Refugee Week in Our Schools

At the end of the last academic year, schools throughout the network recognised Refugee Week in school in a variety of imaginative and inspiring ways that often included direct action to improve the experiences of people seeking sanctuary. Here, we share a roundup of some of the activities that particularly caught our eyes.

Schools across Birmingham got involved with different activities to recognise the celebration. For Abbey Catholic Primary School, Refugee Week coincided with Parish Week; where they focus on what it means for our children to be part of a wider community, and the roles and responsibilities that come with that. One of their activities included a sponsored walk in which the children collectively walked the distance from school to Calais and raised nearly £300 for Refugee Action. At St Peter's Primary School, staff took a whole-school approach to learning with each year group using different resources to learn about different issues around sanctuary.

St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, which is launching their project to be recognised as a School of Sanctuary in September, celebrated Refugee Week in an assembly and with activities across the school community. but some sixth formers went to a house which welcomes women refugees on their arrival to Birmingham and did some gardening to make the place a nice place for them to live. To learn more about the wonderful work in schools in Birmingham see their newsletter.

Artwork from St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, Bradford

Abbey RC Primary school take part in a sponsored walk
Refugee Week in Our Schools continued...

In Bradford, schools contributed to an exhibition of artwork around the theme of 'We Cannot Work Alone' which includes submissions from Bradford Academy, Lilycroft Primary School, St Joseph's Primary School and Cactus Crew Youth Enterprise. The different submissions include powerful visuals of welcome, inclusion and empathy from students across the city.

In Wales, St Mary's the Virgin Primary School in Cardiff, which is in the process of being recognised as a School of Sanctuary, students focused on a range of texts from 'Paddington Bear' amongst the youngest pupils to 'Refugees and Migrants' in Years 5 and 6. The experiences that emerged from these texts included a Teddy Bears’ Picnic where all pupils discussed the practicalities of being hungry and needing food if they set off on a long journey. By exchanging stories of family members who had migrated or lived in different countries, students realised how migration features in all of our lives.

In Liverpool, the students at Phoenix Primary School learnt the song 'You’ll Never Walk Alone' and performed it as a whole school in their reflection assembly held via TEAMS. The staff also continued to expand student’s learning on sanctuary issues by reading ‘Teacup’ by Rebecca Young and conducting different creative activities around the themes raised in the book.

Finally, St Martin’s Academy in Chester took part in a community activity organised by Chester City of Sanctuary to plant a path of welcome in front of the cathedral. This path, symbolising the journey of people sanctuary to Chester, gradually grew over the course of the week with people from different institutions contributing to the path, including students from St Martin’s.

We know that these examples provide but a snapshot of the fantastic activities conducted by schools across the network in recognition of Refugee Week. Thank you to all who took part and renewed their support for people seeking sanctuary in the UK.
Celebrating Ten Years of Schools of Sanctuary

This year we recognise ten years of Schools of Sanctuary by talking to two of our earliest supporters in schools. Here, they share some of their experiences and their thoughts on the role of SoS in 2021.

As Headteacher, Matt Tehan first led St Chad’s Primary, a diverse school with many students coming from Eritrea and Ethiopia, through the School of Sanctuary process in 2013, receiving recognition in 2014 and has recently moved to St Dunstan’s Primary School also in Birmingham which has begun to work towards recognition. Here, Matt reflects on how he first got engaged with Schools of Sanctuary and the role of Schools of Sanctuary in two school contexts.

**What first drew you to Schools of Sanctuary?**

Our school was made up of so many people who had been displaced or migrated for economic reasons and so it was just really important for the school to embody the School of Sanctuary values. Also, at that time in 2013 there were a great number of stories giving asylum-seekers and refugees a really bad press and it always affected me personally because I saw St Chad’s as advocates for the community they were writing about. The more strongly the stories were written, the stronger our commitment came to go the other way.

**What activities did you conduct to be recognised as a School of Sanctuary?**

We started this scheme called language buddies... and by the time I left there were 17/18 languages we could buddy children up with. We also went to the theatre in Birmingham where there was a performance of Refugee Boy and we had to be careful because it was about an Eritrean boy who would go to the Home Office with his parents and wouldn’t know if they would come out and our children had experienced this themselves.

