

Oak National Academy

EVALUATION REPORT (2024-2025)
NOVEMBER 2025



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1. Executive Summary

Oak National Academy was founded in April 2020 to support schools with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, Oak became an arm's-length body of the Department for Education and shifted focus to supporting high-quality in-class teaching. Since then, Oak has been working to develop teacher-made, quality-assured, openly licensed curriculum and lesson resources, designed to reduce workload and improve curriculum expertise across the sector. The release of these new resources began in the 2023-24 academic year. As of July 2025, 10,941 lessons, nearly 80% of all planned lessons, were freely available to teachers via Oak's website.

Since 2020, Oak has commissioned an independent evaluation from ImpactEd each year. As with previous years, this evaluation examined the impact of Oak in the most recent year, specifically the 2024/25 academic year. The aim of the evaluation was to investigate the impact of the use of Oak's resources in a changing educational environment on outcomes for teachers, the sector, and pupils.

The findings summarised in this report are based on a mixed methods approach, including:

1. A quantitative survey with 1,032 participants (including Oak and non-Oak users) to investigate the potential impact of Oak National Academy on teachers' workload, teachers' wellbeing and pupils' academic performance, as well as asking Oak users about their usage of Oak, their feedback on the resources and impact in other areas like curriculum planning.
2. Qualitative research with teachers consisting of 24 interviews and three school case studies to explore experiences of Oak, how the resources are utilised, their views on the quality and added value of the materials, and the impact it has had on themselves, their pupils, and the wider school community. Case studies also included pupil interviews to gain insight into their experience with Oak's curriculum and resources.
3. Oak's anonymised analytics data related to engagement (e.g. lessons taken, lessons downloaded).

1.1 Key findings

1.1.1 Implementation and usage

Teacher and pupil usage

Oak's resources continued to see strong uptake among teachers and pupils, with steady year-on-year growth. Use continues to shift from remote-education for pupils to the main focus now being teachers using the resources to support in-class planning and delivery.

- 196,143 teachers accessed and used Oak's resources between January and July 2025, a 135% increase on the previous year (83,420). Last year, usage was measured using the definition of Total Teacher Users (TTU), while this year it is measured by the definition of

Direct Teacher Users (DTU). As a result, last year's user count of 192,760 (TTU) cannot be directly compared to this year's user count of 196,143 (DTU)¹.

- ◆ Lesson and curriculum resources were downloaded 1.63 million times across the 2024/25 academic year. This is a 128% increase on the previous year.
- ◆ Pupils took part in over 4.2 million lessons through Oak National Academy.
- ◆ On a typical week, Oak's website was used by 54,100 teachers (a 53% increase from last year) and 32,400 pupils.

School reach

Oak remained widely used across phases and school types across England, with particularly strong engagement in disadvantaged areas.

- ◆ Staff in 17,663 schools (72% of all schools in England) accessed Oak resources.
- ◆ In the most disadvantaged areas, there were 36% more downloads per school compared to the least deprived areas.
- ◆ The most popular subjects were Science (30%), Maths (28%) and English (17%) of lesson resource downloads.

New content & AI

In the 2024/25 academic year, Oak continued to expand its content offerings while also introducing AI-powered support for teachers.

- ◆ Over 3,879 new lessons across 10 subjects were released.
- ◆ Oak's new resources have been made available on the Open Government Licence (OGL), meaning that any school, publisher or organisation can draw on Oak's underlying materials to build and train edtech products.
- ◆ Oak launched Aila, an AI-powered lesson assistant.

¹ These definitions differ, as TTU encompasses a broader range of users compared to DTU. DTU measures all UK teacher users who have directly accessed and meaningfully engaged with Oak's teacher products in the last 6 months, performing one of the following actions in the last 6 months:

- Downloading a lesson resource from Oak's teacher product
- Downloading a unit of lesson resources from Oak's Teacher product
- Downloading a curriculum resource from the curriculum product
- Interacting at least 10 times with the Curriculum Visualiser product
- Starting to plan a lesson with Aila (at least to the point of setting lesson objectives)

TTU also includes teachers who use Oak's content indirectly - i.e. use Oak resources but don't visit Oak's website themselves. This is estimated by multiplying the number of Direct Users by the percentage of Oak users who report sharing Oak's resources with at least one other teacher (as gathered via Oak user surveys). This year, we made changes to how both metrics are calculated by improving our data tracking, better enabling us to identify the same user across multiple devices and to geolocate users more accurately. We also remeasured our sharing factor, resulting in a more moderate multiplication figure.

- ◆ By October 2025, 42,160 teacher users had used Aila to create and download 191,765 lesson resources.

Survey findings show Oak's user base was a mix of those who started during the pandemic (40%) and newer users starting this 2024/25 academic year (37%). A smaller percentage of users started after the pandemic but before the 2024/25 academic year (23%). This increase in new users coincides with the release of Oak's new curriculum and lesson resources throughout the 2024/25 academic year.

Oak was primarily used for lesson planning and classroom delivery, particularly for new users, reflecting Oak's increasing focus on supporting classroom teaching and providing a remote learning platform.

1.1.2 Impact on teachers

Overall, Oak users reported more positive experiences in their role than non-users. Oak users typically worked fewer hours, felt they had an acceptable workload, and reported better mental wellbeing; however, these trends varied considerably by role and the reason for using Oak.

Workload

- ◆ **Oak had a positive impact on workload for 85% of users, up from 73% last year. Most users (67%) said Oak had reduced their workload, saving them a median of 4 hours per week.** In open-ended responses, teachers explained that Oak reduced time spent on lesson planning and resource creation, enabling more effective lesson delivery and creative curriculum design. The saved time was redirected to administrative tasks, marking, pastoral care, and professional development. Teachers highlighted that Oak's structured slide decks, quizzes, and worksheets saved significant planning time, especially when no existing scheme of work was available or when teaching outside their subject specialism. A further 18% of users said that while Oak had not reduced their overall workload, it had changed how they used their time, allowing greater focus on activities that directly benefited pupils. Teachers reported redirecting the time saved from planning to higher-value tasks, such as providing feedback, supporting pupils, and enhancing lesson quality.
- ◆ **More frequent Oak users reported a greater likelihood of reduced workload,** higher time savings and a more positive perception of workload, suggesting a clear relationship between the frequency of Oak use and the benefits on workload.
- ◆ Despite this time saving attributed to Oak, Oak users spent more time on planning and preparation than non-users (13.6 hours vs. 9.6 hours). There are two plausible explanations for this pattern, supported by the qualitative interviews and survey data:
 1. **Teachers who choose to use Oak are more likely to perceive workload as a significant problem in their schools.** These teachers, often facing heavier workloads, may adopt Oak in search of additional support. This group may include Early-Career Teachers or non-specialists with less experience in lesson planning

and fewer resources to draw on. Consequently, they tend to invest more time in lesson planning, even with the assistance provided by Oak's resources.

2. **Qualitative evidence indicates that Oak offers a reliable baseline that teachers can adapt to meet their pupils' needs, a practice that Oak encourages and which is appreciated as part of personalising lessons.** While additional planning time—such as trimming slide decks, reformatting for school templates, or adjusting for pupils with special educational needs (SEND) and higher-attaining pupils—can enhance lesson quality, it can also offset some of the time saved by reducing the need to create resources from scratch.

- ◆ **Workload perceptions were mixed and somewhat contradictory.** Oak users were less likely to complete their assigned workload, yet they were just as likely as non-users to view their workload as a serious problem and were slightly more likely to consider it acceptable. As discussed above, one possible explanation is that teachers with heavier workloads may be more inclined to adopt Oak in search of additional support. This apparent contradiction may also reflect a gap between teachers' perceptions of their workload and their actual workload. Further research is needed to clarify how Oak usage influences this relationship and the mechanisms through which it may do so.

Wellbeing & retention

- ◆ **Oak users reported better wellbeing than non-users, with an average wellbeing score of 45.5 compared to 42.2.** This figure was also higher than the national benchmark of 43.9, as reported in the Teacher Wellbeing Index (2024). The most consistent thread was the link between workload and wellbeing. Interviews highlighted that Oak's ready-made resources eased planning pressures, reducing stress and improving work-life balance, while structured materials boosted teachers' confidence and sense of preparedness.
- ◆ **Oak users were far less likely than non-users to report that they anticipated leaving the education sector in two years (8% compared to 23%),** indicating higher retention could be linked to Oak usage.
- ◆ Contribution analysis confirmed the findings from the surveys. **According to qualitative data, teachers experienced reduced workload and improved professional confidence through ready-made lessons, modelled pedagogy, and embedded Assessment for Learning (AfL) routines.** The strongest gains were observed among Early Career Teachers (ECTs) and non-specialist teachers or those without robust pre-existing resources. While structural and cultural barriers, such as unequal access to resources, staff attitudes and perceptions, and COVID-era associations of Oak as an emergency tool sometimes limited its impact, Oak resources contributed most by freeing teacher capacity and providing a reliable baseline on which educators could build their practice.

1.1.3 Impact on the sector

Oak curriculum and teaching resources were widely used and received positive feedback from many users.

- ◆ **Over half of users (61%) reported that Oak had influenced their school's curriculum in some way.** The most common use was swapping or adding lessons (39%), followed by re-sequencing the curriculum (13%). A smaller but notable proportion (9%) reported using Oak as their main curriculum.
- ◆ **Nearly two-thirds of users agreed that Oak had improved the quality of their lesson planning and delivery (63%), with more than half reporting increased confidence in curriculum design (53%).** A smaller proportion (36%) said Oak had improved their school's overall curriculum. These positive impacts were reported more strongly by frequent users, highlighting the importance of sustained engagement with Oak's resources.
- ◆ **Quality ratings for Oak's resources were consistently high, with four in five users rating curriculum sequencing (81%) and teacher resources such as slides, quizzes, and worksheets (80%) as high quality,** compared to 60% and 63% in the 2023/24 academic year, respectively. This shows a recognition of the improved quality of Oak's new resources. **Newer users rated the quality slightly higher than longer-term users,** likely reflecting recent resource developments and the introduction of Aila.
- ◆ A majority of users (78%) reported **applying ideas from Oak lessons** to their own teaching, most often using visuals, diagrams, and structured tasks.
- ◆ **The most common reasons for not using Oak were that the respondents already had sufficient existing resources (24%), followed by 19% who said Oak's curriculum did not align with their own.** 17% reported either a preference for creating their own resources or limited knowledge of Oak. 15% felt Oak resources were for emergency use only (down from 26% last year), reflecting both shifting perceptions and the ongoing view that Oak is better suited to its original purpose. Few respondents cited low-quality resources (9%) or school restrictions (3%) as reasons for not using Oak. Suggestions for improvement included stronger alignment with specific curricula and clearer progression steps. Others reported the need for a wider range of resources for SEND and creative arts subjects; however, this was before the release of new content in these areas, which is now published (as of October 2025).
- ◆ According to the contribution analysis of qualitative data, **Oak supported schools to build curriculum coherence and resilience.** It helped schools navigate structural challenges such as specialist shortages, budget pressures, and fragmented systems. Adoption was facilitated by the direction of leadership, peer advocacy, and the alignment of ongoing CPD activities, creating an environment in which schools could strengthen continuity and quality across the curriculum.

1.1.4 Impact on pupils

The evaluation found no significant difference between Oak's users and non-users in their perceptions of the proportions of pupils exceeding expectations and falling behind expectations.

- ◆ **Both groups estimated that 28% of their pupils were exceeding expectations. Users reported that, on average, 37% of their pupils were below expectations, compared with 34% among non-users, a difference that was not statistically significant.** This suggests that, while Oak has had clear positive effects on teacher outcomes such as workload, wellbeing, and curriculum practice, these findings do not show any observable improvement in pupil outcomes as reported by teachers. However, it is not possible to determine whether this is related to Oak, as a range of factors beyond Oak use influence pupil outcomes.
- ◆ **Contribution analysis showed that Oak resources supported improved engagement, knowledge and access among pupils, particularly for those with SEND, through targeted scaffolding.** However, the impact of Oak's resources varied, with some respondents reporting that high-attaining pupils often required additional challenge, and young learners sometimes struggled with longer or more dense lessons. Contextual factors, such as device access and lesson adaptation, affected the consistency of pupils' experiences.

2. Introduction

2.1 Context on Oak resources

Oak National Academy was established in 2020 as an emergency response to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing teachers with support to facilitate remote learning. While Oak initially served as a vital tool for delivering education to pupils unable to attend school, its role has since expanded. Today, Oak is primarily embedded within in-person teaching, supporting curriculum planning, lesson preparation, and classroom delivery across a wide range of subjects. It also continues to be used in contexts such as cover lessons and remote learning.

Since 2022, Oak has worked with organisations across the sector, drawing on expertise in curriculum development to create full curriculum sequences and associated lesson resources for all national curriculum subjects spanning Key Stages 1-4. Oak's curriculum sequences and lesson resources are optional and adaptable, and provide expert models for schools to learn from, allowing teachers to draw inspiration from one example of what a high-quality curriculum looks like. Its resources give teachers a starting point for their own curriculum development and lesson planning, so they don't have to create resources from scratch.

The release of these new resources began in the 2023-24 academic year. As of July 2025, 10,941 lessons, nearly 80% of all planned lessons, were freely available to teachers via Oak's website. This school year, Oak has released nearly 4,000 of their new lessons in 10 subjects (Music, Geography, PE, Art, DT, Cooking and Nutrition, RE, MFL, Computing, Citizenship & RSHE). Oak's resources and curriculum plans include slide decks, worksheets, quizzes, and video lessons, which teachers can download and edit to suit their needs and those of their pupils. Oak's new resources have been made available on the Open Government Licence (OGL), meaning that any school, publisher or organisation can draw on Oak's underlying materials to build and train edtech products.

Oak also launched Aila in the 2024/25 academic year, an AI-powered lesson assistant that, through a step-by-step process, supports teachers in building a tailor-made lesson plan and accompanying resources. To date (October 2025), 191,765 lesson resources have been downloaded, having been developed with Aila, and 42,610 Oak users have co-created lessons with Aila.

Following previous years' evaluation, Oak has continued to partner with ImpactEd to evaluate the impact of their organisation's resources, in a changing educational environment, on improving outcomes for teachers, schools and pupils. This report focuses on the impact of Oak in the 2024/25 academic year. This evaluation covered a period in which Oak continued to release new resources across national curriculum subject areas. This process is set to conclude in Autumn 2025.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research question

This annual evaluation aims to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent has Oak National Academy achieved its desired impact for:
 - Teachers (workload and expertise)
 - Schools (curriculum quality and resilience)
 - Pupils (continuous access and attainment)
- How exactly has Oak National Academy contributed to these improvements?
- What, if any, were the most important success factors or barriers that enabled or prevented these outcomes being achieved?

These research questions focus on the extent to which Oak has achieved the outcomes outlined in its Theory of Change (see the following page). The Theory of Change articulates the problems the organisation aims to address, how it sets out to solve them (inputs and activities), and the changes that result from its activities in the short- and long-term (outputs, short-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes). Sitting above this model is the organisation's ultimate purpose and mission.

3.2 Evaluation design

3.2.1 Oak National Academy: Theory of Change

The 2024-25 report looks at the impact Oak has had on the following outcomes:

- **Teachers:** Teacher expertise in curriculum and lesson design increases, and teacher workload decreases, allowing them to focus on higher-value activities
- **Pupils:** Pupils have equitable access to more great lessons, improving outcomes and minimising disruption to learning
- **Curriculum:** Curriculum and lesson quality improve within a coherent system that respects teacher autonomy and increases system resilience among teachers

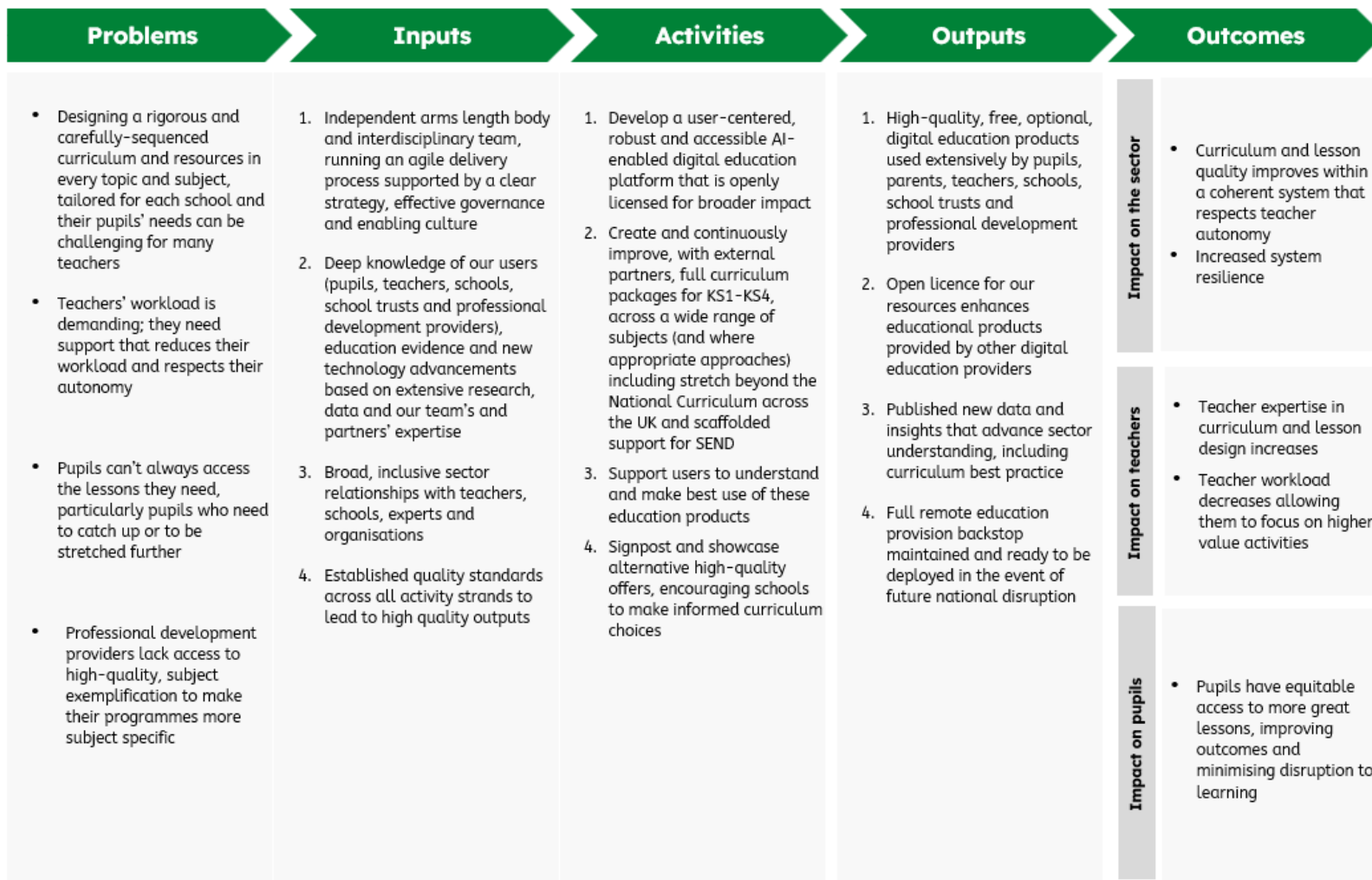


THEORY OF CHANGE

Last updated: April 2025

Purpose: Improving pupil outcomes and closing the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and enabling pupils to access, a high-quality curriculum

Mission: We work with schools, teachers and the wider education system to create and support the use of world-class digital education products built around our rigorous, high-quality curriculum



The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to address research questions related to both impact and process systems. Both surveys and qualitative research were undertaken from May until August 2025. Some outcome areas have been considered through both quantitative and qualitative methods, and are triangulated in this report, for example, the impact of Oak on teacher workload and curriculum design. To provide context for the findings, this report has also integrated Oak's data analytics, which provide an overview of Oak's implementation and usage over the academic year.

