

# News<sup>®</sup> wise

## Evaluation report 2021-22

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## About NewsWise

The Guardian Foundation, the National Literacy Trust and the PSHE Association developed the NewsWise programme in 2018, which is based on a shared mission to create a generation of news-literate children. The programme aims to empower children with the skills and knowledge to engage with news, to feel confident to ask questions and challenge misinformation, and to share their own values and opinions in a fair, responsible and truthful way.



Credit: Leon Edler/ NewsWise

NewsWise provides free high-quality cross-curricular news-literacy education resources, experiences and support for schools and families. These include teacher training and webinars, newsroom-style pupil workshops, opportunities for pupils to meet and hear from journalism professionals, and lesson plans and online resources including activities for families. Funding from organisations including Google allows the programme to be offered free to all settings teaching 9- to 11-year-olds across the UK.

In 2019, the NewsWise programme received a Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Award from UNESCO<sup>1</sup>; in 2020, a Nesta Democracy Pioneers award<sup>2</sup>; and in 2021, a WAN-IFRA European Digital Media award<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/transformational-initiatives-celebrated-global-media-and-information-literacy-awards-2019>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/meet-19-pioneers-shaking-democracy/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://wan-ifra.org/2021/07/wan-ifra-announces-2021-european-digital-media-awards-winners/>

## Executive summary

This report evaluates the impact of the fourth year of NewsWise, which ran from August 2021 to July 2022. This period continued to be affected by educational disruption in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the majority of workshop delivery still taking place online, but there was a return to in-person delivery where possible. Teacher training continued to take place online, meaning that the NewsWise team was able to train teachers from an array of locations across the UK at the same time.

New developments in year four included the establishment of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) sessions for subject specialists in Primary English and Primary PSHE/Citizenship; webinar training on talking to children about the news (with a focus on the war in Ukraine) alongside the collation of resources relating to wellbeing and news; and the adaptation of NewsWise resources and teacher guidance to allow them to be accessed by students with special educational needs in the secondary age range.

During the academic year 2021-2022, the NewsWise programme reached **1,931** pupils<sup>4</sup> in **36** primary schools in areas of disadvantage across the UK, giving them the chance to learn about news, improve their news-literacy skills and prepare their own news reports. In addition, **61** teachers received pre-project online training, **199** accessed webinars and **217** took part in other online training events. **53** media-literacy educators and journalism students were trained in how to teach media literacy effectively and to learn about how journalists can support young people's media literacy. The team also delivered a family workshop for **20** children and **16** adult family members. Finally, **49,884** free resources were downloaded, including curriculum-based lesson plans, classroom materials, SEND resources and family activity packs. This maintains the high levels of digital engagement seen in the previous year.

As this report shows, pupils taking part in NewsWise showed increased interest in the news, greater critical engagement, and improved skills when navigating news. The percentage interested in news almost tripled (from 22.3% to 65.3%) following participation in the NewsWise workshop. Similarly, the percentage who said they would check whether a news story came from a person or organisation they trusted more than doubled (34.0% vs. 72.2%) over the course of the programme. While half (49.2%) of pupils were able to correctly identify two or more stories out of three in the pre-NewsWise quiz, this increased to more than 2 in 3 (68.0%) after taking part in NewsWise. Furthermore, just 3 in 10 (31.1%) pupils felt it was easy to tell if a news story was trustworthy before taking part, but this increased to almost 9 in 10 (88.2%) after NewsWise. This compares with 2 in 5 (61.8%) of same-age pupils across the UK<sup>5</sup>. Notably, teachers told us that taking part in the NewsWise programme had also supported both pupils' wellbeing and their civic engagement. Almost 3 in 4 (73.7%) agreed that the NewsWise programme had helped decrease pupils' anxiety about news stories, while 3 in 5 (63.2%) felt that it increased pupils' motivation to make a difference in their community.

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<sup>4</sup> 1,770 pupils through workshops (59 virtual and 11 in-person) and a further 161 who took part in the overall NewsWise programme but were absent on the day of the workshop.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey 2022 (n = 9.369).

## Summary of key findings

### Pupils have improved news-literacy behaviour

- At the end of the programme, the percentage of participating pupils who said they would check whether a news story came from a news company or person they trusted more than doubled, from **34.0%** in pre-project surveys to **72.2%** in post-project surveys. In addition, more than double the percentage of pupils said they would check whether a news story was reported by other news companies (**28.4% to 65.3%**).

### Pupils have increased news-literacy skills

- The percentage of pupils who were able to identify whether news stories were fake or real improved over the course of the programme. Before NewsWise, half (**49.2%**) of pupils scored two points or more out of three in a news quiz; this increased to more than 2 in 3 (**68.0%**) at the end of the programme. At the same time, the percentage of pupils who got no correct answers halved, from 13.6% pre- to 6.4% post-NewsWise.

### Pupils are more confident navigating the news

- Just 3 in 10 (**31.1%**) pupils said they felt it was 'easy' or 'very easy' to tell whether a news story was trustworthy before taking part in NewsWise, but this increased to almost 9 in 10 (**88.2%**) after the programme. This compares with **61.8%** of same-age pupils across the UK (17.0% 'very' and 44.8% 'quite' easy)<sup>6</sup>.
- After taking part in NewsWise, 3 in 4 (**76.8%**) pupils believed they were better at telling the difference between fact and opinion, while 7 in 10 (**69.6%**) said they now think about whose points of view have been included in a news story.

### Pupils have increased interest in the news

- The number of pupils who said they were interested in the news almost tripled following participation in the NewsWise workshop, with the percentage of pupils interested in the news rising from **22.3%** to **65.3%**.

### Pupils have an increased critical awareness of the elements of trustworthy news

- After taking part in NewsWise, the percentage of pupils who felt that news should be truthful increased from **24.8%** to **55.5%**. Similarly, the percentage of pupils who believed news stories should be balanced rose from **46.6%** to **57.0%**.

### Teachers felt that NewsWise had an impact on pupils' civic engagement and wellbeing

- 9 in 10 (**89.5%**) teachers agreed that taking part in NewsWise increased pupils' engagement with local, national or global issues, while 3 in 5 (**63.2%**) agreed it had increased pupils' motivation to make a difference in their community.
- 3 in 4 (**73.7%**) teachers agreed that taking part in NewsWise helped decrease pupils' anxiety about news stories.

### Teachers found the webinars and training to be of high quality

- **99.1%** of teachers rated the teacher webinars as 'excellent' (70.2%) or 'good' (28.9%).

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<sup>6</sup> The Annual Literacy Survey reached 62,193 respondents aged 8 to 18 in early 2022. Comparison made with 9,369 Key Stage 2 pupils (aged 8 to 11), 7,486 of whom answered a question about news-literacy confidence. 17.0% found it 'very easy', 44.8% 'quite easy', 29.5% 'quite difficult' and 8.8% 'very difficult' to tell whether a news story was trustworthy.

- All (**100.0%**) teachers rated the NewsWise online pre-project training as ‘excellent’ (73.1%) or ‘good’ (26.9%) and **100.0%** felt more confident in supporting pupils’ news literacy. **96.2%** of teachers agree that their understanding of news literacy improved.
- More than **9 in 10** (96.8%) taking part in ITT training felt confident to deliver news teaching in an exciting way and intended to integrate the learning into their future teaching practice, and **94.0%** rated the training as ‘excellent’ (48.5%) or ‘good’ (45.5%).

## Introduction

Over the last decade, the rise of digital technology has brought unprecedented change in how news is created and experienced. The impact of misinformation has been a growing concern, with calls for children and young people’s critical-, media- and news-literacy skills to be improved to help them navigate the contemporary news environment.