More broadly, being a School of Sanctuary was living witness to our mission and being a shining beacon of what we stood for at St Chad’s. Being a School of Sanctuary didn’t stop [at the award]: it grew from there and became embedded in the fabric of the school. Most recently during lockdown, we ran a foodbank and one of the things the governors did [when I was leaving] was ask all staff what was important from a new Headteacher and overwhelmingly the message came back that candidates need to recognise that St Chad’s is a School of Sanctuary. Being a School of Sanctuary wasn’t just led by me, everyone was part of it.

**Now at St Dunstan’s why is still important to be a School of Sanctuary?**

It has a different type of importance at St Dunstan’s. [In contrast to St Chad’s] St Dunstan’s has a majority White-Irish community who typically have less direct contact with people seeking sanctuary and yet whose children are going out into a world where they’re going to meet or hear about the community at St Chad’s and we can’t have ignorance around that. Schools of Sanctuary in this context is about educating the students, school community and families so that we are sending our children out to support the community [of Birmingham] from a position of awareness rather than ignorance or fear.

**Why is being a School of Sanctuary important in 2021?**

I am a very proud Brummie and Birmingham is a growing young city. Birmingham is not going to grow as a city and there will continue to be pockets of ignorance unless every school gets on board with the Schools of Sanctuary stream and stands up without fear and says “welcome”.

Headteacher Matt Tehan with members of the chaplaincy team at St Dunstan’s Primary School
Celebrating Ten Years of Schools of Sanctuary continued...

Beth Mitchell is EAL Leader at Leeds City Academy (previously known as City of Leeds School).

Beth led on the initial ‘School of Sanctuary’ project when the school became one of the first Schools of Sanctuary in 2011. Now with the support of Principal Richard Chattoe, Leeds City Academy has begun to work towards reaccreditation in the coming academic year.

How would you describe your school community?

We are a popular secondary school in Leeds with a mixed population and international culture. Students come from lots of different countries (66 different nationalities) and ethnic minority backgrounds, with over 70 different languages spoken by the school community.

Why was it important to be recognised as a School of Sanctuary?

When we first applied for the accreditation 10 years ago, we had lots of good practices in place. It therefore only seemed appropriate to seek public recognition and acknowledgement that the school was doing the right thing in a unique school context. Reaccreditation is important to reassure stakeholders that these good practices are still in place, now also being much more advanced, and for us to lead the way in guiding other schools to emulate the good practice.

What are some examples of these good practices?

We have a thorough and carefully planned induction process for newly arrived students who are either new to English or in early stages of English. We have well developed processes for communicating with parents, supporting them at parents’ evenings and in understanding school processes. We celebrate and recognise diversity and, during the process of becoming a School of Sanctuary, we were specific in talking about; who refugees are; who asylum-seekers are and subsequently as the school has changed in its demographic; who economic migrants are and how all those groups have come together in our school to develop a vibrant community.

What did you learn going through the process of being a School of Sanctuary?

I think the most important lesson from the process was being able to expand our processes from just a small specialist unit in EAL to being an integral part of the entire school community.

It became important and essential that everyone in school was responsible for our ‘welcome’ process and everyone had a part to play. All staff were trained: cleaners, food staff, visitors, volunteers, pastoral staff, governors, leadership team, teachers. Everyone learned how to understand the various needs of the students and play an active role in making the school a welcoming and informed place for anyone who chose to come here.

Why are you pursuing reaccreditation as a School of Sanctuary in the coming academic year?

It’s important that we remind ourselves, our community, and all our stakeholders, who we are, what we stand for and what we aspire to do. The most important thing is the opportunity for us to celebrate each of our students, our staff, all of the associate people who work in our Trust and to recognise that our school really respects and acknowledges the differences of the people we have in our community. I think it’s important that we make this overt, not covert. We are proud of what we do, we are proud of our organisation, our students, our staff who meet the diverse needs of our students and we want to celebrate that.

What are your priorities for the next year?

We need to go back to basics, we need to, yet again, revisit for staff and students what migration is, refugee and asylum-seeker issues, what leads us to be the school that we are, and what all the strengths of those people involved in that organisation are. We need to probably remind ourselves of all the good things that we’re doing and maybe recognise the things that we have forgotten slightly along the way and also consider the things that we need to do next, because it’s not the end of a journey. It’s the continuation of a very special journey.

Why is being a School of Sanctuary important in 2021?

