

Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 5 March 2020

There is a very strange feeling to this newsletter, as we don't yet know whether or not schools will be having to close down, or what the next weeks and months will bring. Normally we would be looking forward to Refugee Week in June to be followed by a bumper report of all your activities! And we do hope that this will still be possible.

In spite of the uncertainty, the Refugee Council is going ahead with plans for Refugee Week 15th-21st June with this year's theme of "Imagine". Have a look at their website if you need some inspiration: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

Meanwhile in this newsletter you can read about Halesowen College, which is hoping to host a meeting for other colleges in the area to promote the College of Sanctuary agenda - and we're pleased to announce that South Staffordshire College has recently also expressed an interest in this. The team there have also produced an amazing interactive resource "My Refugee Journey" which is suitable for secondary schools and colleges, and which we hope to share nationally as well as locally.

You can also read about work being done in two of our primary schools, Abbey and St Chad's. Abbey recently hosted a networking meeting at which seventeen schools were represented. We are also pleased to welcome Wyndcliffe Primary in Bordesley Green into our network.

We will be keeping in touch by the usual means and look forward to hearing about your plans and activities!

Best wishes,

Birmingham City of Sanctuary Schools team

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In January, Halesowen College received the Sanctuary Award - the first College of Sanctuary in the Midlands!

Halesowen College first contacted us in 2017 and their dedicated team have been actively working on their College of Sanctuary portfolio since January 2018. Readers of the newsletter will remember their reports of the ESOL football team and their participation in the conference in Athens in October last year.

When three of the City of Sanctuary committee visited in December for the final “portfolio visit”, we were presented with not one, not two, but three ring-binders full of evidence of all the steps taken by this college of 5000 students to make it a place of welcome and safety for everybody, no matter where they come from or who they are.

The three-strong team which worked on this have also represented the college in discussions with Birmingham City Council (as many of their students come from Birmingham) and at a recent Colleges of Sanctuary networking meeting in Leeds.

At the award presentation, we heard from two asylum-seekers from the ESOL group, from a member of the LGBT group, and from a student governor. We were delighted to hear that there is enthusiasm for the idea that some of the asylum-seeking ESOL students come to speak to the pupils at our Schools of Sanctuary.



Abbey RC Primary School in Erdington

is working on the 36,000 Humans Project, which seeks to commemorate the people who have died on the way to find sanctuary in Europe. This is what one of the pupils told us:

At school, we have been learning all about refugees and asylum seekers and we are trying to help in as many ways as we can. We are taking part in the 36000 Humans project as we think it is a good way to help to raise awareness, but also we think it is really important to remember all the people who have died, because this should not be happening!

We have been sent a list which shows us details of some of the 36000 people who have died – we were really shocked that the names of the people are not even known.

At Christmas we made baubles for our school tree which commemorated some of the lives lost, we decorated them with the flag of the country they were from and also the date they died. As this was during Advent we talked about how Jesus was a refugee and it got people talking about the issues and how they are s&ll the same for many people today.

We also decided to decorate jars which we will put candles inside. We thought that the candles could remember the people who have died, and how the candle that shines reminds us that we should not forget their stories. We plan to take part in the exhibition during Refugee Week, and all 50 of our Chaplaincy team will create a jar.

Nikols, Year 6

Date	Number of people	Names (if available)	Country of origin	Cause
15475	8/25/2008	4 N.N. (4 women) N.N. (2 babies, 130 20 children)	Eritrea, Ghana, Somalia	drowned after dinghy from Libya capsized near coast of Malta
15476	9/2/2018	130 20 children)	Mali, Niger, Ghana, Sud, Lib	2 drowned, 128 missing after a boat deflated off coast of Libya; 55 survivors
15477	11/2/2010	2 N.N. (2 men)	Eritrea	killed by traffickers in Sinai desert after trying to use phones to call for help
15478	9/21/2016	202 N.N.	Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea	died when boat capsized near Rosetta in Nile Delta (EG), boat bound for Italy with at least 450 passengers
15479	3/27/2011	308 N.N.	unknown	missing, feared drowned when boat carrying 335 people from Libya to Italy was not seen after 2 weeks
15480	12/24/2015	N.N. (11 children; 20 1 pregnant w)	unknown	drowned when wooden boat to Lesbos (GR) sank near Izmir (TR)
15481	8/29/2006	132 N.N.	Sub-Saharan Africa	84 drowned in shipwreck near Mauritanian coast of Nouakchott (MR); 48 missing
15482	4/7/2009	300 N.N.	Algeria, Somalia, Nigeria	drowned after 3 boats reportedly capsized while travelling from Libya to Italy
15483	8/25/2008	61 N.N. (61 men)	Eritrea, Ghana, Somalia	drowned after dinghy from Libya capsized near coast of Malta
15484	10/3/2013	373 N.N.	Africa	drowned after boat on way from Libya to Italy caught fire and sank in the Mediterranean Sea; 155 rescued
15485	7/8/2015	18 N.N.	unknown	missing when boat capsized in the Aegean Sea near Farmakonisi (GR); 21 rescued
15486	10/3/2003	210 N.N.	unknown	50 drowned after boat from Libya sank off Tunisia; 160 missing, 41 rescued

This is an example of the information provided from the project.

The pupils at Abbey are keeping the rest of the school informed about the 36,000 Humans project:



Abbey Primary is also active in other ways - here are some of the posts from their website:

Chaplaincy Team Present Thoughts on Refugees

18 December 2019

Our Chaplaincy team 'Schools of Sanctuary' team had the opportunity to present their thoughts on the plight of refugee and asylum seekers children at a recent meeting.

Also present at the meeting was the Director of Education for Birmingham Diocese and representatives from St Chad's Sanctuary.

Our pupils spoke confidently and eloquently about their feelings and concerns and implored our visitors to consider what the Catholic community and schools can do to help.

We are delighted that as a result of this meeting we have been given the opportunity to present to all Birmingham Diocese head teachers at their annual briefing.



Presenting their thoughts on refugees and asylum seekers.

A Visit to St Chad's Sanctuary

9 December 2019

Two of our Chaplaincy Team members visited St Chad's Sanctuary to deliver all of the Christmas donations from our generous families. All of these gifts will be distributed next week to children and families and we are sure they will be very gratefully received.

Whilst we were there we were lucky to have a full tour of the sanctuary and learn about all of the amazing work they do to support Refugees and Asylum Seekers. We were amazed to learn that the Sanctuary have supported families from over 100 different countries around the world!

At Christmas we are reminded that our Saviour was a refugee, we are all called to do whatever we can to help these vulnerable people and in doing so we encounter Christ.



Two of the Chaplaincy Team at St Chad's Sanctuary.

Chaplaincy Team led Staff Meeting

16 December 2019

Two of our Chaplaincy team planned and delivered a staff meeting this week to all school staff.

The theme of the meeting was Schools of Sanctuary, and our two pupils used this opportunity to share their knowledge about the plight of refugees, the work that we have done so far and what we plan to do next.

They spoke eloquently and passionately about their cause, with staff afterwards saying how moved they were by the meeting.

We are really proud of our Gospel Activists!



Members of the Chaplaincy Team speaking to the staff.

St Chad's RC Primary School in Newtown, which became our very first School of Sanctuary in July 2014, is not only a place of safety and welcome for its pupils, but also takes this message out to the wider world. As a Catholic school, their "Building the Kingdom" curriculum links to social action - the autumn term was Dignity of the Human Person, in the spring term they focused on Options for the Poor and Vulnerable, which they put into practice by visiting homeless people in Birmingham city centre.

