

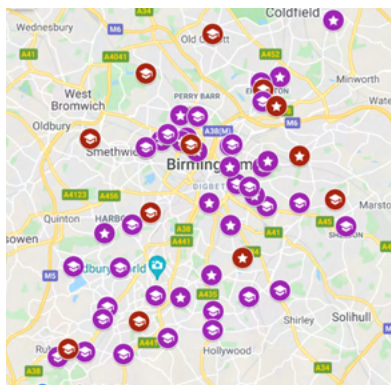
Birmingham Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 11 January 2022

A New Year, and, we hope, a better year.

In spite of everything which has happened since the beginning of 2020, our Schools of Sanctuary network has been thriving. Last year we celebrated four new schools and one college which achieved School of Sanctuary status (Abbey RC Primary, Holy Cross RC Primary, St Dunstan's RC Primary, St Francis RC Primary and Fircroft College) and two others (Shaw Hill Primary and Somerville Primary) which have had their re-accreditation Assemblies, showing that they have continued their commitment to a vision of a world of welcome and hospitality. Other schools are well on the way to producing the portfolio of evidence needed for the Award, including Cockshut Hill Secondary, whose report on "decolonising" the history curriculum is shared with you here.

The national Schools of Sanctuary team were impressed by our schools' enthusiasm for the Orange Heart Campaign and Little Amal's Walk. Chandos won the national competition to create a video about what it means to be a School of Sanctuary; earlier in the year, pupils from Abbey, Cockshut, St Clare's and Welsh House Farm did well in the national "Art of Welcome" competition. In December, two of our schools were invited to take part in producing a short video on the theme of Welcome. And those who took part in the Orange Heart event in October in Birmingham Library were featured on the BBC!

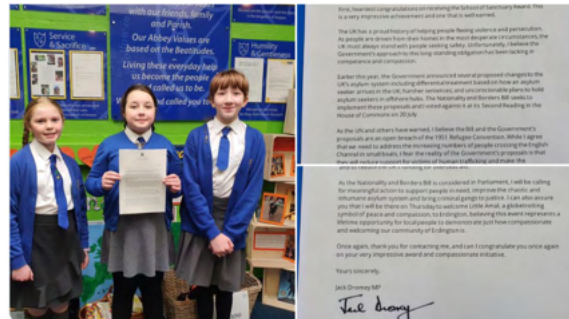


This map shows the locations of the schools in the network - purple for primary, red for secondary, the star shows those who have received the Sanctuary Award. We are looking forward to more stars by the end of this year!

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

Responding to the Nationality and Borders Bill

Abbey RC Primary School was in regular contact with local MP Jack Dromey and were always pleased when he replied, as he did in this long letter outlining his opposition to the Nationality and Borders Bill. We were shocked to hear of his sudden death at the beginning of January.



St Thomas More RC Primary also wrote to their MP Jess Phillips about the Nationality and Borders Bill and also received a positive response.

St Dunstan's wrote to their MP Tahir Ali to thank him for signing a cross-party letter to the Home Secretary pointing out the cruelty involved in the long delays involved in asylum applications and the effect this has on asylum-seekers' mental health.



TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES

The Nationality and Borders Bill was discussed in a very passionate debate in the House of Lords on 5th January and will

now go to one of the Lords' committees for further discussion and amendments. We will keep you informed!

Support for asylum-seekers at Christmas



Abbey RC Primary sent out 420 bags with leaflets asking for contributions for the Shoebox Appeal and also collected warm coats for single men who recently arrived to seek sanctuary in the UK. They also created beautiful orange heart Christmas decorations to raise funds for Stories of Hope and Home, which many of you have welcomed into your school.

Somerville Primary once again contributed to Migrant Help's Christmas Shoebox Appeal as we can see from all the shoeboxes on display at their Award Renewal Assembly in December



Other schools who have told us that they joined in with the Shoebox appeal were **St Thomas More , Nelson Mandela. St Mary & St John and St Peter's.**

Quite a few schools also made additional donations to St Chad's Sanctuary extra to those throughout the year. These schools included **Sacred Heart RC Primary (photo on right)**



and Holy Family RC Primary.

Cockshut Hill also made a huge donation of clothes and shoes, as well as many toys.





St Vincent's RC Primary invited asylum-seekers and refugees to a Christmas concert and a very delicious lunch, prepared and hosted by the pupils.

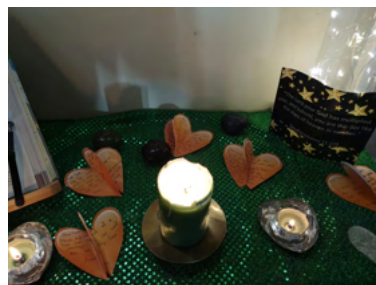
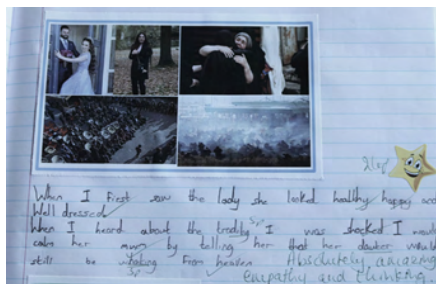


(They also did this two years ago but the 2020 event had to be cancelled.)



