

# Birmingham Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary

## Newsletter No. 18 March 2024

2024 got off to a great start with two schools achieving the Sanctuary Award - **St Gerard's RC Primary** in Castle Vale, and **Benson Community School** in Hockley. After half-term, these were followed by **St Benedict's Primary** in Small Heath and **St Joseph's RC Primary** in Bournville. Congratulations to all of these schools!

Around Valentine's Day, our social media was filled with wonderful photos of Orange Hearts across our network - we can only include a selection here.

We also had an amazing day at the beginning of March when our national coordinator Megan visited Birmingham for the day - read all about it on page 3 of this newsletter.

We know that this is a very difficult time for some of our schools - some of you are welcoming traumatised families who have arrived by boat, and are also having to take on a lot of the paperwork involved in supporting these and other families. We are so grateful for the compassion, commitment and generosity of all the staff and pupils in our schools.

Looking ahead, the theme of this year's **Refugee Week** (17th - 23rd June) is **OUR HOME**. We know that you'll come up with creative ideas and some suggestions can already be found on the [RW website](#). We'll be looking forward to lots of visits and reports!

With very best wishes for the Easter break,

Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary Team

[info@birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:info@birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org)

## **Contents of this newsletter:**

**Page 3 Visit of our national Schools of Sanctuary coordinator**

**Page 4-5 Welcome to a new school in our network - Shirelands Collegiate Academy**

**Page 6-7 Examples of beautiful displays in entrance halls and foyers**

**Page 8 Early Refugee Week at St Mary's Primary in Harborne**

**Page 9-11 Valentine's Day activities across our network**

**Page 12 Examples of practical solidarity**

**Page 13 Day of Action at Adderley Primary**

**Page 14 Day of Action at St Bernard's Primary**

**Page 15 St Benedict's Primary School of Sanctuary Media Club**

**Page 16 Drama at St Benedict's / THE BUTTERFLY LANDS**

**Page 17 News from Halesowen College**

## Megan visits Birmingham!

We were delighted to welcome our national Schools of Sanctuary coordinator Megan to Birmingham at the beginning of March. We had a whistle-stop tour of four of our schools, and then our networking meeting.

Our first stop was **Abbey Primary** in Erdington, where Megan met the Head Teacher and the members of staff who ensure that School of Sanctuary is always on the agenda. We were shown round by enthusiastic pupils and also watched one of the animations the pupils had made showing the long and dangerous journeys made by asylum-seekers, and met some of the animation teams.



Our next stop was **Washwood Heath Academy** where we spoke with some of the school's international community. We heard about their podcasts, the support they receive from the school, and their aspirations for the future. We met in the library with the beautiful Orange Heart display.

At **St Ambrose Barlow Primary** we were made very welcome by the Head Teacher and pupils who chatted enthusiastically to us over lunch - we were having such a good time with them that we didn't take any photos!

At **St Dunstan's Primary** we met the Head Teacher and the Assistant HT who have done so much work to create the School of Sanctuary ethos. Then we spoke to the Sanctuary Ambassadors who were knowledgeable, articulate, and committed.



We can confirm that Megan was totally impressed by these schools and was only sorry not to be able to spend more time with them and with others.

And then we arrived (on time!) at **Cromwell Primary** where the staff had generously agreed to host our networking meeting. We were a fairly small group this year (several people had apologised and others were prevented on the day) but we had a lively and in-depth discussion, planning future events, and getting to know each other better.

We are so happy that Megan took time from her busy schedule to visit us and were even happier about her kind words about our wonderful network!

**We are always very happy when we welcome a new school to our network. Shireland Collegiate Academy is one of our most recently-joined schools, and they have a brilliant programme to support their diverse community and their newly-arrived students. This is what they told us:**

**Shireland Collegiate Academy** is a large, inner city secondary school in Smethwick, Sandwell, in the West Midlands. Shireland sits at the heart of a diverse community. This diversity in both ethnicity, culture and religion is a core strength of the school that helps to guide our principle of promoting cohesion amongst our student body. This is enabled in a large part by our outstanding pastoral team, and we are very proud of the level of pastoral care that we give to our students. Last academic year, many of our students suggested to the Student Council that they would like to celebrate our diverse community. Students acknowledged that our academy was to celebrate our differences in culture, religion, and ethnicity rather than question them. Our first Student Council Culture Day was held in November 2022 and included cultural dress, foods from around the World, cultural icons and music, poetry and literature and the day finished with a fabulous fashion show. It was such a success that it has now become an annual event in our academy calendar.



