

Birmingham Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary

Newsletter No. 16 July 2023

Once again we have been overwhelmed by the commitment and compassion shown across our schools. This term, we have issued new awards to **St John Wall Secondary**, **Corpus Christi Primary**, **St Bernard's Primary** **St Brigid's Primary**, **St Mark's Primary**, **SECOND** awards to **Allens Croft Primary** and **Nelson Mandela Primary**, and **THIRD** awards to **St Vincent's Primary** and **St Chad's Primary**. In the FE sector, **Halesowen College** has also received its **SECOND** award. We have no doubts at all about the vibrant health of our network! We would like here to express our thanks to **Mrs Azadeh** from St Chad's and **Mrs Tibbets** at St Vincent's, both of whom are retiring this summer and who have supported our Birmingham network from its very beginning back in 2014.

In this newsletter you can read about pupils visiting shops and businesses to encourage them to support the campaign to Lift The Ban on asylum seekers' right to work, and responding to the political decision to paint over murals at reception centres for asylum-seeking children. You can also gain inspiration from the many wonderful activities during Refugee Week by pupils and students ranging from Early Years to College - activities of which we only have space to share a few.

Read about an inspiring art exhibition and about our action-packed Celebration Day when twelve schools came together to share activities! Find out as well about a school a little further afield which we are supporting.

This newsletter could have been twice the size, and it's all thanks to our pupils and teachers who are so committed to sharing our vision.

With best wishes for your well-deserved summer break

The Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary team
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Lift the Ban!

Pupils at St Ambrose Barlow RC Primary in Hall Green and St Dunstan's in Kings Heath took to the streets to ask local businesses to support the Lift The Ban campaign. The pupils had learnt that people seeking asylum are banned from working while they wait months and often years for a decision on their asylum claim. It means people like barbers, medical staff, builders and chefs can't work and are forced into poverty.

Alongside their visits to local businesses, pupils from St Ambrose Barlow wrote to their MP, the Prime Minister, and the Home Secretary. Local businesses including Bluewater Bathrooms & Kitchens and MSM Supermarket showed support for the campaign and signed up as business allies.



Miss Laura Newman, when asked what the children took from the day, gave an example: 'The Head Boy said normally when people write stuff they just write but today we really mean what we are writing so it makes it so much more meaningful'

Mr Jon Clinton, Headteacher at the school, said, 'We have done this as it fits in with our Catholic social teaching and how we treat others with dignity. We've looked at *Love the Stranger* with the staff, worked with the Columban Fathers on an inset day. We – myself, the staff, the governors and the children - are all united in making the world a better place.'



In Kings Heath, pupils from **St Dunstan's** also took to the streets and it is inspiring to hear about the warmth of the welcome they received from local shopkeepers. A pupil from the school said, "it was great because people wanted to sign up."



Mr Tehan, Headteacher at the school, said: "At St Dunstan's we teach the children from a very young age that 'no one is too small to make a difference' and that they have the power to make a community better for all. Kindness and compassion for all who make Birmingham their home, mean that our city is a happier place to be and I'm proud that our children are keen to live their virtues for the common good."

Lift the Ban!

The campaign aims to overturn the ban so that people have the opportunity to work, support themselves and their local communities. You can find out more at www.lifttheban.co.uk

Lift the Ban! One of our most recently awarded schools, **St Mark's Catholic Primary in Great Barr**, took the Lift the Ban campaign out of school with members of staff taking these ribbons far and wide across the country during half-term.



Lift the Ban! Pupils at **St Alban's RC Primary School**, which is named for the Patron Saint of refugees, sent the message loud and clear!



♥♥♥♥ **Together With Refugees** ♥♥♥♥ encouraged us to show **Hospitality not Hostility** this Refugee Week!

This was enthusiastically taken up by some of our schools including **Nelson Mandela Primary** who welcomed Stories of Hope and Home.



St Joseph's RC Primary organised a tea-party for the Women With Hope group with whom they are in regular contact.



