Blind and partially sighted children’s right to read school text books

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Executive summary
RNIB wishes to establish estimates of the availability of school textbooks in alternative formats. LISU at Loughborough University was commissioned to establish estimates of the availability of accessible publications. The current study took place in January 2006 and covered school textbooks for Key Stages 3 and 4 in the subject areas of English, Maths, Science and Welsh (as a first language). The survey also included reference books (dictionaries and atlases).

The titles included in the study were obtained from exam boards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and leading educational publishers. Therefore, the textbooks identified cover the range of books likely to be used in schools, but it was not possible to determine which were the most widely used textbooks in schools within the timescale of the project.

Revealweb was used to ascertain the availability of titles in alternative formats, and the source of the material. The results reveal differences in the availability of textbooks in alternative formats between subject areas. However, availability is poor in all subjects for exam board specific texts.

English literature texts, particularly those at Key Stage 4, are the most widely available with up to 80% of titles being available in one or more alternative formats. Literature texts are also available in the widest range of formats. Availability in alternative formats at Key Stage 4 depends on exam board specifications, with the largest proportion available where any edition can be used. Welsh Literature texts are also more widely available if non-specific editions could be used: of the 11 latest edition
titles specified by WJEC for GCSE, only one is available in an alternative format, but seven of the titles are available in earlier editions.

In Science and Maths, texts which are not specific to any one board have greater availability. For example 21% of generic Maths textbooks for Key Stage 4 are available in alternative formats compared with 4.8% of Board specific texts (England). A lower proportion of Science texts are available (14.3% of generic texts and 7.5% of English board specific texts). Fewer board specific titles were identified for Wales (WJEC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) resulting in a very low number available in alternative formats: no Science texts were available, and only one Maths text for each board. Choice of format is poor for Science and Maths. For generic Maths texts, 16.2% are available in Braille 2, 2.7% in cassette versions and 2.7% in Large and Giant Print. Generic Science texts are only available in Braille 2 (4.8%) or cassette (9.5%). There is even less choice of format for board specific texts.

Specific texts are not recommended by curriculum authorities or exam boards for Key Stage 3 and so titles were identified from publishers’ catalogues. Maths books have the highest proportion of texts available (14.7%). However, the texts are only available in two alternative formats: 14% are available in Braille 2 and 2.3% in Giant Print. Science texts are available in three formats: Braille 2 (6.8%), cassette (1.1%), and Giant Print (2.3%), with an overall availability of 10.2%. English textbooks are poorly represented, with only 1.4% available. However, fiction titles are more widely available. If any edition is acceptable, 12.7% of titles are available in a range of formats.
Reference books at both Key Stages have very low availability. However, very few titles specifically for each Key Stage could be identified.

The majority of alternative format texts were available from RNIB or NLB. HM Prison Service is also a key source; they transcribe texts into Braille for use within the service, and will produce copies on demand.
1. Introduction
The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) estimates that there are around 20,000 children in Britain with a visual impairment severe enough to require specialist educational support. Of these, 59% are educated in mainstream schools and may consequently use non-sighted or sighted methods for accessing the curriculum. Previous research by RNIB and others suggests that blind and partially sighted pupils do not have the same access to school text books as their sighted peers do to standard texts. However, RNIB does not have detailed research evidence about the availability and provision of school text books in alternative formats. As a result, RNIB commissioned LISU at Loughborough University to establish estimates of the availability of a selection of school text books in alternative formats. The research aims to:

- Identify the most widely used Key Stage 3 and 4 text books in specified subjects used in schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Establish which of these textbooks are available in alternative formats.
- Discover from which sources these alternative formats are available.