Credit: Leon Edler/ NewsWise

Indeed, research conducted by the National Literacy Trust in 2017 found that only 2% of UK pupils surveyed could correctly identify fake and real news stories. In addition, pupils from higher-income households performed better than those from lower-income households<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the National Literacy Trust’s Annual Literacy Survey 2019 indicated that pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) had lower levels of confidence and engagement with news than their more-advantaged peers<sup>8</sup>, suggesting that the targeted approach taken by NewsWise provides much-needed resources for children who can benefit the most from support in this area.

## The NewsWise project model

The NewsWise programme was designed to respond to findings from a report from The Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in Schools, which was run by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy and the National Literacy Trust in 2018<sup>9</sup>. It provides expert teacher training along with workshops and resources to develop children’s news-literacy skills and give them authentic opportunities to get involved in the production of news<sup>10</sup>. In particular, the NewsWise workshop creates a ‘newsroom’ experience in schools, with pupils taking on editorial roles, identifying trustworthy stories and creating news reports in real time. A 2021 review of media-literacy interventions noted that ‘system 2’ (slower, critical-rational) thinking, evaluation strategies and knowledge of the operation of news industries have “consistently been found to have positive effects on the ability to critically

<sup>7</sup> [National Literacy Trust \(2018\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Cappellini & Picton \(2019\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [National Literacy Trust \(2018\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> See also [Picton and Teravainen \(2017\)](#)

engage with misinformation”<sup>11</sup>. Support for all of these elements of critical engagement are present in the NewsWise programme.

## Outputs

In the fourth year of the project (August 2021 – July 2022), NewsWise reached a total of **1,931** pupils and **61** teachers in **36** primary schools. Since its inception, the NewsWise programme has reached **10,000** children, **188** schools, **2,719** teachers and **123** parents or carers across the UK.

Schools are invited to take part in the NewsWise programme based on their level of need. To take part in a NewsWise workshop and teacher training, a school must:

- Have a higher-than-average percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)
- Be located in an area of high literacy vulnerability<sup>12</sup>
- Be located in an area that is typically under-represented in the mainstream media

The average percentage of pupils eligible for FSM across the **36** primary schools that participated in NewsWise was **32.97%**, well above the national average of 20.8%<sup>13</sup>. **Figure 1** shows the distribution of schools visited. NewsWise was delivered in primary schools in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, achieving a diverse geographical spread.

### Figure 1: NewsWise reach in 2021-22

Thanks to funding from organisations including Google, digital NewsWise resources such as posters, tips and curriculum-based lesson plans are available free to every primary school in the UK. This has enabled the project to reach many more children who may not otherwise have had an opportunity to take part in a project like NewsWise, including those from areas of socioeconomic deprivation. To date, 143,926 free online resources have been downloaded, including curriculum-based lesson plans, classroom materials, SEND resources and family activity packs.



NewsWise reach in 2021-22

<sup>11</sup> [Edwards et al., \(2021\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> See [National Literacy Trust \(2017\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> N.B. this was the 2021 national average – see [Department for Education \(2021\)](#)

## Evaluation methodology

### NewsWise objectives

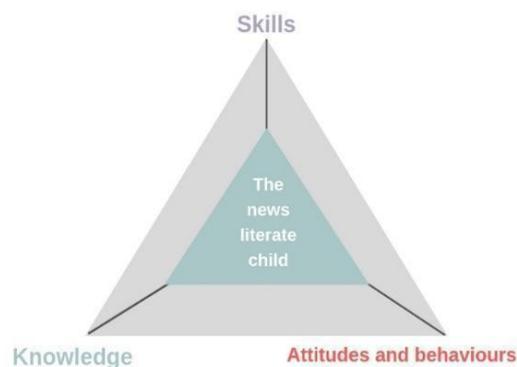
NewsWise aims to reach children from a diverse range of communities in order to:

- **Deepen their understanding of why and how news is produced.** Children will:
  - Learn about reasons for news (e.g. information sharing, income generation, other agendas)
  - Develop their awareness of different aspects of news (factual, opinion, regulated, unregulated), different news formats and media outlets, and what journalists and news producers do (fact checking, editing, etc.)
- **Enable them to navigate the news through active and critical engagement**
  - Active engagement (e.g. experience of learning about news, interest in news)
  - Critical engagement: skills and confidence (e.g. ability to think critically about news stories [i.e. to assess, analyse and evaluate] and confidence to question authority)
- **Empower them to tell their own news stories**
  - Increased ability and confidence to create and share their own news

Based on the *Read On. Get On. (ROGO) Index*<sup>14</sup>, a robust measure of children's reading at age 11, the NewsWise programme evaluation uses a tripartite model to integrate the elements that contribute to the development of a news-literate child (see **Figure 2**). These consist of:

- **News literacy skills** (including understanding what news is and how it is produced, how to find news, what 'good' news reporting looks like, signs of 'fake' news, and recognising fact, opinion, rumour and speculation)
- **Affective processes** (such as attitudes, confidence and motivation)
- **News-literacy behaviours** (engagement with the news, including consumption, questioning, checking, discussing etc.)

**Figure 2: The tripartite model of news literacy**

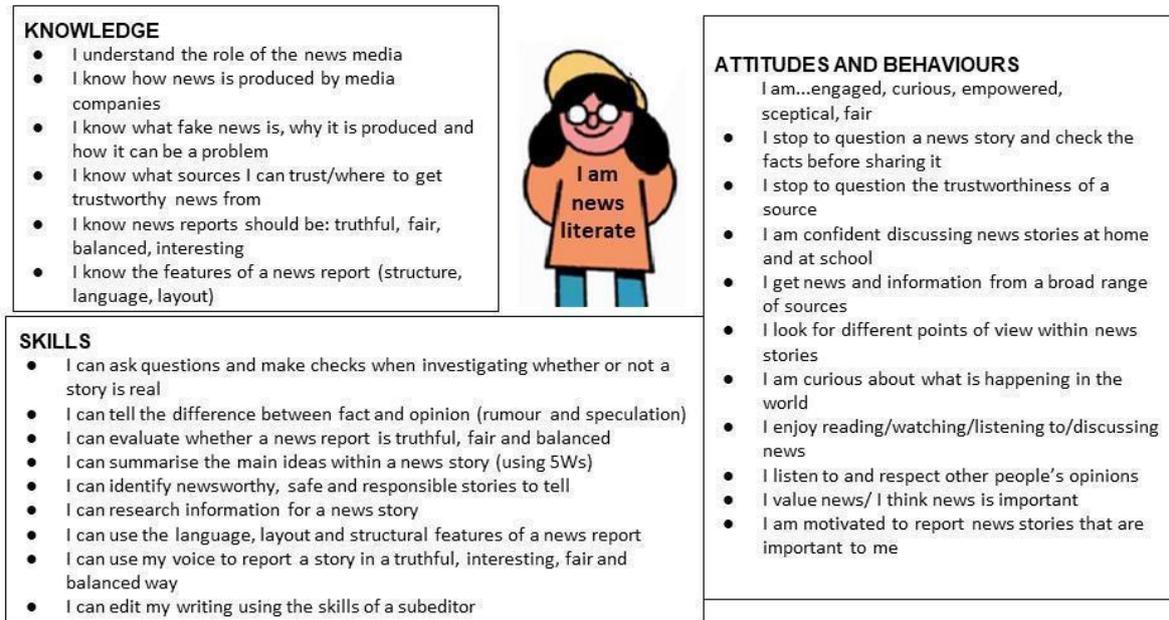


This model reflects the complementary roles of affective and behavioural aspects in supporting news literacy skills, and also considers that some aspects may change more visibly

<sup>14</sup> <https://literacytrust.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/read-on-get-on/rogo-index/>

within the life of the intervention than others. Elements of each aspect are described in more detail below (see **Figure 3**) through the concept of the ‘news-literate child’ developed by the NewsWise programme team in early 2019.