Our Lady & St Kenelm invited their friends from the local Halesowen Welcome for soup, drinks, cake, and shopping, supported also by parents.

Pupils across our schools were shocked to hear that the government's Immigration Minister had ordered murals and cartoons to be painted over in reception centres for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Children at St Gerard's Catholic Primary quickly got to work making cards and posters to send to children at the Kent Intake Centre.



At St Dunstan's Catholic Primary, pupils drew dozens of pictures which they intend to send to the Immigration Minister himself, and also to the children at the reception centre in Kent. This story even made it into the local press, and included a reference to the school's work on the Lift The Ban campaign (see above, page 3).

You can read the full report at <https://bit.ly/44zvMJU>

End of term CELEBRATION DAY

At our networking meeting in March, Mrs Rivett, Head Teacher of St Clare's RC Primary in Handsworth, shared her vision of a day of celebration when children from different schools could come together to share activities, make new friends, and help to strengthen our network. She kindly offered space in her school and put a lot of thought into ensuring that the day ran smoothly and we are very grateful for her initiative, her hard work, and her warm welcome and that of other staff and governors at the school.

And what a varied programme it was!

Pupils from **Cromwell & Bordesley Village Primary schools** worked together to create musical instruments out of abandoned junk items. The children from **St John & Monica's** were clearly very impressed!



Children from **Abbey RC Primary** showed us how to make secret message posters using wax crayons and water-colours.



Somerville Primary shared their technique of making welcome bracelets, which they always have on hand to give to newly-arrived pupils.



Pupils from **St Mary & St John RC Primary** shared their skills in kilim weaving!



Oasis Foundry 's delicious Belgian waffles were very popular!



St Dunstan's ran two sessions explaining about their work on the Lift The Ban campaign and encouraging other schools to join in.

St John Wall was the only secondary school represented, but they had a great time teaching bhangra dancing to groups of enthusiastic primary children!



Nelson Mandela brought their beautiful welcome blanket and materials for pupils from other schools to make their own squares.

Pupils from **St John & Monica's** helped us to make beautiful welcome messages on pebbles and wooden hearts.



Children from **St Clare's** (our host school for the day) passed on their knowledge of the five steps involved in talking to somebody who is different from ourselves, and practised the type of dialogue you might have.

St Mark's Primary shared sewing and applique techniques to make welcome messages.



Children from **Benson Community** School taught us traditional playground games from some of their home countries involving a lot of running around!



This event was an experiment! It was lovely to see different schools interacting and making friends with each other, and going home happy with mementos from the day. We think it's an experiment which will definitely be repeated! Many thanks to all the schools who took part.

Snapshots from Refugee Week around our network



At **Sacred Heart**, pupils learnt about Afghanistan and its kite-flying culture, and also learnt about the situation in Syria. Each class collected specified items to be passed on to St Chad's Sanctuary.

Early Years learnt about Venezuela and discussed why people might have to leave that country. They also learnt about the national bird, the colourful macaw parrot



Pupils at **St Thomas More** created orange hearts and other inspiring images.



Pupils at **St John & Monica's** wrote beautiful postcards to be passed on to asylum-seekers and refugees.



Pupils in Reception at **Wyndcliffe Primary** were inspired by their reading to create houses for refugees, while Nursery created a beautiful "Courage Scarf".



The collage consists of five hand-drawn posters for the 'TELL ME YOUR NAME' project. The posters are colorful and feature various drawings, including a girl's face, a globe, and a rainbow. They contain text in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and French, such as 'TELL ME YOUR NAME', '¿CÓMO SE LLAMA?', 'Comment s'appelle-t-il?', and 'Welcome'.

A stack of several handwritten letters, fanned out. The top letter is dated '1890' and addressed to 'Mr. J. H. Smith'. The handwriting is in cursive and appears to be from the late 19th century. The letters are on lined paper and are slightly discolored with age.