3.2.2 Survey design, sample, recruitment, administration and analysis

The survey was targeted at both Oak users and non-users to provide a clearer picture of the programme's impact on the key research questions. The survey was designed to include both validated measures and custom questions. The validated questions came from the Teacher Workload Survey (TWS) and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). Both surveys have been conducted with nationally representative samples of teachers, providing robust external benchmarks. The benchmarks used for the Teacher Workload Survey are from the Department for Education's 2025 report, 'Working lives of teachers and leaders - wave 3', and the WEMWBS teacher benchmark is from the Teacher Wellbeing Survey 2024. Additional questions were included to ask teachers about their use of Aila, Oak's AI-powered lesson assistant.

The survey was open from May to August 2025. To reach both Oak users and non-users, the survey was distributed in various ways, including using Oak's and ImpactEd's social media accounts and networks, through paid social media advertisements, and via a targeted survey provider, Sprint Education.

A total of 1,032 participants took part in the survey; 69% were current Oak users, while 31% were not. Over half of the respondents were teachers (53% of users, 46% of non-users), followed by middle leaders (33% of users, 44% of non-users). There was a smaller proportion of senior leaders (11% users, 10% non-users), support staff (1% users, 0% non-users) and those classified as 'other' (2% users, 0.3% non-users).

The largest group of respondents worked in secondary schools (45% of users, 38% of non-users), followed by primary schools (29% of users, 25% of non-users), and independent schools (11% of users, 24% of non-users). A small percentage of respondents worked in specialist schools (8% of users, 10% of non-users) and schools categorised as 'other' (7% of users, 3% of non-users).

Survey respondents were also asked about their school's governance model. For both users and non-users, the largest group was respondents who worked in schools that were part of a Multi-Academy Trust (43% of users, 42% of non-users), followed by those who worked in Local Authority-maintained schools (30% of users, 27% of non-users). A lower percentage of respondents worked in stand-alone academies (15% of users, 13% of non-users), and small proportions of respondents worked in schools with other governance models.

Science, Maths, and English were the subjects most frequently used by survey respondents (21%, 18%, and 15%, respectively). Latin, Drama, Physical Education, and other subjects, such as business, finance, and food technology, were the least used by survey respondents.

As this was not a randomised experiment and Oak and non-Oak users were not randomly assigned to groups, we had to ensure that both groups were properly matched and weighted within our sample to minimise bias in the results. Therefore, when analysing the difference in response between Oak users and non-Oak users, we created two comparable groups using a technique called Propensity Score Matching (PSM) to identify and match individual respondents across the two groups. This statistical matching technique helped reduce potential bias from confounding variables and treatment assignment bias. As teachers' responses to questions and workload are often influenced by role and school type, these were used as criteria to create matching user and non-user groups. Using this PSM approach allowed us to make the groups more comparable and minimise bias in the results.

PSM matching based on type of school and school role was performed on the Oak user sample (716) and the non-Oak user sample (316). This process resulted in matched user and non-user groups, each comprising 303 respondents. The matched sample was used for comparisons between Oak and non-Oak users, while the full sample was used for the other analyses of questions asked only to Oak users.

For the wellbeing and teacher workload questions, we compared the results of Oak and non-Oak users to the relevant national benchmarks in the analysis, allowing us to compare both user types to the national average. This helped to contextualise the findings and understand how statistically significant any observed differences were.

Throughout the report, we have conducted analysis to examine differences between different sub-groups of respondents based on factors including:

- Job role (teacher / middle leader / senior leader)
- School (e.g. primary state school / secondary state school / independent school, etc.)
- Type of Oak use (curriculum planning, lesson planning, setting homework, setting cover lesson, setting work for absent pupils, lesson delivery in the classroom and professional development).

We have reported on findings related to distinctions between sub-groups. Where relevant, we noted differences; where this was not explicitly stated, there were no notable differences between sub-groups.

We also conducted analyses to test for statistical significance in differences between groups (e.g., Oak users and non-users) and subgroups (e.g., teachers, middle leaders, and senior leaders). A result is statistically significant when it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. When reporting statistical significance, we use the standard convention of a p-value < 0.05. This means that the likelihood of observing changes at least as severe as those observed, if it were, in fact, the case that the intervention had no impact, is less than 0.05 (i.e. highly improbable). This supports the rejection of the hypothesis that the intervention has no impact, but it does not mean that the probability of the intervention having no impact is, itself, less than 0.05. If a finding is not statistically significant, it does not rule out an effect; rather, it means we cannot confidently say the observed changes were not due to random chance.

3.2.3 Qualitative research design, sample, recruitment, administration and analysis

For the qualitative element of this research, we conducted a combination of individual Oak user interviews and more in-depth school case studies, in which the majority of the triangulation between staff and pupil responses within the same school was collected.

Participants were asked about their experiences using Oak, how they utilise the resources, their views on the quality and added value of the materials, and the impact it has had on themselves, their pupils, and the wider school community. We used a semi-structured interview format, which means the interview guide includes questions or issues to be asked about, but the researcher does not necessarily need to stick with the exact wording. It also includes a variety of “probe” questions. While the moderator is expected to steer the conversation in the intended direction, the participants are largely free to explore different topics.

The individual interviews were held during June and July 2025. Participants were primarily recruited through the survey, with additional recruitment conducted via snowball sampling among identified participants. From those who signed up, a rough sample was created to ensure coverage across various subjects, school types, roles within schools, and how respondents use Oak. However, the representativeness of the sample was limited by the number of participants who signed up for the qualitative research.

For teachers, 24 interviews were conducted. While the aim of qualitative research was never to be fully representative of a wider sample, it is helpful to understand the breakdown of the sample compared to the overall user group.

Role			School type			Total
Classroom Teacher	Middle leader	Senior leader	Secondary	Primary	Independent and other	
15	7	2	16	4	4	24

Table 1: Breakdown of interview sample (teachers)

School type		Total
Secondary	Primary	
12	5	17

Table 2: Breakdown of interview and focus group sample (pupils)

Three in-depth school case studies were run between June and September 2025. These included roughly 3-5 hours of data collection on how Oak is being used across their schools (including exploring how this is different within schools). These schools were identified using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Two schools (one primary and one secondary; one Local Authority-managed and one MAT) were recruited through survey responses, while one additional MAT was approached separately to capture a more recent and

specific use case. We aimed to ensure a mix of school types and use cases - for example, early adoption at one compared with more established use at another.

The qualitative data were analysed using a contribution analysis methodology. This new approach to thematic analysis was adopted for this year's evaluation as it is particularly well-suited to qualitative methods with smaller samples. It is based directly on the Theory of Change and provides a means to build the "contribution story" of a given intervention to observed outcomes. This data has been triangulated with the quantitative data to identify the extent to which Oak has achieved its desired impact, how Oak has contributed to improvements, and, pertinently for the qualitative research, what the most important success factors or barriers were to achieving the outcomes.

Where appropriate, the contribution analysis considered alternative explanations and identified where evidence was weak. In these instances, we have clearly stated uncertainties and presented plausible contribution stories without making unevidenced causal claims.

3.2.4 Triangulation with performance analytics

Throughout this report, Oak's own analysis of platform usage has been embedded for the following reasons:

- Providing context on the implementation and usage of Oak over the 2024/25 academic year
- Triangulating either survey or qualitative findings with usage analytics

Analytics data reflect the period from September 2024 to July 2025 for this academic year. ImpactEd Evaluation has not been involved in collecting this data. In this report, Oak's analytics data is presented as offering additional contextual information, rather than as key findings in themselves.

The EEF has commissioned NFER to conduct an independent evaluation of Aila's impact on outcomes, such as lesson-planning time. The data in this report are from surveys conducted by ImpactEd and are unrelated to the EEF Trial, which will report in Autumn 2026.

3.3 Limitations

Readers should consider the following areas for potential bias or limitation:

- Users were not randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, which introduces the possibility of self-selection bias. For example, teachers who chose to use Oak may share particular characteristics not captured in the data. We have aimed to mitigate this risk by weighting the sample when comparing Oak and non-Oak users.
- While the overall sample size was large enough to support meaningful statistical analysis, some sub-groups within the sample were relatively small. This increases variability in the data and limits the reliability of findings for those groups.
- Teacher outcomes were captured through self-reported data. Although validated measures were used to minimise potential bias, the evaluation did not incorporate additional evidence sources, such as classroom observations or independent assessments.
- While pupil perceptions of Oak were collected qualitatively, quantitative pupil attainment data could not be accessed from schools, which should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

4. Key Findings

The following sub-sections (4.1 to 4.8) bring together insights from both survey and qualitative findings to address the research question: To what extent has Oak National Academy achieved its desired impact for:

- *Teachers (workload and expertise)*
- *Schools (curriculum quality and resilience)*
- *Pupils (continuous access and attainment)*

4.1 Implementation and usage

Overview

High levels of engagement

- ◆ Lesson and curriculum resources were downloaded 1.63 million times across the 2024/25 academic year. This is a 128% increase on the previous year. By October 2025, 191,765 lesson resources developed with Aila had been downloaded, and 42,160 Oak users had co-created lessons with Aila.

Access across areas

- ◆ In the most deprived areas, there were 36% more downloads per school compared to the least deprived areas.

User profile

- ◆ Oak users included both early adopters from the pandemic and new users joining in 2024/25. The growth of new users could be due to the addition of Oak's AI-powered assistant or newly released curriculum and lesson resources.

Patterns of use

- ◆ Oak was used most frequently for lesson planning, curriculum planning and classroom delivery. It was used less often for setting homework, cover lessons, work for absent pupils, and professional development. This trend was especially strong among new users.

Use of Aila (AI-powered assistant)

- ◆ Open-ended survey responses and qualitative data indicated that uptake remained limited in the early stages, with usage being mostly exploratory. Teachers valued Aila's pedagogical alignment, compliance, and safety, compared to mainstream AI tools. Mainstream AI tools were preferred for speed and flexibility, but were trusted less for curriculum fit. Early career teachers and non-specialists were most positive about Aila's potential. Experienced teachers were more sceptical, highlighting the importance of professional judgment. Across groups, there was a strong call for training and support to utilise AI effectively in practice.

4.1.1 Who used Oak's resources?

Key finding: 1,625,531 resources were downloaded, and pupils took part in 4,234,397 lessons in the 2024/25 academic year. In the most deprived areas, there were 36% more downloads per school than in the least deprived areas.

A total of 42,160 teacher users had utilised Aila to co-develop and download 191,765 lesson resources.

Over the 2024/25 academic year, teachers downloaded lessons and curriculum resources a total of 1,625,531 times (128% growth compared to last year), and pupils took part in 4,234,387 lessons (41% decrease compared to last year) through Oak National Academy. This demonstrates Oak's increasing role as a tool supporting routine lesson planning and delivery, alongside a reduced reliance on it for emergency remote teaching. Each week, an average of 54,100 teachers used the site, demonstrating considerable growth compared to the previous year (2023/24), when 35,346 teachers used it, representing a 53% increase. Pupil usage decreased, with an average of 32,400 pupils accessing the site per week, experiencing dips over weekends and school holidays, compared to 52,075 in the 2023/24 academic year (a 38% decrease). As mentioned, this reflects a reduced need for Oak during emergencies and a greater need for Oak for lesson planning and delivery.

Between 13th January and 13th July 2025, a total of 196,143 teachers used Oak's resources, compared to 83,420 teachers who accessed and used Oak's resources between January and July 2024, a 135% increase on the previous year. This increase compared to last year reflects the release of Oak's new curriculum plans and resources across several areas, including music, geography, PE, Art and Computing, for example.

The 2025 figure is defined by all UK teacher users who have directly accessed and meaningfully engaged with Oak's teacher products, performing one of the following actions in the last 6 months:

- Downloading a lesson resource from Oak's teacher product
- Downloading a unit of lesson resources from Oak's Teacher product
- Downloading a curriculum resource from the curriculum product
- Interacting at least 10 times with the Curriculum Visualiser product
- Starting to plan a lesson with Aila (at least to the point of setting lesson objectives).

Oak remained widely used in the 2024/25 academic year across all types of schools and school phases. **Teachers from 17,663 schools in England accessed resources, accounting for 72% of all schools (based on DfE data).** Oak lessons were used across key stages with 15% in Key Stage 1, 33% in Key Stage 2, 32% in Key Stage 3 and 19% in Key Stage 4. While some of Oak's legacy content created during the pandemic is still available on the website, 84% of the downloaded lessons came from the newly released content. Therefore, it is difficult to draw comparisons from previous years.

The free school meal (FSM) category is used as a proxy to understand levels of socioeconomic disadvantage among schools, based on the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM. For the 2024/25 academic year, schools are grouped into three bands: low (less than 20.6%), medium

(20.6% to less than 30.8%), and high (30.8% or more). These thresholds are calculated relative to the national average FSM rate. The most deprived areas (as defined by FSM) had the highest number of downloaded resources per school: **36% more downloads (per school) occurred in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas².**

As of October 2025, 42,160 teacher users used Aila to co-develop and download 191,765 lesson resources.

Science (30%) and Maths (28%) were the most popular subjects, followed by English (17%), History (4%) and Geography (4%) based on the number of lessons downloaded. These subjects had new curriculum packages fully available at the time of the evaluation period.

In the survey, Oak users were asked how many teaching staff in their school were consistently using Oak resources. **Responses varied: 21% reported use across multiple departments or phases, 16% reported that their department or phase uses Oak, and 6% indicated that the whole school uses Oak.** 27% of users said that Oak use was limited to themselves, as far as they were aware, whilst 31% said they were unsure of how it was being used in their school. They suggest that, for most users, Oak is either primarily a personal resource or that teachers have limited knowledge of its use beyond their own practice. This highlights potential opportunities to encourage more cross-departmental use and the sharing of best practices among teachers. It also reflects that Oak did not yet have full curriculum packages available for all subjects, which would limit broader department- or school-wide adoption.

Differences also emerged between secondary and primary school users. Secondary respondents were more likely to report whole departmental or phase use (20%) or use across multiple departments or phases (20%), and that only they use Oak (19%), compared with primary respondents (5%, 12% and 16% respectively)³. By contrast, primary users were more likely to report whole-school use (7%) compared to secondary users (2%). This may reflect structural differences between school types, such as school size, subject departments and specialisations in secondary versus primary schools.

² Schools are now segmented by deprivation using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) as the main metric last year, and by the percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) this year.

³ These figures exclude respondents who answered "Not sure."