**Figure 3: The news-literate child**



To evaluate outcomes reached through workshops and resources, changes in news literacy are measured over the course of the project through child self-perception, teacher perception and skills testing (see **Figure 4**).

**Figure 4: Evaluation time points**



Affective and behavioural elements are evaluated through survey questions designed to explore awareness of topics such as how news is created, news-literacy behaviours and confidence to question the news. Skills are evaluated through a short news quiz comprising three examples of real and fake news at pre- and post-testing points. The design of these measures was informed by validated approaches to measuring children’s news literacy<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. [Hobbs and Frost \(2003\)](#); [Hobbs and Frost \(2017\)](#)

## Sample

We received 1,169 responses to the pupil pre-NewsWise survey and quiz, an acceptable response rate in relation to 1,931 overall programme participants (60.5%). Post-workshop survey responses were received from 689 pupils. Quiz responses from 262 pupils were matched pre- and post-NewsWise. The response rate for the pupil post-NewsWise survey administered several weeks after the workshop (typically after the unit of work had been completed) was better than in previous years, with 479 surveys received (around 25% of all participants).

With regard to teachers, 104 of a possible 199 webinar teacher-training-feedback forms were completed (52.3%)<sup>16</sup> and 26 post-NewsWise online teacher training and workshop surveys were received.

**Figure 5: Evaluation samples for NewsWise**

	Time point and subject of survey	Purpose	Number completed
<b>Pupil</b>	Pre-NewsWise quiz	To establish a baseline, allowing comparison with post-NewsWise pupil quiz	1,169
	Post-virtual workshop reflective survey	To evaluate short-term changes (i.e. over the course of the workshop) in pupils' news literacy	689
	Post-NewsWise survey and quiz	To evaluate longer-term changes (i.e. after the unit of work) and compare with pre-NewsWise quiz	479
<b>Teacher</b>	Post-online pre-project teacher training and workshop	To evaluate feedback from online teacher-training sessions and pupil workshops	26
	Post-teacher webinar feedback form	To evaluate feedback from teacher webinar sessions	104
	Post-NewsWise teacher surveys	To evaluate feedback from the overall project and its impact on pupils and teachers	21
<b>Student teacher</b>	Post-ITT (Initial Teacher Training) survey	To gather feedback from teacher trainees on the impact of a specially designed training session	31

<sup>16</sup> Not comparable with previous years as training had been face-to-face, allowing trainers to request forms to be completed directly after the session. Furthermore, online training in Year 4 focused on class teachers running NewsWise rather than running a twilight CPD session open to all staff after a face-to-face workshop, as in previous years.

## Findings from pupils

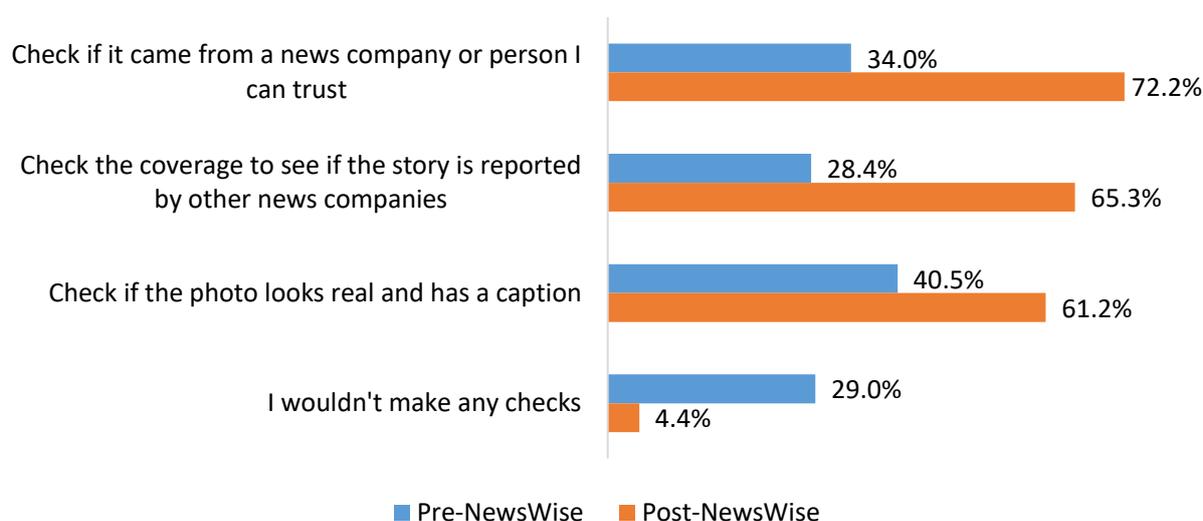
### Outcome 1: Pupils have improved news-literacy behaviour

An important skill in news literacy is the ability to check whether a news story can be trusted, and one aspect of the progression of participants' news-literacy skills was measured by capturing changes in behaviour when evaluating a news story. Pupils were found to be more likely to say that they would do a range of checks to verify news having taken part in NewsWise (see **Figure 6**).

For example, while just a third (34.0%) of pupils would check whether a story came from a news company or person they could trust before taking part in NewsWise, almost 3 in 4 (72.2%) said that they would do this at the end of the project. At the same time, while 1 in 3 (28.4%) said they would check the coverage to see if the story was reported by other news companies before taking part in NewsWise, this increased to 2 in 3 (65.3%) at the end of the project.

While 2 in 5 (40.5%) before taking part in NewsWise would have used visual clues, such as whether a photo looked real and had a caption, this increased to 3 in 5 (61.2%) following the programme. Lastly, the percentage of those who said they wouldn't make any checks at all decreased from 3 in 10 (29.0%) to fewer than 1 in 20 (4.4%).

**Figure 6: What pupils say they do to check whether a news story is trustworthy**



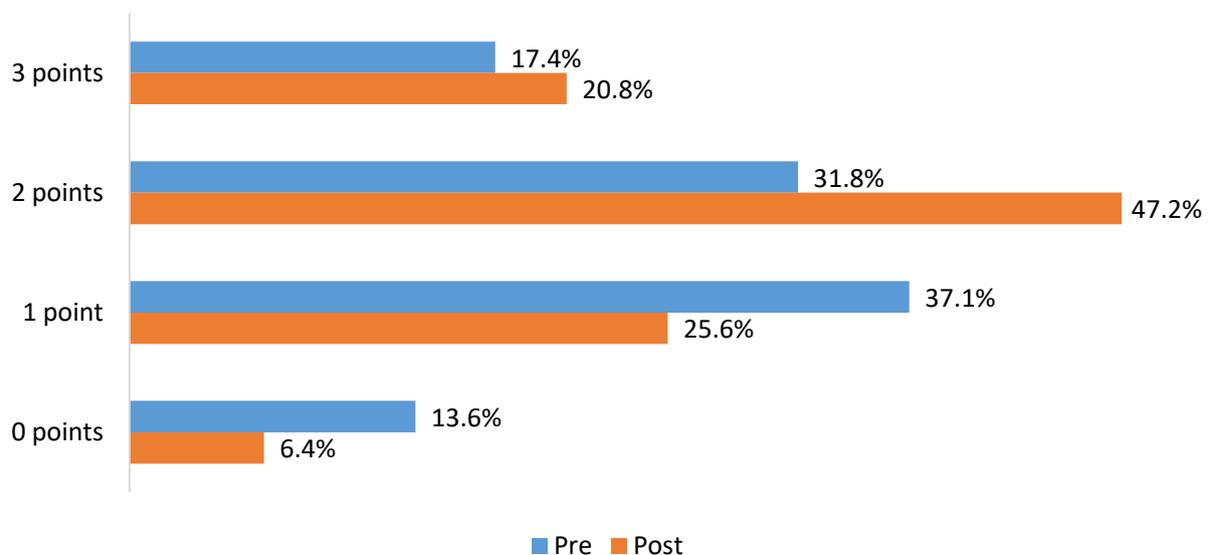
### Outcome 2: Pupils showed increased news literacy skills

Critical engagement with news, including the ability to assess, analyse and evaluate news stories, is one of the main objectives of the NewsWise programme. Children were asked to complete a test to assess their news-literacy skills before and after taking part in NewsWise. This test included a news quiz that asked pupils to determine whether three pieces of age-appropriate news were fake or real.