[illegible]

Dear Mr. Rick,
 I am writing that on
 about Thursday, May 21st, my
 school would lose to you
 one hour and twenty in
 the shopping center that
 every one is now working
 to close before that store
 should be closed with the
 kitchen and support that
 they have.

[illegible]

Year 3 at **Bordesley Village Primary** decided to write to the **Prime Minister** about how people seeking refuge should be treated.



St Mary's B17 discussed a refugee's journey and came up with many suggestions for how to help and show compassion.

The motto of **St Dunstan's Primary** is "Nobody is too small to make a difference" - and here, their Y2 are thinking about how they can show compassion, not just this week, but every week.

Meanwhile Y4 hid orange rocks and words of encouragement in Kings Heath Park, spreading awareness of the plight of refugees.

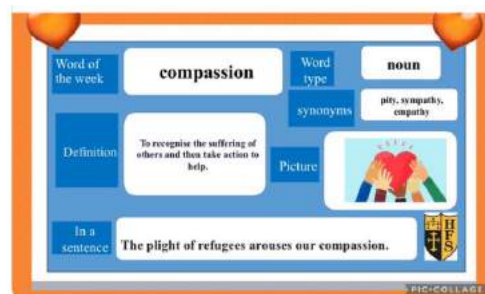


Our Lady & St Kenelm invited some friends from Halesowen Welcome including Farida who had to flee her home country of Afghanistan when the Taliban took over because of her work in supporting women's rights. In other lessons, they used their geography skills to learn to identify countries which people had to flee from.

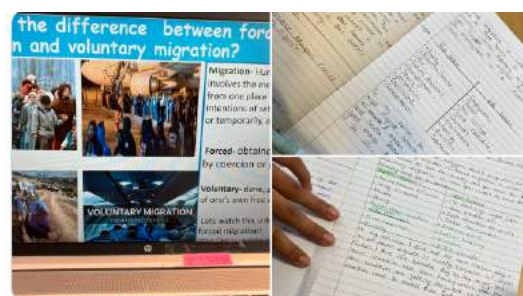




Holy Family Primary chose **COMPASSION** as their Word of the Week.



At **Cockshut Hill**, Year 8 pupils studied the Windrush story and learned about different reasons for migrating - and also looked at the problems faced by refugees and others seeking a new life.



At **Bishop Challoner**, Year 7 geography pupils discovered that the number of people at risk of displacement as a result of natural disasters and climate change by 2050 is over 1 billion.

Pupils at **Sacred Heart Primary** worked with their local library to produce this amazing Windrush display.



A special mention for **St Ambrose Barlow Primary** who have put the City of Sanctuary Logo on their sports kit! And well done to their prize-winning cricket team!

Reading inspiration during Refugee Week!

Many schools focus on specific texts during Refugee Week with special displays in school libraries, as here at **St Thomas Aquinas Secondary**. Students were invited to read some of the books during breaks and lunch or during accelerated reading time in their classes.

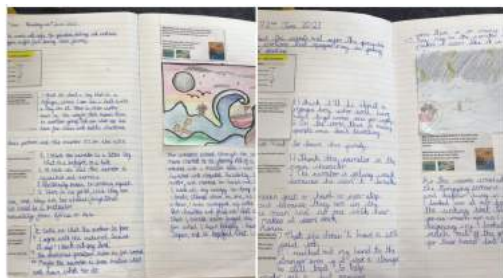


Year 2 at **St John & Monica's** were inspired by “**Under the Same Sky**” to discuss the things that we all do.

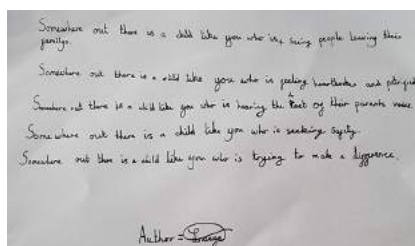
“**The Waiting Place**”, which many schools discovered via the Norfolk Day of Welcome, inspired thoughtful responses at **St Anne's Primary (Chelmsley Wood)**.



