

Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 8 March 2021

With a glimmer of light at the end of the long tunnel, we are using this opportunity to let you know what our schools have been doing both in promoting awareness around asylum and refugee concerns, and in supporting their pupils and families.

The first main piece of news is that Fircroft College has been given the College of Sanctuary award and we are pleased to see that this features prominently on their website!



We are also happy to include some of our schools' entries for the national "Art of Welcome" competition. You'll see that some of the images come from some Twitter accounts - please do let us know how you use social media to spread the word about Schools of Sanctuary.

Our Sanctuary Awards are valid for three years and, as we have reported in recent newsletters, some schools in our network received their second updated award in 2019. Unfortunately because of the pandemic, it hasn't been possible to go ahead with further renewals so we have agreed that there will be some flexibility in extending the life of the existing awards until such time as we are able to go ahead with renewals.

I know that schools are already looking ahead to activities around Refugee Week (15th- 21st June), and it will certainly be interesting to see how exactly this will work out. Several schools are already looking at how our popular poetry workshops can be organised, and there will soon be other suggestions for activities. The theme this year is "We Cannot Walk Alone", which I'm sure you will agree is very appropriate.

We hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter - please feel free to share it with your staff and with other networks.

With very best wishes from the Schools Team,

Barbara, Cath, Debbie, Denise

Several of our schools entered the national Art of Welcome competition.

Here is one entry from 14-year-old Andreea Bahica of **Cockshut Hill Secondary School**, capturing ideas of symmetry and rootedness.

Andreea came to the school from Romania.



Abbey RC Primary also entered the competition, and posted information via Twitter:



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Welsh House Farm also sent in some entries to the competition, coordinated by Simone Grant:



**This heart was created by
Jahnayah, Mustafa, David from KS1**

These are both made by KS2 children: Kegan, Paige, Jake, Dwayne, Max, Grace

The footprints were made by painting wellington boots (as we have been doing lots of gardening)

The Welcome City has letters made using our fine motor skills equipment such as Lego, Simbrix and magnets.



Rebecca Lonergan of Abbey RC Primary School in Erdington updated us on an activity they had done in December:

Students who were home-schooling wrote postcards to be sent to refugees, as messages of friendship and solidarity.

Additionally they sent messages to those isolated from families in care homes.

@abbeyprimary #Y5 C has written a Christmas message she is returning to be passed onto a Refugee



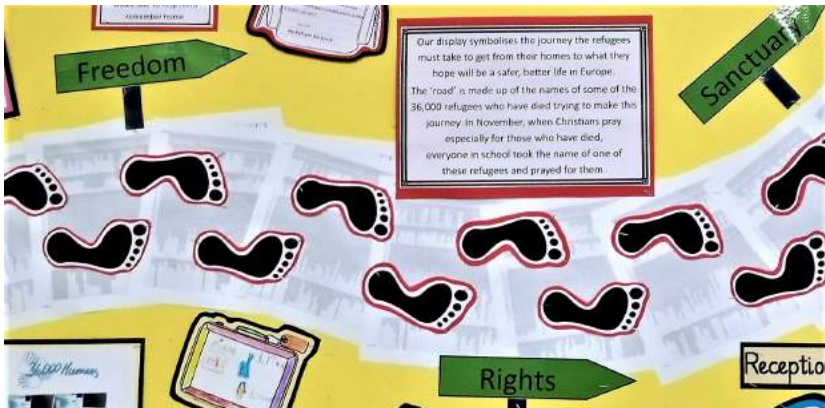
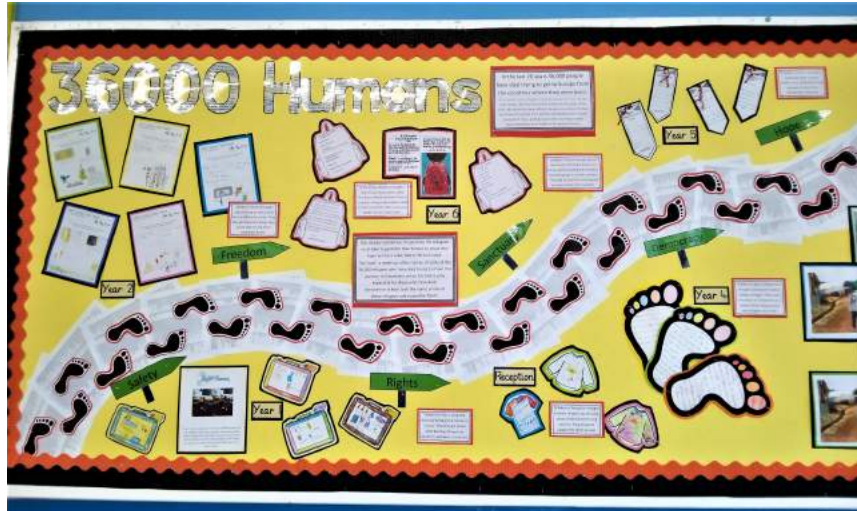
A progress bar for the 'Ration Challenge' campaign. At the top left is the school logo and name 'ABBEY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL'. Below it, the amount raised is '£1,865.64' in large green text. Underneath that, it says '149% of £1,250.00 target'. The bar is filled with a green and white pattern. Below the bar, there are two images: on the left, a cardboard box containing rations with the text 'We eat rations for a week'; on the right, a photo of two children with the text 'Refugees are given food, medicine and education'. In the center, a green arrow points from the box to the photo with the text 'YOU SPONSOR US'.