Pupils were found to be better at identifying whether news articles were real or fake at the end of NewsWise than they were before taking part. As shown in **Figure 7**, there was a slight increase in the percentage who spotted all three fake news articles (from 17.4% to 20.8%). Additionally, while 1 in 3 (31.8%) spotted two articles correctly before taking part in NewsWise, this increased to 47.2% post NewsWise. The percentage of pupils who got no correct answers more than halved from 13.6% to 6.4%.

**Figure 7: Changes in pupils' performance on the real or fake news quiz**

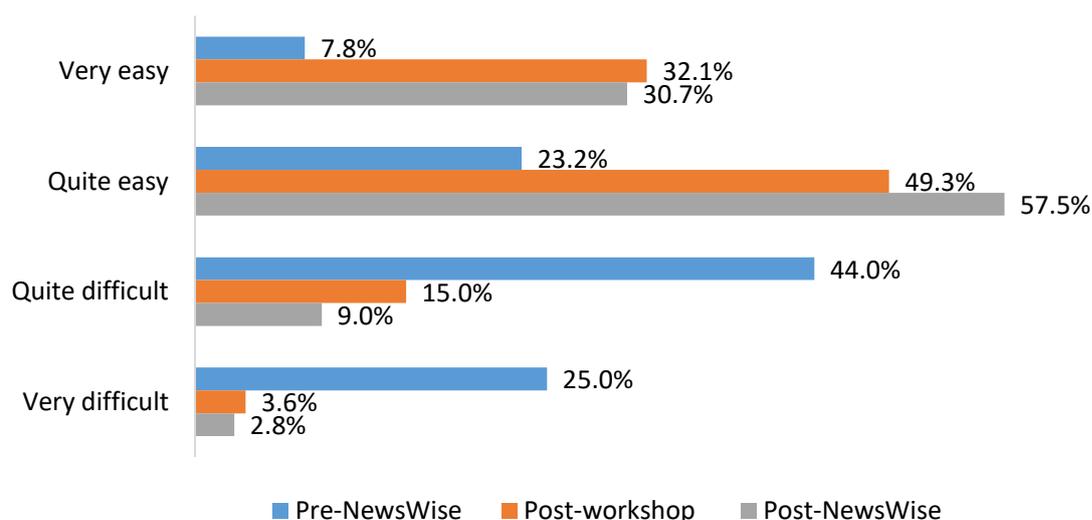


Looking more specifically at pupils who were able to correctly identify whether two or more news stories were fake or real before taking part, this increased from 49.2% (31.8% + 17.4%) to 68.0% (47.2% + 20.8%) at the end of the programme.

### Outcome 3: Pupils are more confident navigating the news

We know that confidence is an issue for pupils because, in the pre-survey, less than a third (31.1%) said they find it 'quite easy' or 'very easy' to tell whether a piece of news is true (see Figure 8). The workshop was very effective in boosting pupils' confidence. Indeed, following the workshop, the percentage of pupils who said it is 'very' or 'quite easy' to tell whether a news story is trustworthy increased from 31.1% to 81.4%, and increased further to 88.2% at the post-NewsWise survey point. Conversely, pre-NewsWise, 69.0% of pupils said they found it 'very difficult' or 'quite difficult' to tell whether a news story was trustworthy, decreasing to 18.6% post-workshop, and further to 1 in 10 (11.8%) post-NewsWise.

**Figure 8: Pupils' confidence in being able to tell whether or not a news story is true**



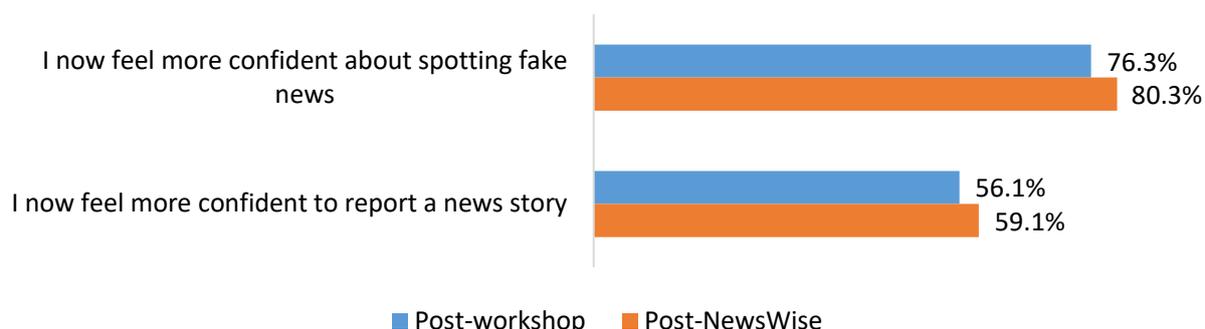
Data from the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey 2022 indicate that NewsWise is helping to raise children's confidence in their news-literacy skills above the national average. 88.2% of NewsWise participants say that they find it 'very' (30.7%) or 'quite' (57.5%) easy to tell whether a news story is trustworthy after taking part, compared with 61.8% of same-age pupils across the UK (17.0% 'very' and 44.8% 'quite' easy)<sup>17</sup>. It is also worth noting that the starting point for pupils taking part in NewsWise – just 3 in 10 (31.1%) finding it easy to tell if a news story is true – is much lower than the national average, suggesting the programme is being targeted effectively at pupils with the lowest confidence, and that those reached by the programme end with considerably higher levels than the national average.

Pupils were also asked about their confidence in spotting fake news and reporting a news story after taking part in the workshop and project. Post-workshop surveys indicate that 3 in 4 participants (76.3%) feel more confident about spotting fake news, and over half (56.1%) are more confident to report a news story (see **Figure 9**). These increased by 4 and 3 percentage points at the end of the NewsWise programme, indicating that the unit of work

<sup>17</sup> The Annual Literacy Survey reached 62,193 respondents aged 8 to 18 in early 2022. Comparison is made with 9,369 Key Stage 2 pupils (aged 8 to 11), 7,486 of whom answered a question about news literacy confidence. 16.0% found it 'very easy', 44.8% 'quite easy', 29.5% 'quite difficult' and 8.8% 'very difficult'.

sustains the impact of the workshop and further increases pupils' confidence around reporting news.

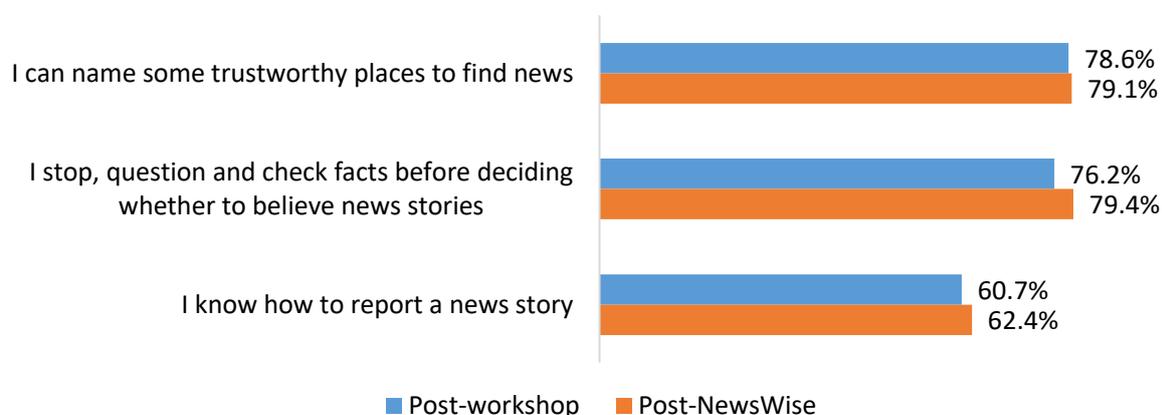
**Figure 9: Pupils' agreement with news-literacy statements**



To provide further insight into children's confidence at the end of the NewsWise programme, pupils were asked how well they felt they could tell the difference between fact and opinion and whether they considered whose points of view had been included in news stories. Responses show that 3 in 4 (76.8%) pupils believe they are better at telling the difference between fact and opinion, while 7 in 10 (69.6%) say they now think about whose points of view have been included in a news story.