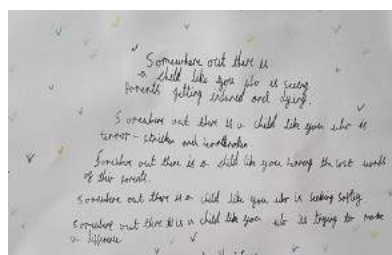
Onjali Rauf, author of “**The Boy at the Back of the Class**” and other books, visited **Nelson Mandela Primary School** and spoke to staff and pupils about her work.



At **St Mary's B17**, “**Boy87**” was the source of this beautiful work by Y5, while Y1 read “**The Journey Home**” and thought about animals who have to leave their homes just as refugees do.



At **St Martin de Porres Primary**, Year 3 enjoyed listening to the author Na’ima B. Robert read her book ‘A Child Like You’. They were so inspired, they wrote their own short verse afterwards



This collection of individual and independent responses from pupils at **St Ambrose Barlow**, was based on Brian Bilston’s poem “**Refugees**” and reflected on the use of positive and negative language when speaking about refugees. It was shared on twitter and received a positive response from the poet himself!



Inspirational art work during Refugee Week!



St Martin de Porres Primary heard from a visitor who had to flee from Uganda half a century ago, and about her life since then. They created this beautiful art-work in honour of all asylum-seekers.

Just look at this art work from a talented and compassionate pupil at **The Rosary Primary**!



Art at **St Mary's B17** explored aspects of compassion.

At **St Dunstan's**, Y6 explored imagery relating to the lived experience of refugees.



Refugee art exhibition in school and in public places!

Pupils at **Our Lady & St Kenelm** put on this wonderful art exhibition inspired by artists from around the world. They have also produced an art exhibition about refugees for the local Cornbow shopping centre in Halesowen and another one for a gallery in Cradley Heath (The Art Yard) which will be on display until September.

For the Refugee Week exhibition, each class researched the work of an artist, and created a piece in their style with a refugee theme. Children read prayers and the choir sang some beautiful songs. There were many visitors and the exhibition raised £87 for the local Welcome Group.



The exhibition was set out in the school hall, thus allowing space for the many visitors.

Early Years was inspired by the story 'Wishes'. It is about a little girl and her family who had to make a long journey to find safety. We talked about the girl's feelings as she left her home behind. She was so devastated. We talked about the colours that might show sadness. We said they would be dark colours. As the girl travelled and came to a safe place she felt much happier and had hope. We discussed what kind of colours might show her feelings at this stage of the story. We painted footprints to represent her journey from sadness, fear and darkness to light and happiness.



Year 1 studied the famous painting 'Under the wave of Kanagawa' (also called The Great Wave) by Katsushika Hokusai circa 1830-32 and created our own waves by mixing our own paints to show the different blues of the sea. We used finger painting and spray painting to create the white foam and spray of the waves. We can only imagine how scared the children in these situations must feel.

Year 2 created a piece titled 'Expressions'. The portraits were inspired by the artwork 'Free' created by Mohammed Jafary. As a class Year 2 researched and read stories about refugees. We discussed the thoughts and feelings refugees may experience when they are told to leave their homes. We thought they may be scared, frightened, anxious.... We then used these refugee stories to show the expressions of what their faces may look like when they are told this devastating news. "To be called a refugee is the opposite of an insult; it is a badge of strength, courage, and victory." Tennessee Office for Refugees



Year 3 created a blanket with messages of love and hope as a signal of sheltering people who are homeless and vulnerable. This was inspired by the sculpture "Sheltering" in St Peter's Square in the Vatican, and was created by carving messages on to polystyrene sheets and transferring them to their chosen media.