Along with this annual event, Student Council wishes to work closely with our International New Arrival Centre, World Refugee Week, Journeys to Shireland project along with new promotional Academy videos featuring over 50 different languages spoken by our students. ***(See next page for the Road Map of the International New Arrivals Centre.)***

The Academy is looking forward to completing the School of Sanctuary award in 2024.

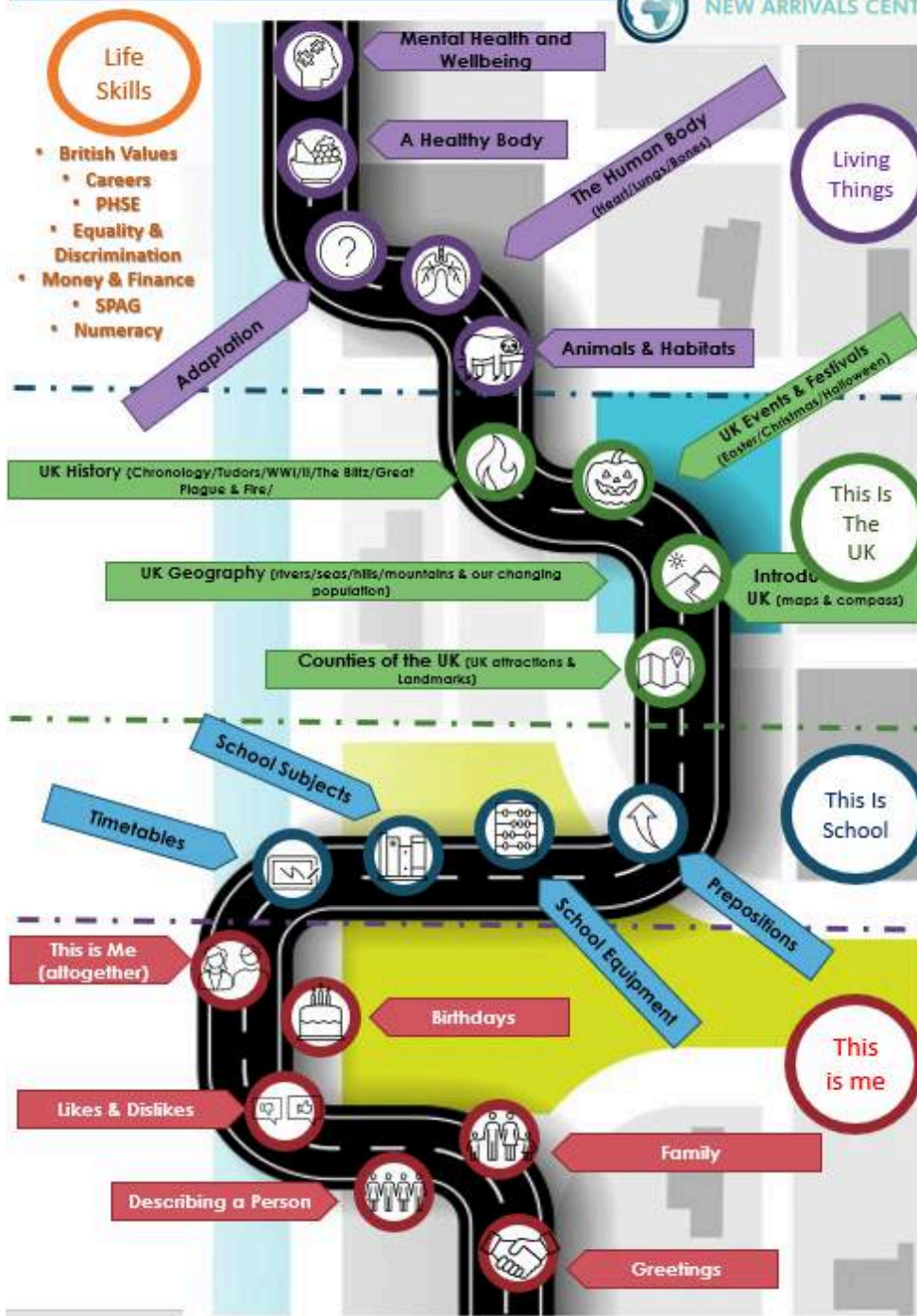


**INTERNATIONAL**  
NEW ARRIVALS CENTRE

## INA Road Map



**INTERNATIONAL**  
NEW ARRIVALS CENTRE





Many of our schools have beautiful displays in their entrance halls and foyers.