In addition, staff raised £1865.64 for the “Ration Challenge” campaign providing emergency food, hygiene kits and life-saving support for a refugee camp in Jordan. This also brought the issue to the attention of the whole school community.

Inspired by this, one Year 5 pupil is raising money for Refugee Action through a sponsored walk.



At St Francis RC Primary in Lozells, Thyssen Lewis told us about their work during lockdown providing laptops and dongles for pupils and food supplies for families. But as well as this, they have also produced a stunning display for the *36,000 Humans* project, which is on the wall of their main hall.



Supporting pupils and families

Shaw Hill Primary School in Alum Rock is one of the schools which is looking forward to renewing their Sanctuary Award. Here, Caroline Ball reports on what they have been doing during the pandemic.

Teachers and our bi-lingual learning mentors have been working very closely with parents and children during the lockdown. We have stayed in touch with weekly phone calls made by class teachers to every child in their class. This has enabled us to engage with parents and children to ensure remote learning is running as smoothly as possible as well as checking on the welfare and health of our families. Where there have been problems accessing remote learning we have loaned ipads and internet dongles to families. Our bi-lingual learning mentors have also been making regular calls to families with limited English, children classed as vulnerable and those who may need extra support to overcome barriers to learning to help and assist them to access and engage with the remote learning program. In addition our SEND CO has regularly been contacting all children on the SEND register.

Maz Sarker of Colmers School tells us about their EAL work during lockdown with newly-arrived secondary-aged pupils:

During lockdown, we had a group of EAL students attending priority provision ranging from years 7-11.

The main focus was on Maths, through 1:1 support; and English, through 1:1 support using toe-by-toe and interactive activities, some of which included group reading and discussions, playing Kahoot and spelling/word games. Every day, we tried to begin and end with a group speaking activity to build their confidence in their spoken English through a Q&A session, where they would ask each other or the staff supporting them different questions.

For other subjects, the students worked through an EAL platform called Flash Academy, where they could learn subject specific vocabulary through interactive activities and games, to help with understanding and memorising different words they will come across in those subject lessons.

Overall, we tried to make the time spent in school, during lockdown, educational as well as fun for the EAL students.

Pupils at Washwood Heath Academy have also been thinking about how they can help others, including making substantial donations to their local food bank, as Aggie Doyle informed us.



Chandos Primary School in Highgate regularly welcomes pupils and families who have recently arrived in the UK. Here is a report from Alex Cockell about how they have been working during the pandemic.

The move to virtual learning has been a challenge for some of our families who do not have devices or internet at home. Fortunately, just before the Christmas holidays we were lucky enough to partner up with SmartLyte Ltd, who not only donated five devices for us to give out to our children, but followed this up after we spoke to them about our newly-arrived children, children who are living in hostels and children who have no access to devices at home, by increasing the number of donated devices to 29, including internet dongles for those families who have no internet access at home or who are



sharing in the temporary accommodation. We delivered a Covid- safe session for parents and children to be shown how to navigate around the device and access the applications.

We have also been lucky enough to be donated a number of food, toiletry and clothing parcels for under-7s from our local community church, The Vineyard, Birmingham. We chose to hand these out to our newly-arrived families and those living in local hostels.