Response to the deaths in the Channel

Quite a few of our schools held special assemblies to remember those who died in the Channel at the end of November, for example **St Thomas More RC Primary**.



Pupils at Cromwell Primary reflected on the lives lost in the tragedy, with some very moving comments.

Climate Change and Refugees

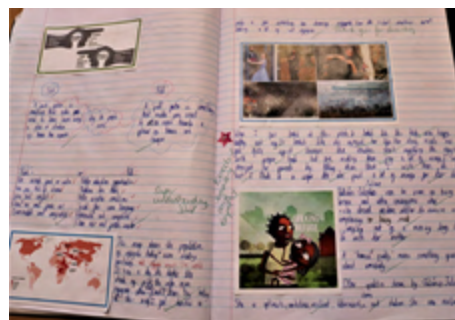
Some schools told us about the art work which they had submitted for the autumn term national competition on "Climate Change and Migration" - these examples are from **St Dunstan's** RC Primary whose pupils will be taking part in an online meeting of the Churches' Refugee Network later this month, which is focusing on that very topic. Pupils from **St Vincent's** RC Primary will also be taking part.



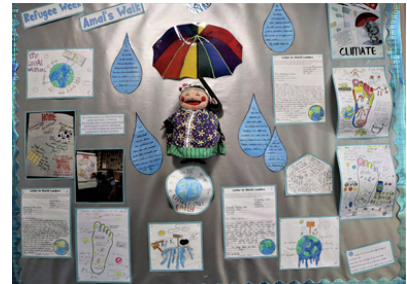
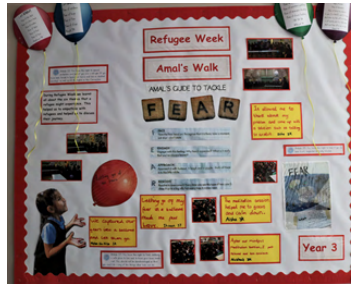
We are waiting for the results of the competition!

Sharing good practice

On an informal visit to **Cromwell Primary** in December, we saw not only shoeboxes but also this board in the hall, and ongoing work in pupils' books. The pupils are aiming to collect £1000 to provide therapy for traumatised refugee children.



Many of our schools welcomed Little Amal in October. Here is some work from Somerville Primary.



It is always a great pleasure to hear about the activities of schools who have recently joined our network. At St Paul's RC Primary in Kings Norton, Inclusion Head Jess Caffrey already has experience in this area as she guided St Vincent's towards its award six years ago - so we can look forward to great things!



Follow us on twitter - @BrumSchOfSanc

Arlene Croyden, Assistant Principal at Cockshut Hill Secondary School, tells us here how the school “decolonised” its History Curriculum.

History in Britain has often been a case of showcasing what the British did for the world, what was given at a time when ‘the sun never set on the British empire’. But who was the sun actually shining on? Can Britain still lay claim to the idea that their notion of colonialism was what caused the sun to shine? To a degree, yes, this claim can still ring true, but cannot be wholly accurate. There is more to colonialism and imperialism than what the colonised were coerced to do.

At Cockshut Hill, we have looked, over recent years, to decolonise our history curriculum, to diversify it to be more representative of our school community. By far, this is not a finished product, nor will be soon, but it’s a start. The ethos of change runs through our Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 curriculum. It is more than just an assembly in October for Black History Month or in January for the Holocaust. It is part and parcel of welcoming everyone, no matter what ethnicity, creed, gender or personal preference.

Our school community has over 50 different nationalities represented, some of whom had their ancestors as the colonisers, others as the colonised. Our young people come from so many areas of the globe and they all bring their own aspects of their culture which need to be celebrated today. Britain had its time to ‘shine’ due to the combined efforts of all involved in the history of its nation. Yes, we study empire but it’s more than this. Go back as far as you wish! For example, the French conquerors brought their methods of law and enforcement which we still have today. We would never know the true makeup of school communities and the country we call home, if William the Conqueror had not commissioned a nationwide survey of the land and started something which highlights our diverse world. Would we have had the medical knowledge in medieval and renaissance Europe if the Christian crusaders had not returned with the knowledge they had acquired whilst fighting the ‘barbaric’ Muslims for the Holy Land? Most certainly not, as the Islamic community was many years ahead of their counterparts in Europe, these counterparts who refused to move away from church philosophy instead of observing and getting to know the anatomy of a human.