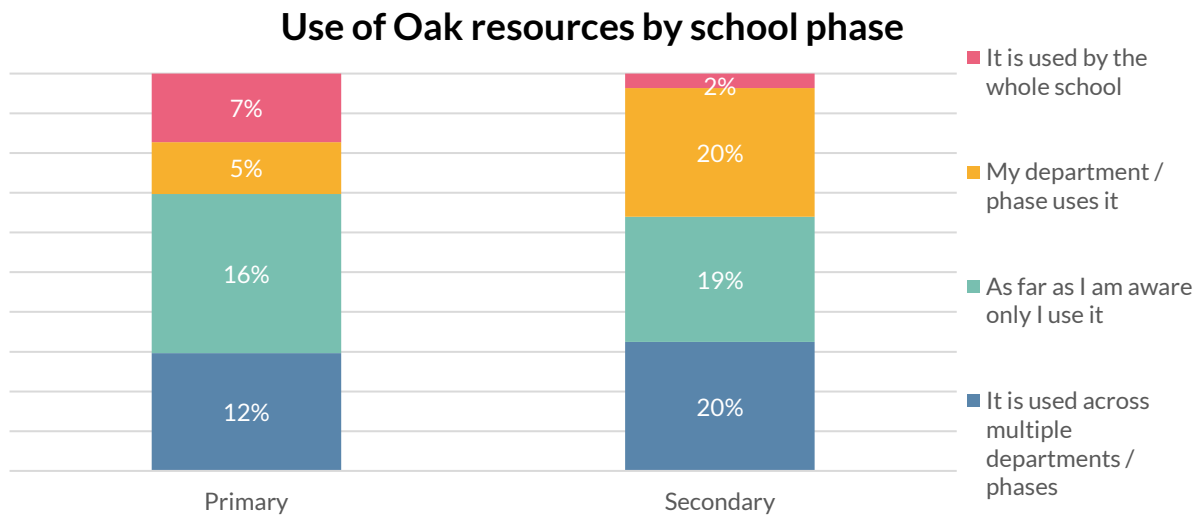


Figure 1: Users reporting how Oak was used across their school comparing responses of primary school users (n=145) to secondary school users (n=224).

4.1.2 How were Oak's resources used?

Key finding: Oak users were a mix of those who had started during the pandemic and those who had started since, with strong uptake of new users in the 2024/25 academic year.

Among current users, 40% reported first using Oak during the pandemic, 23% started after the pandemic but before the 2024/25 school year, and 37% began in the 2024/25 academic year. The growth of new users this year may be linked to the launch of Oak's AI-powered assistant, Aila, as corroborated by Oak's analytics data, which shows that 42,160 teacher users have used Aila to co-develop and download 191,765 lesson resources as of October 2025. This growth may also be driven by increased use, impact, and teacher-perceived quality, supported by the availability of a large number of new curriculum plans and teaching resources, as well as the release of new lesson content during the 2024/25 academic year. Encouragingly, new users are frequent users: 62% of those who started in the 2024/25 academic year and 54% of those who started after the pandemic but before 2024/25 reported using Oak at least once a week.

Qualitative evidence reflects the same trajectory of uptake highlighted in the survey: initial adoption during the pandemic, further growth in the years following, and a marked increase in the current 2024/25 academic year. Motivations, however, differed across contexts and teacher groups.

- **Pandemic response**

Many teachers first encountered Oak during the COVID-19 lockdowns, when the sudden demand for online learning created pressure for reliable, ready-made resources. Oak was widely seen as a pragmatic solution at a time of crisis.

“During lockdown, I was forced to find viable resources. Oak’s video lessons were a lifesaver for cover lessons.” (Secondary physics teacher, interview)

In this phase, Oak’s video lessons were especially valued where staff lacked subject confidence.

- **Post-pandemic adoption**

After schools returned to in-person teaching, adoption shifted from emergency use to addressing specific resource or curriculum gaps. For one case study school, geography was singled out as a subject where Oak provided much-needed structure.

Leadership also played a role in encouraging uptake, with teachers reporting that they were asked to trial Oak as part of their curriculum improvement efforts. Some teachers described being encouraged by colleagues to try Oak.

Curriculum leaders linked adoption to strategic redesign:

“We had a shift in our curriculum design, and Oak was referenced often for its structured resources. It was a natural fit.” (Secondary English lead, Interview)

Teachers consistently compared Oak favourably with other platforms. They emphasised its structured, streamlined design, which offered a clear sense of progression across lessons. Unlike alternative resource banks, which often felt scattered or unfocused, Oak provided everything in one place. This reduced the burden of piecing materials together and was described as directly beneficial for the workload.

The newest users typically described adoption in terms of workload relief, peer influence, and the availability of new features such as Aila.

“The ongoing workload pressures pushed me to look for efficient resources. The AI features promised to save me time on lesson planning.” (Deputy head, primary, interview)

Across interviews and case studies, the motivations for adoption evolved. Pandemic-era use was driven by necessity and the need for online provision. In the post-pandemic years, Oak was adopted more strategically, filling subject-specific gaps, supporting curriculum redesign, or being promoted through leadership. **In the current year, uptake has been accelerated by workload pressures, peer recommendations, and the perceived potential of new features such as Aila.** What is consistent across contexts is that teachers sought reliable, well-structured resources that reduced the burden of planning and addressed weaknesses in their existing provision.

Key finding: Oak was more often used for lesson planning, curriculum planning, and classroom lesson delivery than for setting homework, covering lessons, or working with absent pupils, especially among new users.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their main ways of using Oak’s resources, with the option to select multiple answers. The most common uses of Oak resources were lesson planning (61%), classroom lesson delivery (54%), and curriculum planning (31%). By contrast, Oak was least used for professional development (13%), setting homework (13%), or other purposes (6%), regardless of when Oak was first used. Analysis by start date shows that new users in 2024/25 primarily used Oak for lesson planning (30%) and delivery (28%), in contrast to longer-term users. This reflects Oak’s newly intended purpose as a classroom teaching and delivery tool rather than a remote learning platform.

Patterns of Oak use have also shifted since the pandemic. For example, using Oak to set work for absent pupils was a more popular use during periods of school closures, but now plays a more limited role, with only 8% of those who started using Oak after the pandemic and 5% who started in 2024/25 reporting that they use Oak in this way.

Main ways Oak is used when users started with Oak

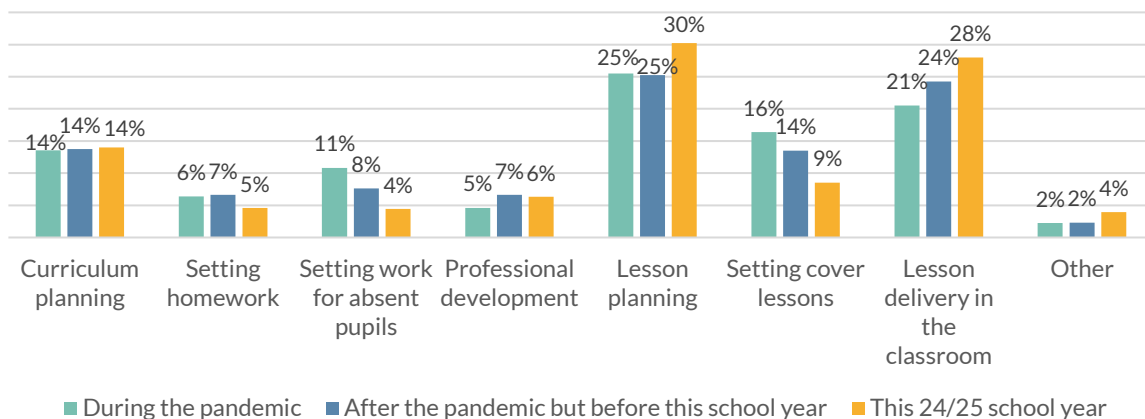


Figure 2: Users reporting how Oak is used across their school by when they started using Oak (n=716).

Across the qualitative evidence, Oak was described as being used most often for lesson planning and classroom delivery, aligning with the survey findings. Teachers consistently highlighted its value in reducing the burden of creating resources from scratch, though use was rarely wholesale. **Instead, Oak served as a reliable baseline which teachers then adapted to suit their pupils, curriculum, and teaching style.**

- **Lesson planning**


Teachers across phases and roles emphasised Oak’s contribution to planning efficiency. Early-career staff, in particular, valued its clear sequencing as a model for structuring a lesson from start to finish. Senior and more experienced staff also drew on it selectively, often to supplement their own resources.



“As a trainee with no existing resources, I could see how a lesson should run from starter to plenary. It stopped me reinventing the wheel.” (Secondary, ECT)

- **Lesson delivery in the classroom**

Teachers described how Oak's resources supported engagement and classroom management, especially in subjects such as science and geography, where demonstrations or structured recall were important.

 *The impact of those quizzes has been that the boys have settled really quickly at the beginning of the class.* (Secondary, English)

However, they also reported that many lessons were too content-heavy and required significant pruning.

- **Curriculum planning and sequencing**

In several schools, Oak was used to underpin curriculum sequencing, either by adopting full units or by benchmarking existing schemes against Oak's structure. Teachers noted improvements in clarity and progression when Oak was integrated.

- **Professional development**

Although less commonly cited, teachers also reported that Oak supported professional growth by modelling evidence-based pedagogy and updating subject knowledge. This was particularly helpful for those teaching outside their specialism.

 *The resources have acted as a form of CPD in their own right, showing us different pedagogical approaches.* (Secondary, Science)

- **Homework and provision for absent pupils**

While less prominent than during the pandemic, teachers continued to use Oak to provide continuity for absent pupils and, occasionally, as homework. Case study schools reported this as especially useful during periods of disruption.

Overall, the qualitative data confirm that Oak's primary role was as a planning and delivery tool, with a significant influence on curriculum sequencing and occasional use for CPD, homework, and cover. The consistency of responses highlights a common pattern: teachers valued Oak's professional structure and breadth and, in line with how Oak actively encourages, teachers almost always adapt it – trimming slides, resequencing content, and layering in stretch or scaffolds. This enables teachers to use their professional judgment to ensure the content is suitable for their context.

4.1.3 Use of Oak's new AI tools⁴

Oak users were asked whether they had used Oak's AI-powered lesson planning tool, Aila. Most users (78%) had used this tool and were subsequently asked how it helped them with lesson planning. Qualitative feedback indicated that users appreciated Aila's role in aligning

⁴ The EEF has commissioned NFER to run an independent evaluation of the impact of Aila on outcomes like lesson planning time. The data included here is from surveys conducted by ImpactEd and is unrelated to the EEF trial, which will report in Autumn 2026.

with the curriculum, encouraging personalised learning and supporting trainee teachers and non-specialists. Many reported that the tool was efficient and helpful for resource generation and fostering creativity in lesson design.

The survey indicated that most users had tried Aila; however, the qualitative data present a more cautious picture, although across a much smaller sample size. Only a small number of interviewees mentioned using Aila, and these were all secondary-phase teachers, typically classroom practitioners rather than senior leaders. Among those who did raise it, awareness was uneven, and use was typically confined to short, exploratory trials.

- **Awareness and uptake (Qualitative Data)**

Most interviewees had not yet used Aila, and several were unaware that Oak had developed an AI tool. A smaller group, comprising all secondary teachers, had begun to trial it. This uneven awareness contrasts with the high survey figure. However, the qualitative sample was not designed or large enough to assess Aila use systematically, so it should not be treated as a reliable measure of overall awareness or uptake compared to the quantitative data.

- **How Aila was used in practice**

Where Aila had been trialled, it was mainly used to generate starting points or outlines for lessons rather than full plans. Teachers saw value in its potential to scaffold content and spark ideas, but rarely relied on it in its unedited form.



It can definitely give you ideas and help you refine what you're doing.” (Teacher, Primary, Interview)

In line with Aila’s objective of supporting collaborative lesson planning while allowing teachers to apply their professional judgement, focus group feedback indicates that Aila is not yet suitable for planning lessons independently. This reflects its ‘beta’ status, which Oak has communicated is still under development based on teacher feedback. It may also suggest a gap between teachers’ understanding of Aila’s intended purpose and its actual functionality.

- **Perceived strengths**

Teachers who had experimented with Aila valued its pedagogy-first design, particularly its prompts focused on addressing misconceptions and sequencing.



I like that the AI will tell you common misconceptions... it reminded me of things I hadn't seen for a while. That's a big plus.” (Secondary, Science, Interview)

Some compared this favourably with mainstream AI tools, highlighting that Aila aligned with the national curriculum and was therefore a “safer” option.



I told colleagues they can't use ChatGPT – it's not GDPR compliant. But Oak is free and DfE-backed, so I know it's safe for schools.” (Secondary middle leader, English/media)

- **Limitations and frustrations**

The small number of teachers who trialled Aila highlighted consistent concerns about speed, narrow functionality, and the need for extensive teacher input and checking, indicating a gap between teachers' understanding of Aila's intended purpose and its actual functionality. These concerns align with the current functionality and intended use of the tool. Aila encourages teachers to actively engage with the tool, assisting them throughout the lesson planning process and asking them to review the output. Currently, the tool only supports the creation of individual lessons, rather than long-term lesson schemes.

Teachers primarily used Aila to generate single lessons or ideas for lesson content,

“I've used Aila to generate lessons when gaps appeared in my scheme of work... It's really for one-off lessons or to get ideas down – you still have to edit and check everything.” (Secondary science teacher, Interview)

- **Who benefits most**

Among the small number of teachers who trialled Aila, early-career and non-specialist teachers described it as particularly helpful, who welcomed its structured pacing and guidance. More experienced staff, with established resource banks and planning routines, were more sceptical.

“I just think it could be misused; you still have to use your professional judgment.” (Teacher, Secondary, Interview)

- **Training needs, ethics, and resistance**

Several teachers highlighted the need for clear guidance on how to use AI effectively in schools. Others expressed doubts about its reliability and the risk of over-reliance on technology.

“I've seen other people successfully use AI, but we haven't had any formal training on it.” (Teacher, Primary, Case Study)

Taken together, the evidence suggests that Aila is still in the early stages of uptake, reflecting its beta nature. The survey found that most Oak users (78%) had used or trialled Aila, indicating broad awareness and willingness to experiment with the tool. The qualitative data, drawn from a much smaller and more varied sample, indicated engagement was more limited and exploratory. A few secondary teachers described using Aila as part of the qualitative data, largely to generate single lessons or ideas, valuing its structure, curriculum alignment, and safety compared with mainstream AI platforms. Other AI tools were used more frequently due to their speed and flexibility. Early-career and non-specialist teachers were the most positive, while experienced staff were generally cautious, emphasising the need for professional judgement. Teachers also emphasised the importance of receiving clearer guidance and training on how to use AI tools effectively in school contexts.

4.2 Impact on teachers' workload

This section presents responses to survey questions on teacher workload, organised into two categories. The first set focused on Oak users, examining how Oak use influenced their workload over the past year. The second set addressed all respondents (both users and non-users), exploring workload more broadly in terms of both the actual time spent on job-related activities and teachers' perceptions of their workload. While the Oak-specific questions allow direct analysis of the relationship between Oak use and workload, the questions posed to the full cohort provide insights into overall workload perceptions and explore how Oak users' experiences compare with those of matched peers. Although school type and job role are controlled for in the analysis, other unaccounted factors may also influence these results, and therefore, they should be interpreted in context.

Overview

Overall workload impact

- 85% of Oak users reported a positive impact on workload (up from 73% last year), saving a median of 4 hours per week. The saved time was redirected to administrative tasks, marking, pastoral care, and professional development. In interviews and case studies (small, non-representative samples), teachers commonly described reinvesting time into pupil-facing work.

Frequency of use

- More frequent Oak users reported greater reductions in workload than those who used Oak less frequently, higher time savings and a more positive perception of workload, suggesting a clear relationship between the frequency of Oak use and the benefits on workload.

Lesson planning and preparation

- Teachers who used Oak spent more time on planning and preparation than non-users (13.6 hours vs. 9.6 hours), despite time savings overall. A plausible explanation raised in the interviews is that this may be because Oak users are more likely to be Early Career Teachers (8% of users compared to 3% of non-users), who are still developing their expertise; however, this cannot be causally confirmed. Another explanation is that teachers who choose to use Oak are more likely to perceive workload as a significant problem in their schools. These teachers, often facing heavier workloads, may adopt Oak in search of additional support.
- Oak was widely seen as reducing the burden of creating resources from scratch. However, benefits were limited by usability issues (for instance, pacing that did not fit their class, PowerPoints that were not dyslexia-friendly, navigation issues), gaps in subject coverage, and the need to adapt resources, which often offset some of the time saved.

Perceptions of workload

- Workload perceptions were mixed and somewhat contradictory. Oak users were less likely to complete their workload within contracted hours but more likely to report that their workload was acceptable than non-users. One possible explanation is that teachers with

heavier workloads may be more inclined to adopt Oak in search of additional support. This apparent contradiction may also reflect a gap between teachers' perceptions of their workload and their actual workload.

Variations by role and context

- Qualitative data supported the survey finding that frequent users saw greater benefits, though effects varied by role and context. Teachers frequently described adapting Oak resources to suit their pupils and school context. While this required additional time, adaptation is an intended part of Oak's design and was often viewed as a valuable process for tailoring lessons rather than a limitation of the materials.

4.2.1 Use of Oak and teacher workload

Key finding: Over two-thirds of Oak users reported a positive impact of Oak on workload, saving a median of 4 hours per week.

The survey asked Oak users how using Oak affected their workload in the 2024/25 academic year. If respondents answered 'no impact', they were also asked if it had changed the proportion of their workload spent on activities that would benefit their pupils.

The majority of Oak users (67%) reported that using Oak had decreased their workload, saving them a median of 4 hours per week. A further 29% stated that Oak had no impact on their workload, although most of this group (61%) felt that Oak had changed how they spent their time, shifting effort towards tasks that directly benefited pupils. A small proportion (4%) of users reported that Oak increased their workload by a median of 5 hours per week.

IMPACT ON TIME	
Positive ("decreased my workload")	67%
Positive ("did not impact my workload' but it changed the proportion of my workload spent on activities that have greater benefit to pupils")	18%
No change ("did not impact my workload or change the proportion of my workload spent on activities that have greater benefit to pupils")	11%
Added time	4%

85% reported that Oak either reduced their workload or shifted it toward higher-value activities, up from 73% last year.

