement scores of pupils in other categories were not statistically significantly different from that of pupils in the *every day* category, which was used as a reference.

The proportion of pupils whose teachers assigned reading homework *every day* has decreased from 2016 (69%), which more than reverses the trend seen between 2011 (60%) and 2016. Alongside the decrease in the percentage of pupils receiving homework daily, there was an increase in the proportion of pupils whose teachers did not assign reading for homework (1% in 2016 to 5% in 2021) and those who assigned it less than once a week (2% in 2016 to 4% in 2021).

Figure 4.10: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by frequency with which teachers assigned reading homework, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)

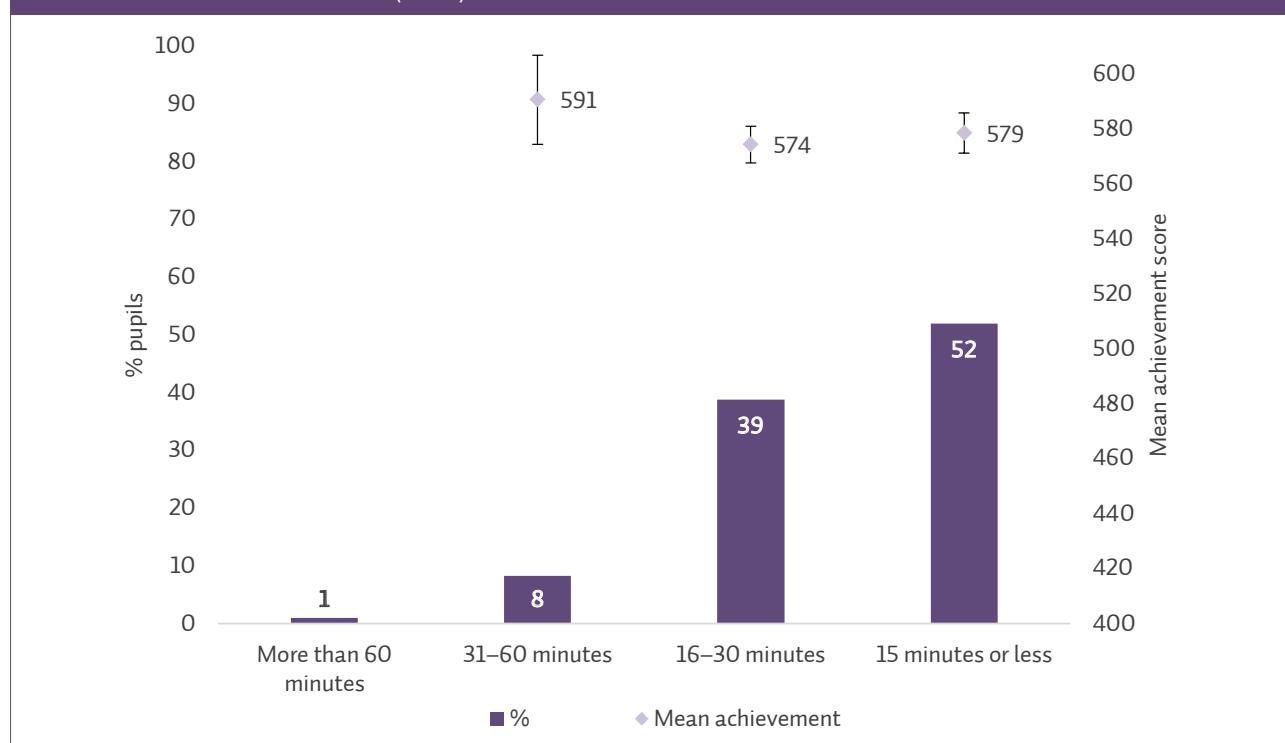


Source: Appendix Table A4.10.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Among those pupils that at least sometimes received reading homework, more than half (52%) were expected by teachers to spend *15 minutes or less* on this homework each time it was assigned, while most of the remainder (39%) were expected to spend *16-30 minutes* on it (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11: Percentages and mean achievement of those pupils in Ireland who at least sometimes received reading homework by the time they were expected to spend on reading homework, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.10.