Year 6 created art inspired by Nelson Makamo who is best known for his charcoal and oil paintings which redresses decades of images that have portrayed African children as destitute. Y6 researched the lives and stories of different refugees and used this as inspiration for their portraits in charcoal and acrylic, to represent the colourful and often difficult lives of refugees.



Many of our schools share their news on social media. Others also include it in their school newsletter, like Welsh House Farm Community School (which received its second award almost exactly one year ago!)



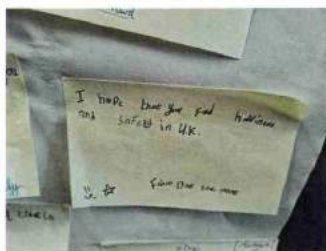
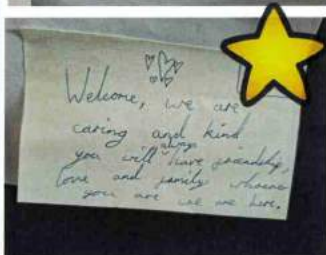
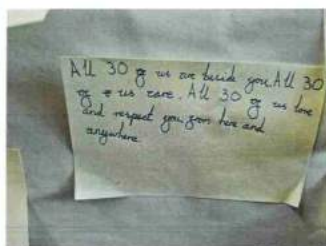
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'Inspired to grow and flourish'

Refugee Week at Welsh House Farm

To mark Refugee Week our pupils looked at the theme compassion. They included this in the simple acts they completed during the week.

Below are some examples of the work undertaken.



I Come From

I come from a land of cities and cars,
Sports cars, factories, motor bikes,
A place where people don't see the dangers lurking,
Homemade shepherd's pie- yum; -but mom's homemade
wedgies - ewwww!

I come from the inside and plugged in days,
Building snowman and drinking hot cocoa every night,
Freckles all over my body,
A bit of maturity and trust deep within.

I come from a family of 10,
Silly siblings everywhere I go,
Parents always telling me what to do,
We are all one big family.

I come from snow days announced on big screen TV,
Always leftovers for my dogs,
Every day a plugged in day,
Everyone shares a bed room.

I come from a home full of happiness,
Everyone ensures the safety and well-being off all.

Lacey
Welsh House Farm Community School



SCHOOL OF
SANCTUARY AWARD
WELCOMING ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES



@WHF_School



Welsh House Farm

Our most long-standing Schools of Sanctuary

We are thrilled to have welcomed many new schools to our network over the last few years, but we also celebrate those schools which have long been steadfast in their commitment to the School of Sanctuary vision - we have eight schools who have received their second award, and three schools who have received their third award!

Oasis Foundry Primary Academy and **St Vincent's RC Primary** received their first award in 2015 (*see photos, right*) and it is wonderful to see how the Sanctuary ethos remains totally embedded in these schools and how their work is held up as an example to others across the School of Sanctuary movement. The Lent "Rucksack project" coordinated by **St Vincent's** for their cluster of schools is now on the national Schools of Sanctuary website.



But we might not have got anywhere without the support of **St Chad's Primary**, whose then Head Teacher Mr Tehan (now at St Dunstan's) was the first to respond to our invitation.



Our very first Award Assembly in Birmingham was at St Chad's in July 2014. Back in those days, evidence was collected in folders and ring binders and audits were unheard-of! Mrs Azadeh has kept the original documents (*photo, left*) and continued adding to them until we moved over to electronic methods.

At that Award Assembly (*photo, right*) we also celebrated the achievement of the then Year 6 pupils in workshops and performances organised by Birmingham Rep around the refugee theme.



Since then, the school hosted our first networking meeting, featured in a graphic novel, provided a pupil for a Refugee Week poster, and joined in many of our activities, while maintaining its ethos of wrap-around support and welcome. We are thrilled that we were able to present the third award and are thankful for all the staff who have made this possible over the years.