2. Method
LISU has previously carried out research for RNIB estimating the availability of publications in alternative formats (Lockyer, Creaser and Davies 2004); this project used similar methodology.
2.1 Subjects covered
For the current study, the category of texts to be investigated were specified by RNIB as:

- Key stage 3 textbooks in the following subjects:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Welsh (as a first language)
  - Reference books
    - English dictionaries
    - Welsh dictionaries
    - Bi-lingual dictionaries (English-French, English-German, English-Spanish)
    - Atlases

- Key stage 4 textbooks in the following subjects:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Welsh (as a first language)
  - Reference books
    - English dictionaries
    - Welsh dictionaries
    - Bi-lingual dictionaries (English-French, English-German, English-Spanish)
    - Atlases
2.2 Identification of titles
RNIB also specified that the ‘top’ or ‘most widely used’ titles should be investigated. To establish the titles used at Key Stages 3 and 4, the relevant curriculum authorities and exam boards, and thirteen of the major publishers of school textbooks in the UK were contacted.

2.2.1 Curriculum authorities
There are separate curriculum authorities for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The curriculum authority in England (QCA) confirmed that it outlined the requirements for each key stage but did not recommend or set particular texts. In Wales, the curriculum authority (ACCAC) confirmed that the examination boards set texts. In Northern Ireland, the CCEA is both the curriculum authority and examination board.

2.2.2 Exam boards
The main examination boards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were contacted with requests for details of recommended and/or set texts in the required subjects for Key Stages 3 and 4. For the purposes of this study OCR, Edexcel and AQA are considered the examining boards for England; WJEC for Wales and CCEA for Northern Ireland. The only boards which did not reply were OCR and Edexcel, so information for these boards was obtained from their websites (www.edexcel.org.uk and www.ocr.org.uk).

None of the exam boards recommended texts for Key Stage 3. Recommendations for Key Stage 4 textbooks varied between subject and board, as summarised below.
**English**
None of the boards recommended texts for English Language. Each board sets texts for English Literature and all boards have some titles in common. However, some boards specify the editions to be used and this has implications for the availability of texts in alternative formats. The recommendations from each board are summarised below:

- **CCEA (Northern Ireland)** prescribes editions for the Drama paper, but the Prose paper allows the use of any edition. In addition, CCEA suggests anthologies which include specified poets and these have been included in the analysis.

- **Edexcel** approves one or two editions of each title for use in its examinations. However, other editions without additional material may be used. Only the approved editions have been included in this study.

- **AQA** provides a list of prescribed editions, but also notes one or two additional editions which may be used. All listed editions were included.

- **OCR** prescribes required editions in its specifications.

- **WJEC (Wales)** does not specify particular editions.

**Science**
Each board has several syllabuses for science and new specifications are being introduced from September 2006.
WJEC confirmed direct to LISU that it does not recommend texts, however two of their subjects specialists suggested titles. CCEA provided four recommended texts. AQA provides an extensive resource list on its website, which includes publications covering AQA specifications and general texts (www.aqa.org.uk). Edexcel provides a list of educational publishers which produce suitable Science textbooks.

**Maths**
CCEA provided a list recommended texts direct to LISU; AQA confirmed that they did not recommend texts but suggested publishers. The Maths subject specialists for OCR, WJEC and Edexcel did not respond to the email; OCR and Edexcel provide information on their websites. No exam board recommendations were included for WJEC Maths.

**Welsh**
WJEC provided a list of set texts for Welsh Literature GCSE.

**Reference Books**
None of the exam boards recommended dictionaries or atlases for use at either Key Stage 3 or 4. Therefore, titles were obtained from the catalogues of the main dictionary publishers (Oxford, Collins, Chambers) and only those specified for Key Stages 3 and 4 were included. Collins also publish an atlas for each of these Key Stages, and additional atlas titles were obtained from a search of Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk).

**2.2.3 Publishers**
RNIB had specified wanting to investigate the 'most widely used' texts. The key source for this information was leading educational publishers. A list of thirteen publishers (see Appendix 1) was compiled from the
information provided by exam boards and also from the *Bookseller Pocket Yearbook 2005*: top 10 publishing groups: school textbook sales 2003. These were contacted by letter, requesting details of their top selling titles in the specified subjects. Publishers were also asked about the availability of titles in alternative formats. In addition, the catalogues of the main publishers were requested or downloaded. Just one publisher (CGP) provided titles. Macmillan replied that secondary schools are not their main market and Hodder Murray confirmed that compiling the data would take longer than the timescales available to the project. Therefore, titles were obtained from catalogues for the remaining publishers on the list. The following catalogues were used: Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Heinemann, Longman, Letts, Hodder Murray, Nelson Thornes, Folens and Collins. As CGP’s list of its most popular titles included several workbooks, which were excluded from the study (see below), additional titles were added from their catalogue.