Notes. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix. The percentages in this figure are proportions of those pupils who at least sometimes received reading homework (95% of pupils, as seen in Figure 4.10). Mean achievement is not reported for the *more than 60 minutes* category due to insufficient data.

Based on teachers' reports (Table 4.7), among those pupils who received reading homework, its completion was *always or almost always* monitored for the majority (91%). Teachers of high proportions of pupils who received reading homework also reported *always or almost always* discussing homework in class (75%) and correcting assignments and giving feedback to pupils (72%).

Table 4.7: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the frequency with which teachers completed certain activities related to reading homework (2021)

	Always or almost always		Sometimes		Never or almost never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Correct assignments and give feedback to pupils	72	579	23	577	5	579
Discuss the homework in class	75	576	22	584	3	588
Monitor whether or not the homework was completed	91	579	7	559	2	~

Source: Appendix Table A4.10.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Assessment strategies in reading

PIRLS 2021 redeveloped a question in the teacher questionnaire relating to assessment strategies in reading. Teachers were asked to indicate the importance they place (*a lot, some, or none*) on the following assessment strategies in reading: *observing pupils as they work, asking pupils to answer questions during class, short, regular written assessments, longer tests, or long-term projects*.

Table 4.8 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the importance their teachers placed on various assessment strategies in reading. Very high proportions of pupils had teachers who placed *a lot* of importance on observing pupils as they work (89%) and asking pupils to answer questions during class (89%), while a majority (62%) had teachers who placed *a lot* of importance on short, regular written assessments. Teachers of smaller proportions of pupils reported placing *a lot* of importance on longer tests (such as standardised tests) and long-term projects. The mean achievement scores of pupils did not differ greatly based on the importance placed by their teachers on the various assessment strategies.

Table 4.8: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the importance teachers placed on various assessment strategies in reading (2021)

	A lot		Some		None	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Observing pupils as they work	89	578	11	567	0	~
Asking pupils to answer questions during class	89	576	11	575	0	~
Short, regular written assessments (paper or digital)	62	578	36	574	2	~
Longer tests (e.g., standardised tests or unit tests)	19	582	74	575	7	575
Long-term projects (e.g., reading logs)	24	577	65	577	11	573

Source: Appendix Table A4.11.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Challenges in reading instruction

Teachers can be faced with challenges in reading instruction which can impact the quality of teaching and learning experienced by pupils. This section draws on reports of such challenges from both the principals of selected schools and participating pupils. Specifically, it examines the frequency of disorderly behaviour during reading lessons and the extent to which instruction was affected by a shortage in reading resources.

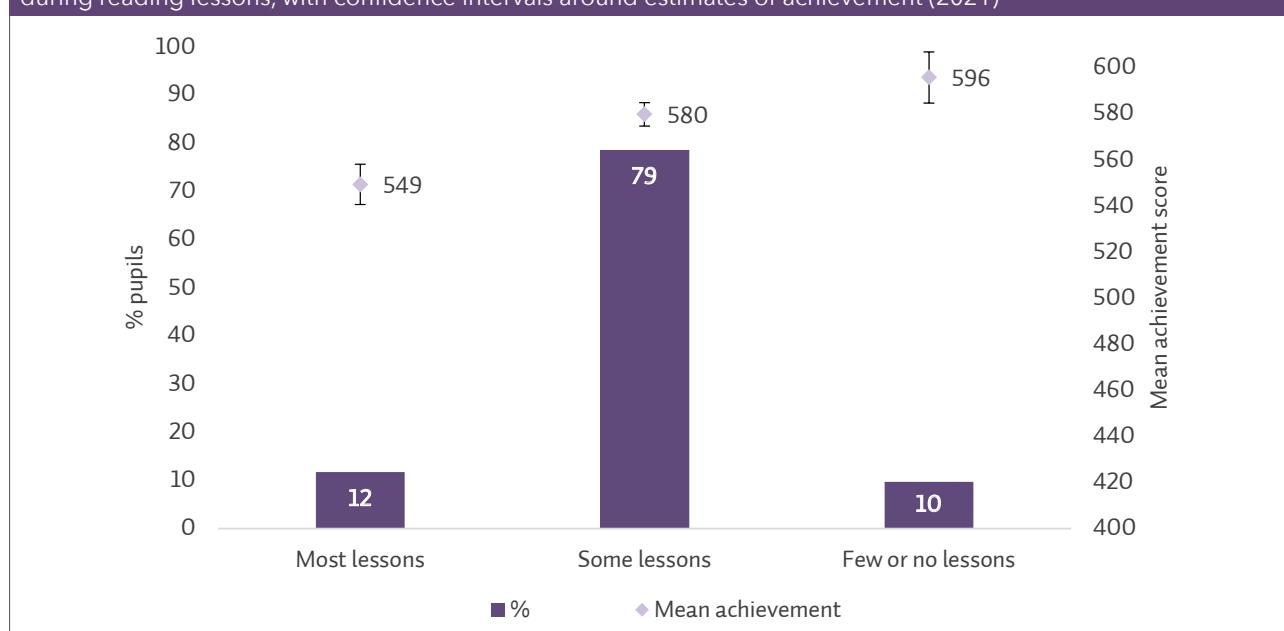
Disorderly behaviour during reading lessons

