

Birmingham Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 14 December 2022

After a long, hot summer, here we are again in the depths of winter, and many of our pupils and their families are finding things really tough. We know that all the schools in our network are working so hard to make sure that everybody is supported and feels safe and looked-after.

We are delighted to report that two schools have received the award this term - *St Columba's Primary* in Rubery and *Our Lady and St Kenelm* in Halesowen. (OLSK is just over the border from Birmingham and has very close links to some of "our" schools, hence we were delighted to "adopt" them into our network!)

As you know, the Award is valid for three years, and we are always very happy when we are able to issue an updated Award. This term, we have re-accredited *Oasis Academy Foundry* (our second ever Birmingham School of Sanctuary back in 2014!) and *Cromwell Primary*.

In our previous newsletter, we included a report from Erdington Academy about their art therapy work. This time we're fortunate to have information directly from the *Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies* explaining the work they do in schools. They have funding to provide workshops free of charge to migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children, but can offer work with other children too.

If you're up for a new challenge, have a look at [page16](#) where there is information about *Lift the Ban's High Street Challenge*.

Wishing everybody lovely Christmas holidays,

The Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary Team

info@birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org Twitter: @BrumSchOfSanc

Contents of this newsletter:

Page 3 “Live in Solidarity” / Visit from Olympic sportsman

Page 4-5 “Fill the Skies With Hope” - reports from across our network

Page 6 Books and prayers

Page 7 Phone call from Benjamin Zephaniah / Display in local library

Page 8 Welcome cards for refugees relocated from Manston

Page 9 Making a difference - writing to MPs/supporting Welcome group

Page 10 Telling visitors that you’re a School of Sanctuary

Page 11 EAL work in George Dixon Primary

Page 12 Board game club at Washwood Academy / “Our Common Home” at St Edmund Campion

Page 13 “Jesus was a refugee” - reflections from Bishop Challoner

Page 14 Visit to St Chad’s Sanctuary - St Thomas Aquinas

Page 15 Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies

Page 16 Oscott Manor Blue Plaque project / Lift the Ban High Street Challenge

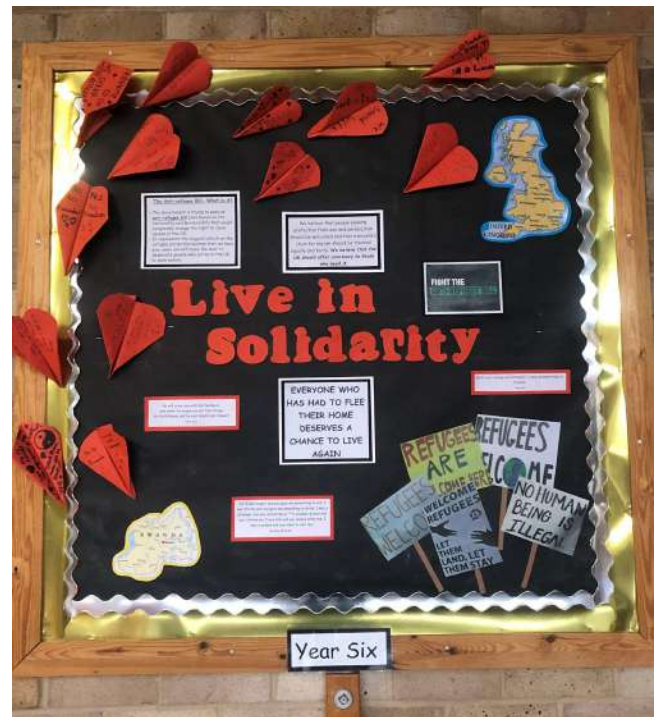
Page 17 Halesowen College ESOL Football

Page 17 - 19 CoMAP project with Birmingham City University and Halesowen College, Erdington Academy, Oasis Foundry, Somerville Primary, Benson Community School

Page 20 - Thank you

At Holy Cross Primary in Walmley, the theme in October was "Live Simply". Y6 chose to 'Live in Solidarity' and linked this to the Schools of Sanctuary work they did with filling the sky with orange heart planes with Messages to the Prime Minister.

Just look at these wonderful messages.