Also, a family with connections to the school heard about our need for donations of paper based, craft activities so that we could provide some of our families with activity packs. As we have a large number of families living in high rise flats and temporary accommodation, we knew there would be children who would have no access to outdoors regularly meaning they would be stuck inside in front of a screen for large portions of the day. Luckily for us, this family very generously donated ten ready made packs containing toys, books and stationery for us to hand out as well as donating £100 to the school itself! Our children were so happy when they got to see what was inside the 'mystery bags' and spoke about them for days.

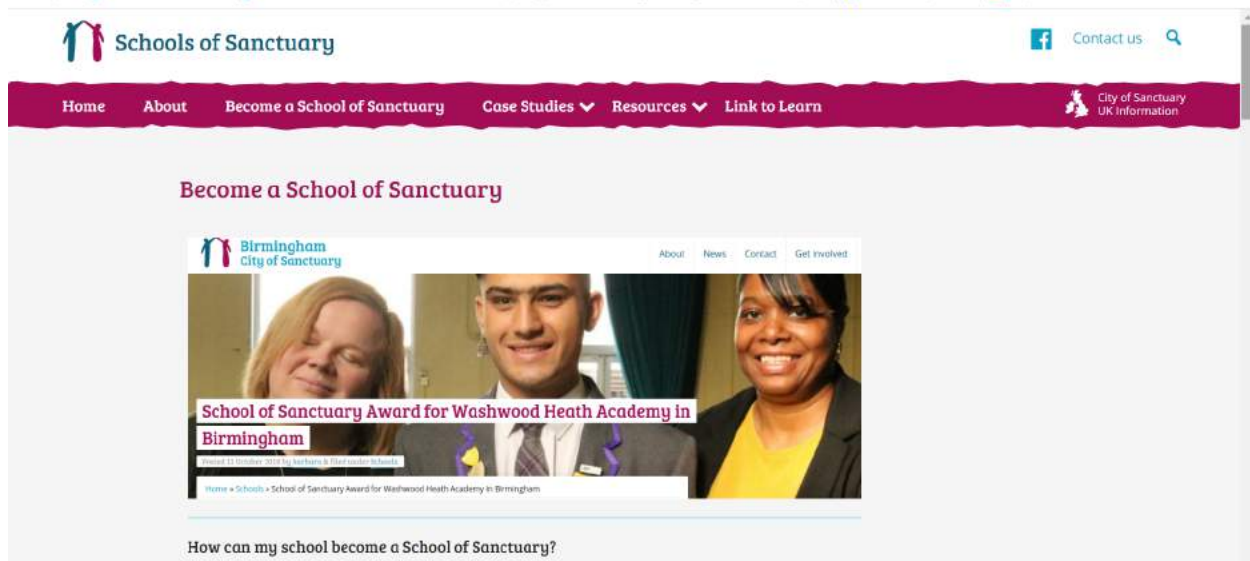


And finally, Greggs, who already support our school Breakfast Club, has now provided continued funding from their Covid Hardship fund, which is available to benefit any of the children and families who attend our school. This funding is there to help alleviate financial pressures felt by families, not so much for the provision of food and living necessities during the current Coronavirus outbreak, but for bulkier, essential items needed at home. This included the purchase of fridges, freezers, fridge-freezers, cookers, washing machines, clothing (including school uniform), supermarket vouchers, beds and bedding. From this scheme, we have been able to help over 25 families this term!

Here at Chandos, we are extremely grateful to all the organisations and individuals who are supporting us!

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We were pleased to see that if anybody goes to the Schools of Sanctuary web-page about Becoming a School of Sanctuary, the first thing they see is a photo from Washwood Heath!



And finally, regarding the Census: if your families are struggling to fill in the Census, help is available. This website gives information about how to access help in a number of languages:

<https://www.bvsc.org/blog/language-shouldnt-be-a-barrier-for-communities-to-be-counted-in-the-census-in-march>

Contact Alison at alison.brinkworth86@field.census.gov.uk or ring her on 07452 934883.

And also on the same topic, *Bellfield Junior School in Northfield* is organising a 1½ day project on the Census on 18/19 March to enable the children to be supportive when it is being filled in at home, and also to learn about the the geography & history of the census, its purpose and to create a simple one of their own. Head Teacher Nigel Attwood will let us know how it turned out!

If you are new to Schools of Sanctuary and would like more information, please contact info@birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org