The frequency of disorderly behaviour during reading lessons, as reported by pupils, was captured through responses to five items in the pupil questionnaire: *Pupils don't listen to what the teacher says; There is too much noise for pupils to work well; My teacher has to wait a long time for pupils to be quiet; Pupils interrupt the teacher; My teacher has to keep telling us to follow the classroom rules*. Pupils were asked to indicate how frequently each of these occurred (every or almost every lesson, about half the lessons, some lessons, or never). Responses were used to create the PIRLS *Disorderly Behaviour During Reading Lessons* scale, within which the overall frequency of disorderly behaviour was categorised as *most lessons, some lessons, or few or no lessons*.

Figure 4.12 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland in each category

of the PIRLS *Disorderly Behaviour During Reading Lessons* scale. Almost four-fifths of pupils (79%) indicated that disorderly behaviour featured in *some lessons*, while 12% indicated that it featured in *most lessons*, and 10% indicated that it featured in *few or no lessons*. Pupils who indicated that *most lessons* included disorderly behaviour achieved a mean PIRLS score of 549, which was statistically significantly lower than that of pupils in the *some lessons* (580) and *few or no lessons* (596) categories.

Figure 4.12: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency of disorderly behaviour during reading lessons, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.12.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Table 4.9 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by component items of the PIRLS *Disorderly Behaviour During Reading Lessons* scale. With the exception of the statement *my teacher has to keep telling us to follow the classroom rules*, the proportions across each of the statements are broadly similar with between approximately one-fifth and one-quarter reporting that the issues referenced occurred in *every or almost every lesson* or in *about half the lessons*, and between approximately two-fifths and half reporting that they occurred in *some lessons*. Pupils were less likely to report frequent occurrence for the statement *my teacher has to keep telling us to follow the classroom rules*, with just under one-third of pupils (31%) selecting *never*.

Table 4.9: Percentages and mean reading achievement of pupils in Ireland, by component items of the *Disorderly Behaviour During Reading Lessons* scale (2021)

	Every or almost every lesson		About half the lessons		Some lessons		Never	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Pupils don't listen to what the teacher says	19	563	23	573	49	587	9	570
There is too much noise for pupils to work well	19	547	25	577	42	590	15	583
My teacher has to wait a long time for pupils to be quiet	24	556	19	579	42	586	16	588
Pupils interrupt the teacher	24	560	19	568	40	587	18	592
My teacher has to keep telling us to follow the classroom rules	18	545	14	571	37	589	31	585

Source: Appendix Table A4.13.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