The catalogues are arranged by subject and key stage, so identification of titles was straightforward. All students’ books and revision texts for Key Stages 3 and 4 were included; homework books and workbooks (books mainly consisting of practice exercises) were excluded. Some texts were specific to a single exam board, others covered GCSE requirements for all boards, and others were general subject texts.

The following details were included for analysis: author, title, publisher, price, ISBN, exam board (if any).

Because of the lack of initial response from most publishers, it was not possible to obtain information on the most widely used texts within the
timescale of the project. The texts used in the analysis were all those which could be identified as being currently stipulated by exam boards or promoted by publishers. It is appreciated that schools may be using previous editions and alternative materials. Investigation of titles actually used in schools would require a survey of teachers and was beyond the scope of this project.

### 2.3 Availability of alternative formats

Table 1 shows the number of titles identified for each Key Stage and subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key Stage 3</th>
<th>Key Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These titles were checked against Revealweb ([www.revealweb.org.uk](http://www.revealweb.org.uk)) for availability in alternative formats. Revealweb is an online catalogue of titles available in a range of alternative formats. It includes the catalogues of RNIB and the National Library for the Blind (NLB), as well as other organisations which supply alternative formats.

If the matching edition of the title was available, the format(s) and also the provider were recorded. Where previous editions were available this was noted separately, but not included in the analysis.
3. Results

3.1 Key stage 3
The titles for Key Stage 3 were obtained from publishers catalogues only. Table 2 summarises the results.

Table 2 Summary of available formats for Key Stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English Fiction</th>
<th>English textbooks</th>
<th>English total</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titles identified (no.)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% available</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any format</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille 2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard cassette</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio: 4 track</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAISY</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large print</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant print</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maths has the highest percentage of titles available in an alternative format, with 14.7% of titles available. However, the range of formats is limited; 14% of the titles are available in Braille 2 and 2.3% in Giant Print. No other formats are available.

Reference books are the least represented, with only 4.3% available in an alternative format.
The availability of English texts varies greatly between English language textbooks and fiction. Only 1.4% of textbooks are available in an alternative format compared with 12.7% of fiction titles. Fiction titles for Key Stage 3 were obtained from OUP and Collins, who publish ‘readers'; no titles were recommended by exam boards or curriculum authorities. If the search is extended to include any possible edition of these titles 66% of titles are available in an alternative format. English fiction texts are available in the broadest range of formats; however Braille 2 is the most widely available with 11.1% of titles available, with other formats less widely available at 3.2% (Standard cassette and Large Print) and 1.6% (4 track, DAISY, Giant Print). Lockyer, Creaser and Davies (2004) found that 13% of Junior Fiction titles were available in alternative formats in 2004, from a sample of 406 titles published between 1999 and 2003. It might be expected that titles recommended for use in schools would have a higher level of availability than junior fiction generally, but this does not appear to be the case, with 12.7% of Key Stage 3 fiction available in alternative formats.

10.2% of Science titles are available in alternative formats. Of these, 6.8% are available in Braille 2, 2.3% in Giant Print and 1.1% in standard cassette and four track cassette. An additional seven titles are available in a previous edition.

The Welsh Joint Education Committee confirmed that there are no specified titles for the study of Welsh at Key Stage 3. RNIB Wales produces Welsh textbooks in alternative formats, and their catalogue includes 26 fiction titles for Key Stages 3 and 4 which are available in Braille; 9 titles are available in Large Print.
Figure 1 summarises the availability of Key Stage 3 texts by subject and format.