Because now more than ever, it is important that we understand that the UK is a multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic community who need to work together and support each other to make a happy community in the UK, but also so that we understand our part in the wider world and that we have a responsibility as a school to reflect the best things about the wider world.
Students at St Dunstan’s RC Primary School in Birmingham turned their learning into action over the course of the summer term. Shortly before Easter, Dr Trewby from Columbans UK and Stephanie from Stories of Hope and Home came to visit the Year 6’s with two asylum seekers, who shared their stories and experiences with our children. Students were horrified to hear some of their experiences and then find out that when they arrive in the UK they cannot work. We were informed of a national campaign #LiftTheBan that we could support in order to advocate for the rights of asylum seekers.

The students immediately leapt into action, writing letters to their local councillors and inviting them to come in and speak to about this issue which they did.

Since then, two students have been invited to be Key Speakers at the Council-run Birmingham Migration Forum, reading their letters to the members taking part in the forum - both being rewarded with a rapturous round of applause! Well done St Dunstan’s!

Shout Loud Photo Voice Project, Newman Catholic College, Brent

During the summer term, students from sanctuary-seeking backgrounds at Newman Catholic College, Brent took part in a participatory photography project with Fotosynthesis. Shout Loud intended to amplify the voices of young refugees and asylum-seekers and enable them to construct a narrative around their experiences and lives. Over the course of five short after-school sessions, participating students explored themes of identity, community and developed their skills in photography in order to capture images that they felt represented the story they wanted to share.
Welcome to the Network

We’d like to extend a warm welcome and congratulations to the following schools who have recently joined or renewed their membership of the Schools of Sanctuary network:

- Ashfield Boys High School, Belfast
- Botanic Primary School, Belfast
- Wheatfield Primary School, Belfast
- Dundonald Primary School, Belfast
- Euston Street Primary School, Belfast
- Abbey Catholic Primary, Birmingham
- Lilycroft Primary School, Bradford
- Bradford Academy, Bradford
- St Joseph’s Primary School, Bradford
- St Cuthbert and the First Martyrs’ Catholic Primary School, Bradford
- Acorn Nursery, Brighton & Hove
- St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School, Brighton & Hove (reaccredited)
- Woodfall Primary & Nursery, Cheshire
- St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, Chorley
- Holy Child Primary School, Derry/Londonderry
- Whitefield Primary, Liverpool (reaccredited)
- Kensington Primary, Liverpool (reaccredited)
- St Paul’s Infants, Liverpool (reaccredited)
- Broad Square Primary, Liverpool
- St Philip’s Litherland, Sefton
- St Bede’s Junior, Widnes
- Recreation Road Infants, Norwich
- Wensum Junior School, Norwich (reaccredited)
- Avenue Junior School, Norwich (reaccredited)
- Roebuck Primary School, Preston
- Moorside Primary School, Ripon
- Oasis Academy Lord’s Hill, Southampton
- Oasis Academy Scholing Southampton
- Bitterne Manor Primary School, Southampton
- St Cyre’s School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Mount Primary School, Wirral
- St Andrews Church of England School, Wirral
- St Pauls RC School, Wirral
- St Peter and Paul School, Wirral
- Holy Spirit Primary, Wirral (reaccredited)
- Our Lady of Pity, Wirral (reaccredited)

Shout Loud Photo Voice Project continued...

These activities culminated in an in-person exhibition held in school during Refugee Week and an online exhibition which available for all to view.

This project is a fantastic way of overcoming any potential language barriers to enable active student voice and create a safe space for students to share their thoughts and experiences.

Do you have News from Your School?

We are now accepting submissions for the next Schools of Sanctuary newsletter which will be published at the start of the January 2022 term.

We aim to includes stories from a range of schools across the network, highlighting examples of creative ways of learning about immigration and best practice in inclusive practice.

If you think you have something to share, please get in touch with Megan at megan@uk.cityofsanctuary.org by 1st December 2021.
**Topic of the Term**

**Climate and Migration**

With the UK hosting the UN’s Climate Change Conference (COP26) from the 31st October to the 12th November this year in Glasgow, there has never been a better time to explore the link between climate and migration.

We are increasingly hearing stories of climate refugees and crises forcing people to leave their homes but who is a climate refugee, how many of them are there and where are they?

We encourage all Schools of Sanctuary to use COP26 to explore this aspect of the human-side of climate change and reflect on steps individuals and schools can take to combat this issue and support people who are affected.