Olympic athlete and refugee visited St Peter's Primary in Bartley Green

On Tuesday 27th October, Olympic and Commonwealth athlete Cyrille Tchatchet



visited St Peter's Catholic Primary School in Bartley Green as part of their Vocations Week. He spoke to the children about his vocational work as a mental health practitioner as well as his career in weightlifting. He also spoke about his experience as an asylum seeker and his journey achieving refugee status. The children hung on his every word and asked many thought-provoking questions. It was a wonderful experience for the children and staff alike!

“Fill the Skies With Hope” - this was the campaign launched by the coalition Together With Refugees in September, to make it clear to our politicians that we think that the scheme to send asylum-seekers to Rwanda is cruel, inhumane, and illegal. Those taking part were encouraged to make orange-heart-shaped paper aeroplanes to be launched into the sky and then sent to MPs.

As usual, our schools approached this with enthusiasm! Some schools shared videos which can be found on twitter #BrumSoS (Benson, St Bernard's, St Dunstan's, St Peter's and others). There is too much to share here!

Abbey Primary used their good contacts to local media to spread their message:

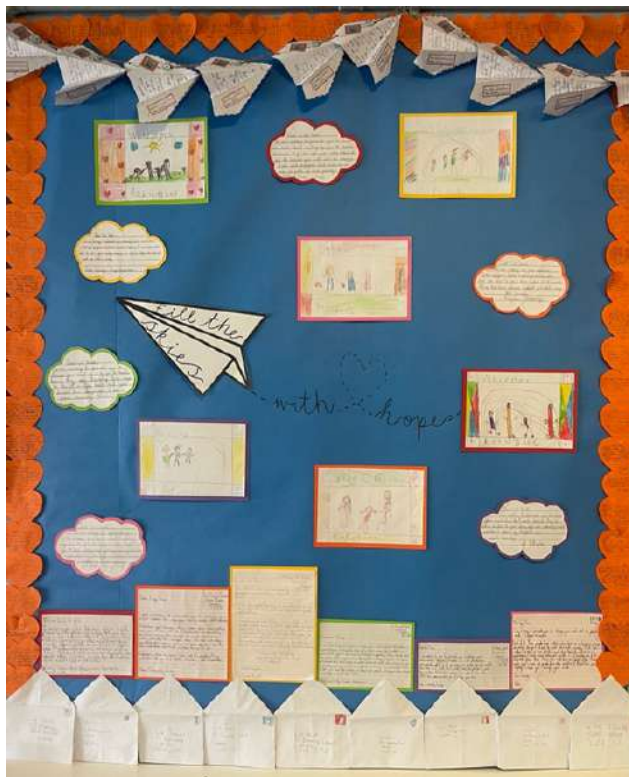
Benson Community School showed us how carefully the pupils prepared their aeroplanes:



Pupils at **St Alban's Primary in Kings Heath** produced a lovely short video.

The pupils of **Corpus Christi in Stechford** also enjoyed sending their messages:

St Mary's in Harborne incorporated their planes into a display:



Other schools which helped to “Fill the Skies With Hope” were Our Lady & St Kenelm, St Vincent’s, St Peter’s, St Jude’s, St Bernard’s, St Dunstan’s, Sacred Heart, St John Wall.... Too many to post images from all of them, but what wonderful evidence of the commitment of pupils and staff.

Pupils at St Thomas More read the book “Oranges in No Man’s Land” and were inspired to further research on the Lebanese Civil War.

St Thomas More R.C Primary School @StTomMore · Oct 12
Year 6 spent the morning constructing their 'best' version of their non-chronological reports on the Lebanese Civil War - inspired by their class text 'Oranges in No Man's Land'. 🍊🇱🇧 #InspireWriting #ExcellenceandFun

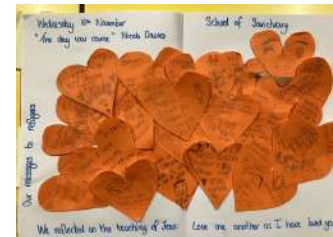


Holy Family were thrilled to have a zoom meeting with author Tom Percival about his book “The Invisible”, which they studied as whole-school text last academic year.