**Fig 1  Availability of Key Stage 3 texts by subject and format**

![Bar chart showing availability of Key Stage 3 texts by subject and format](chart.png)

3.2 Key Stage 4

This Key Stage includes general texts and texts which meet each exam board’s specifications. Results are discussed for each subject, illustrating the availability of texts for each exam board. To give an overall picture for England, the results for AQA, Edexcel and OCR have
been summed. Generic titles, not written for any one board’s specifications, have been analysed separately.

3.2.1 English
Texts for English include English Language teaching and English Literature set texts. The results are summarised in Table 3, and illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 3 Summary of available formats for English Key Stage 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>AQA</th>
<th>Edexcel</th>
<th>OCR</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>Generic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titles identified (no.)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% available</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any format</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard cassette</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio: 4 track</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking books</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAISY</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic text</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large print</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant print</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The textbooks identified for each board include literature set texts for GCSE, textbooks to support literature study and board-specific English Language GCSE texts. Generic textbooks support general English Language teaching.
The difference in availability of alternative formats reflects the exam boards’ requirements for set texts (see Section 2.2.2). WJEC (Wales) does not specify editions and so a high percentage (80%) of the set texts are available in alternative formats; the books are also available in a range of formats (Braille 2, Moon, Cassette, Talking Books, DAISY, electronic text, Large Print and Giant Print). AQA and OCR specify the editions to be used, so fewer titles are available in an alternative format (18.2% and 28.1% respectively). The AQA texts also have the smallest choice of formats (Braille 2, standard cassette, Large and Giant Print).

Generic texts for English are poorly represented, with only 5.9% available and only one choice of format – Large Print.

The majority of the alternative format titles are available from RNIB and/or NLB; only 10 of the titles were available from other sources, namely Nottingham Inclusion Support Service and NBCS Custom Eye Books (see Section 3.3).
Fig 2  Availability of English Key Stage 4 texts by subject and format
3.2.2 Maths
The results for Maths texts are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 Summary of available formats for Maths Key Stage 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AQA</th>
<th>Edexcel</th>
<th>OCR</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>Generic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titles identified (no.)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% available</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any format</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille 2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard cassette</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio: 4 track</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large print</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant print</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over one third (36%) of the Maths texts identified are generic, that is, not dedicated to any one board’s specifications. Of these, 21.6% are available in alternative formats: 16.2% in Braille 2 and 2.7% in each of standard cassette, four track cassette, Large Print and Giant Print.

Schools using texts for specific boards are severely limited as only one title for each board is available in an alternative formats. However, the number of titles identified and checked for each board varies. It should also be noted that some of the generic titles are suitable for all exam boards.
The majority of the alternative format titles are available from RNIB and/or NLB; seven titles are located at other sources and these include HMP Service, Nottingham Inclusion Support Service and Enhanced Resource Base.

The results are illustrated in Figure 3.

**Fig 3**  *Availability of Maths Key Stage 4 texts by subject and format*
3.2.3 Science

The results for Science are summarised in Table 5

Table 5  Summary of available formats for Science Key Stage 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science</th>
<th>AQA</th>
<th>Edexcel</th>
<th>OCR</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>Generic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titles identified (no.)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% available</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any format</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille 2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard cassette</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio: 4 track</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 21 generic titles, 14.3% are available in alternative formats (4.8% in Braille and 9.5% each for Standard Cassette and 4 track cassette).

The specifications for Science tend to vary between boards, with each board offering several options. In addition, the specifications are due to change in September 2006. Although texts listed in publishers’ catalogues for the new specifications were omitted, some of the exam boards’ data may include a mixture of old and new texts. AQA provides an extensive list of suggested texts, as well as offering several syllabus options, hence the large number of texts. Of the 124 titles identified for AQA, 7.3% are available in alternative format (5.6% in Braille and 1.6% in each of 2 and 4 track audio). Of the eleven titles listed for OCR, 18.2% are available in alternative formats (9.1% each for Braille,
Standard Cassette and 4 track cassette). None of the titles specified for Edexcel, WJEC or CCEA are available in alternative formats.

The majority of the alternative format titles are available from RNIB and/or NLB. Seven titles are available from HMP Service.