In addition, statements relating to children's scepticism and reasoning skills, developed with reference to Skillsbuilder<sup>18</sup> questions are included in pupil and teacher surveys. Pupil responses indicate a high level of confidence in knowledge around how to spot fake news, positive behaviour when evaluating news, and awareness of sources of trustworthy news (see Figure 10). Indeed, post-workshop, almost 4 in 5 (78.6%) said they could name some trustworthy places to find news. This remained steady in the post-NewsWise survey (79.1%). 3 in 4 (76.1%) pupils post-workshop said they stop, think and check facts before deciding whether to believe news stories, which increases to 4 in 5 (79.4%) post-NewsWise. Finally, 3 in 5 (60.7%) pupils post-workshop said they knew how to report a news story, which remained steady at 62.4% at the end of the programme.

**Figure 10: Pupils' agreement with news-literacy statements**



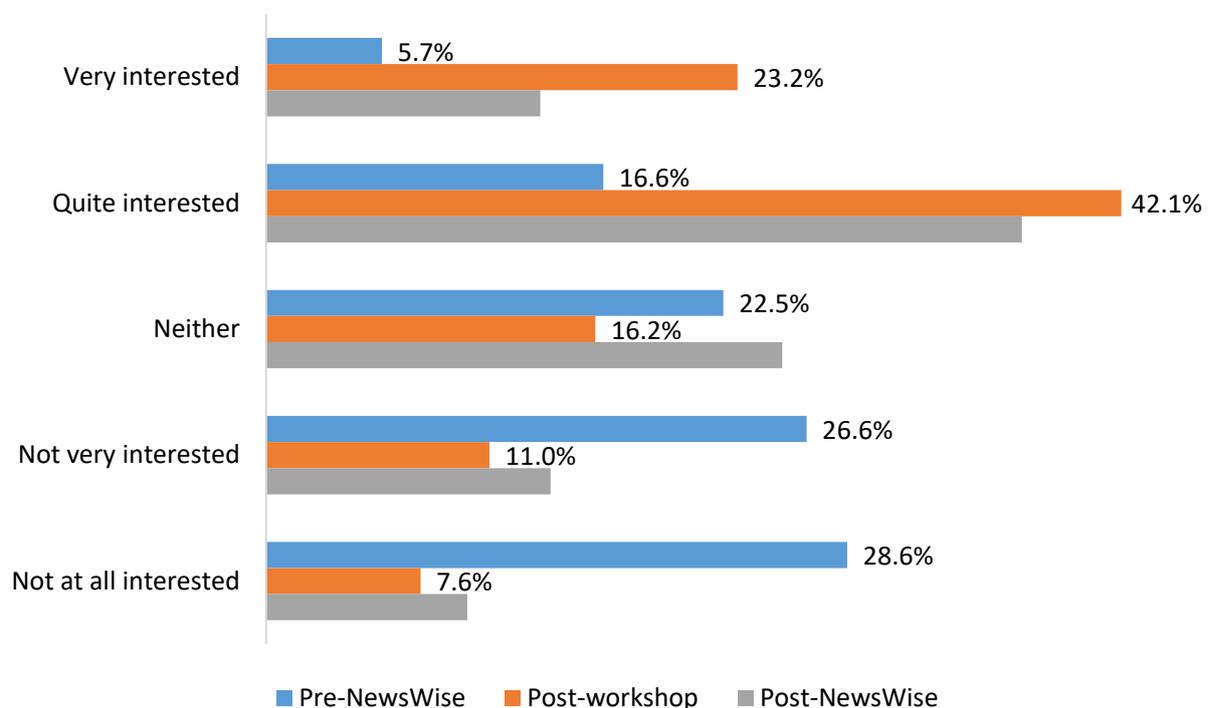
<sup>18</sup> <https://www.skillsbuilder.org/>

#### Outcome 4: Pupils have increased interest in the news; however, active engagement decreased marginally over the course of the project

One of the most prominent findings from the pupil surveys is that the NewsWise workshop is particularly effective in increasing pupils' engagement with news (see **Figure 11**). Indeed, the percentage of pupils who said that they were 'very interested' or 'quite interested' in news almost tripled between the pre-project and post-workshop time points (22.3% to 65.3%).

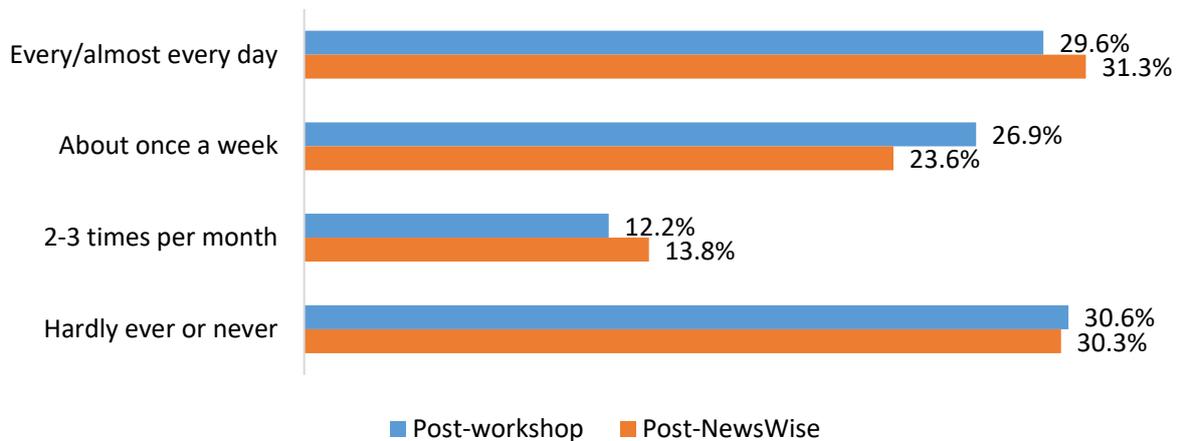
This was sustained at the post-project time point, which indicated that 50.7% of pupils remained 'very' or 'quite' interested in news several weeks after the workshop. Conversely, while more than 1 in 4 (28.6%) pupils said they were 'not at all' interested in news before taking part in the NewsWise workshop, this decreased to just 1 in 10 (9.9%) after the project.

**Figure 11: Pupils' responses to the question 'How interested are you in news?'**



Pupils were also asked how often they read, watched or listened to the news at the post-workshop survey point, and the post-NewsWise time point several weeks later. The percentage of pupils who engaged with the news either daily or weekly decreased marginally over this time, from 56.5% to 54.9% (see **Figure 12**). However, 1 in 3 (31.3%) children post-NewsWise still said that they engaged with the news daily, while 1 in 4 (23.6%) engaged about once a week.