To help schools approach this learning focus, we have collated some resources including videos, lesson plans and activities that you can use. These include the [climate focus activities in the Little Amal education pack](#), a [lesson plan and video for secondary students from the British Red Cross on climate change in the South Pacific](#) and a [video of teenagers from the Marshall Islands sharing their experiences of the impact of climate change](#). For more suggested resources, please see our [website](#).

What can your school do to support people affected by climate change who are forced to leave their homes?

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**Upcoming Events**

- **21st Sept - International Day of Peace**
- **October - Black History Month**
- **19th Oct - Little Amal arrives in Folkestone**
- **20th Oct - Little Amal event in Canterbury**
- **22nd Oct - Little Amal event in Lewisham**
- **23rd/24th Oct - Little Amal events in London**
- **26th Oct - Little Amal event in Oxford**
- **27th Oct - Little Amal event in Coventry**
- **28th Oct - Little Amal event in Birmingham**
- **29th Oct - Little Amal event in Sheffield**
- **31st Oct - Start of COP26**
- **3rd Nov - Supporting Afghan Students in Schools** (hosted by SoS UK and Refugee Education UK). Registration details to follow - [sign up to our mailing list](#) to be notified.
- **3rd Nov - Little Amal event in Manchester**
- **16th Nov - International Day for Tolerance**
- **10th Dec - Human Rights Day**
- **18th Dec - International Migrants’ Day**

For details of the Little Amal events see [here](#).

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**Campaigning**

#TogetherWithRefugees

Together With Refugees is a coalition of organisations and people from all walks of life who believe in treating refugees with care and compassion.

This year, the UK government is planning to introduce new rules for how we treat refugees. The plans represent a major attack on people seeking safety and they may undermine our obligations under international law, which has incited criticism from the UNHCR. People would be judged by how they got here, rather than by their need for protection. It would make it even more difficult for refugee families to reunite, leaving children stranded and alone and it would mean that many people seeking sanctuary will be left destitute.

Together for Refugees are calling for a kinder, fairer and more effective approach to supporting refugees in the UK.

The orange heart is a symbol of the Together with Refugees campaign and represents compassion for people fleeing war and persecution. Inspired by the refugee nation flag, and the colours of a lifebelt, the heart
#TogetherWithRefugees continued...

symbolises hope and kindness. By re-creating and displaying the heart in school, in the local community and on social media you can show your support for refugees.

During the week 18 to 22 October 2021 local groups around the UK will kick off Show Your Heart activities, where members of the public show their support for refugees. On 6 December 2021, there will be a big reveal of orange hearts at landmarks around the UK. Coordinate your efforts around these dates and share your pictures on social media using the #TogetherWithRefugees and #WhoWeAre hashtags and tweeting @SchsOfSanctuary. You will also soon be able to submit them to an online exhibition on the Together with Refugees website.

To help schools get involved, we have collaborated with the TWR team to develop a toolkit with suggested activities and resources. Soon available on the website, we encourage all Schools of Sanctuary to participate in the UK-wide movement that believes people seeking sanctuary should be welcomed and treated with care and compassion.

**Latest Resources**

**Schools Resource Pack**
A comprehensive new pack full of case stories, ideas, and resources to help your school develop learning and practice. Available online and in hard copy soon. Sign up to be informed.

**Their World**
Using stories from young Syrians who have sought sanctuary these packs help those aged 7-16 to learn about sanctuary issues and develop empathy and understanding.

**The Walk Education Pack**
This pack helps schools get involved with Little Amal’s Walk across Europe, and is differentiated by age and themes. You can also get involved with their Letter Project: on the 7th October, Little Amal will deliver 10,000 letters to the European Parliament in Brussels, written by children and young people answering one big question: ‘What do you wish you could change for children like you and Little Amal?’ You can post or email your letters and see more information here.

**Learning about and Welcoming Afghan Refugees Resources** and **Learning about Climate and Migration Resources**
The latest resources compiled thematically by Schools of Sanctuary.

**CPD Opportunities**

*The Bell Foundation - Adaptive teaching for learners who use EAL’ online course*
This four-week course provides guidance on how to adapt teaching in a responsive way to meet the language development needs of pupils who use EAL by introducing a range of easy-to-use strategies which can be implemented immediately into your teaching. It is expected to take 3 hours in total and starts on the 20th September.

