

# Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary

## Newsletter No. 3 - July 2019

Welcome to our third Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary newsletter which we hope will inspire you and encourage you to share your activities with other schools. This is a Bumper Edition, as we have lots of reports from activities during Refugee Week.

Since the last newsletter, we have been proud to present the Sanctuary Award to three schools - Cromwell Primary in Nechells, Chandos Primary in Highgate, and Nelson Mandela Primary in Sparkhill.

We were also delighted to award Oasis Academy Foundry with an updated Sanctuary Award to mark over four years of their status as a School of Sanctuary. Our very first School of Sanctuary, St Chad's Primary in Newtown, received the award exactly five years ago this month, and will be presented with the updated Sanctuary Award at the beginning of the next academic year. It's really great to know that our schools are showing long-term commitment and are also happy to network and offer support to others. We're also very pleased to welcome Abbey Catholic Primary School in Erdington to our network. We have already had an inspiring meeting with some of their pupils who attended the play at Carrs Lane during Refugee Week.

Our schools were very active during Refugee Week and it's great to see the enthusiasm both in schools which only recently joined the network and in schools which have been working with us now for several years. We organised poetry workshops in several schools, with excellent results, and we will be sharing some of the poems with you in due course. *If your pupils have produced poems separately from those written in our poetry workshops, please pass them on so that they can be shared.*

In the following pages you will find information from Allens Croft, Colmore, Holy Cross, Nelson Mandela, Our Lady of Lourdes, The Oaks, Washwood Heath Academy, and Welsh House Farm.

The Schools of Sanctuary Team wish you all a wonderful summer break and look forward to more exciting activities in the new academic year.

Best wishes

Barbara, Cath, Debbie & Sue

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**Allens Croft Primary in Kings Heath received the Sanctuary Award a year ago. As you can see from this report, they are still committed to welcoming and learning about refugees.**

When our visiting guest asylum seeker, Bara'a Ismail, visited Allens Croft Primary School during *Refugee Week*, she was met by sixty Year 5 students all poised to become star newspaper



reporters. The reporters were all keen to interview their guest and find out as much as they could about asylum seekers and the journey Baraa had taken to reach the UK.

Class teacher, Melissa Holloway, had listened to Bara'a last year with a Year 6 class and knew the children would get frank and honest answers to their questions. She said, *'Being able to hear the story first-hand gives it a sense of gravity and helps the children to empathise*

*with those who have had a hard struggle.'*

The students had clearly been well prepared for this unit of work, centred around seeking asylum, and asked many perceptive questions. So many questions were raised that Baraa continued to give her answers for 50 minutes!

Having listened to the visitor's story, and taken exhaustive notes, the students were given time to reflect upon all they had heard. It was then their task to write up what they had learnt in the form of their very own newspaper article.

At the end of the week 5 students were chosen to read excerpts from their articles to represent the work of the two classes. They presented this to the School Assembly so that all the students would get a flavour of Baraa's story for themselves.

Excerpts:

*Being a refugee is difficult. In this story, we are going to tell you the life of a refugee in England.*

*She was detained in her home country. When she was returned to her home, that same evening, she had a very important talk with her children. It was to make a very important decision to leave and be safe or to stay and be surrounded by danger.*

*Forced to leave her home just because she wanted to stand up for her rights. Her son didn't understand because he had friends and liked his school before he had to flee.*

*She was very upset because she couldn't speak English and that made it very hard to communicate with people. She missed her family and she wanted to go home. Her two children had come with her and she wished they could live with better conditions. One was a boy who was at that time 10 and a half and one was a girl of 13.*

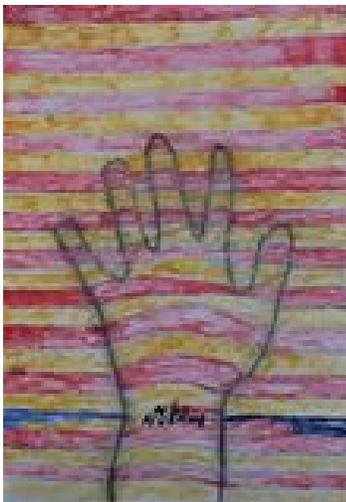
*Have you ever been unsafe in your country? ... Right now, she is as safe as she can possibly be. The sad thing is that she can't contact her family and she can't visit them.*

Speaking to some of the children afterwards about what they had gained by listening to Baraa one said:

*'I have never had the chance to speak to a refugee before and listening is important because it helps you understand their struggles.'*

Another comment was quite poignant:

*It touched our hearts when she told us she was taken in front of her kids. Her son was about the same age as us.'*



Some of the children completed posters

One student did this at home with his brother as he explained all about the speaker who had visited his class. He explained that the handprint on the paper is to remind everybody to give everybody a helping hand. He also wrote the word *hope* in top left corner.