Table 3: Responses to questions asking the impact of using Oak on workload and follow-up question if 'no impact' answered, asking did using Oak change proportion of workload spent on activities that have greater benefit to pupils

The impact on workload varied depending on how Oak was used. **When analysing the responses from those who reported reductions in workload by use cases, the most notable reductions were observed in lesson planning, followed by lesson delivery and curriculum planning.** Among users who used Oak for lesson planning, 66% reported a reduction in workload, and 62% of those using it for lesson delivery reported the same. In contrast, 36% of users who used Oak for curriculum planning and 30% of those using it for setting cover lessons reported a reduced workload. Fewer users reported workload reductions for other tasks: 15% for setting homework, 16% for assigning work to absent pupils, and 14% for professional development.

The amount of time saved, however, varied by the main way in which Oak resources were used. Mainstream uses, including curriculum planning, lesson planning and delivery, were associated with a median of 4.6 hours of saved time. 'Emergency' uses, such as setting cover lessons and setting work for absent pupils, were associated with a median of 5 hours of saved time per week. Those who used Oak for professional development reported the greatest time savings, with a median of 6 hours per week, suggesting that Oak may be particularly valuable for long-term goals such as learning and development. The slightly higher time savings for 'emergency' use cases, such as setting cover lessons or work for absent pupils, may reflect the fact that these tasks require less adaptation than mainstream uses like lesson planning.

The time saved for Oak users also varied by role. While senior leaders saved a median of 3 hours, teachers saved a median of 5 hours, middle leaders saved 3 hours, and support staff saved 5 hours.

More frequent Oak users reported both a greater likelihood of reduced workload and higher time savings. Among those who reported reductions in workload, 60% used Oak at least once a week (median of 5 hours saved), 26% a few times a month (median of 3 hours saved), and 14% once a month or less often (median of 2 hours saved). This suggests a clear relationship between the frequency of Oak use and the benefits of workload.

For the 4% of respondents who felt Oak increased their workload, the median time reported was an increase of 5 hours per week. This figure was lowest among those who started using Oak after the pandemic but before the 2024/25 school year (5.5 hours), slightly higher for newer users (5.8 hours for those starting in 2024/25), and highest among those who started during the pandemic (7.2 hours). This suggests that, for the few users experiencing increased workload, the increase is moderate, and the timing and context of adoption matters - early pandemic adopters were more likely to report higher workload increases, possibly due to adjustments during a more challenging period or effects of cumulative usage.

Users who provided an explanation for how Oak had increased their workload reported challenges such as adapting materials to align with school curricula and class needs, addressing accessibility issues (for example, PowerPoints not being dyslexia-friendly or pacing not fitting their class), and resolving technical problems. As shared in the qualitative interviews, these additional steps were described as creating extra workload for some staff.

In open-ended survey responses related to this question, participants widely reported that Oak had decreased their workload by reducing the time spent on lesson planning and creating

resources, and facilitated enhanced lesson delivery, creative curriculum planning, and opportunities for more targeted and adventurous teaching. Respondents reported that this has subsequently freed time for administrative tasks, marking, pastoral care and professional development.

4.2.2 Impact on teachers' workload: Oak users vs. non-users

All survey respondents (Oak users and non-users) were asked a series of questions about their workload, and the responses of Oak users were compared with those of non-users to identify any differences in workload impact potentially linked to Oak usage. Responses to these questions were weighted to ensure that the hours reported were comparable across respondents working full-time and part-time hours.

Weekly hours on lesson planning and preparation: Oak users vs. non-users

Key finding: Oak users reported spending more time on lesson planning and preparation, with an average of 13.6 hours compared to 9.6 hours for non-users. This difference was statistically significant.

Oak users were asked to estimate the total number of hours they spent on individual planning or lesson preparation in the most recent full working week. **Oak users reported spending more time on lesson planning and preparation than non-users, averaging 13.6 hours per week.** This difference was statistically significant, suggesting that Oak users may engage more deeply with planning activities, possibly because they are adapting content, leveraging Oak's features, or taking on additional responsibilities associated with its use. This could also be because Oak users are more likely to be Early Career Teachers who are still developing their expertise. The additional time spent on lesson planning may be contributing to both time savings and improved quality in other areas, such as lesson delivery.

Weekly hours on other activities related to the job: Oak users vs. non-users

Key finding: More frequent Oak users reported spending less time on job-related activities in a working week, compared to less frequent users.

Respondents were asked, "In your most recent full working week, approximately how many hours did you spend in total on activities related to your job?"

Oak users worked an average of 2.5 hours less per week than non-users (45.2 hours compared to 47.6 hours). This difference was not statistically significant. These averages were lower than the 48.1 hours reported in the [2025 Teacher Workload Survey](#).

Respondents who used Oak more regularly reported saving more time on job-related activities than those who used Oak less often or not at all. Those using Oak at least once a week reported saving an average of 5 hours per week, working an average of 42.7 hours, compared with 48.3 hours among those using it once a month or less and 47.6 hours among non-users.

Number of hours spend on activities related to job per week by frequency of Oak usage

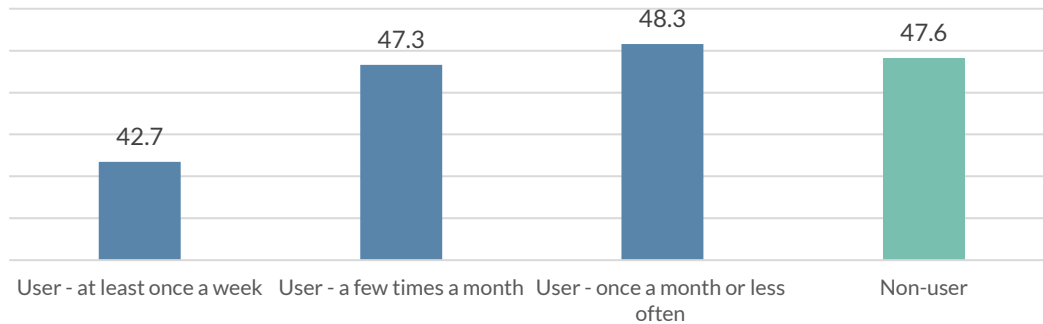


Figure 3: Number of hours reported to be spent on activities related to the job in the most recent full working week, by frequency of Oak usage. Sample size: User; n=303, Non-user; n = 303.

However, when analysed by subgroup, classroom teachers using Oak worked slightly more hours on average than non-user teachers (46.5 compared to 43.2 hours), although this difference was not statistically significant. This finding aligned with the 2025 Teacher Workload Survey, which reported an overall average of 48.1 hours among classroom teachers in England. This may be because teachers spend the largest proportion of their time on time-intensive mainstream activities, such as lesson planning, which often involves adapting content, and additional responsibilities associated with Oak use – something confirmed by the earlier finding that Oak users spend more time on lesson planning and preparation. However, among middle leaders, Oak users worked 6.1 fewer hours per week than non-user middle leaders (43.8 compared to 49.9 hours). The largest difference was observed among senior leaders, where users worked 15.4 fewer hours than non-users (44.9 hours compared to 60.3 hours).

Number of hours spent on activities related to job per week by role

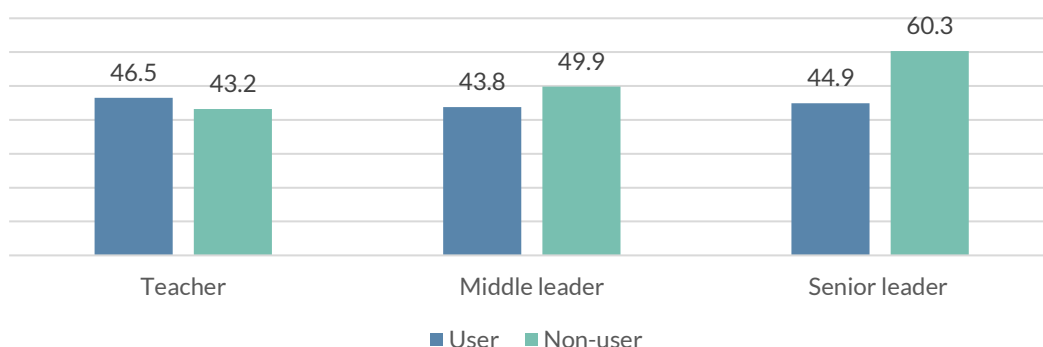



Figure 4: Number of hours reported to be spent on activities related to job in most recent full working week, by role. Sample size: User; n=303, Non-user; n = 303.

The qualitative evidence supports the survey finding that more frequent Oak users tend to experience greater reductions in workload, although the scale of impact varies across roles and contexts. Teachers consistently described Oak as reducing the burden of creating resources from scratch, particularly in lesson planning and resourcing. Similar to the learning from the survey results, almost all participants emphasised that adaptation was necessary, which offset some of the time saved.

- **Time saved in planning**


Teachers across schools reported that Oak saved them hours of planning time by providing structured slide decks, quizzes and worksheets. This was particularly important when no existing scheme of work was in place, or for staff teaching outside their area of specialism.

Early career teachers and non-specialists were the most positive about these savings, often describing Oak as transformative.

 *As a trainee with no existing resources, I could just grab something already developed and focus more on how I was going to teach.” (Secondary, Trainee, Interview)*

- **Reinvestment of saved time**


Teachers explained that the time saved from planning could be redirected toward higher-value activities, such as feedback, pupil interaction, and lesson enrichment.

 *I can concentrate on getting to know my students better.” (Secondary, Case study school)*

Several also linked this shift to improvements in confidence and work–life balance.

- **Where Oak added workload**

Despite the efficiencies, teachers frequently noted that adapting Oak to their context introduced additional work. This included, for example, PowerPoints not being dyslexia-friendly or pacing not fitting their class.

 *I have to do a fair amount of tinkering when I import them because of the odd way that they transfer from Google to PowerPoint.” (Secondary, Maths, Interview)*

Usability issues and gaps in coverage were also cited as adding to the workload. However, this could have been due to contextual factors, such as Oak being in the process of releasing new resources during the evaluation period.

- **Variation across teacher groups**

Workload impacts varied by experience. ECTs and non-specialists, who lacked extensive resource banks, were most likely to see Oak as saving substantial time. More experienced teachers acknowledged the value of Oak’s structure but often felt compelled to adapt it heavily to fit their established practice.



As a secondary maths teacher with 15 years of experience, I'm not sure that I see the same time savings that others might." (Secondary, maths, interview)

The quantitative and qualitative findings together indicate that Oak's impact on teachers' workload depends on the frequency of users' engagement and the extent of their classroom experience. Users reported that Oak reduced workload most noticeably in lesson planning (66% of users) and lesson delivery (62% of users), by supporting more time-intensive standard tasks, compared with less time-intensive occasional activities such as setting cover lessons (30% of users) or work for absent pupils (16% of users). Qualitative evidence confirms that Oak reduces the burden of creating resources from scratch, thereby supporting mainstream tasks such as lesson planning and delivery.

At the same time, compared to their non-user peers, Oak users spent more time on lesson planning and preparation (13.6 vs. 9.6 hours), and classroom teachers using Oak worked slightly more hours overall (46.5 vs. 43.2 hours). This seemingly contradictory finding may reflect the need to adapt Oak resources, the inherently time-intensive nature of lesson planning, greater engagement with other teaching activities, or that teachers with heavier workloads may be more inclined to adopt Oak in search of additional support.

4.2.3 Perception of workload: Is teacher workload a serious problem in your school?

Key finding: All respondents considered workload a problem at their school, regardless of whether they had used Oak or not.

Survey respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following questions/statements relating to workload:

- To what extent, if at all, do you consider teacher workload to be a serious problem in your school? (1: Not a serious problem – 5: Very serious problem)
- I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted working hours (1: Strongly disagree – 5: Strongly agree)
- I have an acceptable workload (1: Strongly disagree – 5: Strongly agree)

Both users and non-users of Oak described teacher workload as a serious problem in their school, with 83% of users and 84% of non-users agreeing with this statement (scoring 3,4, or 5 out of 5).

Extent to which teacher workload is considered a serious problem at school

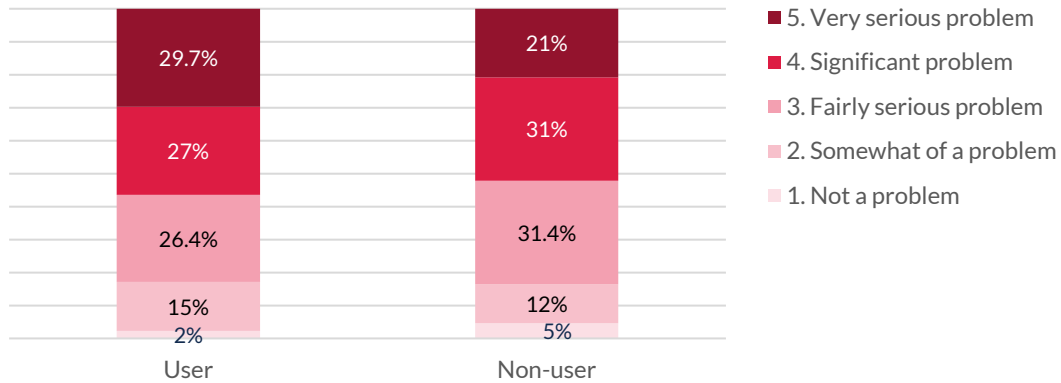


Figure 5: The extent to which teacher workload is considered to be a serious problem in the respondent's school. Response options from 1: Not a serious problem to 5: Very serious problem, comparing Oak users to non-users; User n=303, Non-user n=303.

The extent to which workload was considered a serious problem varied by role. **Teachers who used Oak were slightly more likely to view workload as a fairly to very serious problem at their school than non-user teachers (80% compared to 79%), a statistically significant difference.** This may reflect a self-selection effect, where teachers experiencing higher workload pressures are more motivated to try Oak as a potential solution. Similarly, among senior leaders, Oak users were more likely than non-users to view workload as a fairly to very serious problem in their school (87% compared to 81%), despite working fewer hours compared to non-users. As teachers who use Oak also reported spending more time on lesson planning and preparation, it is worth exploring whether this contributes to their overall perception of the workload as negative. This suggests that teachers who use Oak may be more engaged in lesson delivery, spending additional time on lesson preparation, which could heighten their perception of workload. However, without further data to triangulate these factors, no definitive conclusions can be drawn at this stage. However, this was not reflected for middle leaders, with 85% of users considering workload a problem, compared with 90.6% of non-users.

Perception of workload: 'I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted hours'

Key finding: Oak users were less likely to complete their assigned workload within contracted hours but were more likely to report having an acceptable workload than non-users. These differences were not statistically significant.

Oak users were slightly less likely than non-users to report being able to complete their workload within contracted hours, scoring 4 or 5 out of 5 on this statement (15% compared to 20%), a difference that was not statistically significant.

Average score for 'I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted working hours'

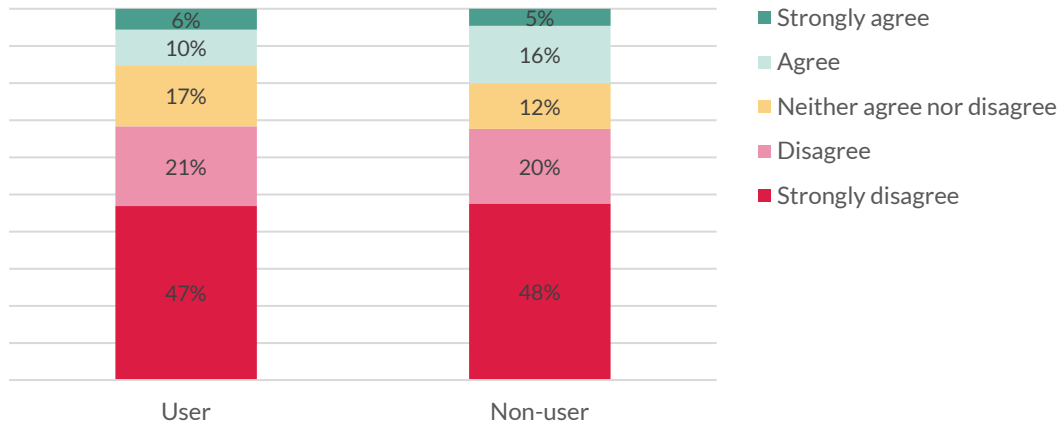


Figure 6: Responses to the statement 'I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted working hours'. Response options from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree, comparing Oak users to non-users; User n=303, Non-user n=303.

Qualitative feedback suggests that this may reflect how Oak is used in practice, including the time spent adapting resources and managing the large amount of available content. However, overall, Oak had a positive influence on the workload. Subgroup analysis provides further insight into why this may be the case.

In primary schools, Oak users were less likely than non-users to report being able to complete their assigned workload, with an average of 1.8 versus 2.1 in response to this question. In secondary schools, however, Oak users scored slightly higher than non-users, indicating they were more likely to complete their workload (1.9 compared to 1.8). Both the primary and the secondary differences were not statistically significant. This could suggest two things: first, there could be something about the primary resources that requires additional time for activities such as lesson planning, adapting resources and setting homework. Second, primary teachers may be new Oak users or have limited support from their immediate staff network, which may contribute to their perception of workload. It is also important to consider that scores for both primary and secondary users were generally low for both users and non-users (below 3 out of a possible 5). This may suggest that, despite differences in experience, workload challenges persist across various types of schools.