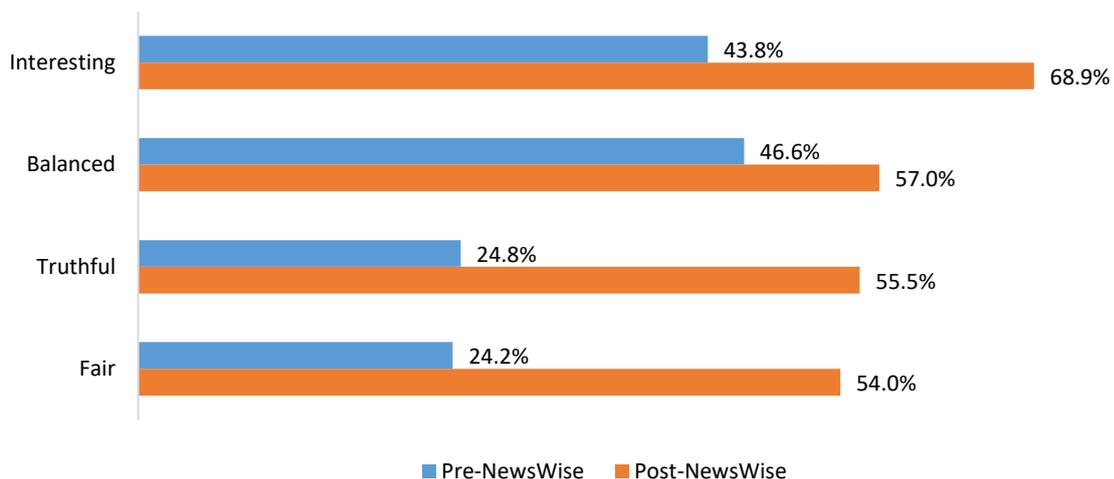
**Figure 12: Pupils' responses to the question 'How often do you read, watch or listen to the news?'**



**Outcome 5: Pupils have increased critical awareness of the elements of trustworthy news**

Survey findings indicated that, having taken part in NewsWise, there were positive changes in pupils' critical awareness of the elements of trustworthy news. Indeed, while 2 in 5 (43.8%) felt news should be interesting before NewsWise, 68.9% said the same following the programme. The percentage of those who felt that news should be balanced increased from 46.6% to 57.0%. Finally, the percentage of those who felt that news should be truthful and fair doubled from before (24.8% and 24.2% respectively) to after (55.5% and 54.0%) NewsWise.

**Figure 13: Pupils' understanding of what news should be**



**Pupils' feedback on the NewsWise programme**

Alongside measuring the learning outcomes outlined above, we were keen to hear what pupils thought about the NewsWise programme, and which aspects they found most and least enjoyable or interesting. Almost 2 in 3 (64.4%) pupils reported enjoying learning about news literacy through the NewsWise virtual workshop, with 30.0% saying it was 'very good'

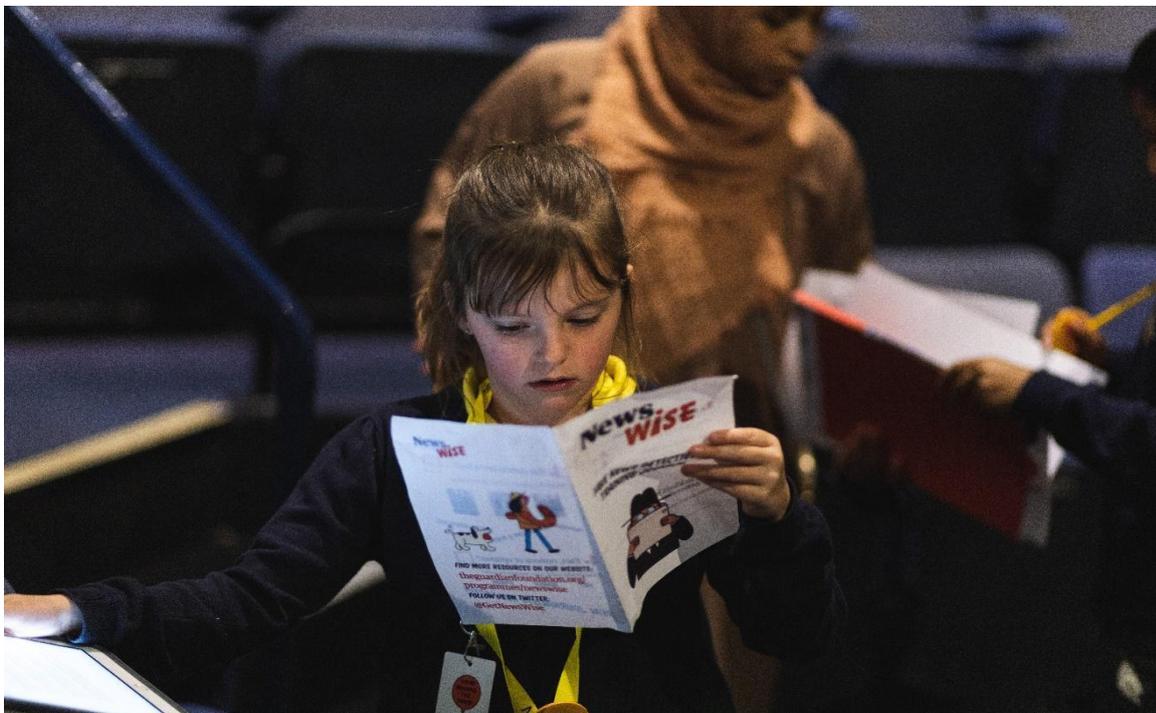
and 34.4% saying it was 'good'. Indeed, almost all comments about aspects of the programme children didn't like related to sessions having to be virtual, or the virtual sessions being too long to focus, while comments about what they did like most often highlighted interactive elements and opportunities for collaboration.

“They were very interesting lessons and I learned how to be more collaborative.”

“One thing I liked about my NewsWise lessons was when I talked to the governors.”

“There were interesting facts on the Powerpoint and I liked spotting fake news.”

“We got to scan the texts and pick which report we wanted to write.”



## Teachers' perspectives on the NewsWise programme

Teachers may be involved in the project through several avenues, such as their school or class taking part in a NewsWise virtual workshop and therefore attending the required online pre-project teacher-training session; running the unit of work with their pupils; taking part in online workshops as part of conferences; taking part in news-literacy webinars; downloading online resources or taking part in a news-literacy Initial Teacher Training (ITT) session.

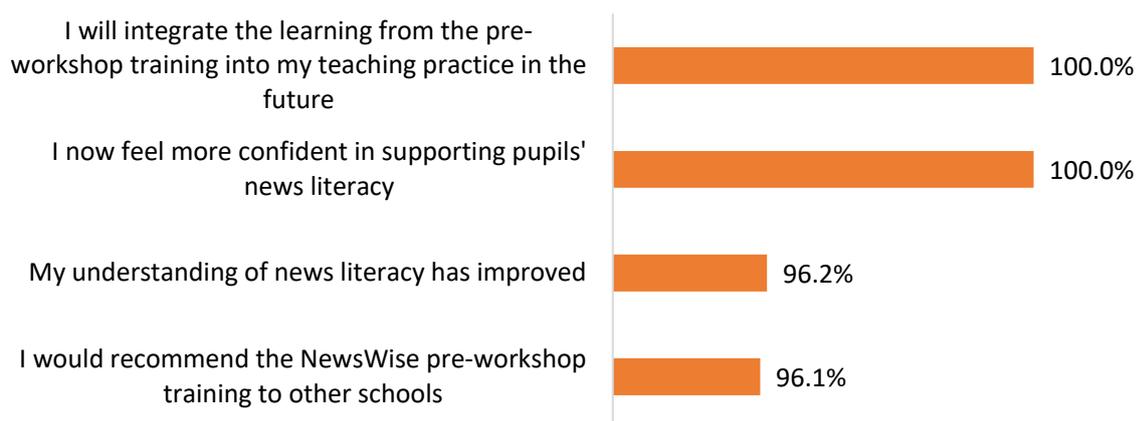
Two main surveys were used to capture teachers' feedback on the NewsWise programme itself. The pre-project teacher-training survey included questions about the impact of the online training on their knowledge and confidence about supporting news literacy, and their

professional perception of the impact of the virtual NewsWise workshop on pupils. Teachers were further invited to complete a post-NewsWise survey several weeks after the teacher training (i.e. after the unit of work) to evaluate any longer-term changes in their teaching practice and on children’s news literacy. In addition, a further survey captured feedback from ITT training sessions in November 2021 and January 2022.