Holy Family School @HolyFamilyScho1 · Nov 4
We loved listening to the amazing @TomPercivalsays reading The Invisible. We thought about the feelings of Isabel and refugees around the world. Thank you @EmpathyLabUK for this brilliant resource. 📖
@BumSchOfSanc @BCPP_ @MirandaMcK @BhamDES



At St Catherine of Siena Primary, Year 2 listened to the story “The Day the War Came”. The children reflected on what it means to be a refugee and why it is important to treat all people with dignity and respect.



At St Vincent’s the pupils thought about their parents from Tigray, where war has been raging for the last two years. They wrote prayers which have been passed on to the families there.



Exciting news from St Bernard's Catholic Primary School!

WOW! Benjamin Zephaniah (poet, writer, lyricist, musician) took time out of his busy national and international schedule to actually phone our school and pass on a message to one of our pupils, AISHA (Y5 poet) - personally thanking her for writing a Ben Zeph inspired poem.

Her poem, all about the rich, cultural diversity of St. Bernard's School, touched Mr. Zephaniah. He actually tweeted it across the poetic globe!

If you could have seen Aisha's face when she listened to the voice of Benjamin actually THANKING HER, simply inspirational! Top person, top poet! He has MADE a POETIC DIFFERENCE to Aisha (and the children of St. Bernard's).

Aisha's words and now being read, digested and ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE across the world! Thank you to Benjamin's friends for making the correspondence and contact poetically possible. 😊

All you need to do now is read her poem...

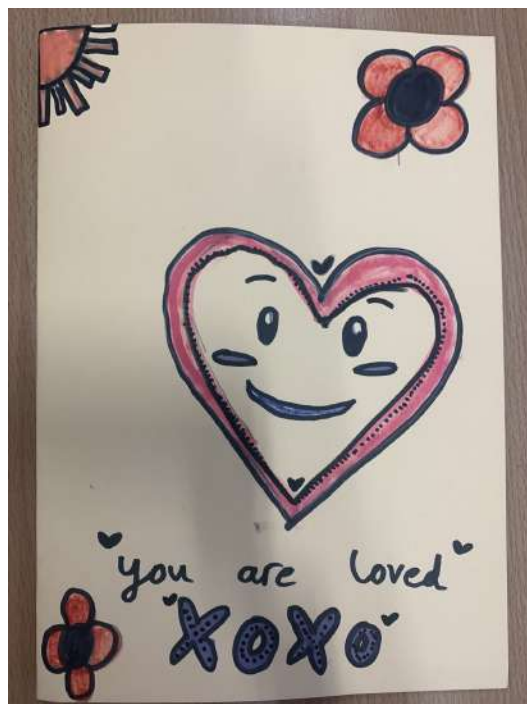
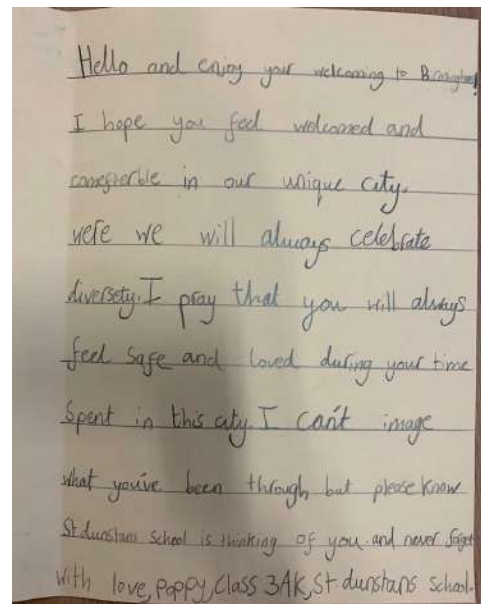


Pupils at Somerville Primary created a display for their local Small Heath Library!

The display combined the Orange Heart Campaign with the school's commitments as a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. The giant heart is created from smaller orange hearts made by children from Reception all the way to Year 6. Library staff have said that it has been very well received and many parents have also commented on it. Pupils also picked library books about refugees and placed them on a table in front of the display.



We were all shocked when we heard about the conditions in the Manston Detention Centre, so when we learned that a group of refugees from Manston had been relocated to Birmingham, pupils from St Dunstan's, St Jude's and St Martin de Porres Primary Schools very quickly got to work and made beautiful cards to welcome them.



Pupils at our Schools of Sanctuary know that they can make a difference and change the world for the better.

Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils at Bordesley Village were given the link to information about the condition at Manston detention centre, and asked to write to their MP Shabana Mahmood with suggestions about how refugees could be made more welcome.

Cromwell Primary, in the same constituency, also wrote letters to MP Shabana Mahmood.

School of sanctuary



As a School of Sanctuary, we believe that all refugees and asylum seekers should be treated with respect and dignity. There have been many reports in the news about the mistreatment of refugees and asylum seekers recently. Click on the below to learn about a recent incident.

We want children in Year 4, 5 and 6 to write a letter complaining about the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers and suggest ways in which they could be treated better and why. |

Homework activity: Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 (only)

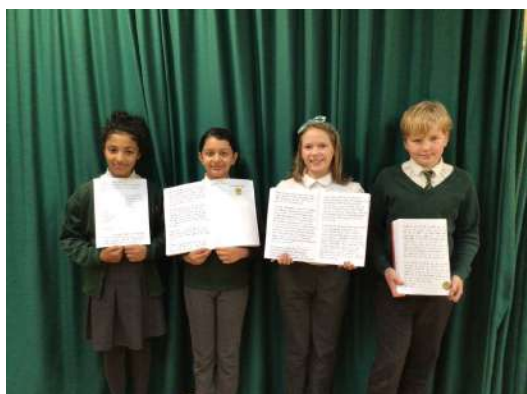
You need to write a letter to your local MP (Shabana Mahmood), remember to use the address of your school. Your teacher will give you paper to write on, you must bring your letters in by Monday 14th November so we can post them to **Ms Mahmood**.



Shabana Mahmood is a British Labour Party politician and barrister serving as the Member of Parliament for Birmingham Ladywood since 2010.

Thank you

The link:
<https://www.sky.com/story/home-office-facing-judicial-review-over-migrant-overcrowding-at-manston-immigration-minister-says-12736728>



St John & Monica's also wrote to their MP Tahir Ali about the need for a more compassionate attitude towards refugees.

(Tahir Ali MP is a supporter of our Schools of Sanctuary and also took part in a "Fill the Skies With Hope" event which took place within his constituency - so these letters will get a positive reception!)

Our Lady and St Kenelm is just over the border in Dudley (which does not yet have a Schools of Sanctuary network so we are very happy that they have joined us!) Staff from the school have a rota to volunteer every week at Halesowen Welcome which offers practical and emotional support to asylum-seekers and refugees.



*We're always delighted to welcome new schools into our network, and in this newsletter we'd like to introduce you to **George Dixon Primary School**. Maxine Gordon tells us here about some of their work.*

I am aware that a few of our schools have pupils who speak many languages, with a fair number of native speakers. As we at George Dixon Primary School have pupils who speak 54 languages and without a significant core of native-Standard-English speakers, I thought our strategies for meeting the needs of our pupils would be of interest.

Firstly, we carry out an EAL assessment on our newly arrived pupils and this is shared with the class teacher. In class, these pupils are then paired with a child who is more fluent in English. They also work with children who speak their home language across the school. Google translate is also used with parents, and children (especially during lessons).



In addition, to core and foundation subjects, pupils with little English receive daily intervention sessions using the *Race to English* pack.

Pupils feel at home here and make good progress because we celebrate their culture and respect their native traditions. Our EAL/New to English Parent Workshop, with an outside professional, is well attended as parents are keen to support their children in the work we are doing.

We're looking forward to hearing more from this vibrant and lively school!

Washwood Academy has told us about their break time and lunchtime board-game club for ESL students.

It has proven to be very popular - and provides a safe environment for students new to English and new to school. On average we have 5-10 students every break and lunch.

We have bought lots of different board games and puzzles and students love playing these every day.

Nothing beats a happy laughter of year 7 playing Jenga or Connect 4, especially if they beat a member of staff.

It helps the students build new friendships with each other when they have little or no English.

They can still interact together through games, learn to work in a group - not to mention the fact that many of them had never played board games before.



St Edmund Campion Secondary organised a “Super Learning Day” for the whole school. For the Year 8 pupils, the theme was “Our Common Home” and they were reminded that it is our duty to look after the planet and all of its people.