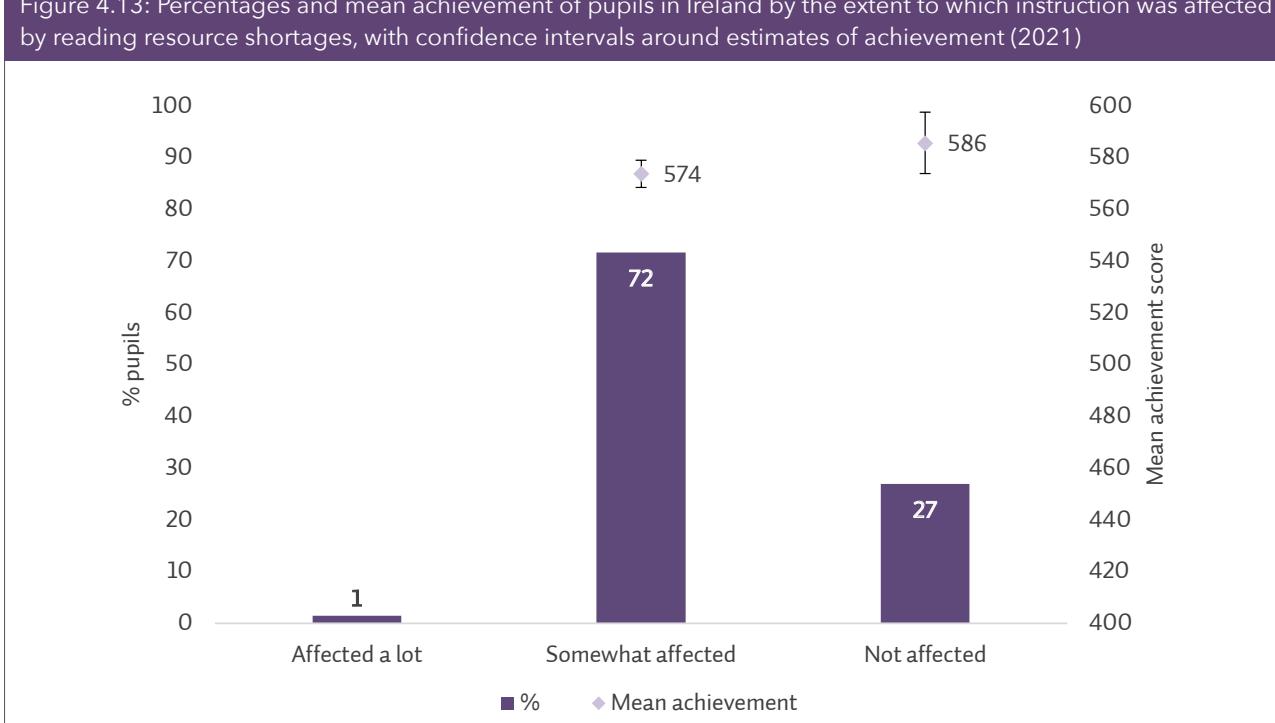
Instruction affected by reading resource shortages

The extent to which instruction was affected by shortages of reading resources was captured through the school questionnaire. School principals were asked to indicate how much (*a lot, some, a little, or not at all*) their school's capacity to provide instruction was affected by a shortage or inadequacy of resources in two areas: general school resources and resources for reading instruction. General school resources included *instructional materials, supplies, school buildings and grounds, heating/cooling and lighting systems, instructional space, technologically competent staff, technology and media resources to support teaching, technology and media resources to support pupil learning and expression, resources for pupils with learning disabilities, and internet connection*. Resources for reading instruction included *teachers with a specialisation in reading, computer software/applications for reading instruction, library resources, and instructional materials for reading*. School principals' responses (about the shortage or inadequacy of both general and reading-specific resources) were used to create the PIRLS *Instruction Affected by Reading Resource Shortages* scale, on the basis of which pupils were grouped into three categories: *affected a lot, somewhat affected, or not affected*.

Figure 4.13 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland in each category of the PIRLS *Instruction Affected by Reading Resource Shortages* scale. Based on school principals' reports, the majority of pupils (72%) were in schools where they were *somewhat affected*, while one-quarter (27%) were in schools where they were *not affected*. A very small proportion of pupils (1%) were in schools which were *affected a lot*. The mean PIRLS score of the pupils in the *somewhat affected* category (574) did not differ statistically significantly from the mean PIRLS score of those in the *not affected* category (586).

Looking at the individual component items which contribute to the scale, the proportion of pupils whose school principals reported that their schools were affected *a lot* by a shortage of each resource type in 2021 was 10% or lower, with the exception of internet connection (13%) and school buildings and grounds (12%) (see Appendix Table A4.15).

Figure 4.13: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the extent to which instruction was affected by reading resource shortages, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.14.

Notes. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix. Mean achievement is not reported for the *affected a lot* category due to insufficient data.

