



Our Lady's R.C. High School, Manchester

Designing a modern, dynamic library and learning centre for a brand-new secondary school in Manchester.

Summary

Our Lady's R.C. High School is a new-build secondary school in Manchester catering for over 900 pupils aged 11 to 16. Before its official opening in 2022, BookSpace was invited by teachers Claire Ryan and Hannah Woosey to put forward a design for the new school library.

The brief

One of the main objectives was to create a multi-purpose library and learning space with a number of zones that could be used for different purposes. As the new library was going to be used as an additional teaching space, the layout needed to accommodate enough tables and chairs for a whole class. The school wanted to create areas for

group work, independent research and somewhere with sofas and armchairs where pupils could relax and enjoy reading. In addition to the main school library, Claire and Hannah wanted to use an adjacent room to house their non-fiction books and develop an outdoor reading space using the balcony area.

The second priority for the new space was to ensure that the library furniture could be adapted to hold more books as the collection grew.

"The school plan was to increase the book capacity in the library over time, so it was important that the furniture was flexible enough to allow for this. For this reason, mobile bookcases which can be easily re-positioned were used mid-floor and the central area included tables that can be moved elsewhere to make room for additional book display and storage when needed." says BookSpace designer, Jonathan Turner.

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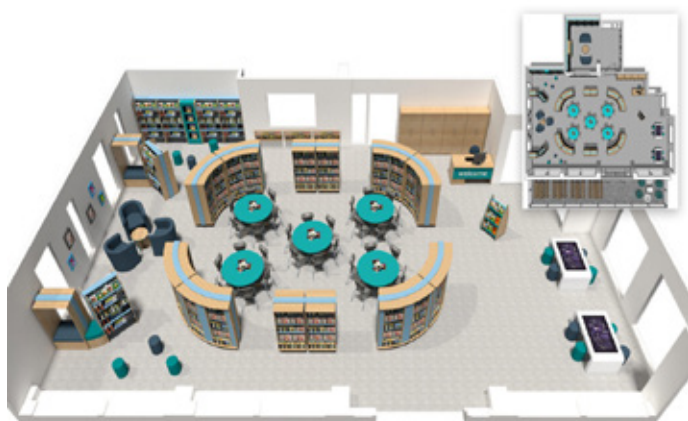
Working with BookSpace

As the building was under construction when Claire and Hannah contacted BookSpace, the first part of the library design process was achieved through online meetings and emails. This enabled our design team to get a detailed understanding of the brief and begin creating a modern, sophisticated library that would encourage students to use the space. As part of our free library design service, our design team often produce two to three designs for each project as our customers find it useful to see a variety of layouts with different features and price points.

“Students were impressed when the library first opened, they enjoyed how open and bright the space was and how much room there was for them to sit and use the space.”

Merryn Coles, Librarian

For this project, Jonathan presented four slightly different approaches to using the space. Option one prioritised the central area for whole class teaching whereas option two focused on providing smaller areas for group work. Options three and four included a Feature Tree as a focal point and tables in a variety of locations to accommodate visiting groups of different sizes.



Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



Option 4

The result

With two further adjustments to option one, the final library design was approved and the project was handed over to the main contractor, Rosslee Construction, who were responsible for the build. BookSpace liaised with Rosslee and the school to

manage lead-times, delivery and installation of the library furniture and ensure everything went smoothly.

The final design included many of BookSpace's signature pieces, including a bespoke Librarian Desk with storage, outdoor benches, bar-height desks and

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wall-mounted book display. Positioning library shelving mid-floor was the perfect solution for zoning the library. This enabled classes to take place in the heart of the space but also allow students to use the quiet reading areas and study spaces around the perimeter at the same time.

The library opened in January 2023 and the response from staff and students has been very positive.

“Students were openly impressed when the library first opened, they enjoyed how open and bright the space was and how much room there was for them to sit and use the space.” explains Librarian, Merryn Coles.



**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.**