**Colmore Junior School in Kings Heath has recently joined our network and they got off to a flying start, as Amy Fox reports here!**

At the start of the week, our whole-school assembly welcomed special guest Zahra, a refugee from Iran, who spoke about her difficult journey from Iran to the UK and how she and her family have now made their home in Birmingham.

On that day, all 16 classes shared different fiction and non-fiction books about refugees.



**During the week, every year group engaged in related activities.**

**Year 3** imagined they were refugees trying to juggle the competing pressures of living in the UK. They had to try to keep balloons in the air, each balloon representing a different issue such as getting food, learning a new language, finding housing, getting an education. From this task, the children developed a strong awareness of the difficulties asylum-seekers experience when coming to the UK.

The children in this year group also thought about what they could do to make a new refugee pupil welcome at Colmore and what problems they might face starting school in a new country. They designed an assortment of welcome posters and welcome cards, and produced a “top tips for starting at Colmore” booklet.

**Year 4** welcomed Lucy from Kings Heath Action for Refugees, who spoke about the organisation and ways we can take social action to improve our community. We are planning to work with them on a project in the autumn term - watch this space!



One way Colmore has been taking social action is through collecting clothes for St Chad's Sanctuary, a vital charity that supports asylum-seekers in Birmingham. Our families have been incredibly kind, donating over 100 bags of children's clothing! To put in with the clothes, the children created some lovely postcards with kind and caring messages of support for new refugees arriving in Birmingham.

They also looked at backpacks of child refugees, deciding what would be the five most important things to take if they had to leave home in a hurry. Then narrowing it down only three items - it was incredibly difficult to decide.



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**Year 5** took part in workshops run by Cath Palgrave about Climate Refugees. They produced artwork about what home means to them.

In **Year 6**, children explored what life in a refugee camp would be like and what human rights might be restricted through living there. The children explored the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and discussed which rights would be protected and which would be compromised.

**Holy Cross Primary School in Walmley recently joined our network and had a very active Refugee Week! Katrina Crowley reports:**

We simply had the best week! Children's knowledge and understanding of refugees and asylum seekers at the start of the week was low. However, by the end of the week all children now understand and can relate better to what a refugee experiences and how we should be seeing God's love within us to help and welcome those in need.

Every class completed a lesson about what a refugee is and learnt about different stories related to this. Children had to imagine themselves in their shoes and reflect on what they would bring with them if they were forced to flee their home country; this exercise, which was completed at the start of the week, set the children in the right mindset. All classes completed geography lessons linked to the theme of refugee week- each class focused on the geography skill of compare and contrast- again excellent outcomes were seen.

Throughout the week, the Mini Vinnies and Rights Respecting Representatives collected the children's clothing donations that were brought into school for St Chad's Sanctuary. On Friday afternoon, we took the clothes to the Sanctuary and had a tour to help develop their understanding of where refugees come from and what they would like our further support with. One child said to me "That was the best experience I ever had." We showed photos of the visit during a whole school assembly and the children shared what they learnt - all children from ages 4 to 11 were engaged. The whole school were given homework related to refugee week to encourage children to carry on the messages they had learnt and spark more conversations - children have come to me this week and said what they will be doing as a family to ensure all refugees feel welcome.

We loved it! This is just the beginning!

**Rochelle Jefferey, Assistant Head of Nelson Mandela Community School, reports on the school's journey towards becoming a School of Sanctuary.**

Having gained our Unicef Rights Respecting Schools award in January, becoming a School of Sanctuary seemed a perfect next step for Nelson Mandela School. Our children already had some understanding of the refugee crisis, with our Rights Rangers having instigated an amazing event last spring where they arranged to meet and play with refugee children based at the centre in Edgbaston. In Autumn 2018 our whole school had participated in 'Echo Eternal' – a commemorative arts, media and civic engagement project which is inspired by the testimony of British survivors of the Holocaust recorded in interviews by Natasha Kaplinsky for the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation. Children across the school had listened to the words of Kurt Tausig, responding through artwork to his plight as he left his home and family as a refugee travelling to Britain. Schools of Sanctuary provided us with the opportunity to build on this learning, 'connecting' with today's refugee children and being active in making sure all children enjoy their rights.