Average score for 'I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted working hours' by school stage

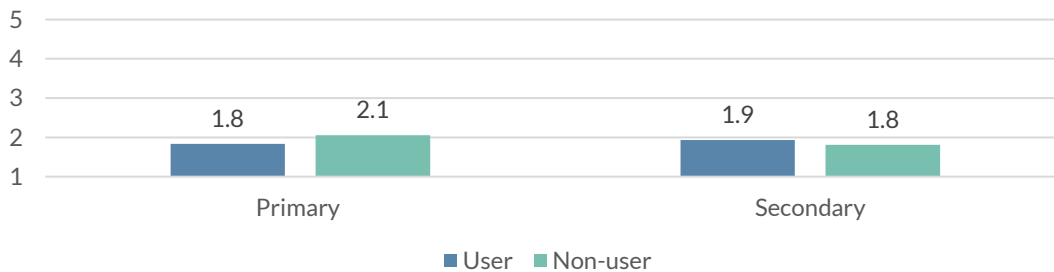


Figure 7: Average scores for the statement 'I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted working hours'. Response options from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree (n=199)

Average score for 'I have an acceptable workload'

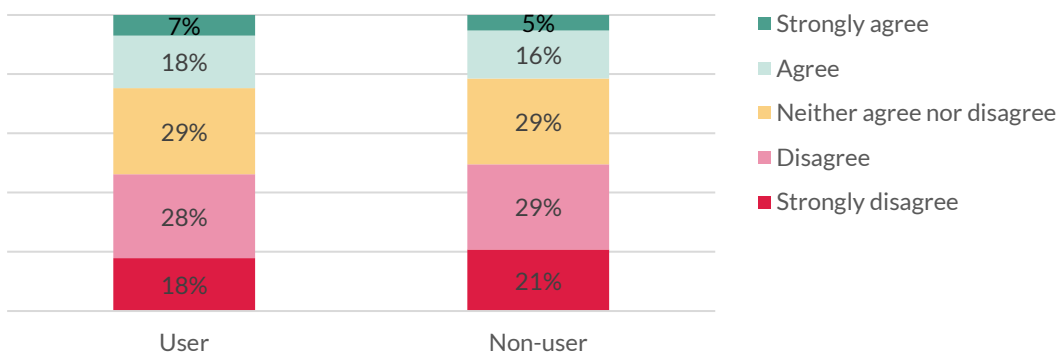


Figure 8: Responses to the statement 'I have an acceptable workload, response options from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree, comparing Oak users to non-users; User n=303, Non-user n=303.

Despite these differences, Oak users were more likely to report having an acceptable workload compared to non-users (25% vs. 22%), although this difference was not statistically significant. The non-user figure broadly aligns with national research reported in the [Department for Education research 'Working lives of teachers and leaders - wave 3'](#)⁵ Report, where 22% of teachers and leaders agreed that they had an acceptable workload,

⁵ Teachers and leaders were asked to which extent they had an acceptable workload. The total sample was 10,020. Of these, 5,095 taught in primary schools, 4,385 taught in secondary schools and 540 in specialist schools. Response options were 'Strongly agree', 'Tend to agree', 'Tend to disagree', 'Strongly disagree'. 'Agree' responses were aggregated from respondents answering either 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree'. IFF Research & IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. (2025, June). *Working lives of teachers and leaders: Wave 3 research report*. Department for Education, UK.

suggesting the non-user survey findings have some validity and are consistent with wider evidence.

This apparent contradiction between perceptions of assigned workload and acceptable workload suggests that, while Oak may help teachers feel their workload is more manageable overall, they may still spend additional time outside contracted hours, possibly due to adapting or selecting resources and engaging more deeply with teaching materials. Qualitative evidence supports this interpretation, indicating that Oak generally has a positive influence on workload, but its benefits are partly offset by the time required for adaptation and navigation.

Perceptions of workload differed between Oak users and non-users depending on their role. **Among teachers, those who used Oak were less likely than those who did not to agree that they had an acceptable workload (52% compared to 63%).** In contrast, middle and senior leaders who used Oak were more likely than their non-user counterparts to feel that their workload was acceptable (36% compared to 34% for middle leaders and 12% compared to 3% for senior leaders). This aligns with evidence showing that Oak-using classroom teachers worked slightly longer hours on average (46.5 vs. 43.2 hours) and spent more time on lesson planning and preparation. This may indicate that, while Oak supports teaching tasks, teachers' need to adapt and integrate resources adds to the time spent on planning, which could shape perceptions of workload.

Workload perceptions also varied by how often Oak was used. Those using Oak a few times a month reported the most positive perceptions of workload. They were more likely to agree with the statements *"I can complete my assigned workload during contracted hours"* and *"I have an acceptable workload"* compared to weekly users, occasional users (once a month or less), and non-users. When asked more broadly about whether workload was a problem, those using Oak a few times a month reported it was a less serious problem (average score 3.5) compared with weekly users (3.7), infrequent users (3.8), and non-users (3.5). One possible explanation is that weekly users may experience additional workload from the effort required to regularly adapt and integrate Oak resources. Another possible explanation is that teachers with higher workloads may be using Oak more regularly to help manage their demands. Further exploration of how occasional users engage with Oak could provide additional insight into the relationship between usage patterns and perceptions of workload.

Case Study: Primary School A

Context

Primary School A is a one-form entry academy serving approximately 210 pupils, with around 40% of them eligible for pupil premium. The school, previously judged “Requires Improvement,” was rated “Good” in 2024, with inspectors noting stronger teaching, behaviour, and inclusion. Geography had been particularly hard to resource, with staff relying on Twinkl and Oddizzi. Leaders adopted Oak to bring consistency, improve vocabulary, and streamline planning.

Mechanisms of Use

Oak became the baseline for geography, with supplementary use in maths. Leaders identified core units while allowing staff autonomy to adapt to their needs. Teachers valued the ready-made lessons with slides, recaps, and vocabulary, and particularly the visuals: *“The visuals for our children are so, so important and it was very hard to find useful ones before.”* Staff frequently condensed lessons, describing the content as “meaty” and sometimes too dense: *“Most lessons are structured into three parts... fitting all three is impossible, so I usually take one out.”* SEND pupils required extra scaffolds, while higher-attaining pupils needed additional stretch. Pupils accessed Oak in class and at home via centralised links and Chromebooks, though some faced login and connectivity issues.

Outcomes

Teachers reported clearer sequencing and less time wasted searching for resources: *“This is much more beneficial to our workload because it’s all there.”* Geography teaching was reportedly stronger, with more consistent vocabulary across year groups. Pupils showed improved recall and confidence: *“You can tell the difference in the books – the children are writing more like geographers.”* They also valued slides, maps, and pauseable videos for homework. However, heavy slide decks sometimes made lessons overly teacher-led: *“It feels like most of the lesson is spent with the teacher talking.”* One teacher felt that some of Oak’s in-lesson quizzes and knowledge checks were pitched too simply, so they did not always give a reliable picture of pupil understanding. Additionally, the school had no way of monitoring how consistently pupils used Oak outside of lessons, which made it difficult to track engagement.

Evaluative Reflection

Oak provided Primary School A with a reliable foundation in geography, enhancing teacher confidence and pupil outcomes where resources had previously been fragmented. Its impact relied on careful adaptation and was constrained by lesson density, not being able to edit the worksheets, and unequal digital access at home.

4.3 Impact on teacher wellbeing

Overview

Wellbeing scores

- ◆ Oak users reported higher wellbeing scores (45.5) than non-users (42.2). Importantly, the average wellbeing of Oak users was also above the national teacher wellbeing benchmark (43.9 in 2024), indicating that Oak use may be associated with higher wellbeing.

Contributions to wellbeing

- ◆ Teachers suggested that Oak contributed positively to wellbeing by reducing planning time and boosting confidence in lesson delivery. Benefits were strongest for trainees, early-career teachers, and non-specialists. Some barriers limited improvements in wellbeing, including dense lesson materials and concerns over professional autonomy.

Teacher retention

- ◆ Oak users were more likely than non-users to say they plan to stay in education, suggesting a link between Oak usage, wellbeing, and retention.

Key finding: Oak users reported better wellbeing than non-users, with a score of 45.5 compared to 42.2.

Teacher wellbeing was measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), a tool designed to assess the mental wellbeing of a population, where higher scores indicate more positive mental wellbeing and lower scores indicate less positive mental wellbeing. The scores are summed to produce a single score ranging from 14 to 70.

On average, Oak users had a wellbeing score of 45.5 compared with 42.2 for non-users, a statistically significant difference. This suggests that Oak users experienced higher overall mental wellbeing. Their average wellbeing score (45.5) was also slightly above the national benchmark of 43.9 reported in slightly higher than the national benchmark of 43.9 reported in the [Teacher Wellbeing Index Survey of 2024](#)⁶, whereas non-users scored below this benchmark.

Differences between users and non-users were consistent across roles. Teachers, middle leaders, and senior leaders who used Oak all reported higher wellbeing than non-users in the same roles (46.1 compared to 42.8; 44.6 compared to 41.1; and 47.4 compared to 44.7, respectively). These differences were statistically significant for teachers and middle leaders, but not for senior leaders.

⁶ Education Support. (2024). Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024.

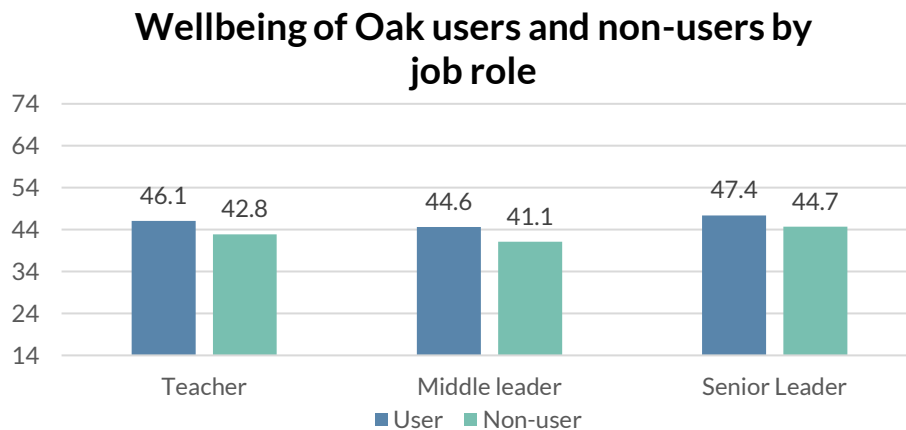


Figure 9: Mental wellbeing scores, using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, of users and non-users by job role. User n=303, Non-user n=303, Teacher n=144, Middle leader n=127, Senior Leader n=31.

Wellbeing also varied by school phase. Oak users in secondary schools reported higher wellbeing scores than secondary non-users (45.9 compared to 39.6), a statistically significant difference. Scores for users exceeded the national average for wellbeing in secondary schools (43.6), while scores for non-users were considerably below this benchmark. In primary schools, however, users reported slightly lower wellbeing than non-users (43.6 compared to 44.3), though this difference was not statistically significant. Despite this, both users and non-users had higher wellbeing scores than the national average of 43.2 in primary schools.

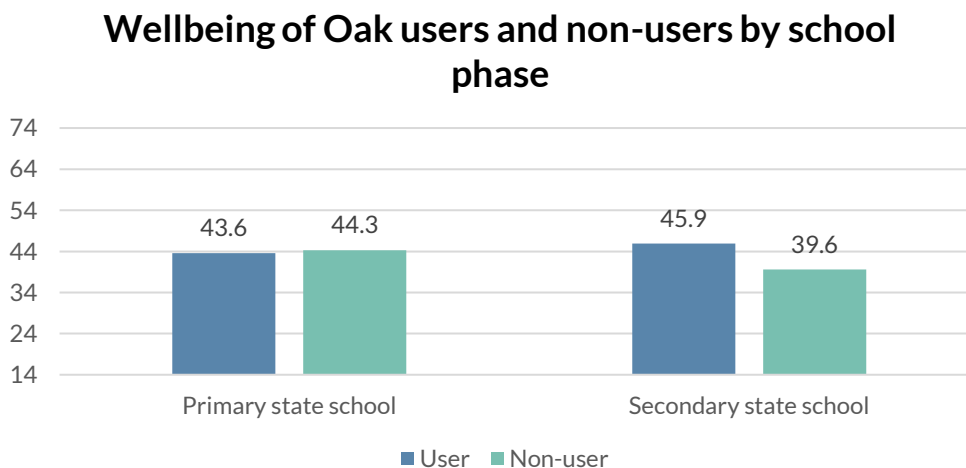


Figure 10: Mental wellbeing scores, using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, of Oak users and non-users, by school phase; User n=303, Non-user n=303.

Wellbeing was not a core focus of the qualitative interviews, and teachers rarely discussed it directly. However, several themes emerged incidentally that shed light on the survey finding that Oak users reported higher wellbeing scores than non-users.

- **Reduced stress through workload savings**

The most consistent thread was the link between workload and wellbeing. Teachers emphasised that Oak's ready-made resources reduced the pressure of planning from scratch, which several described as lowering stress and improving work-life balance.



It's definitely sped up my lesson planning... working smarter, definitely less stressful.
(Secondary, Trainee languages)

- **Increased confidence in lesson delivery**

Teachers also reported that access to well-structured resources enhanced their confidence in teaching, making them feel more secure and prepared.

- **Variation by teacher group**

As with workload, the benefits for wellbeing appeared strongest for trainees, early-career teachers, and non-specialists, who felt supported by Oak's scaffolding. More experienced teachers, particularly those with established resource banks, reported fewer wellbeing benefits.

- **Work-life balance**

Several teachers explicitly linked Oak to improvements in work-life balance, although not universally. While some felt able to leave work earlier or avoid taking lesson planning home, others still found themselves working late to adapt and check materials.



I feel I can go home earlier now without worrying about lesson plans. (Primary, Leadership role)

- **Negative or mixed effects**

A minority of teachers described aspects of Oak that undermined their sense of wellbeing. Overly long or dense slide decks were seen as stressful to deliver, while others felt Oak risked reducing creativity or professional autonomy.



There's just too much – 40 slides for one half-hour lesson. (Primary, Year 1)

Although wellbeing was not explicitly explored in qualitative interviews, teachers' incidental reflections suggest that Oak contributed positively to their sense of wellbeing, primarily through reduced planning time and improved confidence in lesson delivery. These gains were most evident for trainees, early-career teachers, and non-specialists. However, benefits were not universal: dense lesson materials, concerns about professional autonomy could undermine the potential wellbeing improvements.

Key finding: Oak users scored high on teacher retention indicators, particularly in terms of remaining in and advancing within the education sector.

Survey respondents were asked about their career plans over the next two years to measure teacher retention as an indicator of workload and wellbeing. 38% of Oak users said they expected to remain in the same role, compared with 35% of non-users (excluding those who

answered “don’t know”). Notably, **Oak users were far less likely than non-users to report that they anticipated leaving the education sector within two years** (8% compared to 23%). These differences were statistically significant. Across all roles, fewer users than non-users are expected to leave education within two years: middle leaders (4% vs. 9%), teachers (3% vs. 12%), and senior leaders (0.7% vs. 2%).

Oak users were also more likely than non-users to see themselves progressing within education. More users reported expecting to look for a promotion either elsewhere (14% compared to 9%) or within their current workplace (20% compared to 18%). In addition, 20% of users anticipated changing role or setting while staying in education, compared with 16% of non-users.

Career expectations for users and non-users were largely consistent across school types. One noticeable difference, however, appeared in specialist schools, where 16% of users expected to remain in the same role compared with only 2% of non-users. This may highlight the unique nature and potential challenges of working in a specialist school compared to mainstream schools. Further research is needed to explore if and how Oak contributes to teacher retention in specialist schools.

Projected career path over the next two years

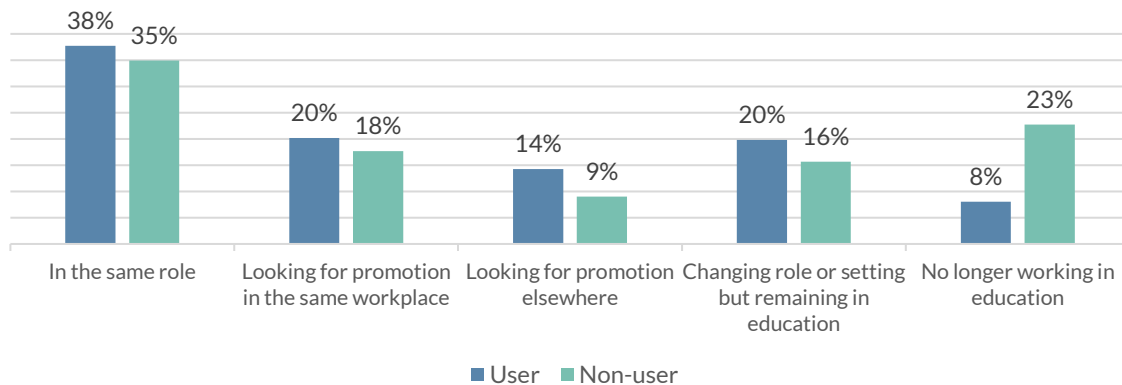


Figure 11: Responses to the question ‘Where do you see yourself in two years’ time?’, with respondents able to select one of six options and ‘don’t know’ responses excluded from the analysis, comparing Oak users (n=273) to non-users (n=255).

4.4 Impact on curriculum, lesson design and teaching practice (Users)

Overview

Patterns of Oak usage

- ◆ Oak's curriculum resources were widely used. The most commonly reported use of Oak was swapping or adding specific lessons based on Oak's curriculum (39%), followed by using Oak to adjust the sequencing of their existing curriculum (13%). A smaller proportion of users (9%) reported adopting Oak's curriculum as their main sequence. It is worth noting that during the evaluation period, Oak did not have fully resourced curriculum sequences in all subjects.

