

Birmingham Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 10 December 2021



The Big Orange Heart Special Edition!

Our inboxes have been full of the orange hearts which we have been using in the subject line of e-mails about the Together With Refugees/Show Your Heart campaign in response to the proposed legislation affecting asylum-seekers. The response from our schools has been magnificent, and in this special edition of the newsletter we can include just some of the lovely photographs you have shared with us. There is also an article about a visit to Wales by some of our Head Teachers and a

group of asylum-seekers, and a report on Little Amal's visit to Erdington.

In our next newsletter, planned for January, we're looking forward to reporting on other inspiring activities which I'm sure we'll hear about in the second half of the autumn term.

We are also delighted to report that **Abbey RC Primary School** finally had its Award Assembly (postponed from June for reasons you will understand). We are looking forward to upcoming Award Assemblies at **Holy Cross** and **St Dunstan's**, and **Somerville Primary School** will also be having its Award Renewal Assembly before Christmas. Other schools heading towards the award are **St Peter's** in Bartley Green, **Oasis Woodview**; also, looking forward to the Award renewal are **Allens Croft**, **Welsh House Farm**, **St Clare's** and **Erdington Academy**. As you will be aware, the Award is valid for three years and it is always very heartening to see how the work continues and grows.

If your school does not yet have the Award but you think that you have enough evidence to go for it, please let us know!

With best wishes from
The Schools Team
forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk

2

On 21st October, seven schools attended an event in the Library of Birmingham where they showcased their work and were congratulated by Cllr John Cotton (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Equalities) for their commitment and passion. “It is these children who give us hope for the future,” he said. And we do so agree!



Staff from the schools with Cllr John Cotton, and pupils and staff in front of the Library after the event. The event even made it on to the BBC!

<https://bbc.in/3Cd6dzp>

What some of our primary schools did (in strictly alphabetical order!)

Abbey RC Primary School, Erdington



Abbey made a mark in Erdington by appearing in the local newspaper with items about both the Orange Heart campaign, and the preparations for Little Amal's visit. At their Award Assembly in October, we heard about all the work they had done over the last few years, including an ongoing engagement with the 36,000 Humans project, and now, an enthusiastic

embrace of the Orange Heart campaign. The pupils wrote to their MP about the Nationality and Borders Bill and created Orange Heart posters to bring to the event in the Library.



3

Chandos Primary School, Highgate

As well as preparing to welcome Little Amal, Chandos also responded to the Nationality and Borders Bill by stating their welcome for refugees.



Holy Cross, Walmley



Pupils at Holy Cross wrote to their MP after learning about the implications of the Nationality and Borders Bill, and brought examples of their messages to the event in the Library.



St Dunstan's Kings Heath



The entrance to St Dunstan's is now covered in Orange Hearts. On the day of the national demonstration in London against the Nationality and Borders Bill, the pupils got up very early to take placards to a group of asylum-seekers who were leaving from the coach station to attend. They were proud to see their placards outside Buckingham Palace!



They also made very tasty Orange Heart pizzas to share with refugees and asylum-seekers.



St Mary's Harborne

All year groups at St Mary's learnt about refugees and created Orange Hearts. Here are some examples from Reception, Year 4, and Year 5.



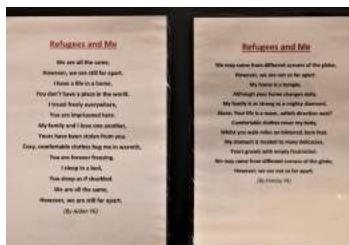
St Peter's Bartley Green



Pupils at St Peter's told us at the Library about their response to the Nationality and Borders Bill. They also created a beautiful tree for the entrance hall, made out of Orange Hearts, but that was a bit too big to bring along.



St Thomas More, Yardley



The pupils had written very moving poems which they brought to the Library, and had also created these beautiful hearts as part of their Bible Study.





St Vincent's, Nechells

The pupils at St Vincent's wrote to their MP and created these hearts to show their support for refugees.

Wyndcliffe Primary shared their Orange Hearts on social media:



Secondary Schools who took part in the Orange Heart activities included

Holly Lodge, West Bromwich

Pupils from Holly Lodge joined us at the Library and told us about the work they had been doing to raise awareness.