Activities and discussion on the day were very topical, encompassing decisions being made at COP27 and the concern for human rights in Qatar. There were creative activities and also letter-writing to local MP Paulette Hamilton. They were joined by Stories of Hope and Home to help explore this topic with a powerful Q&A session with a woman who suffered greatly on her journey to this country. Undoubtedly, many misconceptions were addressed and pupils learnt the importance of providing a warm welcome.

The pupils and staff ended the day in hope and prayer, that the lessons learnt would enable them to ‘live wisely, think deeply and give generously’, following the guidance of Pope Francis.

At this time of the year, many schools reflect on the Christmas story and the fact that Jesus was a refugee.

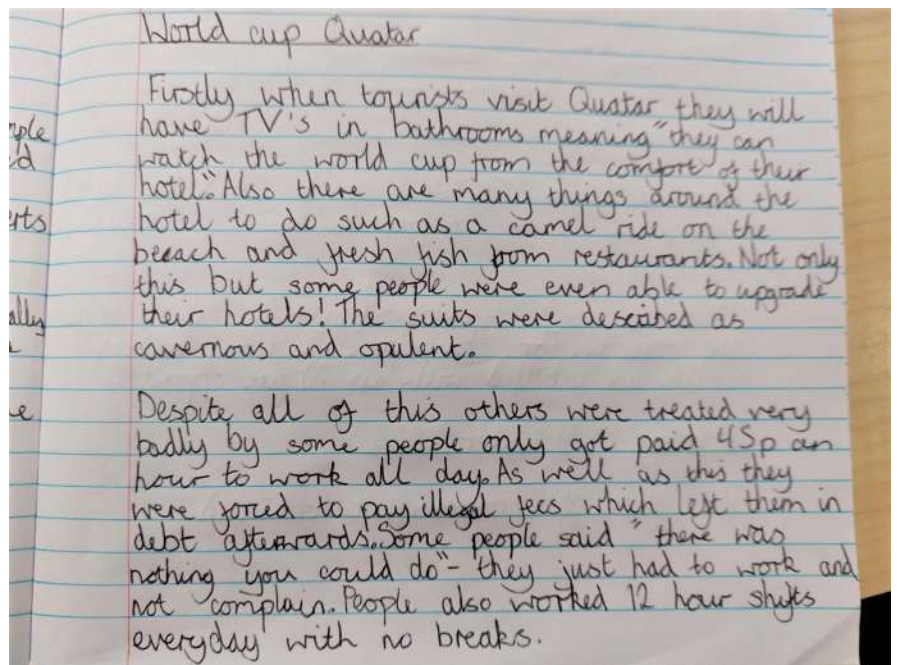
Solidarity

Lets stand in solidarity with those who have fled their homeland this Advent.

- Create a Poem sharing a message of welcome and solidarity
- Write a letter to Rishi Sunak or Suella Braverman (Home Secretary) highlight the importance of welcome and support for refugees
- Create a Christmas card for a local Refugee family.

Bishop Challoner Catholic College produced an assembly on this topic which was shown in every year group, and which ended with a call to action.

The school also took the opportunity of the World Cup to discuss with all Year 7-10 students the impact of the World Cup on the migrant workers who were - in many cases - exploited to create the impressive stadiums and infrastructure. Students read a Guardian article which explored the employment conditions of many migrant workers. They examined how workers could become trapped, either through low wages, or having their passports confiscated, and were often forced to work in squalid conditions. Finally, they considered how Catholic virtues related to knowledge of the circumstances migrant workers are often forced into, and reflected on how individuals can help make the world a better place



This written reflection is from a Year 7 pupil.

Many of our schools support St Chad's Sanctuary, a place of welcome and support for asylum-seekers in the city centre. A group of pupils at St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School visited and then told their Year 9 assembly about their experience.



We went to St Chad's sanctuary to see where all the donations that our school brought in goes to and how we help by donating not only our money and clothes but also our time.

Mrs. Martin gave us a tour while telling us about refugees. We were told that refugees were treated poorly and how they suffered. $\frac{3}{4}$ of people who ask to be asylum seekers get

rejected by the government which means only 50 of us in our year group would be able to enter the country.

If they were accepted to enter the country the treatment wouldn't be much better. Asylum seekers living in hotels would only be given £8 per week and were tracked using the card they would be given. They would also be living in poor conditions where they have no control over what they eat or do. One member of the asylum seekers had to only eat chips for 14 months - imagine if that was you?