History focus: Travelling for Safety

Corpus Christi Primary has re-written its history curriculum with a focus on travelling. This begins in Y1 with the history of travelling for leisure; Y2 looks at adventure, Y3 at exploration, Y4 investigates travelling to gain power and Y5 studies travelling for trade. Year 6 looks at the history of people travelling for safety and for a better life. Beginning with re-capping of previous learning, including a study of slavery as an example of using people as commodities, concepts introduced in Y6 are war, danger to life, and the need to escape.

Starting with the Christmas story and the political reasons for the Flight into Egypt, pupils then move on to studying the reasons for the Irish Potato Famine and its effects - what was the impact on Ireland and on America, how were the Irish immigrants there received and what did they bring with them?

Thinking about the voyage of the *Titanic*, pupils learn about the different groups of people on board, their reasons for travelling, their experiences and their treatment on the ship, and look at the death toll relating to the different types of passenger, including the fact that the exits to the third-class accommodation were kept locked.

Moving on to World War 2, pupils recap work done in Y4 about the growth of the Nazi party and go on to look at the Nazi attitude to minorities and especially to the Jews. Thinking about the Kindertransport, they learn about what happened to the children once they arrived, and what happened to their parents. This is followed by a case study focusing on the work of Oskar Schindler and how he was treated after the war.

Building on the Y3 work about the Commonwealth, pupils then move on to looking at the whole Windrush story, who came and why, how they were received, and the impact reverberating up until today.



Coming right into the present time, pupils study the years of ongoing war in Syria, the plight of the people and how they are looking for safety, how they travel and how they are received in their country of destination. This of course fits in seamlessly with the work done by the whole school as a School of Sanctuary which welcomes and supports asylum-seekers from all over the world.

This integrated curriculum allows pupils to develop understanding through contextualised teaching and learning and to note connections over time and to ask historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.

St Mary & St John in Erdington had a busy and productive Refugee Week, as Shannon Ryan reports.

It was a very busy Refugee Awareness week for our children at SS. Mary and John Catholic Primary School. As a school, we won 40 copies of the book, **'The Waiting Place'** which gives the story of many refugees who are waiting for asylum documentation and have to stay in camps in the meantime. This is a book written by Dina Nayeri (who was a refugee herself fleeing from Iran). Year 3 and 4 started our Refugee week by joining thousands of children on a live Zoom with Dina herself who told us her story and gave us a chance to ask her some of our questions.



During the week, we also had prayer services led by schools in our St. John Paul II Multi Academy family. This was a significant time for us, as we gathered through Zoom with our academy family to discuss some of the issues refugees face and we made prayers dedicated to them. Here is an example of a freedom bird prayer for refugees fleeing around the world.

Finally, on 23rd June we had our annual Refugee Day. Children came to school dressed in the countries that refugees may flee from, as a big part of the day was to celebrate their cultures so they have a place of belonging and welcome if they ever came to our school. Children brought in food items which we donated to our local food bank (Bethany Food Bank). The first part of the day saw us celebrating the cultures of the countries we had studied. We made Macaw parrots, puppets and Mandazi bread; did Kilim weaving and in the afternoon completed some simple acts of compassion including reading with our peers, planting seeds and making welcome signs! What a wonderful day we had together as a community!



Refugee Week at St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School

At St Thomas Aquinas, we took a week to focus on refugees and a culture of welcome. During form-time, we watched reflective videos about what it means to be a refugee and listened to people's stories about how they had to flee from their home.

We also encouraged students to express themselves by celebrating their culture, coming into school on our 'Diversity Day' in their cultural dress and bringing in cultural dishes for everyone to try. As part of this celebration, we had a Mass where students read in their own languages and some were even refugees themselves from Syria and Ukraine, they were proud to read in their language and wear their flag.



Year 7 did a walk around the local community in solidarity for refugees praying at different points the walk in form groups. Before starting this walk, we gathered as a community on the playground in prayer and reflection, thinking about why we should show compassion and service to refugees around the world.