Both PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2016 included a PIRLS *Instruction Affected by Reading Resource Shortages* scale; however, some of the individual items have changed across the cycles. Despite this, the scale has been created such that comparisons are possible across 2011, 2016, and 2021 (additional information about the scale components across cycles can be found in Appendix Table A4.15). The proportion of pupils in each of the categories has generally been similar between 2011 and 2021 (Table 4.10). There was a small increase in the *not affected* category between 2011 and 2016, but this has decreased in 2021, in line with the proportions reported in 2011. Similar to 2021, the difference between the mean PIRLS scores of pupils in the *somewhat affected* and *not affected* categories was not statistically significant in 2011 or 2016.

Table 4.10: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by the extent to which instruction was affected by reading resource shortages (2011, 2016, 2021)

	Affected a lot		Somewhat affected		Not affected	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
2011	1	~	71	550	27	557
2016	0	~	66	565	34	570
2021	1	~	71	550	27	557

Source: Appendix Table A4.14.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

~ Mean achievement is not reported due to insufficient data.

Teacher characteristics

Some questions in the teacher questionnaire related to teacher characteristics and attitudes. This section explores teacher job satisfaction, participation in professional development relating to reading, and frequency with which teachers read for enjoyment.

Job satisfaction

Teacher job satisfaction was captured through six items in the teacher questionnaire: *I am content with my profession as a teacher; I find my work full of meaning and purpose; I am enthusiastic about my job; My work inspires me; I am proud of the work I do; I feel appreciated as a teacher* (a new addition for PIRLS 2021). Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency with which they felt that way about being a teacher for each of these six statements and their responses were used to create the PIRLS Teacher Job Satisfaction scale. The PIRLS 2021 national report included a breakdown of teachers' responses to each item (see pages 78-79 in Delaney et al., 2023). Here, the composite PIRLS Teacher Job Satisfaction scale is reported, which includes three categories: *very satisfied*, *somewhat satisfied*, and *less than satisfied*.

Figure 4.14 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the extent to which their teachers were satisfied with their job. Teachers of over half of pupils (53%) reported being *very satisfied* with their job, 37% being *somewhat satisfied*, and 10% being *less than satisfied*. The mean PIRLS score of pupils whose teachers were *very satisfied* did not statistically significantly differ from the scores of pupils in the other two categories: *somewhat satisfied* and *less than satisfied*.

Figure 4.14: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by teacher job satisfaction, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.16.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Both PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2016 included a *Teacher Job Satisfaction* scale, but the scale was created such that the PIRLS 2021 scale is not comparable with the 2011 scale. The proportion of pupils whose teachers were *very satisfied* has decreased from 60% in 2016 to 53% in 2021, with this difference accounted for by an increase in the *less than satisfied* category from 4% in 2016 to 10% in 2021. Looking at the individual components which are used to create this scale (see Appendix Table A4.17), decreases were observed in the proportion of pupils whose teachers felt *very often* that they were enthusiastic about their job (64% in 2016 and 56% in 2021), that their work inspired them (54% in 2016 and 46% in 2021), and that they are proud of the work they do (62% in 2016 and 56% in 2021). Most of the other items remained generally stable between 2016 and 2021, despite the specific challenges associated with teaching in a COVID-19 context.

Table 4.11: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by teacher job satisfaction (2016, 2021)

	Very satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Less than satisfied	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
2016	60	570	36	561	4	561
2021	53	582	37	571	10	569

Source: Appendix Table A4.16.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Participation in professional development in reading

As part of the teacher questionnaire, teachers were asked two questions about professional development (e.g., workshops, seminars, lesson studies) on various aspects of reading. These aspects included: *Teaching reading comprehension skills or strategies*; *Integrating literacies across the curriculum*; *Addressing pupils' language needs when teaching reading*; *Integrating technology into reading instruction*; *Instruction related to digital literacies*; *Addressing differentiation of instruction based on pupils' needs and interests*; *Assessing pupils' reading*. Firstly, teachers were asked to indicate whether they had completed formal professional development in these areas in the two years preceding PIRLS 2021. Secondly, they were asked how they would prioritise their need for future professional development in these areas.