The results are illustrated in Figure 4.

Fig 4  Availability of Science Key Stage 4 texts by subject and format

Blind and partially sighted children’s right to read school text books 17
3.2.4 Welsh
RNIB are interested in the availability of texts for Welsh as a first language. WJEC provided a list of eleven prescribed literature texts for GCSE Welsh. Of these, only one title (9.1%) was available in an alternative format (Giant Print). However, the editions noted by WJEC were the latest editions (2003-4); seven of the titles are available in previous editions.

All of the titles in alternative formats (both prescribed and previous editions) are available from RNIB Wales.

3.2.5 Reference
Reference titles included dictionaries and atlases. Exam boards and curriculum authorities did not recommend any titles, so data were obtained from publishers’ catalogues (online and print copies). Only those specified for use at Key Stage 4 were included and seventeen titles were identified. None of these are available in an alternative format.
3.3 Suppliers of publications in alternative formats

Most of the accessible publications identified are available from RNIB or NLB on loan.

RNIB Library Services offer books for loan in a variety of formats including Braille, audio and Large Print (www.rnib.org.uk).

NLB lends books in Braille and Moon, and also has a small collection of Large Print, Giant Print and audio books. (www.nlb-online.org).

Several organisations provide a transcription service for textbooks for both individuals and schools. Once a book has been transcribed, the organisation may sell further copies. Three additional suppliers (to RNIB and NLB) emerged as key suppliers of school textbooks during this study:

- **HM Prison Service**: several prisons provide a Braille transcription service and also offer copies for sale.

- **Nottinghamshire Inclusion Support Service**: produces books in Braille and Large print for students in the service. Items produced can be reproduced for other authorities and individuals with a charge to cover costs.

- **NBCS (National Blind Children’s Society) CustomEyes Book Service**: produces books to order in a range of print sizes. Copies are available for purchase to members of NBCS; the service is available in the UK only.
4. Summary

This research aimed to identify the most widely used textbooks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for specific subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4, and to determine which of these textbooks are available in alternative formats. It was not possible to specify the most widely used titles within the timescale of the project, therefore, information on titles was sought from exam boards in the three regions of the UK and from the current catalogues of leading education publishers. As a result, the titles included are representative of those generally used by schools. It should be noted, however, that titles for Key Stage 3 were obtained from catalogues only.

The availability of titles varies between subject. English literature texts for GCSE are the most widely available, especially where exam boards do not prescribe editions. For example, 80% of the English literature texts set by WJEC (any edition) are available compared with 18% of the texts prescribed by AQA. Suggested literature for Key Stage 3 English is also widely available if specific editions are not required. However, English language textbooks are poorly represented with only 1.4% of Key Stage 3 titles and 5.9% of Key Stage 4 titles available in alternative formats.

English Literature texts are also available in the widest range of formats, including Braille, Moon, cassette, DAISY, electronic texts and various print sizes. Maths texts are only available in Braille 2 and/or Giant Print; Science texts are available in Braille 2 and/or cassette, with some Key Stage 3 Science texts in Giant Print.
RNIB and NLB are the major suppliers of alternative texts via the various library schemes. Various other sources are included on Revealweb and these mostly offer publications for sale.

The estimates of the availability of school textbooks established by this research demonstrate the lack of educational resources for blind and partially sighted children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and provide evidence in support of RNIB’s campaign to highlight and improve the current situation.
References


## Appendix 1  Publishers contacted and response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge University Press</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Education (Heinemann)</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HarperCollins</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macmillan Education</td>
<td>Reply to letter stating that their main market was English as a second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGraw Hill</td>
<td>No reply to letter; no relevant books found on website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Thornes</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folens</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford University Press</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letts</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGP Books</td>
<td>Replied with most popular texts; as very few in some sections, additional titles from the catalogue were added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson (Longman)</td>
<td>No reply to letter; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routledge</td>
<td>No reply to letter; no relevant books found on website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodder</td>
<td>Replied that data required could not be provided within the timescale of the project; details of current publications obtained from catalogue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>