Although adults in school were aware and sympathetic about the current refugee crisis, our teacher and teaching assistant insets served to clarify sometimes vague knowledge and bring home the extent of the current situation by highlighting misconceptions and sharing facts. Although learning about migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is currently in our curriculum, this has been developed further to ensure it is not tokenistic and has progression of understanding. As a boost this year, the decision was made to

have our annual Rights Respecting schools week as Refugee Awareness week and we took full advantage of the offers made by the SOS network. Cath kick-started our week, with a fantastic assembly introducing the idea of sanctuary to the whole school. She then worked with Years 2 and 3 learning about Climate Change refugees.



On Friday year 6 pupils were thrilled to attend a poetry workshop with Vanwy, a poet from Warwick University. The thoughtful and emotive poems written will provide the basis of our school's performance at the Rights Respecting Schools Celebration event at Birmingham Rep on the 11<sup>th</sup> July. In addition each year group was provided with a book (recommended from BookTrust.org) to help support empathy with refugee children. Our Rights Rangers chose the simple but poignant story 'My Name is not Refugee' by Kate Milner to share with parents at our coffee morning on World Refugee day.

Our week culminated in a fund-raising event where all our families were invited into school. The weather was kind, with parents and their children visiting the bake sales, games and stalls set up by each class in the school playground. Whilst there, families paused to place on a world map a sticker (or often stickers) indicating a special place where they have family living or have themselves migrated from – a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the diversity of experiences of our own school community. In total the day raised £755, to be shared equally between the global charity Unicef and local charity Kings Heath Action for Refugees.

Alongside this very special focus week, our school council have researched and created our 'welcome pack' for any child, refugee or otherwise, who may start our school. This is backed up our new 'Schools of Sanctuary' policy, which clearly sets out to our school community the actions that we take, and would take to ensure we are truly a place of sanctuary for refugees.



**Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School, in Yardley Wood, is another new member of our Schools of Sanctuary network. Head Teacher Pauline David has told us what they did during Refugee Week.**

The school marked refugee week through a range of events. All classes in school acknowledged this week in some way in their RE or other curriculum activities. On a more formal level, our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils took part in workshops about Modern Day Slavery run by the Just Enough Group. This group use the arts to delve into difficult and emotive issues so that children have an opportunity to learn about the wider world in a safe and fun way, where the core message is still taken forward. The children learned about the impact of slavery.

In addition, our Year 6 class had a workshop with the Anne Frank Trust UK about prejudice, discrimination and hate speech (linked to the real life events of Anne herself and brought to date with relevant references to recent contexts). These workshops proved to be valuable for staff and pupils alike.

We have always been proud of the links we have established with St Chad's Sanctuary and this week the children had an opportunity to go and watch a performance called "Home", written and performed by refugees and asylum seekers who use the facilities and support offered by the Sanctuary. The children were very moved by the play and, while there, had the opportunity to discuss and ask reflective questions. On return to school the work continued.



We rounded off our events with a Refugee and Migration workshop led by the Red Cross when the children did more in depth work about the reasons why people flee their homes and the impact of not being made welcome when they come to the UK.

**The Oaks Primary School in Druids Heath were involved in an exciting music project, which Year 3 teacher Tara Harris tells us about here:**

To celebrate our commitment of being a School of Sanctuary, The Oaks Primary School welcomed the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, a group of visiting musicians Sound of Karachi, parents and members of the Schools of Sanctuary Team. Musicians worked with each Year 3 class and teachers to create two new distinct compositions which they performed in a special assembly to the school, visitors and the community. We were also lucky enough to also watch the amazing members from Sounds of Karachi perform. Feedback from all parties about the project were positive. Lewis described the project as, 'Amazing!' He said, "I loved it because we got to learn how to use music in different ways. We discovered how to make different sounds with different instruments. The musicians were nice. They helped us improve our skills in music. The first one (composition) was about how to have a conversation in music and the second was about the musician coming all the way from their home to our school.'

Mrs Khatun appreciated how multicultural the project was. She said, "One of the musicians was from Bangladesh which is where my family is from." The musicians were really good at engaging the children. The idea of creating the musicians' own journey from Dhaka to Birmingham through music was an interesting perspective for the children to explore. The children hadn't really understood how people travel and set up home from different countries or thought about reasons why people make journeys.