Impact on teaching

- ◆ Almost two-thirds of users reported that Oak's curriculum and resources enhanced the quality of their lesson planning and delivery. More frequent users were more likely to report positive impacts on both curriculum and teaching practice.

Key finding: Oak curriculum resources were widely used, most commonly to adapt existing lessons, with 61% reporting this type of application, and 9% using Oak's whole curriculum package as their main curriculum.

Oak users were asked about the typical ways in which Oak's resources had impacted their school's curriculum, focusing on areas where they had input in decision-making. **Overall, 61% of users reported that they had used Oak in some way to change their curriculum.** The most frequently reported use was swapping or adding certain lessons based on Oak curricula (39%), followed by using Oak to change the sequencing of their curriculum (13%). A smaller proportion of users had made Oak's curriculum their main curriculum sequence (9%), and 39% reported that Oak had not impacted their curriculum at all.

The most typical way Oak resources have impacted the school curriculum

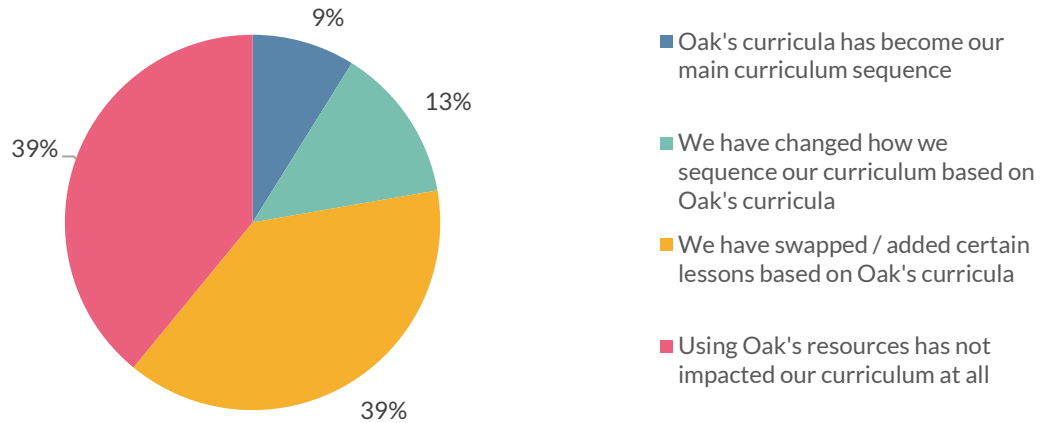


Figure 12: Responses to the question 'Thinking of the curricula you have been involved in making decisions about, what is the most typical way that Oak's resources have impacted on your school's curriculum?', with respondents able to select one of five options and 'don't know' responses excluded from the analysis (n=530).

Key finding: Over half of users reported that Oak's curriculum and resources had improved the quality of their lesson planning and delivery.

Oak users were asked to respond to three statements about the impact of Oak's curriculum and resources on them as an individual or their school:

- Oak's curriculum and resources have improved the quality of my lesson planning and delivery (1: Strongly disagree – 5: Strongly agree)
- Oak's curriculum and resources have increased my confidence in curriculum design (1: Strongly disagree – 5: Strongly agree)
- Oak's curriculum and resources have improved our school's overall curriculum (1: Strongly disagree – 5: Strongly agree)

Impact of Oak on curriculum and lesson planning/delivery

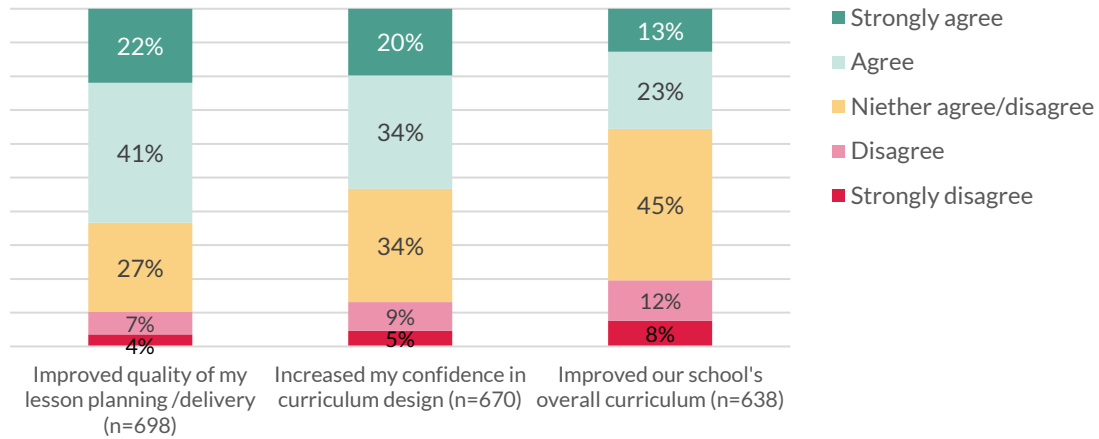


Figure 13: Oak users' responses to three statements about the impact of Oak's curriculum and resources on a scale from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree, sample sizes are indicated under each statement.

Two-thirds of users agreed that Oak's curriculum and resources had improved the quality of their lesson planning and delivery (63% scoring 4 or 5 out of 5) and that these resources had improved their confidence in curriculum design (53%). A smaller proportion (36%) of users agreed that Oak's curriculum and resources had improved their school's overall curriculum.

A considerable proportion of users (27-45%) gave neutral responses, and 10-20% felt Oak's resources had no impact on them as an individual or their school. This was particularly true for teachers (20%) and middle leaders (15%), as well as for users in secondary schools compared to primary schools (22% compared to 9%).

Key finding: More frequent Oak users were more likely to report positive impacts on curriculum design, lesson planning, and delivery.

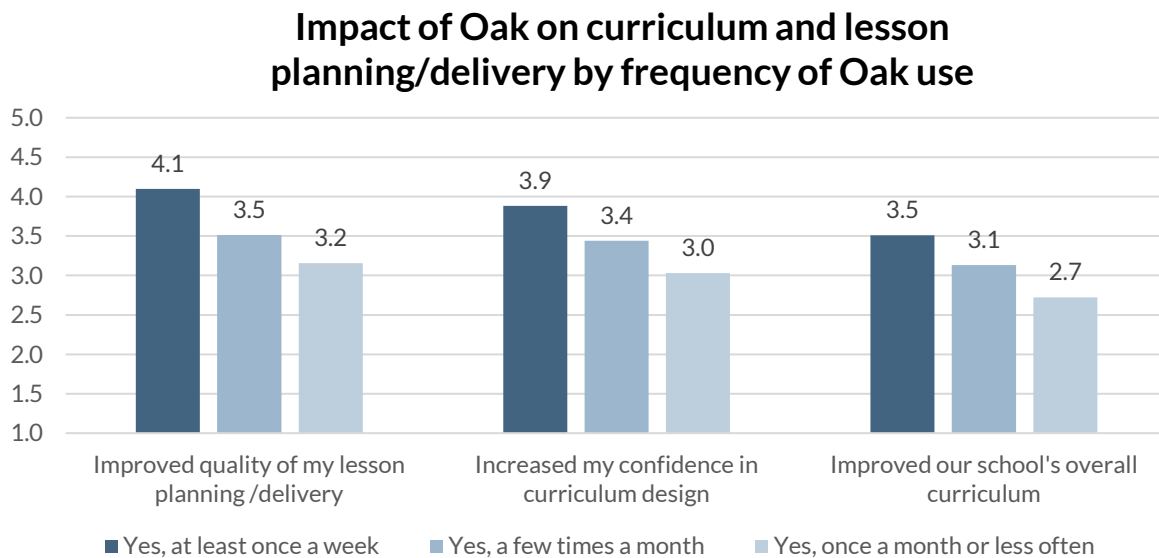


Figure 14: Oak users' responses to three statements about the impact of Oak's curriculum and resources on a scale from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree, by frequency of Oak use; (n=716).

Across all three statements, more frequent Oak use was associated with higher average scores (3.8 for once-a-week users, 3.4 for users who used it a few times a month, and 3.0 for once-a-month users), as depicted in the graph above. This indicates associations between regular engagement with Oak's resources and greater impact on lesson planning and curriculum. It is also possible that infrequent users face challenges in adapting to a new system, which limits the benefits of Oak's resources. The finding highlights the importance of providing effective support and guidance to occasional users, helping them overcome this initial phase. It is also worth exploring the mechanisms of usage that may be contributing to improved outcomes in lesson planning and curriculum design. The next section, on the quality of Oak's resources, discusses some of these factors (for instance, teaching practice) in more detail.

Case Study: Secondary School A

Context

Secondary School A is a large, diverse urban secondary school with around 1,300 pupils. Most students have English as an additional language, and around a quarter are eligible for free school meals. After earlier challenges, the school has been recognised for its strong behaviour, pastoral care and academic ambition, and was previously judged “Outstanding” by Ofsted. Oak was introduced to strengthen coherence in geography and history and to provide richer, higher-level content across the humanities curriculum.

Mechanisms of Use

Subject leads integrated Oak into schemes of work, reshaping slides to match departmental formats. The Head of Geography explained: *“I’ve now done three schemes of work using them, right on my fourth... the geography that is being delivered is almost like giving me a subject knowledge update.”* Teachers highlighted Oak’s model answers and feedback: *“The fact that they give model answers and feedback is what we try to do in our lessons.”* The Head of History noted the value of consistent reading resources and quizzes and suggested Oak videos could also support CPD for non-specialists. Pupils reported that Oak’s visuals and international case studies, such as Dollar Street, helped them understand comparisons between countries. Homework tied to Oak was seen as more straightforward: *“When we get homework, it’s linked to what we just learnt in lesson so it’s a lot easier to understand.”*

Outcomes

Teachers described geography teaching as more ambitious, incorporating themes like inequality and globalisation that they had not previously covered. Pupils demonstrated clearer understanding, stronger recall, and more engaged discussions: *“We could compare different countries from around the world, and everything made a lot more sense.”* Remaining barriers included wordy slides and a lack of challenge for the most able. It was also noted that not all staff were aware of Oak’s updated resources. A teacher suggested that Oak could communicate updates more proactively, for example, through regular newsletters.

Evaluative Reflection

Oak enriched content and raised expectations at Secondary School A. It was most effective where subject leads embedded and adapted materials, but less so where uptake was patchy or lessons felt overloaded. Pupils responded positively to visuals and structured checks; however, greater differentiation and staff awareness were noted as areas for improvement.

4.5 Quality of Oak's resources

Overview

Sequencing and structure

- Four in five users rated Oak's curriculum sequencing and structure, as well as teacher resources, as "high quality." Similar to last year, these scores were higher among more frequent users.

Benefits of Oak's resources

- Teachers and pupils described Oak's resources as clear, trustworthy and professionally presented. Resources were generally valued for their reliability, sequencing and engaging use of visuals.

Suggestions for improvement

- Limitations identified included lessons sometimes feeling too long or "slide-heavy", and gaps at KS4 in creative and technical subjects. This could have been due to the full curriculum package not being released by Oak at the time of these interviews. Tasks often required adaptation to meet the needs of both SEND pupils and higher-attaining pupils. In practice, teachers treated it as the bones of a lesson—a reliable structure to be adapted and built upon for their own classroom contexts.
- This year, Oak introduced new full curriculum plans and over 3500 lesson resources in 11 subjects (Music, Geography, PE, Art, DT, Cooking and Nutrition, RE, MFL, Computing, Citizenship, RSHE). Overall, this has contributed to higher quality scores compared with previous years, when the majority of usage relied on Oak's pandemic-created materials.

Key finding: Over three-quarters of users rated Oak's curriculum sequencing and structure as 'high' quality, and these scores increased with frequency of Oak usage.

Users were also asked to rate the quality of Oak's curriculum sequencing and structure, as well as its teacher resources (e.g., slides, quizzes, worksheets), on a scale from 1 (Very low) to 5 (Very high). Over three-quarters of users rated both areas as 'high' or 'very high', with 81% for curriculum sequencing and structure and 80% for teacher resources, as depicted in the graph below. These figures are considerably higher than last year, when 60% of users rated curriculum sequencing and structure as 'high' or 'very high', and 63% did so for teacher resources. This improvement suggests a positive response to enhancements made in both areas over the past year and can generally be attributed to the improved quality of new resources released this year.

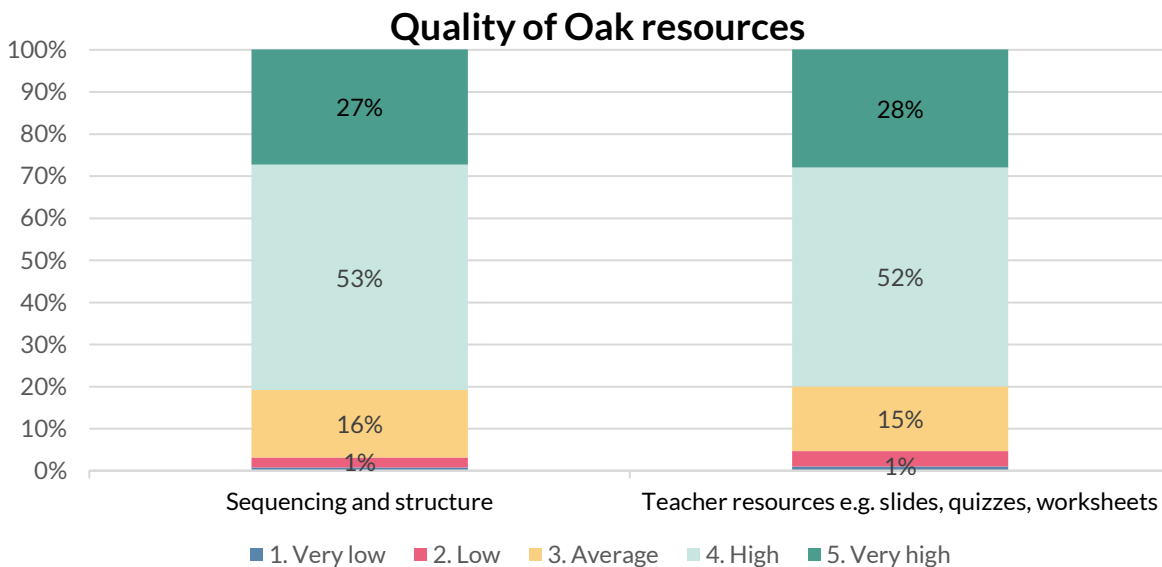


Figure 15: Oak users' rating of the sequencing and structure of curriculum resources and the quality of teacher resources on a scale from 1: Very low to 5: Very high; (n=716).

Quality scores improved with increased frequency of Oak usage, indicating that those who utilised Oak more frequently tended to perceive quality more positively than those who used it less often. New users (in the 2024/25 academic year) gave slightly higher average ratings than longer-term users (prior to the 2024/25 academic year): 4.2 compared to 4.0. This difference may reflect positive perceptions of newer Oak resources launched in the 2024/25 academic year, such as new lesson content and the AI-powered assistant, Aila. The 2024/25 ratings are also notably higher than those from 2023/24, when new users (those who began using Oak that year) reported an average score of 3.9 compared with 3.6 among longer-term users. This upward trend suggests that the recent improvements to Oak's offer, particularly the full introduction of the new curriculum plan and resources, are being well received by newer users.

This difference can be explained by several factors. First, new users, depending on when they began to use Oak resources, may hold a more positive bias towards the tool overall. In contrast, longer-term users might be more critical and have higher expectations based on their extended experience and previous applications. Second, the impressions of new users may be more positively influenced by the most recent updates and improvements to Oak resources. Finally, longer-term use may lead to a sense of repetition, which could have affected the satisfaction scores.

Over three-quarters (78%) of users reported seeing a model or idea in an Oak lesson that they applied in their own teaching. The graph below depicts the range of elements adopted by respondents, with the most common being Oak's visuals and diagrams (selected by 25%).

Type of Oak idea/model applied to own teaching

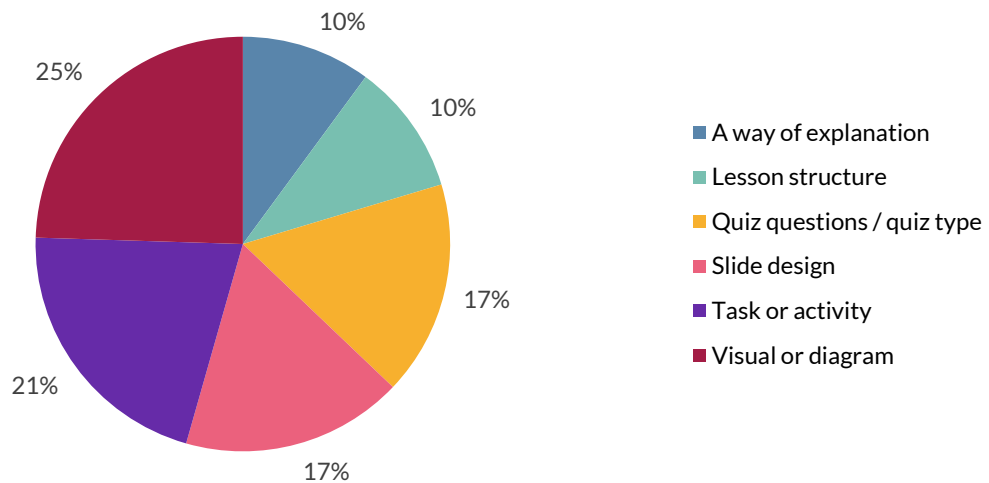


Figure 16: The type of resource that Oak users had applied to their own teaching (n=555).