This is the entrance hall at **Benson Community School**, and what makes it special is the presence on the top left of little skittles decorated by pupils to represent people making their way across the Mediterranean, which they did in 2022 for the exhibition in a local art gallery, *The Sea is Big* (see our newsletter No 13 [here](#)).



At **Chandos Primary**, which recently received its **second** Sanctuary Award, the entrance foyer is filled with Orange Hearts created by pupils across the whole school.



At **Lichfield Cathedral School** (which we are supporting in its work towards the award), the teacher responsible for the School of Sanctuary work even roped in her husband to make these beautiful glass hearts for the School Reception area - which look even more stunning against a winter sunrise!



At **The Abbey RC Primary** in Erdington, the entrance foyer is filled with their tree of welcome and the houses from their “global neighbourhood” made by pupils with links to many countries. QR codes provide more information about the different countries.



At **Cromwell Primary** in Nechells, there is a permanent School of Sanctuary board in the hall which is visible from the entrance foyer. You might think that this looks familiar, but take a closer look - the content has been updated and changed showing the great level of commitment from the whole school.





St Mary's Primary in Harborne has a tradition of holding Refugee Week in the spring term, and this year was no exception!

And as usual, this was shared with parents and the wider community in their newsletter.



# REFUGEE WEEK

week beginning 15.1.24





Having started reading 'The Boy at the back of the class', Year 5 worked really hard planning their 'Welcome Letter' for any refugee child who may start at St Mary's, so that they can quickly feel part of the family.





Year 1 led us in a wonderful Mass about the importance of welcoming refugees and standing up for our most poor and vulnerable in society.



The children also discussed the dilemmas that Mary and Joseph would have faced when escaping to Egypt; how their journey is similar to modern day refugees; and how Jesus, as a child refugee, needed to be protected. We linked our learning to Article 22 -





The children have led prayer and liturgy, praying for refugees and focused on our virtues of how we can show love and compassion to all those in need.











Year 2 have learnt about how the bluebird took refuge in the robot's heart as they read their class text together this week.



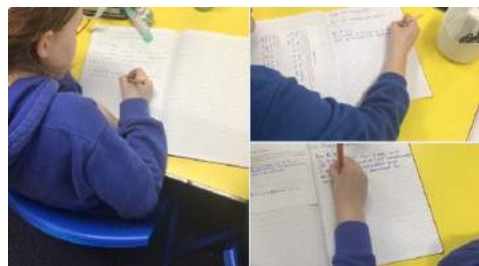
Our schools joined with enthusiasm in the Valentine's Day campaign from Together With Refugees, sharing their artwork of Orange Hearts and making cards to give to asylum-seekers and refugees.



At Our Lady & St Kenelm, Year 1 showed their solidarity with refugees and asylum-seekers, and made cards for their friends at Halesowen Welcome.



And as well as sending hearts and cards, Year 6 wrote letters to their MP James Morris to express their disappointment that he had voted for the Rwanda Bill.



Cards were also made by pupils at **St John and Monica's Primary** and the students at **St Thomas Aquinas Secondary** produced artwork with multiple hearts.



**At Abbey Primary School**, two of the Caritas Ambassadors helped to lead an assembly focusing on the meaning of sanctuary and their plans for Valentine's Day.



**Pupils at Abbey** with their welcoming Orange Hearts.



**St Bernard's Primary** discussed the meaning of "sanctuary" and launched a fundraising appeal for clothes and toiletries for St Chad's Sanctuary.

The pupils wrote messages of welcome for the asylum-seekers who visit there.

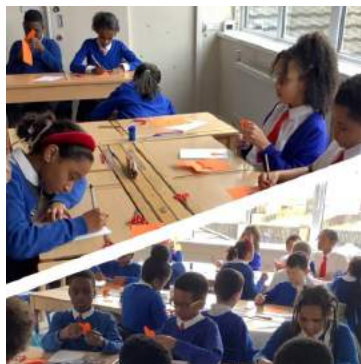


**Year 6 pupils at St Martin de Porres Primary** remembered refugees everywhere.

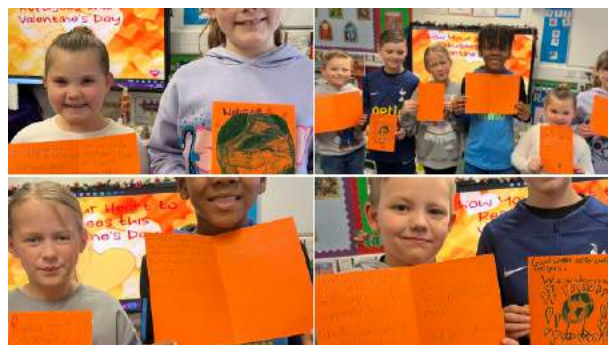




**Pupils at St Chad's Primary** made cards to send to asylum-seekers to show that they are welcomed.



Pupils at **St Anne's Primary in Chelmsley Wood** also made cards for St Chad's Sanctuary.