*The Bell Foundation - Language awareness for teaching staff*
Aimed at school practitioners, this four-week course develops awareness of how the English language works and what areas of English learners who use EAL may find particularly difficult. An increased awareness of how language is used in lessons allows teachers to support learners who use EAL more effectively. It is estimated to take 3 hours in total and starts on the 4th October.

**UNHCR with Norfolk Schools of Sanctuary - Teaching for Refugees**
This online six-week training provides primary and secondary teachers the basic knowledge and adequate training to work with refugee children and also support teachers to teach about the situation of refugees. Starting on the 1st November, estimated total time is 6-8 hours.
Book Club

Primary

‘Hello! A Welcoming Story’ is a new picture flipbook from Gina K Lewis which follows the lives of 5 newly arrived refugee students and 5 local students who welcome them to the classroom. It is a perfect resource for engaging young children aged 4-8 years old on learning about sanctuary issues.

Narrated from different students' perspectives, young readers are encouraged to reflect on how others may be feeling and thinking and how they would like to be treated, encouraging empathy and compassion.

Secondary

Mirriam Halahmy’s ‘Hidden’ is written from the perspective of 14 year old Alix who lives by the beach on the South coast of England. Living in a community in which anti-immigration rhetoric circulates, Alix is forced to confront her own prejudice and prejudice when she witnesses an incident of bullying against her classmate, Samir.

This is reinforced when Alix and Samir save a drowning man on the beach, who they later realise is someone has fled danger in Iraq and trying to reach safety in the UK.

Amidst ongoing misleading media coverage of people crossing the Channel to seek sanctuary, this book is perfect for focusing on the human-side of these stories and opening discussions with students aged 11-16 years old about seeking sanctuary.

For teachers

‘Equitable Education’ by Sameena Choudry is a must-have for all those working in schools who wish to develop their inclusive practice from children from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those who are or have sought sanctuary in the UK. In this easy to read guide, Choudry comprehensively outlines the intersecting issues affecting the attainment of different groups of disadvantaged pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with English as an Additional Language and refugee and asylum-seeking students. and offers practical strategies for addressing these gaps. A bonus: can you spot the reference to Schools of Sanctuary?
 COMPETITION CORNER

Summer Edition Winners

During the Summer Term, we set the competition for students in schools across the School of Sanctuary network to develop a short animation explaining what sanctuary meant to their school. We are delighted to recognise the below entry from Year 4 students as Chandos Primary in Birmingham as the winning submission.

First Place - Chandos Primary, Birmingham

A huge congratulations to Lexie, Xavier, Dariush, Pedro, Khadija, Melody, Rylee, Blessing and Josh in Year 4 at Chandos Primary in Birmingham for this fantastic animation of what sanctuary means to their school. Click on the link above to view it.

Their submission completely blew away the Schools of Sanctuary UK team for its creativity and powerful message. All students will be receiving a certificate in recognition of their fantastic video and the animation has been added to the Schools of Sanctuary website.

Winter Edition Competition

In recognition of COP26 in Glasgow, this term’s competition involves an exploration of the theme of climate and migration. We ask students to demonstrate this exploration in a piece of art. Students should ask themselves: how are climate and migration linked? Who is affected and how? What should be done to respond to the rising threat people are experiencing?

Entries should be submitted to the schools@cityofsanctuary.org email account by November the 26th with the school's name, the student's name (or initial if preferred) and their age. A winner will be selected from the primary and secondary entries, with winners receiving a Schools of Sanctuary certificate sent to their school. Entries will also be shared on the Schools of Sanctuary media channels and website.
Connect and Engage

Schools of Sanctuary Website

The Schools of Sanctuary website has a wealth of information and resources for those interested in becoming a School of Sanctuary and for those who have already been recognised to continue to learn and embed positive policies and practices. We’re constantly updating so check back regularly for the latest.

Want to know more about a certain topic or in need of a particular resource? Get in touch with Megan at megan@uk.cityofsanctuary.org and we will see if we can share or develop something to help you.

Connect with Schools of Sanctuary

Follow us on Facebook and our new Twitter account for the latest news, events, resources and chat...

Connect with City of Sanctuary UK

Follow City of Sanctuary UK on Facebook and Twitter for news across the network and to learn more about working to make the UK a place of welcome, safety and respect.