The qualitative evidence supports the survey finding that Oak’s resources were generally rated highly for their reliability and sequencing. Teachers and pupils repeatedly emphasised that the resources were clear, trustworthy, and professionally presented. At the same time, they noted important limitations: lessons could be too long or “slide-heavy,” there were gaps at KS4 in creative and technical subjects, and tasks often required adaptation to meet the needs of both SEND and higher-attaining pupils.

- **Accuracy and trustworthiness**

Teachers valued Oak’s resources as factually correct and expert led. This was especially important for non-specialists or those teaching outside their main subject, who relied on Oak to provide confidence in explanations. Several contrasted Oak’s credibility with the mixed quality of alternatives such as TES, Twinkl, or generic AI outputs.


“I’m a biologist teaching physics. Oak is reassuring – I know it’s factually correct, written by someone who knows what they’re doing. I trust it more than TES.” (Secondary, Science)

- **Curriculum sequencing and structure**

A common theme was that teachers found Oak’s sequencing very useful. They felt it clearly outlined learning objectives and showed how to build knowledge step by step. Many described it as providing schools with a shared framework and national baseline, particularly in subjects such as science, mathematics, and geography. Pupils also said this structure made lessons easier to follow.

“With Oak, I could just click the exam board and know the lessons were spec-matched.” (Secondary, Science)

However, some noted that the progression between difficulty levels was uneven, and certain topics were pitched too quickly.

 *It went from a positive gradient to a negative gradient with only one example in between. The kids were lost.”* (Secondary, Maths Lead)

- **Clarity, visuals and Assessment for Learning (AFL)**

Teachers and pupils praised Oak’s visuals, diagrams and retrieval checks. The clarity of slides and the inclusion of dual coding and AFL routines (entry quizzes, exit tickets, quick-fire questions) were widely seen as strengths that kept lessons consistent. Pupils frequently mentioned that visuals and recap questions made content easier to understand and remember.

- **Adaptation and content volume**

Teachers frequently noted that Oak lessons were not usually delivered “off the shelf,” describing them instead as the “bones of a lesson” that required adaptation. Most saw this as a normal and expected part of planning, using Oak as a foundation to tailor lessons to their pupils, phase, and curriculum context. Common adjustments included trimming long slide decks, resequencing content, and adapting scaffolds for SEND pupils or adding stretch for higher attainers. In a few schools, pupils sometimes found lessons long and dense. While adaptation was rarely raised as a complaint in interviews, a small number of teachers suggested that some lessons attempted to cover too much content.

- **Gaps and limitations**


Teachers across contexts highlighted missing coverage at KS4 in Cooking and Nutrition, music, PSHE, and RE, as well as a lack of depth in some cultural topics. For some, this limited Oak’s usefulness for exam preparation or specialist teaching. However, these findings are likely due to the fact that these subjects were not fully released by Oak at the time of this research. Some also felt that pitch and style were occasionally inappropriate for older pupils:

 *Some KS4s said the cartoon characters felt babyish – they giggled at them.”*
(Secondary, Maths Director)

- **Influence on teacher practice and pupil learning**

Beyond content, Oak acted as a form of “embedded CPD.” Teachers reported that the built-in structure normalised evidence-informed pedagogy: chunked instruction, explicit learning objectives, and regular AFL. Many adopted new habits as a result.

Pupils also recognised benefits, particularly in recall and comprehension. They described visuals, structured recaps, and retrieval practices as supporting understanding, while still depending on teacher input for deeper explanation.

 *When we get homework, it’s linked to what we just learnt in the lesson, so it’s a lot easier to understand.”* (Pupil, Secondary, Case study)

Overall, teachers and pupils described Oak’s resources as trustworthy, well-sequenced, and supportive of AFL and recall, which gave both groups confidence in their use. The neutral and professional design contrasted positively with the clutter or errors of other platforms, making Oak a credible baseline for planning. However, Oak was rarely used wholesale. Teachers consistently described the need to adapt lessons—cutting down long decks, reordering content, scaffolding for students with SEND, and adding exam-style stretch for higher attainers. Quality was therefore experienced as conditional: strong as a starting point, but dependent on teacher curation to maximise impact.

Coverage gaps in KS4 and creative/technical subjects, as well as occasional pitch issues, limited Oak’s perceived universality. For many, Oak provided a trusted foundation, but not a finished product. In practice, teachers treated it as the bones of a lesson—a reliable structure to be adapted and built upon for their own classroom contexts.

4.6 Impact on the sector (non-users)

Overview

Non-user teachers felt they had sufficient existing resources or that Oak's curriculum was not aligned with their school's curriculum. Qualitative work suggested that Oak was not perceived as of poor quality, but rather as redundant alongside existing resources, and was still viewed as a tool for the pandemic rather than a mainstream offering. A minority reported limitations, including resource density, navigation issues, subject gaps (particularly at KS4 in music and food technology), and cultural resistance to adopting externally produced materials either because they were sceptical about change or felt it risked undermining creativity.

Key finding: The most common reasons respondents did not use Oak resources were that they already had sufficient materials and that Oak's offered curriculum did not align with their own.

Respondents who had not used Oak but had heard of it, or who had used it previously but then stopped, were asked to explain why they chose not to use Oak resources. The most frequently reported barrier was that staff already had a wide range of other resources for planning lessons (24%). A further 19% reported that Oak's curriculum did not align with their own.

This was followed by 17% of respondents who reported that they either preferred creating their own resources or that they did not know enough about Oak resources (17%). A smaller proportion (15%) felt that Oak resources were designed for emergency use only, reflecting a drop from 26% last year and a shift in perceptions, but also indicating the ongoing perception that Oak resources are more suited to their original use case than to recent applications. Very few respondents stated that they did not use Oak because they felt the resources were of low quality (9%) or because Oak was not permitted in their school (3%).

Reasons for not using Oak

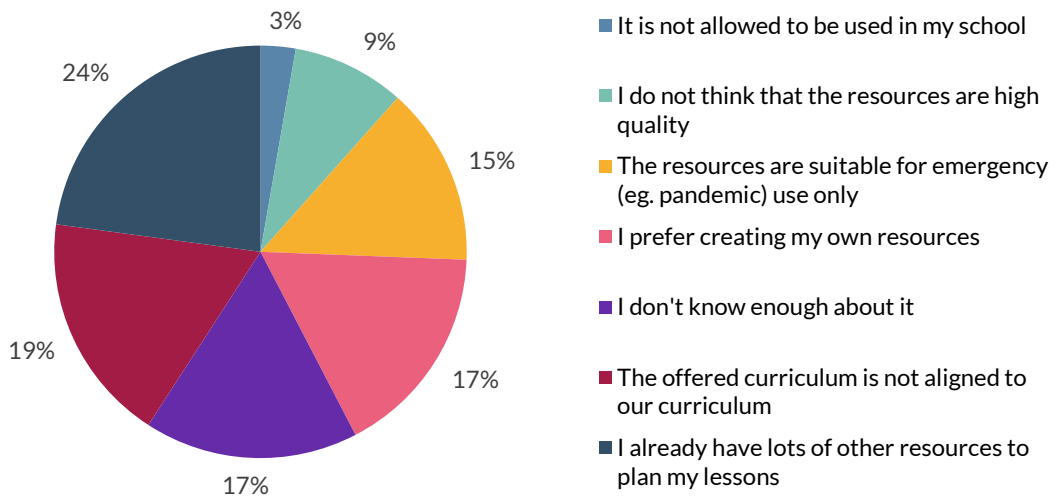


Figure 17: Reasons selected by non-Oak users in the current academic year 2024/25 who had heard of Oak previously as to why they chose not to use Oak resources, multiple choice selection (n=328).

A subgroup analysis of this outcome revealed additional insights. Primary respondents were more likely to say that Oak was only suitable for emergencies, that they already had numerous other resources, or that Oak was not aligned with their curriculum. This could be because Oak do not currently have a full Primary offer and is still releasing content in this area. In secondary schools, the top reasons for not using were having sufficient existing resources, a preference for creating their own materials, and a lack of alignment with the curriculum.

Non-users - reasons why Oak was not used by phase

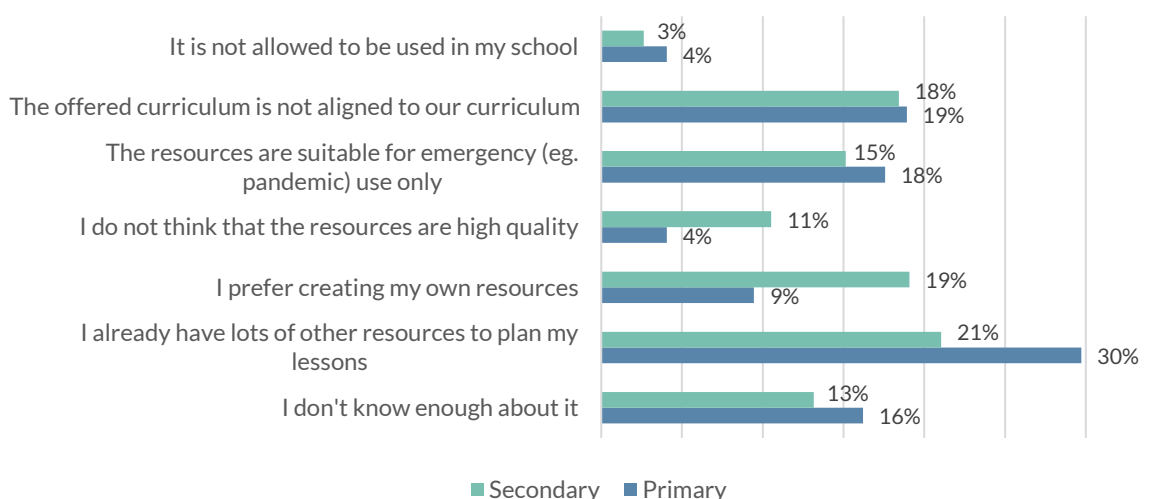


Figure 18: Reasons selected by non-Oak users in the current academic year 2024/25 who had heard of Oak previously as to why they chose not to use Oak resources, multiple choice selection, comparing primary (n=74) to secondary (n=152) respondents.

Respondents who responded with 'I do not think that the resources are high quality' or 'the offered curriculum is not aligned to our curriculum' as an explanation for not using Oak were asked to explain how they thought the resources could be improved. Common suggestions included the need for better alignment with specific curricula, improved academic rigour, a wider variety of resources (particularly for SEND pupils), and increased focus on creative arts subjects. Several respondents also suggested including sequenced activities and clearer progression steps, as well as providing additional support for students with lower abilities.

Qualitative interviews and case studies offer further insight into why some teachers did not utilise Oak resources, stopped using them, or engaged with them only minimally. While these views were less common in the dataset than those of regular Oak users, they either confirm the survey findings or offer important context for understanding them.

- **Already having sufficient or preferred resources**

A recurring theme was that experienced teachers often had large banks of personal or departmental resources that they trusted and felt met their needs. For them, Oak was unnecessary or redundant. In some cases, teachers also linked resource creation to their professional identity, preferring to build lessons themselves.

“ I've been teaching for 25 years... I brought quite a lot of other people's stuff with me as well. So I've come across Oak but not used it.” (Secondary, History)

- **Perceptions of Oak as an emergency or pandemic-only tool**

Some teachers continued to associate Oak primarily with the COVID-19 lockdown period, seeing it as an emergency resource rather than a long-term planning tool. This perception limited their willingness to adopt Oak more fully.

“ My first impression in lockdown was terrible... I thought they were just BBC Bitesize links. Only recently, I realised the new ones are incredible.” (Primary, Deputy Head)

- **Lack of curriculum alignment**

Another barrier was misalignment between Oak's sequencing and individual school or exam board requirements. Teachers described Oak as less useful if it did not match their specific curriculum needs.

- **Concerns about quality or appropriateness**

While very few teachers rejected Oak on quality grounds overall, some noted practical concerns that made resources difficult to use. These included slide decks that were too long for younger pupils or materials pitched at the wrong level, as noted earlier.

- **Navigation and usability issues**

A small number of teachers cited difficulties in finding and managing resources on the platform, which discouraged sustained use.

- **Cultural resistance**

Some comments reflected cultural attitudes towards resource use. Certain teachers expressed resistance to adopting externally produced materials, either because of scepticism about change or because they felt it risked undermining creativity.

“*I hate teachers who just download something and put it on the screen. I don't want staff using Oak as a lazy shortcut.*” (Primary, Teacher)

- **Suggestions for improvement**

Although less frequent, some non-users did offer constructive feedback on how Oak could be made more relevant. Suggestions included clearer progression steps, stronger scaffolding for lower-attaining pupils, and guidance on evaluating the quality of resources.

“*I feel like they [teachers] would need some guidance, possibly some ratings like what TES has.*” (Secondary, Food Technology)

These findings suggest that increasing uptake among non-users may depend less on improving baseline quality and more on addressing alignment, expanding subject coverage, improving navigation, and shifting Oak's reputation from “emergency provision” to a long-term, mainstream planning tool.

4.7 Impact on pupils

Overview

- ◆ **No significant differences were observed between Oak users and non-users in terms of pupils' overall academic performance.** Although survey results suggest that Oak users perceive more pupils as behind expectations compared to non-users, this cannot be confirmed without triangulation using (a) pupils' direct or indirect use of Oak resources and (b) pupil-level attainment data across different subjects.
- ◆ It is important to note that pupil outcomes cannot be attributed to the use of Oak. **The survey did not explicitly ask whether results were due to Oak**, and we lack pupil-level attainment data, information on how extensively Oak resources were used, pupil characteristics, and school-level factors. Consequently, any reported outcomes should not be interpreted as a direct effect of Oak.
- ◆ Although case studies or interview data did not specifically assess this outcome, they were helpful in understanding why and how Oak resources contribute to pupil outcomes. **Qualitative evidence suggests Oak's resources had the strongest impact on engagement, recall, and accessibility for lower-attaining pupils**, with predictable structure, scaffolds, visuals and AFL routines supporting confidence, vocabulary, and sometimes progress towards target grades. However, benefits were conditional: teachers needed to adapt content for different abilities (particularly for SEND pupils), and pupils reported that long lessons or dense slides reduced interactivity. Home ICT inequalities also limited access, and some teachers questioned whether resources always help build deep conceptual understanding.

Key finding: Oak users and non-users reported no significant differences in the perception of their pupils' academic performance.

Survey respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their pupils who were performing below expectations and the percentage of their pupils who were performing above expectations. The responses of Oak users and non-users were compared (using matched groups) to identify any differences in perceptions of pupils' academic performance.

On average, both users and non-users reported that 28% of their pupils were exceeding expectations. However, on average, users reported slightly more pupils behind expectations (37%) than non-users (34%). These results were not statistically significant. This finding, however, may not be due to the use of Oak in isolation, as other factors, such as pupil characteristics, school-level differences, or the number of other resources being used, may have influenced the number of pupils that teachers believe are behind expectations.

Percentage of pupils behind and exceeding expectations

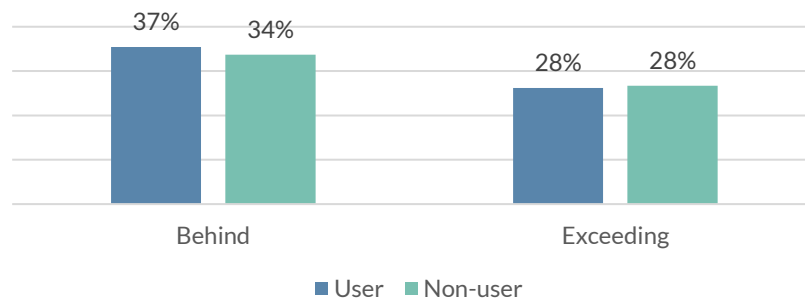


Figure 19: Average proportion of pupils that matched Oak users and non-users reported as being behind and exceeding expectations; User n=303, non-User n=303.

The qualitative research did not directly measure pupil outcomes but provided accounts of how Oak might have contributed to these outcomes by shaping engagement, recall, and providing access to learning in different contexts. Teachers and pupils described clear benefits in terms of structure, visuals, and recall routines, alongside challenges related to content density, limited differentiation, and inequalities in digital access.

- **Improved engagement and recall**

Across schools, Oak's predictable structure and use of quizzes, visuals and recaps were credited with improving pupil engagement and recall. Teachers described how AFL routines, such as starter challenges, entry/exit quizzes, and quick-fire questions, settled classes and reinforced key ideas. Pupils also highlighted the ability to pause videos (when using them at home) and revisit visuals as helpful for maintaining attention and consolidating understanding.

“The impact of those quizzes has been that the boys have settled really quickly at the beginning of the class, allowing for greater coverage of material.” (Secondary, English tutor)

- **Closer attainment to grade expectations**

Some teachers reported that Oak's sequencing supported pupils in progressing more consistently towards their targets. Lessons were seen as providing a clear pathway through difficult topics by breaking them into manageable steps. While anecdotal, these perceptions suggested that Oak provided pupils with a more stable route to achieving expected outcomes.

- **Vocabulary and conceptual understanding**

Teachers frequently cited Oak's role in strengthening vocabulary and subject-specific terminology, particularly in primary settings. Recap routines and shared slides across year groups created consistency, which pupils noticed in their own explanations.

“The pros have been that the vocabulary has improved and the terminology... there's a clear structure throughout the school as well with all using the same Oak resources.” (Secondary English lead, Interview)

- **Support for SEND and lower-attaining pupils**

Oak's chunked structure, checks, and scaffolds were described as well-suited to SEND and lower-attaining pupils. Teachers noted how routines such as vocabulary recap, modelling, and the use of "structure strips" helped these pupils succeed more independently. Pupils also reported that retrieval activities supported understanding.