**At St Mary's B17, Year 5** wrote letters to a refugee child who may be joining the school.

**At Holy Family Primary**, pupils' response to the book "Peace on Earth" included writing poems including a welcome for refugees.



And at **St Edmund Campion Secondary**, the chaplaincy team also prepared messages of welcome and support.



**Practical solidarity is so important, and we are totally impressed by the generosity shown by our schools.**

**At Our Lady & St Kenelm** the pupils' Wear Orange Day raised over £160 for the local Halesowen Welcome group! At the same time, Year 2 hung messages of solidarity and welcome for asylum-seekers and refugees all round the school.



**St Joseph's B30** collected £230 towards backpacks for a local charity for refugee women and their families which they support! They are providing backpacks and school equipment for 30 children in collaboration with **St Thomas Aquinas Secondary**



**School** where the collection will also include the local Hope Projects charity.

**Holy Family School** marked World Book Day by collecting money for a CAFOD programme teaching children to read all round the world. They also take care of their newly arrived pupils - the school council wrote to local supermarkets to ask for donations of uniforms, and were delighted to receive a positive reply from Tesco, where the pupils from the council were happy to receive the donated uniforms.



**We also know that very many of our schools collect huge amounts of items to pass on to St Chad's Sanctuary - so a big thank you to all of those schools.**

## Adderley Primary School's Journalist Club (Ys 5-6) reports here on their Day of Action!

At Adderley Primary School (School of Sanctuary; UNICEF Gold) children from Years 5 were buzzing with anticipation, as they were to collaborate with people from '*Stories of Hope and Home*'. They discussed the issue of allowing asylum seekers to work, because the ban is harmful to everyone. It takes the harshest toll on people seeking asylum, but also the UK economy misses out on tax revenue and much needed skills, by leaving people frozen out of the workplace.

Emeka and Aboubakr shared their difficulties and challenges on their way to Nigeria/Ivory Coast to England. Aboubakr stated: "Being unable to work and use your skills is really tough on people seeking asylum, who have already been through so much. People are escaping horrible situations and need safety." In a gripping whole school assembly, Emeka recounted his harrowing journey from Nigeria to England, offering a firsthand perspective on the challenges faced by asylum seekers. His narrative served as a poignant reminder of the resilience and courage in the human spirit.



We embarked on a journey of activism, we wrote letters and channelled our voices to: the royal family, the government, Birmingham City Council and many others! Through this collaborative work, the children not only improved their journalistic skills, but also gained a deeper understanding of social justice issues. They recognised the power of their voice in effecting change and embraced their role as supporters for equality and human rights.

As the letters were sent off, carrying the hopes and aspirations of the children, a sense of empowerment flooded the school community. The initiative sparked conversations, ignited empathy, and inspired a commitment to standing up for the rights of the marginalised.

As an awarded School of Sanctuary and a UNICEF Gold Rights Respecting school, we are proud to support those who experience challenges in their lives!

**St Bernard's RC Primary** (Moseley) held a **Day of Action** in March with the support of Asylum Matters, Stories of Hope and Home, and the Columbans. The whole school was off timetable for the day, and the ensuing assembly show-cased the work done during the day from Reception right through to Year 6, featuring poems, songs, art, videos, welcome cards and much more. These are only a few snapshots of the day. You can also read about it in the [Birmingham Mail](#)!



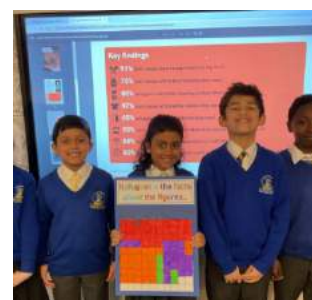
Reception explored what it is like to live in a small shelter.

Year 1 studied the parable of the Good Samaritan and explained to the assembly what it means to be a good neighbour.



One class in Year 3 met an asylum seeker from Eritrea who told them his story.

In another Y3 class, pupils studied the shocking findings in a recent report from Asylum Matters and used their maths skills to present the information.



