

# Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary

## Newsletter No 7 January 2021

Warm greetings to everybody at the beginning of what we hope will be a better year than the one we have just had. As I write this, it's not even clear when and how schools will be going back for the spring term - just adding more uncertainty and stress to the lives of staff, children and parents.

As you will see from the reports in this newsletter, our wonderful schools have kept going even through the dark days of the pandemic, with some amazing achievements. We are also happy to report that two new schools have joined our network: St Francis Primary School in Lozells, and St Mary and St John Primary School in Erdington. Fircroft College in Selly Oak has also put in its application for the Sanctuary Award.

We are looking forward to arranging a networking meeting by zoom in the near future, to discuss how we might invite speakers into schools remotely and possibly hold workshops, if physical visits are not possible.

Refugee Week this year is 14th-20th June and the theme is "We cannot walk alone". We also really hope that we will be able to create some kind of exhibition for the *36000 Humans* project this year, so please take a look at that if you haven't yet done so.

Looking forward to meeting up soon, in some form or other,

Best wishes on behalf of the Birmingham City of Sanctuary Schools Team,  
Cath, Debbie, Denise and Barbara.

Contact: [forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk)

2

**Abbey RC Primary School in Erdington** has continued its work on the 36,000 Humans project. Following on from last year, when they designed Christmas tree decorations and memorial candles to commemorate those who have lost their lives seeking sanctuary, this year they have created “people” representing each individual.



## Nelson Mandela School - Being the Light in the Darkness

Rechelle Jeffery tells us how, as part of the project Echo Eternal, children at Nelson Mandela School have been reflecting on the testimony of Kurt Taussig, a Jewish child refugee with a special connection to our school.



The theme this year is 'Be the Light in the Darkness'. In November all the children created artwork in response, a selection of which has been sent to be part of an online exhibition. They also thought about the pledge we could make as a school – to be a light in the darkness ourselves.

As a Rights Respecting School and a School of Sanctuary, it was no surprise to us that many of the children thought straight away of helping refugee children. Just as Kurt Taussig was made to feel welcome as a child in the UK all those years ago, they want to make refugee children feel welcome in Birmingham.

So, on January 12<sup>th</sup> we will be holding a Campaign day. Prior to this day we will be collecting donations

of toys, games and books from our families which we will then deliver to Kings Heath Action for Refugees.

A film will also be shown in which our Rights Rangers share our pledge and the thoughts behind it, along with those of other participating schools.

Our children will also take part in Action for Refugees 'Birds of One Sky' campaign, taking their coloured posters home to display in our community - a simple lesson in learning that campaigning does not have to cost money!

## 2021 Shoebox Appeal with Birmingham Migrant Help

Migrant Help put out an appeal to schools to create Christmas shoeboxes containing a mix of essentials and luxury items. We're pleased to report that you rose to the challenge!

Somerville Primary school provided 136 boxes and teacher Mr Khan encouraged the pupils to reflect on why they were doing this.



**Dalanda Yr3 said:** 'This is a good thing to do because it will let asylum seekers know that Birmingham is a city of Sanctuary and that they are welcome here.'

**Musa Yr4 said:** ' I am happy that we are taking part in this appeal because it is a very kind thing to do.'

**Adam Yr5 said:** 'I think this is great because Article 31 says we have the right to play and rest and these gifts will allow less fortunate children to do that'.

**Nafica Yr3 said:** 'This is important because as an Investors in Pupils school we learn all about the people that are investing in our future and it is nice to let asylum seekers know that they are not forgotten.'

5

**Cockshut Hill Secondary School under the guidance of Arlene Croydon also provided a large number of boxes.**

Year 7 will also be creating art work for their perception of themselves in order to show how different we all are and to work with this. The school's Equality Committee will also be doing work for Holocaust Day in January.



**Simone Grant of Welsh House Farm Community School in Birmingham in Quinton sent us these photos of the donations provided by their children. One boy in Year 2 said that he had bought his special gift with the money the Tooth Fairy had given him.**



## News from Holy Cross Primary, Walmley

### Katrina Crowley, Vice-Principal, reports:

Fortunately we celebrated our Refugee week in book week back in March (before lockdown!)- as we had Stephanie from *Stories of Hope and Home* work with us, and about 8 refugees/ asylum seekers came into our school on the Monday of that week to introduce themselves in a whole school assembly and then they paired off to go to individual classrooms to tell their stories - about which the children took notes, or made storyboards. The children also got an opportunity to ask questions and invited our visitors to stay for lunch. Some of our children created a hamper of goodies, full of stationery to support the learning they completed with Stephanie at St Chad's Sanctuary. The children then during the week wrote the stories of those who visited us and it really developed the skill of empathy through completing this project.

As part of our Harvest celebrations, we donated 50 bags of food to St Chad's Sanctuary.

For Advent, our KS2 children will be asked to do a 'reverse advent calendar' and place objects in their Christmas Shoebox ready to donate to Migrant Help.

We also continue to ensure we discuss stories of migrants through our reading curriculum and will definitely be making links when sharing the Christmas story!

Pupils at Holy Cross Primary handing over their shoe-boxes to Migrant Help.



**Meanwhile, Chandos Primary has been keeping a multiplicity of plates spinning, as Head Teacher John Allan reports:**

Christmas Hampers and food parcels were provided by Vineyard Church and distributed to identified families.

Greggs supported our Breakfast Club and have also enabled our families to access a one-off hardship fund,

The *Get Families Talking* initiative has enabled us to swiftly refer families to them. The families receive a free device (laptop or tablet) with an internet dongle to enable them to actively communicate and access support and information on the internet.

Local MP Shabana Mahmood, has been a great support in enabling families to access the complex housing system to secure safe and appropriate provision.

Bournville Busy Parents Network, through the Bournville Book Festival charity, provided beautiful reading bags for each and everyone of our Reception and year 1 children - almost 120 children in all. Amazingly generous!

In February 2021, through the Get Families Talking Project, we will be working to deliver a zoomed interactive learning opportunity linking teachers, children and families in Reception and Year 1. The focus is to enhance learning through play, early reading and phonics skills, engaging with vulnerable or isolated families.

Finally we are trying to pull together a musical video recording of all the school joining together in a virtual sing-a-long. No idea if we can pull it off...fingers crossed!

**Alexandra Owens of St Anthony's RC Primary School in Chelmsley Wood**

reported that since returning in September they have worked with the Columbans to discuss climate change, and why people may have to flee their homes due to this. Marjorie Engcoy, who is currently living in Fiji as part of the missionaries, spoke to us about being called to be a Columban missionary and inspired the children and staff with the joy she had for her work. She spoke about issues in Fiji and around the world and linked this in with our vocations in life. As well as this, the children then went out into the local nature reserve to take time to appreciate what God has given to us. During this study day they touched upon many pressing issues throughout the day including climate change, refugees, racism and vocation.