Whilst the English were driven to ‘do their bit’ in medieval England and conform to the superiority of a male-dominated, status-arrogant society, the people of Mali were driven to obey an unwritten human rights charter which was a whole millennium ahead of its time, the Manden charter. This is just the start of recognising that our community’s ancestors shaped the world in which we live more than those who went out to the “uncivilised”. Were they “uncivilised”? No, they had their ways of living which the British

condemned as they 'knew better.' What works in one place does not always work in another. Slavery – demoralising and humiliating one nation for the profit of another - is wrong on every level! As times of war highlighted: two major wars proved the worth of the Irish and Indian armies to name but a few of the so-called Commonwealth nations who paid their duty and lost their lives, all in the name of British pride. Thousands of soldiers from across the nations which once made up the British empire lost their lives or livelihoods just for one nation's spoils of war. The promise of a better life in Britain as their prize was hardly accurate. The Windrush community came to Britain to face severe racial hostility. Mockery, humiliation, outright victimisation and discrimination lasted for decades and decades, and still does! How quick the British were to forget those who helped them in 'their finest hour'.

Our students are taught every day to understand the humanity in the world, to welcome the differences within it. No one is better than anyone else. This world is made of different people, our school community created by hundreds of different individuals. As part of our curriculum, we drive forward the difference in the world, of man and women, of black or white or purple (who cares what skin tone you are), of heterosexual and homosexual, of Christian, Muslim, Sikh or Jedi! So, when we think back to colonial times, we should think that, as a British nation, we learned more than we taught to others! Our school motto is 'Nothing but the best' as we continue to celebrate the best of what makes us, us. Whether this is in a history lesson, maths lesson, English lesson, or Aspire

- lessons which are designed to prepare our students to be the very best they can be.

Whether it's in a school community event or a sporting event, we must continue to be "Nothing but the best" to everyone. Each day. Every day.



Cockshut Hill is a Rights Respecting Gold Award school and is well on the way to achieving its School of Sanctuary award.

Working towards the Award

St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School & Sixth Form is also showing its commitment to being a place of welcome, and is working towards the Sanctuary Award, as Lay Chaplain Anna O'Driscoll reports:

Some of our students learnt about refugees and asylum seekers when we were preparing for the visit of 'Little Amal' the refugee puppet. We made orange hearts and a few took them to meet Amal in Birmingham.

We have had links with St Chad's Sanctuary over the last few years and have been sending donations at Christmas. We asked Abi, who runs the sanctuary, what was needed and we decided this year again to focus our Advent charity on helping refugees and asylum seekers. We are also collating Christmas hampers for our local community as there are many struggling, especially at the time of this pandemic.

Each year group was asked to bring a different item from the list. Some brought stationery, some toiletries but an overwhelming amount of staff and students brought in good quality recycled clothing. They watched a video in assembly giving them more of an insight into why asylum seekers and refugees need so much help when they arrive in our city.



Our 6th form team, Hannah, Catherine and Keziah helped to sort the clothes with Mrs O'Driscoll, Mrs Keeves and Mrs Roberston Rogers and delivered the items with Mr Jaep to St Chad's Sanctuary. Some forms collected money and the form tutor ordered the items online. We were also able to buy energy drinks, umbrellas and wheelie suitcases. We are truly blessed with the generosity of our staff and students.



We hope that soon, we may become a School of Sanctuary.

Halesowen College was the first College of Sanctuary in the Midlands! Here, Kelly Forrester tells us about their ESOL Reading Buddies.

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.

Most recently we had our first meeting of our ESOL Reading Buddies group. Students across college were invited to volunteer their time to talk to and read with students from our ESOL programme. This helps build bonds of friendship between students from different courses who have differing life experiences and allows students for whom English is their second language to become more confident with their speaking and comprehension skills.



It was also useful as it allows students to understand more of the language and culture of their peers, with the use of colloquial slang and differing dialects not something that is taught within the classroom but instead picked up via conversation.

Jamie Morgan-Green, Community and Engagement Manager said, "This has been a fantastic initiative and has helped a lot of our students not only make new friends but improve their English".

Since our last newsletter, we have celebrated two Award Assemblies and two Award Renewal Assemblies - all with pupils in leading roles. It is so good to experience the enthusiasm and commitment of these young people.



Holy Cross RC Primary School in Walmley received the Award in November.



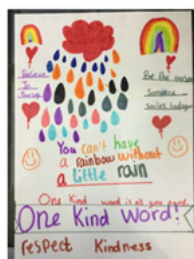
St Dunstan's RC Primary School in Kings Heath received the Award in December.



Somerville Primary School in Small Heath received its first Award in 2018 and so it was time to present the updated Award, after an exuberant assembly full of music and dance.



Shaw Hill Primary in Alum Rock also received the Award in 2018 and we were delighted to present them with their updated Award. The Assembly included a reading of one of the winning poems from last year's Refugee Week Poetry Competition.



Shaw Hill also shared with us some lovely art-work from their Anti-Bullying Week with sentiments which we're sure you will all agree with.



Well done and thank you to everybody for your commitment and hard work!