Table 4.12 presents the percentages and mean reading achievement of pupils in Ireland by whether their teachers completed formal professional development on various aspects of reading. Based on teachers' reports, half of pupils had teachers who completed formal professional development relating to teaching reading comprehension skills or strategies. Over two-fifths of pupils had teachers who completed formal professional development relating to addressing differentiation of instruction based on pupils' needs and interests (45%), integrating literacies across the curriculum (43%), integrating technology into reading instruction (42%), and instruction relating to digital literacies (42%). Slightly lower proportions of pupils were taught by teachers who completed formal professional development relating to assessing pupils' reading (33%) and addressing pupils' language needs when teaching reading (28%). The mean scores of pupils whose teachers completed formal professional development in the area of integrating literacies across the curriculum and addressing pupils' language needs when teaching reading were statistically significantly higher than those of their peers whose teachers did not complete formal professional development in these areas in the two years preceding PIRLS 2021.

Table 4.12: Percentages and mean reading achievement of pupils in Ireland, by whether teachers completed formal professional development on various aspects of reading (2021)

	Yes		No	
	%	Mean	%	Mean
Teaching reading comprehension skills or strategies	50	574	50	579
Integrating literacies across the curriculum	43	570	57	582
Addressing pupils' language needs when teaching reading	28	568	72	579
Integrating technology into reading instruction	42	574	58	578
Instruction related to digital literacies	42	576	58	577
Addressing differentiation of instruction based on pupils' needs and interests	45	579	55	575
Assessing pupils' reading	33	575	67	578

Source: Appendix Table A4.18.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Table 4.13 presents the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by their teachers' level of need for future professional development on various aspects of reading. When asked to prioritise their need for future professional development on various aspects of reading, the teachers of most pupils reported their need as *high* or *medium*. Approximately two-fifths of pupils had teachers who prioritised their need as *high* for the areas of assessing pupils' reading (43%), addressing pupils' language needs when teaching reading (41%), and addressing differentiation of instruction based on pupils' needs and interests (40%). Between approximately one-quarter and one-third of pupils were taught by teachers who prioritised their need as *high* for each other area of professional development relating to reading.

Table 4.13: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland, by their teachers' level of need for future professional development on various aspects of reading (2021)

	High		Medium		Low	
	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean
Teaching reading comprehension skills or strategies	28	579	57	576	14	576
Integrating literacies across the curriculum	24	569	57	581	19	575
Addressing pupils' language needs when teaching reading	41	584	52	572	8	577
Integrating technology into reading instruction	35	572	48	580	18	579
Instruction related to digital literacies	33	574	50	577	16	578
Addressing differentiation of instruction based on pupils' needs and interests	40	579	48	576	12	569
Assessing pupils' reading	43	582	48	571	9	580