### Teacher training was considered high quality and increased confidence in supporting pupils’ news literacy in the classroom

Data from the post-teacher-training surveys indicate that NewsWise was not only effective in developing the confidence, skills and engagement of pupils but it was also an insightful and worthwhile experience for the teachers taking part. All teachers (100.0%) rated the NewsWise pre-project training as ‘excellent’ (73.1%) or ‘good’ (26.9%). Reflecting this, 96.2% agree that their understanding of news literacy improved and 100% feel they are now more confident in supporting pupils’ news literacy (57.7% ‘very confident’ and 42.3% ‘fairly confident’; see Figure 14). In addition, more than 9 in 10 (96.1%) say they would recommend the NewsWise training to other schools, while 100% say that they would integrate the learning into their future teaching.

**Figure 14: Impact of NewsWise pre-project training on teachers**



Related comments from teachers included:

*"I've loved teaching this project, the children have gained so much and I've learnt things too, and enjoyed using the fantastic-quality resources. So much so that we will be putting an 'In the News' context for learning into our new curriculum within the next cycle and the NewsWise lessons will form an integral part of it."*

Teachers were also very positive about the quality of the NewsWise pupil workshop, with **76.9%** rating it ‘excellent’ and 23.0% as ‘good’. Teachers were also invited to share any observations about the impact of the workshop on pupils. Comments indicated that learning from the workshop had both an immediate and a lasting impact on pupils’ news literacy, and that this extended beyond the classroom:

“It encouraged a lot of discussion and debate which has been missing from many students’ lives.”

“The ... plentiful opportunities to identify the questioning and checking of the sources as a group gave them confidence to then tackle the task independently. The writing scaffold for their final report was useful for the less-confident writers and again is a structure we can use moving forward.”

“The activities were really engaging for the children and also accessible for children of a range of abilities which was really valuable.”

### Teachers report an increase in pupils’ news-literacy skills

The post-NewsWise teacher surveys provided more evidence that NewsWise was effective in developing the news-literacy skills of pupils:

- **100%** of teachers agreed that the NewsWise workshop increased pupils’ engagement with news and journalism
- **100%** of teachers agreed that the NewsWise workshop supported pupils’ speaking and listening skills
- **92.3%** said the NewsWise workshop engaged pupils who were usually more reluctant in the classroom

Teachers were invited to share examples of any pupils who appeared to benefit in particular from taking part in NewsWise. A number of themes arose from a thematic analysis of comments, including improved oracy skills, greater engagement in reading and writing, increased critical awareness and inclusivity, and greater confidence in speaking. One teacher shared how a child had previously spoken about news stories that to them were “obviously fake” but that he believed to be true. The workshop explained clearly to the child why and how these articles were fake, and provided him with the skills to question what he read and understand why this is important.

### Increased confidence in public speaking

Many teacher comments shared the impact of the NewsWise workshop on quieter and less-confident pupils for whom the format facilitated and encouraged speaking in front of peers, while others noted that the oracy elements of the project influenced children’s writing skills:

“GV & LB are not generally confident to share work in class. As part of the workshop, they wrote a report which they then presented to the class and the online workshop facilitator; it was amazing to see how much their confidence had grown in such a short space of time and how proud they were of what they have achieved.”

“One particular child’s confidence shone in the workshop. They are sometimes reluctant to share answers, however today their hand was constantly up, they showed real progression throughout the session and solidified their understanding and participation in the workshop by performing at the end of the session. This was really nice to see.”

“She suffers with quite severe dyslexia but, after another group presented their news report at the end of the morning, she wanted to come and present with her partner. This is a first for her!”

### Real-life application and increased critical awareness

Teachers also shared how children are now able to use their knowledge from NewsWise in the real world:

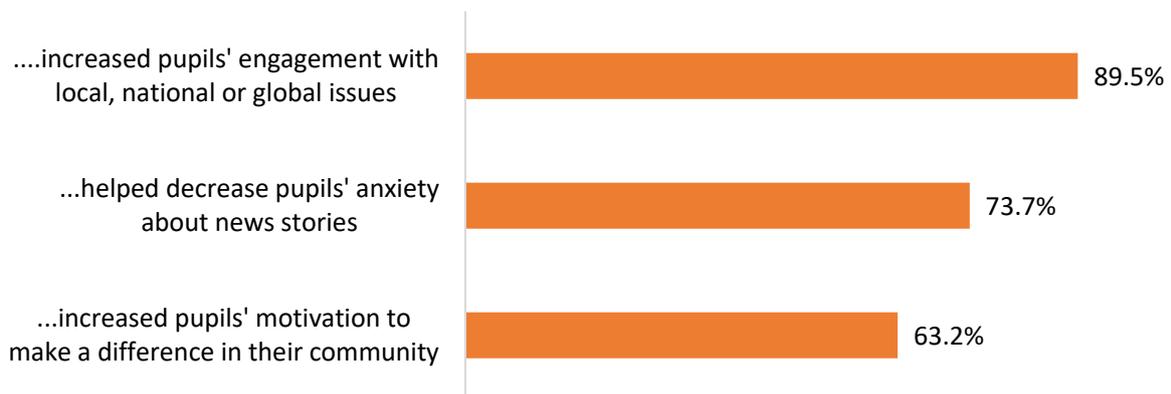
“It has really allowed them to see the purpose of our unit of work, equipping them with the necessary skills to understand the news. I have had parents comment saying their children have gone home asking to watch the news tonight to check if it is real or fake!”

“Understanding fake and real news is so important to them as often they come into school talking about things that are likely to be fake but it is difficult to explain to them why.”

### Civic engagement and wellbeing

In 2021-22, new questions were added to the teacher survey in response to informal feedback in previous years relating to the impact of NewsWise on children’s civic engagement and wellbeing. As shown in **Figure 15**, 9 in 10 (89.5%) teachers agree (26.3% ‘strongly agree’ and 63.2% ‘agree’) that NewsWise increased pupils’ engagement with local, national or global issues. In addition, 3 in 4 (73.7%) agree (21.1% ‘strongly’, 52.6% ‘agree’) that NewsWise helped decrease pupils’ anxiety about news stories. Finally, 3 in 5 (63.2%) agree (21.1% ‘strongly’, 42.1% ‘agree’) that NewsWise increased pupils’ motivation to make a difference in their community.

**Figure 15: Taking part in NewsWise...**



### Webinar surveys

104 feedback forms were received from teachers taking part in webinars in Year 4. Webinars were designed to offer complete news-literacy CPD for primary teachers, with four complementary sessions covering critical analysis of news, talking about the news and supporting pupils’ wellbeing, and the impact of reading and writing real news in the classroom, with strategies for introducing all of this into teaching practice. The team also ran

a one-off webinar to support teachers in talking about the news with their pupils in response to coverage of the war in Ukraine.

99.1% of participants rated the webinar as ‘excellent’ (70.2%) or ‘good’ (28.9%). Almost all (87.7%) said it had contributed to their professional development either ‘very much’ (33.0%) or ‘quite a lot’ (54.7%). Reflecting earlier feedback relating to the impact of the NewsWise programme on pupils’ wellbeing, comments included:

“I feel that this particular workshop was extremely useful because the news is very scary for children today, and your suggestions on how to teach students strategies for calming down or resolving their news anxiety were right on target.”

