



Kingsley Special Academy, Kettering

Designing a SEN-friendly school library that gives every pupil the opportunity to access books and enjoy reading.

Summary

Kingsley Special Academy in Kettering is a primary school catering for 156 children with a diverse range of special educational needs. Assistant Headteacher, Sara Cullingford-Agnew, was tasked with setting up a new library and had identified three main aims for the new space.

The aims

- To make the library space more accessible for pupils.
- To display books in a way that made it easier for children to choose.
- To create a library that would capture children's imaginations and inspire a love for reading.

Accessibility

During the initial visit as part of BookSpace's [free library design service](#), we could see that the old library was very crowded and the library furniture restricted wheelchair users from accessing the space. A vital part of the brief was to create a new library that was accessible to every child in the school. The school wanted a feeling of space and flow whilst also having some smaller zones – cosy reading dens and nooks for those children that like to feel contained.



At BookSpace, we've worked closely with a number of Special Schools and understand that the physical environment can have a huge impact on the engagement, progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs.

BookSpace designer, Michelle Tomlinson, was excited to work on the project and created several layout options for the school. "When designing a SEN-friendly library, we think carefully about the space and avoid overstimulating displays that can distract pupils with sensory sensitivity. We look at the type of library furniture and seating to make sure there's something for every pupil" says Michelle. "With this project, I wanted to include our much-loved Hideyholes as they offer a more intimate, quiet place to sit and read but the standard design wasn't suitable. By adapting the units and opening up the access, we could make sure children with additional mobility needs could enjoy them as well."

"The castle is a huge draw, the children love to be inside, looking out, but also to sit around the fireplace."

Sara Cullingford-Agnew - Assistant Head

Book display

Over the years the library had accumulated thousands of books which were so tightly packed onto the shelves that the children couldn't actually remove them. Sara was keen to display the books in a much more visible way, offering a smaller choice that was easier for children to see.

The BookSpace face-out shelf was the perfect solution. With a lip at the front of the shelf to prevent the books from falling off, the shelf is specifically designed to display a small number of books face-out that will not only look more appealing but will make choosing a book much easier for young readers. You can read more about BookSpace's unique library shelving [here](#).



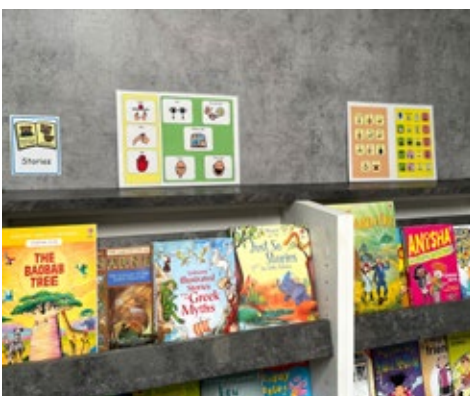
The 'wow' factor

The third key requirement was to create a library that had a real impact and would draw children in. It needed to be something that would fire the children's imagination but at the same time, offer areas that were calm and not overstimulating. The final design included an impressive castle feature, cosy reading nooks and a small area for group work.

BookSpace

Our library designer Michelle loved working on something so unique and creative whilst staying true to the BookSpace philosophy - **making the books look great.** "We took every opportunity to include lots

of eye-catching book displays so that wherever the children were in the library, there was always a book to be seen and within easy reach".





Before



After

The result

The new school library was launched with a big reveal for each class. To add excitement and intrigue, staff covered the doors and windows and opened with a library trail and a special storytelling event. "The library was a big hit," says Sara. "The children were so excited to explore the different areas, and very quickly settled to listen to stories and explore the books."

Since the library was opened, staff have already noticed a positive change in the children's attitudes to reading.

"Long term children's engagement with the space and books has increased hugely. Individuals, groups and whole classes now use the library regularly, and rather than children simply sorting through a huge array of books, they now more frequently select a book, find a space and engage with it." Sara Cullingford-Agnew.

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Sara Cullingford-Agnew - Assistant Head