Duncan Chapman, the lead composer of the project, commented: "On entering The Oaks it was clear to me that this was a school with a real sense of community and enthusiasm. What was most impressive was the way in which such a diverse group of children were all able to participate and collaborate on the music we were creating without feeling pressured or isolating those children who might find group activities difficult. Having had the experience both as a visiting artist of many schools, and the parent of a child on the Autistic Spectrum, it lifted my spirits to work in such a fundamentally inclusive and supportive school. Modelling how one would like the world

to be is, in my view, one of the most important things that we can do when working with young people, and The Oaks is a real example of this in action. All the children we worked with and met were able to take part, they were all listened to, and there was no sense of any barriers to participation and learning. A wonderful couple of days that inspired us all.”

Elaine Heinen, a musician from the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, said: “I was incredibly impressed with The Oaks school. The atmosphere hit me straight away - there was a clear sense of wanting the best for the children.”

This project, arranged in conjunction with the Schools of Sanctuary Team and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, provided learning opportunities for the children around diversity, inter-dependence, race equality and pupil voice. This was a fully immersive arts experience that reinforced the school’s inclusive ethos. Thank you to the Schools of Sanctuary team and BCMG who facilitated this wonderful event.



**Washwood Heath Academy had a wide range of activities, as SENCO Aggie Doyle has reported:**

All the staff were briefed about Refugee Week and put posters up in every classroom and in every office. There were five student assemblies delivered by refugee pupils who shared their stories, and staff shared the academic success stories of their pupils. In form time, pupils watched videos and clips followed by discussions about the situation of refugees.

At the Awards Celebration the CEO of the Academy Trust awarded the highest award to 15-year-old Ihsanulla Ahmadzai, a refugee child from Afghanistan now living with a foster family. He came to the UK three years ago, never having attended school before - this was his first ever school. He is a role model for many children, very popular with staff and pupils, and received the award in recognition of his promotion of the Washwood Way - HEARTS values of the school - **Happiness, Excellence, Achievement, Respect, Resilience, Tolerance and Self-Belief**. And you can see how delighted he was!



There was a lot of poetry - some Year 7 pupils took part in a poetry workshop with two poets from Warwick University, and whole-school poetry sessions during the school produced some excellent poems, such as the one on the next page (written by a pupil who is not a refugee).

*I met a man from a broken land.  
Oceans away from where we are now.  
And he told me a tale of his youth.  
He described a journey he took as he walked home.  
The sun blazed across his body,  
Yet the breeze kept him cool,  
And it carried the scent of the nearby market.  
Spices, delicacies, flowers and fruits.  
Aromas dancing around him made him feel alive.  
So he rushed home, across fields.  
Into the arms of his loving mother and he with his family in bliss.*

*Yet the country he talks of is not the one I know.  
The one I know is barren.  
Flowers unable to grow among the rubble and the man is alone.  
He carries with him two pots of ashes.  
And as he walks away,  
Tears well up in my eyes.*

**Welsh House Farm received the Sanctuary Award in 2015 and the indefatigable Lucy Hudson and Simone Grant ensure that the whole school is involved.**

Years 1, 2 and 3 had a cinema afternoon in the hall to watch Paddington, with follow-up activities taking place during the week. The school also held the regular Coffee Morning with a sing-song. A group of pupils attended the play at Carrs Lane put on by St Chad's Sanctuary. Years 5 and 6 had a speaker from the Red Cross, while Year 4 had a visit from a refugee from Iran, who was visiting the school for the fourth year running and is always welcomed warmly by pupils she has spoken to in the past. Friday was a "Bounce Day" to raise money for UNICEF. Year 6 had a poetry workshop with a visiting poet

As well as sharing texts from a selection of books about refugees with related tasks such as writing a review or something for a display, Years 1, 2 and 3 wrote welcome postcards to give to children newly arrived in the school. There was a poster competition on the theme of "We welcome refugees" and in each class, children taught their peers phrases in their home language. Buddies made key rings using colours that represent a certain country. These were sold at the Summer fete to raise money for UNICEF.

During Refugee Week the school dinner menu was changed so that everyday a meal from a different country was cooked. Children really enjoyed eating food from different cultures.

As usual in Welsh House Farm, examples of work were collected for the stunning display for the foyer.

After Refugee Week, the process began to appoint new Buddies for 2019/20.

**Many thanks to all our schools for the great work they are doing! The reports here are, we know, only a glimpse into all the activity which is going on across the city. We're looking forward to next year!**