The clothes that we have given would be set up in the Sanctuary like a shop to give them a sense of dignity, to further this dignity we are asking for toiletries and teen men's clothing.

As we think about our most vulnerable members of the community, we pray...

Christ,
No matter how much we run
No matter how much we hide
You are the one we find
You are our refugee
A beacon of light
Some may flee from war torn countries
Some may cross the endless seas
You said "Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"
Cuz, you love us at worst and best
Amen

Art Therapy in schools - Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies (BCAT)

BCAT is a Birmingham charity established in 1993 that delivers professional arts therapies and community arts in health workshops - using art, music, drama, dance movement and play as a catalyst to support mental health and well-being.



Arts Therapy works in the same way as counselling and psychotherapy but with the added benefit of the art form. This makes it the perfect intervention for our immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking families to be able to access the emotional support they need in order to be able to process the immense difficulties and traumas associated with relocating to a different country and completely different culture.

A three year grant from the national lottery in 2016 allowed BCAT to establish a professional HCPC arts therapies project in many schools where we worked with children and families with significant EAL needs. This successful project is now operating in over 25 schools –supporting EAL and other children, their families and school staff. BCAT has recently been given a grant to provide free arts therapies for Ukrainian children who have recently arrived in

the UK. We are also able to continue to support Syrian and Afghan children through funding.

Our arts in health workshops are there to support your organisation in diversifying your offer to include creative mental health support. We have provided many successful after-school clubs for EAL children and their families, who come together to learn English using art, music, drama, movement and play. Unlike arts therapy, arts in health workshops allow groups to take place in a safe space where participants can enjoy all the social benefits of being in a creative workshop. The positive effects of arts in health are well documented as we become more aware of mental health struggles.

We have funding to offer your group FREE creative workshops so please let us know! Please email us talktous@bcat.info or visit our website www.bcat.info

"We have been working with BCAT since April 2022. We referred some of our Syrian refugee children to Liz in the hope that they would receive something that we can't offer as a school.... sometimes our children come to us with needs that mean they need specialist support. ... We saw the impact of dramatherapy on our children last year and because of this we have requested to have Liz back this year to work with a different group of children as well. Dramatherapy is a fantastic addition to our Pastoral offer as a school and it's something we wouldn't be able to offer without BCAT" Slade Primary School

Oscott Manor Community Special School decided to mark International Migrants Day by creating Blue Plaques to celebrate their members of staff who have come from other parts of the world. Their original schedule for finishing their displays was thwarted somewhat by a visit from an official body, but they did manage to send us this lovely photo, and they have also shared a video on their Youtube channel at [Assembly 5th December | International Migrants Day 2022 - YouTube](#)



Are you up for a new challenge?



Some of you have already supported the work of the Lift The Ban campaign which is working towards giving asylum-seekers the right to work. Right now, people seeking asylum in the UK are banned from working and forced to live in poverty. Instead of allowing skilled builders, chefs, farmers and medical staff to support themselves by working, they are forced to waste their skills and talents.

The next stage is to take the campaign into our local High Streets to get businesses on board. Have a look at the resource pack [Lift the Ban - High Street Challenge Handbook](#) and contact emma@asylummatters.org if you think this is something your school could get involved with. And don't forget to let us know too!

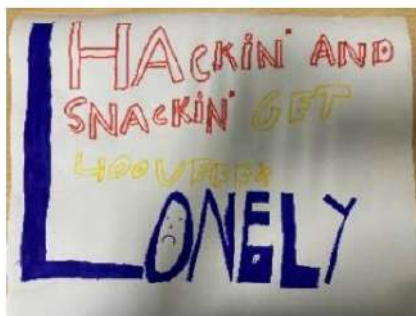
Halesowen College knows how to support its students from all over the world - Kelly Forrester reports on their football project.

As part of our enrichment offering, we give our ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) students the chance to play football on our all-weather pitch every week.

This has been made possible thanks to two local charities, the Harry Bennett Foundation and Fill Ya Boots, who have donated football boots to our students, so they are able to play on our 4G pitches. By supporting the Harry Bennett Foundation, we are also supporting aid work in Ukraine.



