



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Transforming a corridor into a reading destination.

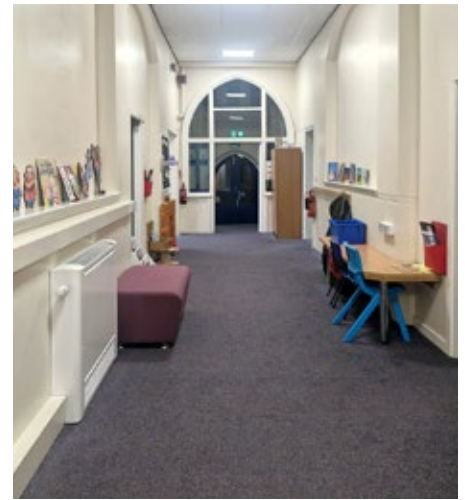
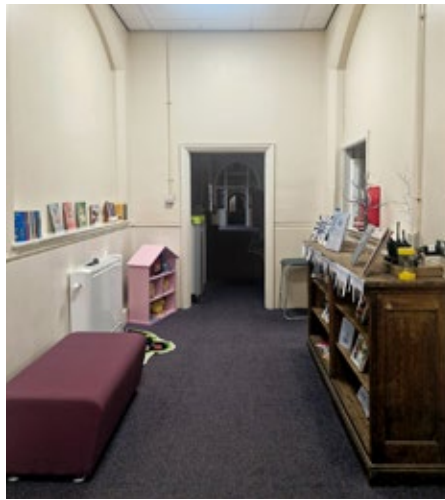
As a vibrant, diverse urban primary school located just outside Preston city centre, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is passionate about helping **every child** discover the joy, confidence and opportunities that reading can bring.

Like many schools, however, Sacred Heart faced a familiar challenge. Space was limited and there simply wasn't an available room to create the kind of immersive reading environment staff knew would make a real difference. Instead, they looked at a simple corridor and saw an opportunity.

Seeing potential in an everyday space

Before the transformation, the corridor housed several bookcases and provided an overflow area where children could leave the classroom to read, share books or carry out research.

But while it was functional, it wasn't inspiring.



The furniture was dated, the layout didn't make the best use of the available space and, despite the staff's ambitions, the area lacked the warmth and sense of purpose needed to encourage children to spend time there.

The school had a clear vision. They wanted somewhere that felt **special** – somewhere children would actively choose to visit, whether to lose themselves in a story, read with friends or simply enjoy a few quiet moments with a book.

Turning that vision into reality, however, required a design that could **maximise every square metre** without overwhelming the space.



Bringing a shared vision to life

The project formed part of our contribution to the **National Year of Reading 2026**, during which we selected Sacred Heart to receive a free bespoke reading space. While the design and library furniture was provided as part of this initiative, the real focus was always on demonstrating how thoughtful design can transform children's relationship with reading.

From the outset, **collaboration** was central to the project.

BookSpace worked closely with teacher, Mrs Jenkins, to understand their ideas about how they wanted the space to feel and function, whilst developing a design that reflected the school's ethos, supported everyday teaching and celebrated its unique identity.

One feature was especially important.

Sacred Heart's "bee" theme, linked to its Big Promises values, is embedded throughout school life, so it needed to become a natural part of the design. At the same time, the school wanted a space that was **visually engaging** without becoming overstimulating.

The result was a calm, welcoming environment that balanced creativity with practicality. Every element was designed with purpose, ensuring children could access books independently while creating cosy spaces that invited them to **stop, settle down and read.**

"Having a high quality, purposeful area to read has encouraged even our most reluctant reader to grab a book!"

Mrs Jenkins, Teacher

Making every inch count

Although the corridor itself presented several design challenges, every available space was carefully utilised to create **distinct reading zones** that encourage both independent and shared reading experiences.

One of the standout features quickly became the **beehive seating area**. Reception pupil, Rowan, tells us "I like sitting with my friends in the bee hives to read our favourite books. I love it when we have story time in there together."



Providing an enclosed, comfortable place where children can curl up with a book, the **Honeycomb Hideyhole** has become one of the most popular spots in the school to read. Other features include **Toadstool Seats**, **Cubby Houses** and tiered shelving with face-out display to ensure children of all ages can comfortably **browse, discover and enjoy books throughout the day.**

A reading space children couldn't wait to explore

The reaction from pupils was immediate.

When children arrived to see the completed reading corridor for the first time, excitement spread quickly throughout the school. There was an unmistakable buzz as pupils eagerly explored the new space and discovered its reading nooks for themselves.

"I love going out to the reading corner, I like reading new books in the cosy Bee hives."

Yassmine - Year 1

"The new reading corridor helps you to relax when reading or it's a lovely place to go to when you need some quiet time."

Prosper - Year 6

"It's amazing to see people sit and read in a peaceful place, taking a break from the world. I love the bee chairs. They fit our school theme brilliantly!"

Olivia - Year 4

That initial enthusiasm hasn't faded.

Today, the corridor is **rarely empty**. Throughout the school day it is filled with children reading independently, sharing books with friends or taking part in guided reading sessions with teachers and teaching assistants.

Mrs Jenkins tells us "One of our favourite things as staff is walking through the corridor and seeing little heads popping out from the different reading nooks and spaces. It's wonderful to see children so engaged in books and choosing to spend their time reading."



Encouraging reading for pleasure

For schools where classroom space is at a premium, creating dedicated environments for reading can have a **significant impact**.

Before the project, every classroom had its own reading corner, but these spaces were naturally limited.

The new reading corridor has provided something entirely different: a dedicated environment that children genuinely want to use.

Teachers have noticed a **marked increase** in the amount of time pupils spend reading for pleasure. Children regularly ask to visit the corridor, choose to read there independently and frequently recommend books to one another.

"I cannot believe the impact our new reading corridor has had in our school! Having a high quality, purposeful area to read has encouraged even our most reluctant reader to grab a book! Mrs Jenkins, Teacher

Parents have noticed the difference too. "They were blown away by the quality of the design and how effectively the space had been transformed. Many parents commented that their children had been coming home talking enthusiastically about the reading corridor and were excited to show it to their families. It was wonderful to hear how much the children value the space and how their enthusiasm for reading is extending beyond school and into their conversations at home. The positive feedback from both children and parents has been fantastic and has reinforced just how much of an impact the area has had on our school community."





A small space with a lasting impact

This project demonstrates that transformational school library design doesn't always require new buildings or major extensions. Sometimes, the greatest opportunities already exist within the spaces schools pass through every day.

By reimagining an ordinary corridor, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School has created an environment that encourages curiosity, supports learning and inspires children to **spend more time reading simply because they want to.**

For us, it was a privilege to support the school as part of our National Year of Reading initiative. For Sacred Heart, it has become something even more valuable - much-loved space that is helping shape the reading habits of their pupils for years to come.

"BookSpace have been amazing to work with! From listening to our design needs, creating a bespoke area to meet our requirements and fitting around our timetable - they made the whole process really easy!"

Mrs Jenkins, Teacher

**At BookSpace we love helping to design reading spaces no matter how large or small.
Contact our friendly team on 0121 246 2777 to find out more.**