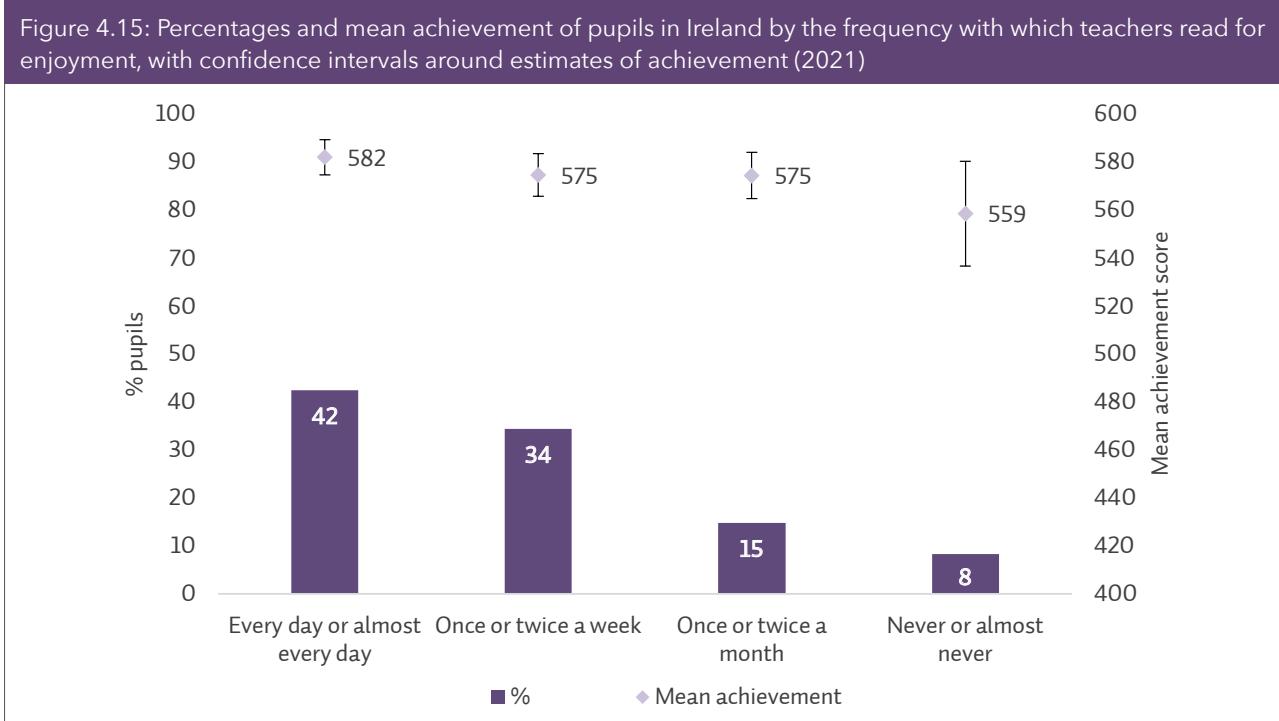
Source: Appendix Table A4.19.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Read for enjoyment

The teacher questionnaire asked teachers to indicate how often they read for enjoyment. Teachers were presented with four response options: *every day or almost every day*, *once or twice a week*, *once or twice a month*, or *never or almost never*. Figure 4.15 shows the percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which their teachers read for enjoyment. Teachers of over two-fifths of pupils (42%) read for enjoyment on a daily or near-daily basis, while over one-third read for enjoyment *once or twice a week*. A small proportion, less than one-tenth (8%) of pupils, had teachers who *never or almost never* read for enjoyment. None of the mean PIRLS scores were statistically significantly different from that of pupils in the *every day or almost every day* category, which was used as a reference.

Figure 4.15: Percentages and mean achievement of pupils in Ireland by the frequency with which teachers read for enjoyment, with confidence intervals around estimates of achievement (2021)



Source: Appendix Table A4.20.

Note. Due to rounding, some differences may appear inconsistent with those reported in text or the Appendix.

Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the relationships of selected class and teacher characteristics with the overall reading achievement of pupils in Ireland in PIRLS 2021. Ireland's data from PIRLS 2011 and 2016 were also compared to those from 2021, where appropriate. As noted in Chapter 1, PIRLS 2021 data must be interpreted in the context of important caveats, which are particularly relevant for countries that tested at Start G5 (including Ireland).

Teachers reported that more than half of pupils received between five and seven hours of English language instruction per week. The mean PIRLS scores of these pupils were not statistically significantly different from those of pupils in the highest category of *9hrs or more*, which was used as a reference. The proportions reported in PIRLS 2016 were broadly similar except for the *9hrs or more* category, in which a decrease of five percentage points was observed.

Teaching reading as a whole-class activity was the most frequently used approach and this has consistently been the most frequently used approach across PIRLS cycles. All other approaches, including same-ability grouping, mixed-ability grouping, individualised instruction for reading, and pupils working independently on an assigned plan or goal, were used less frequently. The frequency of use of mixed-ability grouping and individualised instruction for reading has increased steadily over time (between 2011 and 2021).

The most common activities used during reading lessons on a daily or almost daily basis were reading aloud to pupils, asking pupils to read aloud, and asking pupils to read silently on their own, and this has been consistent across the three PIRLS cycles. Teaching digital literacy skills, which was a new addition in the PIRLS 2021 questionnaire, was completed much less frequently. The proportion of pupils whose teachers taught skimming or scanning strategies more frequently increased across cycles.

Most pupils in Ireland had teachers who reported encouraging pupil discussions of texts

frequently. The trend between 2016 and 2021 was consistent for the frequency with which teachers used the strategies of providing materials that are appropriate for the reading levels of individual pupils, encouraging pupil discussions of texts, and encouraging pupils to challenge the opinion expressed in the text.