Students in Y7&8 had the opportunity to reflect upon what it's like to be a refugee, focusing on what they would take if they had to leave their home in a hurry and why they might have to. We then discussed our government and the choices they had made not to help refugees anymore. Students were upset by this and described them as "humans like us" in need of compassion and service to help them. As a stimulus, classes used the poem 'Refugees' by Brian Bilston, whereby students created freeze frames to show the power of being able to help refugees and look at the world differently.



Years 8&9 had a special assembly delivered by St Chad's Sanctuary. Brendan O Driscoll spoke about the work of the Sanctuary. Reza and Michael both shared their story of being an asylum seeker as well as our very own maths teacher Mr Khorrami.

Our small team is very busy with our Birmingham schools but sometimes we are able to support schools outside our area. One such school is Lichfield Cathedral School, which has embraced the School of Sanctuary vision with passion.



EAL teacher Ms Davies has adapted the City of Sanctuary Supporting Organisation logo to incorporate the school colours and has organised an EAL "sharing" session in collaboration with the Cathedral, with invitations sent out to all the schools in the diocese.

Ukrainian pupils in the school have been supported in making a PowerPoint which was sent out to form tutors to be delivered during PSHE and one of the pupils delivered a whole school assembly in the Cathedral about the things that she considered to be important about her culture; this was followed by a Ukrainian lunch designed by two of the pupils. The drama teacher Ms Croft, who is absolutely fabulous and who wholeheartedly worked on a poem with Anna (a pupil from Ukraine) and her Year 9 class. Anna chose a poem, taught them all the first stanza, which they learned and which they signed in British Sign Language. Sarah entered them into the Poetry by Heart competition and they won a special award for their outstanding commitment to inclusion.



Lichfield Cathedral School also welcomed Stories of Hope and Home and an Afghan refugee member of the Lichfield City of Sanctuary Group. It is wonderful to see how the School of Sanctuary vision is becoming all-pervading in this school which takes pupils aged between three and eighteen!

Halesowen College has just received its second award and regular readers of our newsletter will know that they have an ongoing programme to support their College of Sanctuary vision! Here Kelly Forrester tells us about two recent initiatives.

Craft Club Refugee Week Event

Our Craft Club worked in collaboration with our ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners to create elaborate collages of national flags from their home countries. This encouraged lots of conversation between students about life before they travelled to the UK celebrating their different cultures.

This event brought together our ESOL learners with learners from other courses, allowing both groups to learn about experiences different from their own, such as differing childhood experiences and school careers to alternative cultural traditions.

The session was planned for 45 minutes but most students stayed for 2 hours, being very engrossed in what they were doing. Some learners spoke about how different countries have similar cultures, so supporting staff suggested that they could investigate the history of the countries to expand upon this. Another learner researched the origins of their flag and what the colours represented and were keen to highlight this on the flag. One learner was teaching another learner days of the week in his first language of Spanish.

A truly worthwhile and enjoyable event. These flags have gone on display as part of our Refugee Week celebrations.



World Book Night Giveaway April 2023

As part of World Book Night, **Halesowen College Library** was successful in their bid to receive copies of a fiction title which was given away to learners to encourage reading for pleasure.

The book we chose to giveaway is 'You Think You Know Me' by Ayaan Mohamud. It tells the story of Hanan, a Muslim teenage girl facing increasing Islamophobia in the UK. When her world is rocked by her friend's murder and it seems that every Muslim is to blame, Hanan decides that the time for silence is over. It is time for her to stand up and shout.

All copies of this book were successfully given away to a wide range of students, with the hope that they will recognise within the book the message of accepting and supporting others of different backgrounds and to stand up against injustice and prejudice. As a proud College of Sanctuary this is a message we aim to convey in our enrichment activities alongside our curriculum.



During **Refugee Week**, the College Library created a display of resources detailing different refugee and immigrant experiences. Resources range from informative non-fiction and emotive poetry to graphic fiction and an essay collection. Library users are also signposted to our TV recording resources Clickview, where they can watch programmes about different refugee experiences.