

Reading Strategy

September 2026

OUR ETHOS

Sacred Heart Catholic Academy is a distinctive and nurturing community rooted in the teachings and values of the Catholic faith. Central to this is Catholic Social Teaching, which calls us to care for one another and uphold a preferential option for the poor. Guided by the love and compassion of the Gospel, we seek to live out the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:40: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

This commitment shapes all that we do, as we serve our local community in Crosby and maintain strong partnerships with our Catholic feeder schools. Our work is underpinned by our core values of **love, service, ambition and respect**.

RATIONALE

Reading is a fundamental life skill. We are committed to ensuring that every pupil leaves Sacred Heart with both the **ability** and the **desire** to read.

- **Reading for pleasure.** The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) identifies reading enjoyment as a key factor in improving attainment and engagement, so we foster a genuine love of literature through widespread reading for pleasure.
- **Reading widely and often.** Exposure to a broad range of texts is one of the most effective ways to develop vocabulary, comprehension and background knowledge. Beck, McKeown and Kucan highlight the importance of rich vocabulary instruction, and the National Reading Panel shows that fluency and comprehension are strengthened through regular, meaningful reading practice.
- **Evidence-informed support.** Our approach is informed by Scarborough's Reading Rope, which shows the interdependent strands of word recognition and language comprehension. Targeted interventions ensure pupils who need additional support receive it in a timely and effective way.

We believe it is the right of every child to become a competent and confident user of the English language, equipped to live, learn and succeed in a literate world. Through rich fiction and non-fiction, pupils deepen their understanding of themselves and the world, develop critical thinking and build cultural capital, becoming not only skilled readers but thoughtful, curious and informed individuals.

AIMS

High-quality education should inspire pupils to become both creative and critical thinkers. Through this strategy we aim to ensure that all pupils:

- develop the reading proficiency expected for their age
- communicate fluently, confidently and precisely, using a rich and varied vocabulary
- engage with and critically evaluate a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, and appreciate a rich literary heritage
- become imaginative and purposeful writers, with strong control of spelling, punctuation and grammar

High levels of literacy are the foundation for understanding and mastering key concepts in every subject. Strong reading and writing skills equip pupils to thrive academically and beyond.

OVERVIEW

Three strands of our reading strategy

01

Reading intervention

FOR PUPILS NOT YET
SECONDARY-READY

Identifying pupils who need help and giving them targeted, timely support to become confident, fluent readers.

02

Disciplinary reading

IN EVERY SUBJECT

Teaching pupils to read the texts and vocabulary of each subject, with classrooms adapted for every reader.

03

Reading for pleasure

FOR EVERY PUPIL

Building a love of reading through form time reading, events and a reading culture that reaches home and the wider community.

ASSESSMENT UNDERPINS ALL THREE STRANDS

Pupils in **Years 7–10** complete a GL Assessment reading test **three times a year**, and **Year 11** pupils **twice a year**.

The data is analysed to identify each pupil's reading age and area of need (**word recognition, language comprehension, phonological awareness or reading fluency**). This identifies the intervention groups in Strand 1 and informs classroom adaptations in Strand 2. Reading ages are shared with parents.

Reading intervention

For pupils who are not yet secondary-ready readers. Using the assessment data, pupils are grouped by reading age and need, and receive structured intervention, much of it delivered during form time. Support is organised in waves, so that pupils who do not make enough progress move to a different approach.

Amber readers

Most pupils needing support are amber readers, reading below the expected level.

	KEY STAGE 3	KEY STAGE 4
Wave 1	Reading Development Programme Weekly in form time. Focus: word recognition and language comprehension.	Reading Plus Online, at home and in form time. Focus: fluency, vocabulary, stamina and motivation.
Wave 2	Better Reading Weekly in form time. Focus: reading fluency and word recognition.	Reading Plus Online, at home and in form time. Focus: fluency, vocabulary, stamina and motivation.
Wave 3	Reading Plus Online, at home and in form time. Focus: fluency, vocabulary, stamina and motivation.	Reading Plus Online, at home and in form time. Focus: fluency, vocabulary, stamina and motivation.

Red readers

Some pupils are red readers, with significant reading difficulty.

	KEY STAGE 3	KEY STAGE 4
Wave 1	Lexonic Leap phonics, 3 times a week in form time, for pupils scoring 8.5 or below on the phonics screening. All other red readers: Better Reading with prosody adaptations. Focus: word recognition and fluency.	Better Reading with prosody adaptations. Focus: word recognition and fluency.
Wave 2	Better Reading with prosody adaptations. Focus: word recognition and fluency.	Reading Plus Online, at home and in form time. Focus: fluency, vocabulary, stamina and motivation.
Wave 3	Reading Development Programme Weekly in form time. Focus: word recognition and language comprehension.	Reading Plus Online, at home and in form time. Focus: fluency, vocabulary, stamina and motivation.

Working with parents and exam access

- Parents are informed when their child begins an intervention and are updated regularly on progress.
- Parents of pupils in intervention are invited to support one-to-one reading sessions.
- The SENDCo reviews access arrangements for pupils in exam groups.

Disciplinary reading

Every teacher is a teacher of reading. Each subject has its own vocabulary, texts and ways of reading, and pupils are taught to read, talk and write like experts in each discipline.

Reading in every subject

Whole-school approach	The whole-school reading strategy is embedded in every department.
Speak like a...	Every classroom has a “Speak like a...” oracy display, modelling the language of the subject (for example, speak like a historian or a scientist).
Dictionaries and libraries	Every classroom has dictionaries and a departmental library.
Literacy in the curriculum	Each subject’s curriculum includes at least one literacy-based homework and “Do Now” activity.
Marking for literacy	Marking for literacy is embedded across the school.

Adapting teaching for every reader

Knowing the readers	Teachers highlight the weakest readers in their planning and seating plans.
Classroom adaptations	Teaching is adapted according to each pupil’s reading age and any SEND need.
Teaching assistants	Teachers deploy TA support effectively, in line with the “Bus Route” seating plan.
Teacher toolkit	Every classroom has a teacher toolkit, including reading rulers and coloured overlays.

Reading for pleasure

We want every pupil to enjoy reading and to choose to read. Reading for pleasure is built through form time, whole-school events and links with home and the wider community.

Form time reading

Form time reading follows the **Form Time Reading Curriculum**, which alternates between:

- **Whole-class readers.** Form tutors read high-quality novels aloud, modelling expert reading. Reading a whole novel builds fluency and stamina, and texts are chosen to support personal development and build cultural capital.
- **Purposeful Reading units.** Non-fiction, speeches and extracts linked to school standards, key dates and personal development themes, using **reciprocal reading** strategies (predict, question, clarify, summarise).

SEE ALSO

Form Time Reading Curriculum 2026–27: the full list of novels and Purposeful Reading texts for each year group.

A whole-school reading culture

A reading book, every day	A reading book is part of every pupil's non-negotiable equipment.
National events	We mark national events such as World Book Day, National Poetry Day, Roald Dahl Day and Dictionary Day.
Reading Ambassadors	Reading Ambassadors support links with our partner primary schools, including at transition events.

Home and the wider community

Information for parents	Reading strategies and support are shared with parents and carers through ParentMail.
Local offers	Offers and events, such as holiday activities at the library, are promoted to parents through ParentMail.
Celebrating reading	Achievements and national events are celebrated on the school's social media.