The majority of pupils had teachers who used the following tasks to help develop comprehension skills on a daily or almost daily basis: *locate information within the text; identify the main ideas of what they have read; explain or support their understanding with text-based evidence, and make predictions about what will happen next in the text they are reading*. Activities relating to digital comprehension skills, such as determining whether a website is useful for a specific purpose and evaluating the credibility of a website, were used much less frequently.

Consistently over the past three cycles of PIRLS, teachers were somewhat more likely to use literary reading materials than informational reading materials. Among the literary reading materials, short stories were the most commonly used text type, while among the informational reading materials, non-fiction subject area books or textbooks were the most common. Poems/poetry, a new addition in the PIRLS 2021 questionnaire, was used by almost all pupils on at least a monthly basis.

Based on reports from teachers, the majority of pupils had a library or reading corner available in their classrooms, but the proportion has decreased statistically significantly from the previous cycles of PIRLS. PIRLS reading achievement did not differ statistically significantly depending on whether pupils had a library or reading corner available in their classrooms. Of those pupils who had a library or reading corner in their classrooms, the majority were reported to use it during class time on a daily or almost daily basis.

Almost three-fifths of pupils in Ireland had, at least sometimes, digital devices available during reading lessons. This proportion decreased statistically significantly between 2011 and 2016, with the 2021 proportion similar to that reported in 2011. The mean achievement did not differ statistically significantly depending on whether or not pupils had digital devices available during reading lessons.

The post-reading activity of answering oral questions about or orally summarising what has been read was the most frequently used activity on a daily or near-daily basis. Almost all pupils were taught by teachers who asked them to *write something about or in response to what they have read* and to *talk with each other about what they have read* on at least a weekly basis. Taking a written quiz or test and creating a multi-modal response were used less often.

The majority of pupils (54%) received reading homework *every day*, while a very small proportion of pupils (5%) did not receive reading for homework. The mean PIRLS score for the pupils who received reading homework *every day* did not differ statistically significantly from those of the other categories. The proportion of pupils receiving reading homework *every day* decreased in 2021 from 2011 (60%) and 2016 (69%). Most pupils were expected to spend *15 minutes or less* on their reading homework, and teachers of almost all pupils who received homework reported to *always or almost always* monitor its completion.

Very high proportions of pupils were taught by teachers who placed a lot of importance on *observing pupils as they work* and *asking pupils to answer questions during class*. Smaller proportions of pupils were taught by teachers who reported placing a lot of importance on *longer tests*, including standardised tests or unit tests, and *long-term projects*.

Almost four-fifths of pupils reported disorderly behaviour during *some* reading lessons, and more than one-tenth reported it during *most* reading lessons. Pupils who indicated that disorderly behaviour occurred in *most lessons* had a mean PIRLS score which was statistically significantly lower than those of the other categories (*some lessons* and *few or no lessons*).

School principals were asked about the extent to which instruction was affected by reading resource shortages. The majority of pupils attended schools which school principals considered as *somewhat affected*. Almost no pupils were in schools which were *affected a lot*. The proportions in each category remained generally stable between 2011 and 2021.

More than half of pupils were taught by teachers who were *very satisfied* with their job, but this proportion decreased from three-fifths in 2016. Teachers of one-tenth of pupils reported being *less than satisfied* which has increased from 4% in 2016. The mean PIRLS score of pupils whose teachers were *very satisfied* did not statistically significantly differ from those who were *somewhat satisfied* or *less than satisfied*.

Between one-third and one-fifth of pupils had teachers who completed professional development on various aspects of reading in the two years preceding PIRLS 2021, with the highest proportion reported for professional development on *teaching reading comprehension skills or strategies*. Teachers were also asked to prioritise their need for professional development on the same aspects of reading, and the teachers of most pupils reported their need as *high* or *medium*.

Teachers of over two-fifths of pupils read for enjoyment on a daily or near-daily basis, while teachers of less than one-tenth reported *never* or *almost never* reading for enjoyment. The mean PIRLS score of pupils whose teacher read for enjoyment *every day* did not statistically significantly differ from those of the other categories.