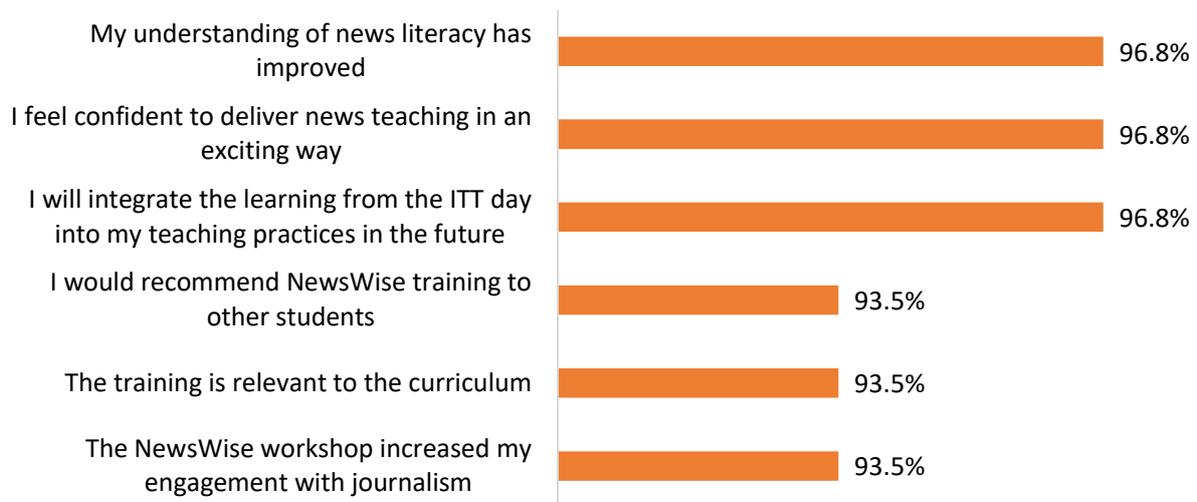
“I found tackling how to approach news helpful, and discussing how we can watch out for our wellbeing when looking at these stories with pupils.”

### Initial teacher-training feedback

Alongside designing news-literacy training sessions that can contribute to qualified teachers’ CPD (Continuing Professional Development), the NewsWise team has developed training designed to support teachers as part of their Initial Teacher Training. In November 2021, nine third-year undergraduate English subject-specialist teacher trainees at Stranmillis University College in Belfast took part in two virtual ITT sessions to train them as leaders in news literacy. The first session included information on different types of news writing, with a task to produce their own news report or feature article. The second session included a Q&A with a journalist and then focused on transforming primary classrooms into newsrooms. In January 2022, this was followed up with a one-day training session for the full cohort of third-year undergraduate trainee teachers, where they were led by the subject-specialist trainee teachers through a practical ‘teachers as writers’ activity, producing a news report on a current story in real time, as well as considering how to create an immersive news-teaching activity. Several of the subject specialists went on to run their own news-writing workshops with pupils.

In November 2021, the NewsWise team also worked with 20 undergraduate PSHE subject-specialist trainee teachers at the University of Brighton. This training session covered how to safely use real news stories in the classroom to ensure pupils’ wellbeing is prioritised. Following the ITT sessions, 31 feedback forms were received. 16 respondents (51.6%) rated the training day as ‘excellent’ and 15 (48.4%) as ‘good’. More than 9 in 10 respondents agreed that, after the training, they felt confident to deliver news teaching in an exciting way (96.8%), had a better understanding of news literacy (96.8%) and intended to integrate the learning into their future teaching practice (96.8%) (see **Figure 16**).

**Figure 16: Feedback from ITT on news-literacy training**



Comments were extremely positive. For example:

“Very clearly laid out with the right amount of detail, involving the professional journalists as well as valuable practical application. I thought the day was excellent!”

## Family workshop

After pausing family workshops in the 2020-21 academic year due to COVID-19, the NewsWise team ran a family workshop with 20 children and 16 adult family members from a school in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, in September 2021. The North Yorkshire Coast is identified as an area of high literacy need. In the workshop, children and their family members completed activities together on distinguishing fact from rumour and opinion; identifying clickbait headlines; understanding how images can be manipulated; and checking the coverage of a story. Children also had the opportunity to perform their own news bulletin.

10 feedback forms were completed by the adult family members at the end of the workshop. All 10 respondents rated the session ‘very good’. Most families reported greater confidence in supporting their children’s news literacy as a result of the workshop. For example, of nine responses to a question about how confident they felt helping their children to spot fake news, two felt ‘very’ or ‘quite’ confident before the workshop and eight felt this way after taking part. Positive comments included:

“[It was a] friendly way to make children aware of an issue which they will encounter on a daily basis.”

“Loved the whole thing but my daughter particularly enjoyed reading the news.”

“[I enjoyed] the way the facilitators interacted with the kids. Really engaging and fun.”

## Conclusion

Data from this evaluation show that in its fourth year, the NewsWise programme has continued to have a very positive impact on children's news literacy. This is evident across a variety of indicators, including attitudes, behaviour, confidence and skills. For example, the number of pupils interested in news almost tripled, while more positive news-literacy behaviours, such as checking sources, more than doubled following participation in NewsWise. Encouragingly, improvements found following the NewsWise workshop were either sustained or increased following completion of the unit of work, indicating that this is an effective tool for consolidating learning.

Notably, the success of the NewsWise programme has been remarkably consistent over the years, regardless of changes in cohort, content and the significant educational disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, there are some interesting differences between annual cohorts. For example, in this academic year, fewer than 1 in 4 (24.8%) pupils said they felt news should be truthful before taking part in NewsWise, the lowest percentage of any year to date (for example, 41.2% believed this in 2020-21, 37.8% in 2019-20, and 80.0% in 2018-19). Hearteningly, this increased to more than half (55.5%) of pupils following participation in NewsWise. In addition, teachers and trainee teachers themselves report increased confidence in teaching news literacy, suggesting the programme may have a sustainable impact on those they teach in years to come. Indeed, teachers have been identified as a key target group in the UK Government's Online Media Literacy Strategy<sup>19</sup>.

Alongside the challenges of misinformation, it may also be argued that the news agenda has become increasingly challenging for children and young people in recent times (as noted in a teacher's comment, news can be "very scary for children today"). In response to informal feedback relating to the impact of NewsWise on children's civic engagement and wellbeing over time, some new questions were added to the teacher survey this year. Findings indicated that many teachers felt taking part in the programme had a positive impact on their pupils' engagement with local, national or global issues, with 3 in 5 feeling that NewsWise had increased their motivation to make a difference in their community. Furthermore, almost 3 in 4 teachers agreed that NewsWise had helped decrease pupils' anxiety about news stories.

These are both elements that we aim to explore further in future years. An exciting recent development for the NewsWise programme is a successful bid for funding to be involved in a Randomised Cluster Control trial lead by the University of Birmingham. This will allow the impact of the programme on children's civic engagement to be explored over the next two academic years. Also looking forward, while classroom projects, virtual and in-person projects, teacher training and ITT sessions will continue next year, there will be an increased focus on family workshops and working with local communities, extending NewsWise's work beyond the classroom into the wider environment of children's lives. Schools, families and media organisations each have a role to play in fostering the skills and confidence that will empower children and young people to become responsible news creators and consumers.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-media-literacy-strategy>

“Our Year 5 and 6 have loved this project and can’t wait to share their learning with governors next week. They now have a good understanding of the impact that the media can have on society. A superb example of integrated purposeful learning.”

Carrie Jenkins, Headteacher, Gabalfa Primary School

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Our sincere thanks to all of the schools that, despite really challenging times, participated in our surveys this year. We couldn't do it without you!

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Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions.

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