Year 4 had written many poems and songs, and sang this one for us.

Year 5 met an asylum-seeker who explained that he was not allowed to work, and the pupils heard about the Lift The Ban campaign.



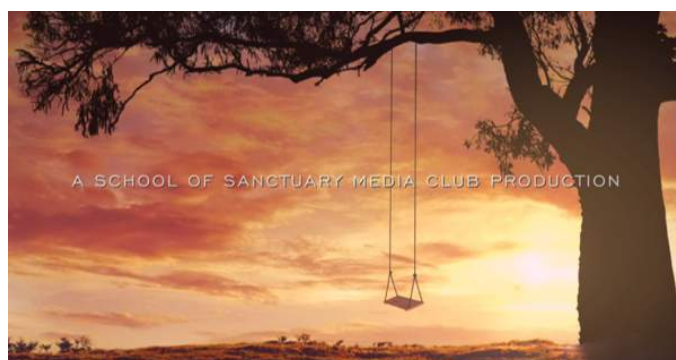
Year 6 spent the day on a range of activities and presented their artwork in the assembly.





We are always impressed by the creativity of the staff and pupils in our schools. Poetry and art work are a staple part of many activities, and some schools are also venturing into animations and video production.

**St Benedict's School** has a **School of Sanctuary Media Club** where pupils produce short videos to promote the message across the school. You can see how high the standard is from some of these screenshots!



**Drama is an important part of enabling people to express themselves and feel**

**empathy with others. We know that some of you work with the Birmingham Rep (on the left are some examples of the work done at St Benedict's) - if you're keen to pursue this, please contact their Head of Education [bhavik.parmar@birmingham-rep.co.uk](mailto:bhavik.parmar@birmingham-rep.co.uk).**

- **Inclusion Hub Animal Sanctuary** – exploring the meaning of sanctuary -
- **Class 4N Journey of a Modern Refugee** – across the ocean in a crowded boat. "No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land."
- **Class 6A World War 2 Evacuees** – Their story through letters.
- **Class 2D Animal Sanctuary - The UK's Oldest Rescue Dog**. Exploring the meaning of Sanctuary.
- **Class 3G I am a Refugee**—A poem by Tshiamo (aged 14) from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I am a refugee, I have come to share. Please let me fit in.
- **Class 3A Free**—A poem by Amy Ludwig Van Derwater. Exploring the label 'refugee'.
- **Class 5H Yara's Story**. Yara is a talented embroiderer who is unable to make a living in her home country. Desperation forces her to leave her home, but she finds a new life and prosperity in the UK where people value and pay for her skills.
- **Class 5R** . Three Refugees. Each refugee is an individual with an individual story.

We were also very thrilled to see that quite a few of our schools have invited the Stringcredibles with their brilliant performance of The Butterfly Lands. If you'd like to invite them, please get in touch at [contact@thestringcredibles.com](mailto:contact@thestringcredibles.com) . (Don't forget to mention that you are part of the School of Sanctuary network!) Here they are at St Clare's Primary.

**THE STRINGCREDIBLES** & **Nate Holder** present...

**The Butterfly LANDS**

**A BRAND NEW SHOW FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**live music, poetry & interaction**

**Learn about the migration of people through the story of a butterfly**

**How does migration enrich where we live?**

- ✓ Celebrating diversity
- ✓ Encouraging empathy, kindness & compassion
- ✓ Exploring sensitive subjects creatively

**tailor made for: Key Stage 2**

[thestringcredibles.com/butterflylands](http://thestringcredibles.com/butterflylands)

LOTTERY FUNDING | ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND | Services For Education | Music Service | Birmingham Rep | University of Birmingham | National Literacy Trust



**As well as all our wonderful schools, we have the equally wonderful HALESOWEN COLLEGE, which recently featured on the Good Neighbours Facebook page for the programme they put on for their students during the Christmas holidays. They provide transport from Birmingham so if any of your secondary pupils are looking for a college, they will be in safe hands here!**

### **Here is an update on their enrichment clubs.**

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.



We have a weekly ESOL Reading Buddies group. Students across college 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.

As well as Reading Buddies we also run a Conversation Club. This is open to all students and staff and provides the opportunity for people to meet up and talk with others who share a first language.

Craft Club is popular with many of our students and is an opportunity to make friends and learn new skills or share techniques. Recently students learnt to knit and crochet.

Joy Sutton, Head of ESOL, said, "College enrichment clubs help a lot of our students not only make new friends but improve their English".