Students from Halesowen College also took part in the Co-MAP international project, invited once again by Birmingham City University.



Pupils from three schools (Oasis Academy Foundry, Somerville Primary, Erdington Academy) and Halesowen College reflected on their experiences during lockdown. The students at



Halesowen College made masks and turned their collage into an animation which you can see [here](#).



Kelly Forrester of Halesowen College tells us about the students' experience:

Some of our ESOL students took part in a Europe-wide study with Birmingham City University exploring experiences of school and college closures due to the COVID_19 outbreak.

The Co-MAP (Collaborative Community Mapping) project used art as a way for participants to express their feelings regarding the impact the pandemic had on them, their lives and their education. The first session had students create their own collage, with education staff and parents each creating one as well to reflect their differing perspectives. The following session focused on the students' viewpoint and allowed them to turn their collages into multilingual comic strips that will become part of a larger comic book with the work of other participants from Greece, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands.



One of the families involved said this of the project, "It was a nice experience, we learned and thought a lot about how the pandemic changed our lives, we were also very surprised to learn that there were many groups around the world having this experience."

After the sessions students were invited to visit an exhibition of their work at Birmingham City University and were also given a tour of the campus.



Mary-Rose Puttick, who had the oversight of the project, tells us what happened next:

Following the CoMAP exhibition at Birmingham City University's campus in the summer, the young people's involvement in the project took another exciting turn this autumn.

The 'Hackin and Snackin' exhibition displayed the work of the young people from Halesowen College, Erdington Academy, Oasis Foundry, and Somerville Primary at Location 29 gallery in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham.

The exhibition, curated by three of the CoMAP community artists, happened in three stages. Part 1 was a family day in the October half-term week when the BCU team

invited the young people who had participated and their families. The second part was a Schools of Sanctuary day. Benson Community School's Y4 class visited the exhibition and engaged with the work of the young people and added their responses and their own experiences to the exhibition. The Y6 children from Oasis Foundry who had taken part from the start of the project also visited and were excited to see their work in



a real art gallery. Finally, there was an evening event where school leaders, teachers, community and arts organisations, university staff, and local councillors were invited to the exhibition to celebrate this partnership work with Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary and to learn from the young people's experiences.



Mary-Rose also commented on the project as a whole:

Working in partnership with Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary as part of the CoMAP collaboration has benefitted the project on many levels. Through this we have deepened our relationships with the three Schools of Sanctuary and the College of Sanctuary that we had worked with previously on the Open School Doors project; building our understandings of how the whole school/college was impacted by Covid-19 and how the school community came together to support and learn from one another. Working with the same schools again also gave us new insights into the changing student cohorts of schools that are responsive to national and international political events. Barbara from Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary also brokered our connection with Location 29 gallery which enabled the young people's work to be celebrated in a beautiful city centre space and which opened up the opportunity for a group of young artists to gain experience in curating an exhibition. We were also introduced to new schools within the Schools of Sanctuary network, and we were so pleased to work with Benson Community School for the first time and observe how their children engaged with the project and kept the 'learning through lockdown' dialogue alive as we move towards the final stages of the project.

And finally, a big thank you to our generous schools whose pupils, staff and parents think about asylum-seekers and refugees even at times when many are struggling.

Our schools have responded generously to the city-wide appeal for Christmas shoe-boxes for asylum-seekers in hotels, and many have made special collections for St Chad's Sanctuary in the city centre.

A **BIG THANKS** to all our schools who took part in these collections.

Some schools collected for other local charities, so a special mention for

St Joseph's RC Primary School B30 who provided gift bags for women and families in the Women With Hope project;



St George's Church of England Primary B16 and St Mary's RC Primary B17, who collaborated to provide Christmas boxes and hot-water bottles for the Hope Projects tenants - people who are left homeless and destitute while challenging the flawed refusals of their asylum claim;



Our Lady and St Kenelm who made shoe-boxes for asylum-seeking children who attend Halesowen Welcome, where school staff regularly volunteer.



If you are looking for a local refugee charity to support, please bear these in mind:

<https://hope-projects.org.uk/>

<https://birchnetwork.org/>

<https://thebikeproject.co.uk/tag/birmingham/>

<https://storiesofhopeandhome.blogspot.com/>