

Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 2 - April 2019

Welcome to our second Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary newsletter which we hope will inspire you and encourage you to share your activities with other schools.

Although we are “Birmingham” City of Sanctuary, we don’t have too rigid an approach to boundaries, and in fact one of our first Schools of Sanctuary was St Anne’s Catholic Primary School in Chelmsley Wood, Solihull. Now, we have expanded to include Halesowen College, and have just begun to work with Birchills C of E Primary Academy in Walsall. Other Birmingham schools which have recently joined our network are Chandos Primary (Highgate) and Holy Cross Catholic Primary (Walmley).

We are delighted to announce that Cromwell Primary School (Nechells) has been given the School of Sanctuary Award, and the presentation will take place at a special Refugee Day event in the week before actual Refugee Week. And of course Refugee Week itself is coming up in June - we are already thinking about how best to support your activities during the period before, during and after the week.

Unfortunately our plan to do something in Symphony Hall or Town Hall did not come to fruition as they had no availability in the weeks we had suggested. However, they are on board with City of Sanctuary, so we’re looking forward to possible future cooperation.

What our schools have been doing

On the next pages there are reports from Halesowen College and Benson Community School, which give an idea of the variety of the activities in our network. It would be great to have a bumper edition of the newsletter after Refugee Week, with information about all your activities!

Best wishes
Barbara

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Benson School in Hockley is new to our Schools of Sanctuary network but has already been working on refugee issues. Here Deputy Head Svinder Rana writes about a recent drama project with the Big Brum Theatre Company.

At Benson, our children have been involved in theatre workshop lessons with Big Brum. We initially invested in this support to help improve the stimulus for writing. Through the power of theatre and the thought provoking issues dealt with, we definitely got our pupils interpreting, reflecting and making links with the topics discussed and their own lives.

The 'Flee' workshop explored the theme of being lost and what this meant to children and staff. The project was best suited to the oldest key stage two pupils and would be relevant for secondary age pupils too. In the production, two characters from very different backgrounds find sanctuary in the park; one truant from school with an unstable home life and the other who is a refugee, not sure about what has happened to his family.

The Big Brum staff used open ended questions with the children to get them to think about the theme to elicit their understanding and views about the scene unfolding before them. They built on children's initial responses by using probing questions that got the children to deepen their understanding. These initial ideas were explored further by staff in follow on lessons. Some of the themes that emerged from the discussions related to, trusted adults, tolerance and people sleeping rough in the city. They explored the latter further by considering how these people are treated in society currently and thought about how they could get themselves out of such situations; the support that is available.

We found that there are so many themes that can be explored from a starting point such as this, in relation to the wider curriculum. The skill of the staff who deliver these workshops has been extremely valuable in helping our children broaden and deepen their understanding of themes that continue to be prevalent in society today.

Halesowen College – ESOL football teams

In 2018 we had a few ESOL students who were keen to start a football team. This project was supported by James Bragg as part of a Sport England initiative and quickly grew to 28 students who attend a training session each week. The interest from so many students enabled us to create an ESOL football team which has FA accreditation. The team participated in 5 tournaments last year. To celebrate World Mental Health Day in October, there was a match between our ESOL football team and the College's 3rd football team which is made up of Sport students – the ESOL team was well supported from the side lines and was victorious. Our ESOL footballers have also had the opportunity to visit Liverpool United Football Club.

Many of our ESOL students would have had nothing to do on Christmas Day, so we organised a Christmas Day football match, which was attended by ESOL students and staff from a large number of College departments. Staff not only cheered on the footballers, but also supplied the refreshments and bought them Christmas gifts. Following the Christmas Day match, ESOL footballers were given tickets to watch West Bromwich Albion play later the same week. This year our ESOL footballers are part of the Birmingham County Flexi College League. This league has enabled us to enter both male and female teams with varying levels of football experience and ability and has encouraged non-sporting students to engage with football activities.

Erika Walkington, Halesowen College