St Thomas Aquinas, Northfield

The Year 8 pupils were unfortunately unable to join us at the Library but look at all the work they had done!



Halesowen College - End of Year Celebration and 'Together with Refugees' Campaign

Kelly Forrester reports:

Staff and students at Halesowen College are always thinking of new ways to ensure our students feel like an integral part of the college community, no matter the course they are on or their individual backgrounds.

At the end of the summer term our students and staff from the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) department celebrated their hard work after a difficult year by holding a celebration event. The afternoon involved a football match, games, cultural dancing and a picnic where everyone brought some food to share. As a College of Sanctuary, events like this also help a lot of students by creating opportunities for them to socialise in a safe and welcoming environment.



We have also held a Craft Club event and invited staff and students to come along and create orange hearts as our contribution to the 'Together With Refugees' orange heart campaign. Students could cut out and decorate orange hearts, create paper hearts using origami techniques or learn to crochet a heart.



These have been displayed amongst the trees along our nature trail walk which surrounds the main College Campus, as a striking installation to show our support of and empathy towards refugees.

Pictured left are ESOL teacher Helen Farnan, Outreach staff Claire and Chelsea along with two students from our ESOL programme.

LITTLE AMAL in Birmingham

At **Abbey RC Primary**, the first thing you see in the entrance hall is a display about Little Amal's journey, and the school and Little Amal made it into the local newspaper!



At **Chandos Primary** the children have been writing postcards and following Little Amal's journey - on 22nd October



they celebrated her arrival in the UK with dancing, marches, and lots of orange hearts.

At **Somerville Primary**, the children have been following Little Amal's journey, thinking about what they might take with them, and also made their own puppet to share Little Amal's experiences.



And finally, Little Amal arrived in Birmingham, looking shyly round the corner at the crowds gathered in Erdington High Street, and even there being met by Orange Hearts....and also by pupils, parents and staff from some of our Schools of Sanctuary.



Welcome the Stranger....

Stephanie Neville, who has brought “Stories of Hope and Home” to quite a few of our schools, tells us about an innovative and exciting project, and we hear from some of those who took part.

The “Welcome the Stranger?” programme was a collaboration between The Catholic Primary Partnership, The Columbans and Stories of Hope and Home. We invited a group of primary headteachers to journey together towards a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding how we welcome those who are seeking sanctuary participating as individual human beings, as educators, and as leaders.



The programme included two online and two face-to-face sessions as well as, at its heart, a three day residential “Festival of Encounter” together with a group of people with lived experience of seeking asylum. There was the opportunity to extend knowledge and understanding of the asylum system and the situations faced by those who seek refuge; to explore the theology of welcome and hospitality; but above all to share in moments of meaningful encounter with one another. We deeply

believe in the transformative power of these encounters: it is from this, the sharing of experiences, stories and lives, that everybody comes away enriched and inspired. Now that the programme is drawing to a close, we are excited to see the outcomes that will follow and the impact it will have in the schools and communities of those who took part.

Several Head Teachers from our Schools of Sanctuary took part:

Joe McTernan, Head Teacher of Abbey RC Primary which received its award just the week after this journey, wrote:

As Principal of Abbey Primary in Erdington, I was privileged to take part in a retreat of encounter with the wonderful people of the Stories of Hope and Home project. Spending time building personal relationships and friendships with people who have experienced or are still within the asylum-seeking process was humbling. We visited Llandudno in Wales, together we walked the Great Orme and enjoyed fish and chips on the pier amongst time for conversation, reflection and laughter. Sharing stories with those who have had to flee their home countries has developed my compassion and understanding of those seeking asylum. The encounter will stay with me personally but also it has empowered me as a school leader to raise awareness and champion the marginalised through the pupils in my care.



Victoria Rivett is Head Teacher of St Clare’s RC Primary in Handsworth, which will soon be renewing their Sanctuary Award: *Our trip to Llandudno last week through the ‘Welcome the Stranger’ project was a truly memorable experience. I am very thankful for the opportunity to listen, learn, think and share with such an inspirational group of people. Spending time indoors at the lovely Loreto Centre and outdoors walking up the Great Orme or swimming in the sea gave us all the chance to tell our stories of our families, friends, homes and hopes for the future. I have learnt so much and now want to be able to share that with as many others as possible.*