- **Challenges in stretching high attainers**

By contrast, teachers repeatedly reported that Oak's tasks were "doable and confidence-building," but not sufficiently challenging for higher-attaining pupils. Many said they supplemented Oak with exam-style questions or extension activities to provide a challenge. Pupils themselves described some quizzes as too easy.

- **Engagement and behaviour management**

Teachers valued Oak's videos and AFL routines as tools for classroom management. Quizzes and visuals provided pupils with something immediate to engage with, helping to maintain their focus. However, content overload in some lessons led to restlessness, particularly in younger classes, with pupils describing lessons as overly teacher-led.

- **Active learning habits**

Several teachers noted that Oak's resources encouraged more active participation. The use of whiteboards, retrieval starters and built-in AFL checks pushed pupils to contribute rather than remain passive. Some also described peer- and self-assessment enabled by Oak's answer slides, which reduced marking and promoted responsibility.

“Even in Year 10s who'd been quite passive – sitting there nodding – having those slides with mini whiteboards made them active learners.” (Secondary, Science)

- **Concerns about depth of learning**

Finally, one teacher explicitly cautioned that Oak's resources risked supporting procedural knowledge rather than deeper conceptual understanding. They noted pupils could achieve high marks without fully grasping underlying concepts. A small number of others described adapting materials to create more discussion or application opportunities, but these comments were isolated within an overall positive picture.

“Might get a grade 9 in GCSE, but there are kids that can get a grade 9 who don't understand the difference between discrete and continuous data.” (Secondary, Maths)

The qualitative evidence suggests that Oak's resources had the strongest impact on engagement, recall, and accessibility for lower-attaining pupils. Teachers and pupils alike valued the predictable structure, scaffolds, visuals, and AFL routines that promoted recall and fostered a positive classroom climate. These features were often linked to improved confidence and vocabulary development, and in some cases, to pupils' perceptions of being closer to their target grades. However, the benefits were conditional. Teachers consistently

described the need to trim overloaded content, supplement tasks to stretch higher-attaining pupils, and provide additional scaffolding for pupils with SEND. Pupils themselves reported that while visuals and retrieval helped them learn, overly long lessons or dense slides reduced interactivity and practice time. Inequalities in home ICT access limited the reach of digital resources outside school, and a small number of teachers questioned whether Oak always secured deep conceptual understanding.

4.8 Enablers and barriers to outcomes

The following sub-section draws on themes and insights from qualitative data (interviews and case studies) to answer the research question: What, if any, were the most important success factors or barriers that enabled or prevented these outcomes from being achieved?

Contextual Success Factors (Enablers)	Contextual Barriers (Constraints)
<p>Budget pressures and free access: In a context of squeezed school budgets, Oak’s free availability made it a realistic option compared with paid platforms.</p>	<p>Persistent COVID associations: Early negative impressions (“just Bitesize links”) left a stigma among a subset of staff who still viewed Oak as an emergency tool, although this group is now smaller than it was in previous years.</p>
<p>Peer advocacy and leadership direction: Uptake spread when deputies, mentors, or subject leads actively signposted Oak; central distribution (shared drives, spreadsheets) made access seamless.</p>	<p>School branding and IT policies: MATs requiring slide templates or blocking downloads eroded efficiency gains and limited day-to-day usability.</p>
<p>System fragmentation of resources: In a crowded landscape of TES, Twinkl, Seneca, and others, Oak’s coherent, DfE-backed offer gave schools confidence to adopt a national baseline.</p>	<p>Device and connectivity inequalities: Pupils without home access had to queue for computer rooms or missed catch-up entirely, constraining equitable outcomes.</p>
<p>Shortage of subject specialists: non-specialists covering science, computing, or humanities relied on Oak’s trusted explanations, raising confidence and accuracy.</p>	<p>Coverage gaps in the curriculum: Unreleased KS4 and creative/technical subjects (such as music, food technology, RE, and PSHE) meant Oak could not serve as a full curriculum backbone.</p>
<p>High pressure on staff time: Trainees and ECTs with no resource bank, as well as teachers managing multiple exam groups, were especially receptive to Oak’s ready sequences.</p>	<p>Cultural resistance in some staff groups: Experienced teachers with established resource banks saw Oak as undermining craft identity or encouraging “lazy teaching.”</p>
<p>Sector push for evidence-informed practice: Oak’s alignment with explicit instruction, cognitive load theory, and retrieval practice resonated with current CPD trends, aiding legitimacy.</p>	<p>Lesson density and age appropriateness: Over-long primary slide decks and “babyish” KS4 visuals undermined classroom engagement, limiting pupil-level outcomes.</p>

Trust/MAT moves toward coherence: Leaders seeking consistency across schools used Oak to align sequencing and reduce duplication, magnifying workload benefits at scale.	Awareness and performance of AI tools: Oak’s Aila was slow and narrow compared to mainstream AI, limiting its potential as an enabler of adaptation.
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Table 3: Contextual success factors and barriers affecting realisation of outcomes

The main contextual enablers were system-wide and organisational. System-wide factors included conditions across the sector that made Oak easier to adopt – for example, free access at a time of budget pressure, shortages of subject specialists, and Oak’s coherent, nationally aligned offer in a fragmented resource landscape. Organisational factors came from within schools and trusts, including peer advocacy, leadership encouragement, moves towards consistent sequencing across schools, and alignment with current training and CPD priorities, all of which helped to embed the use.

The main contextual barriers were practical and cultural. Practical barriers related to the working environment – such as curriculum coverage gaps, IT or branding restrictions, and unequal access to devices and connectivity for pupils. Cultural barriers referred to staff attitudes and perceptions, including lingering COVID-era associations of Oak as an “emergency” tool, scepticism among some experienced teachers, and concerns about lesson length or the age appropriateness of visuals.

Case Study: Secondary School B

Context

Secondary School B is a mixed secondary and sixth-form school with approximately 800 pupils. Ofsted rated it “Good” in 2023; however, attainment remains below local and national averages, with a Progress 8 score of -0.36 and only 49% achieving a grade 5 or higher in English and maths GCSEs. Around 30% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Oak was primarily adopted to support pupils who were absent due to exclusion, illness, or persistent non-attendance.

Mechanisms of Use

The school created a central Google spreadsheet of Oak lessons, organised by year and term, alongside BBC Bitesize and other relevant links. Pupils were issued Chromebooks and headphones. This system was shared with families to ensure consistent provision, and leaders reported fewer parental complaints as a result: *“We used to have to do it on paper... now we get fewer complaints from parents.”* Staff valued the interactive video format, which combined teaching input with questions: *“It’s much better when you’ve got the video, you can watch it, pause it, engage with it.”* Students themselves noted: *“I like the fact that there was a video, and then the question... it wasn’t just sitting and reading.”*

Oak, however, was rarely used in mainstream lessons. Teachers saw it as a backup for alternative provision. Barriers included a lack of monitoring: *“You don’t get that information on whether they’re used.”* Staff also highlighted the need for paper-based alternatives for SEN pupils or families reluctant to use screens.

Outcomes

Oak helped ensure that pupils excluded or absent continued to access structured learning, reducing gaps and maintaining consistency. Teachers reported that Oak was particularly valuable for non-specialists, who could rely on the structured videos and lesson materials to deliver content outside their expertise. Yet engagement was uneven, and without reliable tracking or integration into mainstream lessons, its broader impact was limited.

Evaluative Reflection

Secondary School B used Oak effectively as a safety net for inclusion and continuity. Leaders put systems in place to share Oak lessons consistently and provided pupils with devices, which made access easier. Pupils valued the clarity of videos and quizzes. However, Oak’s role remained narrow, with weak tracking and limited classroom integration, preventing a wider impact.

5. Conclusion

The following sub-sections will use survey findings and qualitative data to answer the research question:

To what extent has Oak National Academy achieved its desired impact for:

- *Teachers (workload and expertise)*
- *Schools (curriculum quality and resilience)*
- *Pupils (continuous access and attainment)*

Teachers (workload & expertise)

The evaluation found that Oak had a broadly positive impact on teachers' workload and wellbeing. Oak's impact increased with the frequency of use. Overall, 85% of teachers reported that Oak had a positive impact on their workload. Most users (67%) reported that Oak had reduced their workload, saving them a median of 4 hours per week. Among those who said Oak had no impact on workload (29%), most (61%) still noted that it shifted their time towards more valuable pupil-focused activities. Only a small proportion (4%) felt that Oak increased their workload, which, as other findings suggest, may be linked to the time required to adapt to a new system and tailor Oak materials to teachers' specific needs.

Additional evidence suggested that Oak users felt their workload was reduced. Users reported working 2.5 hours less per week than non-users, a finding that was consistent across all groups, including those who used Oak more frequently, as well as among middle and senior leaders. Classroom teachers who used Oak, however, reported working more hours than non-user teachers. This could be because Oak users are more likely to be Early Career Teachers still developing their expertise, or it may relate to the types of activities they use Oak for, such as time-intensive mainstream tasks like lesson planning and preparation.

Despite this, Oak users were more likely to describe their workload as acceptable (25% compared to 22%). However, they were less likely to report completing work within contracted hours. **This contradiction between perceived and actual workload suggests that while Oak helps teachers feel their workload is more manageable overall, they may still spend extra time outside contracted hours,** as they would need to adapt resources and engage more deeply with materials, thereby enhancing the quality of classroom delivery. This may be particularly true for early-career teachers. Another possible explanation is that teachers with heavier workloads may be more inclined to adopt Oak in search of additional support. Finally, it may also reflect a gap between teachers' perceptions of their workload and their actual workload. Further research is needed to clarify how Oak usage influences this relationship and the mechanisms through which it may do so.

Research in education indicates that teacher wellbeing and staff retention are closely related to perceptions of workload. **Consistent with this, we found that, overall, Oak users had a better wellbeing score than non-users** and were less likely to anticipate leaving education within two years (8% compared to 23%).

Contribution to teachers

- ◆ **Reducing workload and freeing capacity:** Teachers consistently described Oak as removing the burden of starting from a blank page. Ready-made slide decks, worksheets, quizzes, and videos provided what many called the “bones of a lesson,” meaning teachers could avoid repetitive formatting and resource creation. For trainees, early career teachers, and non-specialists, this was transformative, saving multiple hours a week and reducing stress. The time saved could be reinvested in circulating during lessons, checking understanding, or differentiating for groups of pupils.
- ◆ **Improving expertise and confidence:** Beyond time savings, Oak acted as an embedded professional development. Its clear sequencing, explicit objectives, and built-in AFL routines (such as starter challenges, retrieval questions, and exit tickets) modelled evidence-based pedagogy. Teachers reported adopting these habits in their own planning, even when not using Oak slides directly. This reinforced approaches such as chunked instruction and regular formative checks. Non-specialists valued Oak’s accuracy, which gave them confidence to deliver lessons outside their usual subject area. In this way, Oak strengthened teacher expertise and supported system resilience in contexts of patchy subject coverage.

Schools (curriculum quality & resilience)

Oak users were typically positive about the quality of Oak’s resources and had utilised them in various ways. For example, the majority of users (61%) reported using Oak to make changes to their curriculum, with 39% swapping or adding lessons, 13% altering curriculum sequencing, and 9% using Oak as their primary curriculum. The majority of users (63%) reported that Oak improved the quality of their lesson planning and delivery, and a similar proportion stated that they gained greater confidence in curriculum design as a result of using Oak. More frequent engagement with Oak’s resources helped maximise their benefits in the curriculum, lesson planning, and delivery.

Users typically reported that Oak’s curriculum sequencing and structure, as well as its resources, were of high quality. Those who used Oak more frequently were more likely to have more positive perceptions of quality than those who used it less often.

Non-users offered several reasons as to why they had chosen not to use Oak. These included the availability of other resources and their lack of alignment with the school’s curriculum. A smaller proportion of staff (15% compared to 26% last year) reported that they thought Oak resources were suitable for emergency use only, reflecting a slight but ongoing perception that Oak resources are more suited to their original use case than to recent applications.

Contribution to schools

- ◆ **Enhancing curriculum quality and coherence:** At departmental and trust level, Oak provided a national baseline that could be used to fill gaps or inspire redesign. Some schools adopted Oak wholesale for entire Key Stage 3 schemes, while others treated it as a reference point for sequencing. Leaders described how Oak created consistency across

year groups, particularly in vocabulary and progression. This curricular glue reduced duplication and provided teams with a shared framework to build upon.

- ◆ **Building resilience and continuity:** Oak also contributed to system resilience. Its ready-to-use resources were sometimes used as cover lessons and to address pupil absence. Non-specialist staff could deliver Oak lessons with minimal preparation, providing continuity when colleagues were away. Leaders also highlighted Oak's role in ensuring disadvantaged schools had access to high-quality resources at no cost, supporting equity in a funding-constrained environment. However, barriers such as subject gaps at Key Stage 4, school template requirements, and lingering perceptions of Oak as a "pandemic tool" reduced its uptake in some contexts.

Pupils (continuous access and attainment)

Oak users and non-users reported no significant differences in the perception of their pupils' academic performance. This suggests that, **while Oak has had clear positive effects on teacher outcomes such as workload, wellbeing, and curriculum practice, these findings do not show any observable improvement in pupil outcomes as reported by teachers.** However, it is not possible to determine whether this is related to Oak, as a range of factors beyond Oak use influence pupil outcomes.

Contribution to pupils

- ◆ **Improving engagement and recall:** Teachers and pupils reported that Oak's clear structure, visuals, and regular AFL checks improved the classroom environment and recall of knowledge. Quizzes and starter tasks helped settle classes quickly and kept pupils active rather than passive. Pupils noted that visuals and dual coding made abstract concepts easier to grasp, while retrieval practice helped vocabulary "stick."
- ◆ **Supporting continuity and equity:** Oak resources were used for homework, revision, and catch-up, giving pupils continued access to lessons outside the classroom. This was particularly valued in contexts of absence or exclusion. However, digital inequities limited access for some, and teachers often highlighted that independent use still required teacher mediation.
- ◆ **Limits around stretch and engagement:** The main limitation identified was that independent tasks were often too easy for higher-attaining pupils, requiring teachers to add exam-style or extended activities. Primarily, long slide decks risked restlessness and reduced interactivity. Teachers were cautious in attributing attainment gains directly to Oak, but many noted improved recall and smoother progression in specific units.

How exactly has Oak National Academy contributed to these improvements?

According to qualitative evidence, Oak's main role was to provide a structured and reliable baseline of curriculum materials that could be used flexibly. The mechanisms through which Oak worked were time savings in planning, modelling of pedagogy, and provision of continuity and scaffolding. Outcomes were strongest where teachers had limited prior resources or were teaching out of specialism, but were moderated by subject gaps, the need for adaptation, and issues of stretch and engagement. In contribution analysis terms:

- **Context:** Teachers under workload pressure, schools seeking curriculum coherence, pupils with uneven access and attainment.
- **Mechanisms:** Oak provided ready-made, curriculum-aligned lessons; modelled sequencing and pedagogy; offered AFL routines and scaffolds; and created a trusted baseline for coverage.
- **Outcomes:** Teachers experienced reduced workload and greater professional confidence; schools achieved stronger curriculum alignment and resilience; pupils engaged more actively, recalled knowledge more securely, and SEND pupils in particular benefited from scaffolding.

The evidence also shows that outcomes were conditional. Gains were strongest among early-career teachers, non-specialists, and schools without robust existing resources. They were weaker where subject gaps, adaptation burdens, or access constraints reintroduced workload and limited Oak's reach. High-attaining pupils often required additional stretch, and younger learners sometimes disengaged with long or dense lessons.

Overall, Oak contributed to improvements not by acting as a finished product, but by supplying a reliable foundation on which teachers could build. Its contribution was most evident in the way it freed capacity, modelled effective pedagogy, and supported continuity and access across schools.

Domain	Context (starting point)	Mechanism (what Oak provided)	Outcome (what changed)
Teachers – workload	ECTs and non-specialists without resource banks; teachers under pressure	Ready-made slide decks, worksheets, quizzes, and videos	Reduced planning time; freed capacity for feedback, circulation, differentiation
Teachers – expertise & confidence	Teachers are unsure about pedagogy routines or teaching outside of their specialism.	Modelled sequencing, explicit objectives, AFL routines, fact-checked explanations	Increased professional confidence; adoption of AFL and explicit instruction; safer teaching out of specialism

Schools – curriculum quality	Departments/trusts needing coherence and progression	Spec-aligned sequences and baseline lessons are used to swap/add or re-sequence	Stronger curriculum alignment, clearer progression, reduced duplication
Schools – resilience	Schools with staff absence or high deprivation	Ready-to-use lessons/videos for cover and catch-up; free access to high-quality materials	Continuity for absent staff/pupils; improved equity in resourcing
Pupils – engagement & recall	Mixed-attainment classes; varied starting knowledge	Predictable structure, visuals, retrieval starters, AFL checkpoints	Improved classroom climate, stronger recall, clearer understanding of new concepts
Pupils – stretch for high attainers	High-attaining pupils needing challenge	Base Oak tasks supplemented with exam-style questions or extended tasks	Challenge maintained, though additional teacher adaptation required
Pupils – equity & continuity	Pupils absent/excluded or working from home	Digital lessons, videos, and homework linked to class content	Catch-up and revision opportunities, though uneven access due to login/connectivity issues

Table 4: Contribution analysis pathways

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Supporting our purpose driven partners to make better decisions using high quality evidence.

