The Future Is Bright: The Skies Are Filled With Hope

Throughout the winter term, schools, along with community groups and other organisations and institutions across the country, came together to show their support for people seeking sanctuary and call on the government to scrap the cruel Rwanda plan.

By making orange paper airplanes and writing messages of solidarity and kindness for those seeking safety in the UK, we came together to fill the skies with hope, not hate.

We were delighted to see so many schools learn about this new plan and get involved with activities to show their support for welcoming those seeking safety. With these ethically-informed and pro-active students we are reassured that our future leaders will shape their decisions with compassion and understanding.

Many schools shared videos or photos of their students flying their planes on social media, including Benson School in Birmingham and Whinhill Primary School in Greenock, Inverclyde.
Over the autumn thousands of newly arrived people were housed in the Manston Processing Centre in Kent. Conditions were reported as unsanitary, unsuitable and hugely overcrowded, at one point the tented facilities were more than twice over capacity. Following several controversies including the appalling death of a man held at the site, all people were rehoused to other parts of the UK.

At City of Sanctuary, we know that people arriving into the UK should be welcomed into our communities, not held in dangerous camps. In Birmingham, a number of schools in the network including St Dunstan’s, St Jude’s and St Martin de Porres Primary Schools, wrote letters welcoming former Manston residents to Birmingham and their communities.

Writing letters to new arrivals is a really lovely way of welcoming people to your community as well as encouraging students to emotionally engage with the reality of people seeking sanctuary. If you have done or do a similar activity in your school, please do let us know to be featured on social media and in our next newsletter!

The Future is Bright {continued...}
With Thanks to Schools' Generosity and Support

In the past year, our Schools of Sanctuary network has boomed! In the last year, we grew by nearly 100 schools, with over 300 more schools signing the pledge. Our network of Local Leads has also grown, meaning that Schools of Sanctuary is now actively delivered in over 50 local areas in the UK. For the first time ever, we also delivered 5 different events specifically for schools within a year, helped collate funding guidance on sanctuary seeking students and produced more resources too.

Amidst all this growth, the tiny two-person strong Schools of Sanctuary team has remained the same - just increasingly overstretched! For this reason, we launched an emergency fundraiser to help us build up capacity and continue to ensure the sustainability of the Schools of Sanctuary programme. We are hugely grateful to St John Wall Catholic High School (Birmingham), Kings CE College (Wolverhampton), The Cathedral School (Cardiff), Adderley Primary School (Birmingham), Wingrove Primary School (Newcastle), Harehills Primary (Leeds), St Andrew Major CiW Primary School (Vale of Glamorgan) and Woodhouse Grove (Bradford) for their generous donations.

We are committed to keeping the Schools of Sanctuary programme completely free, but given the level of interest this is the first year we have been forced to ask schools to donate if they can. For our tiny team, every donation means the world and goes a long way.

Can YOU help us?

Please consider donating, or including Schools of Sanctuary in your school fundraising efforts to help make sure that Schools of Sanctuary can be sustained.

Another way to show your support is to get in touch sharing some brief feedback about how the Schools of Sanctuary award, events, resources and/ or your Local Lead or City of Sanctuary UK have helped your school improve its provision for refugee students or helped change your school culture with specific examples - these tangible examples make a big difference in funding bids. Thank you.

School Staff Model Welcome and Solidarity

Schools of Sanctuary is a whole-school effort, meaning that everyone within the school community should develop their understanding of forced displacement and migration issues and take part in activities to support those seeking sanctuary.

Last term we were particularly impressed to hear of school staff and teachers going above and beyond to support people seeking sanctuary.

At Our Lady and St Kenelm Primary School in Dudley, 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.

In Lancashire, staff and governors from Brownedge St Mary’s Catholic High School have been closely involved with the local parish Community Sponsorship Group contributing to efforts to raise £10,000 to welcome a refugee family in their community.

In Suffolk, the Schools of Sanctuary Lead at Woodley Primary School continues to work closely with the local Suffolk Refugee Support organisation and has helped organise the collection of care packages and gifts to be distributed amongst newly arrived families in temporary accommodation. In the run up to Christmas this even involved convincing another volunteer to dress up as Father Christmas to spread a little cheer and magic this festive season.

With all the pressures on schools at the moment, a huge well done for these staff for leading the way for their students!
Across Borders: NI and Republic of Ireland activity

Did you know that Schools of Sanctuary are in the Republic of Ireland too?

This year, the Education Authority Northern Ireland (our Local Leads in Northern Ireland) and Belfast City of Sanctuary are working with the Schools of Sanctuary Team in Places of Sanctuary Ireland to develop an exciting cross-border project.

Through a variety of learning activities, interactions and partnerships, ten schools (five from the North and five from the South) will participate in the project which aims to promote a cross-border culture of welcome, safety, and inclusion for those seeking safety.

Some activities will include pen pal type initiatives, joint webinars on learning about refugees journey to the Island of Ireland and connecting with the Departments of Education North-South.

The project aims to make children aware of the uncertainty and insecurity that refugees face in camps and in their host countries. By providing children with free copies and holding events with the book’s author, we challenge them to think about questions like “what do you do or say when a newcomer arrives to your school?” or “what if you had to play Simon says in Farsi?” Through Dina Nayeri’s The Waiting Place (with photographs by Anna Bosch Miralpeix), readers come to know the fears, joys, and dreams of children waiting in refugee camps.

The University of St Andrews with financial assistance from the Tay Charitable Trust purchased 5,800 copies of The Waiting Place to be distributed to children in UK schools in the 2022-23 school year. Since October 2022 when the project officially launched, 1,260 books have been given to students from 8 schools along with a special discussion guide for teachers to use with their students. In 2023, we are excited to distribute even more books and engage with many more schools. To learn more and get involved see page 10.

Having the opportunity to take part in the project was a great for the children. The project was well organised, with a pre-project meeting for staff explaining what was involved. The material sent out to schools was high quality and easily adapted to younger KS2 children. The children met an actual author, Dina Nayeri, and were able to ask her questions about the plight of refugees.

She was so open in sharing her story and that of the children she had met. Her message was very positive and full of hope! She reminded us that refugees are children just like us and we need to be ‘kind and curious’ and celebrate all children’s achievements. Our children learnt a lot and enjoyed the activities, the online event and the book. I highly recommend ‘The Waiting Place’ Project!
Welcome to New Whinhillers

Whinhill Primary School in Greenock, Scotland have welcomed many displaced families to the community and school and are currently working towards becoming a School of Sanctuary. As a school, they are committed to understanding the challenges their families face and seek ways to overcome them.

As well as providing uniform for the children, the Whinhill Global Citizenship committee (made up of children from P1-P7) created a Welcome Pack for children starting in Whinhill Primary School, with the idea coming from the children themselves. The children in the committee had discussions about what should be in the packs, identifying what they would find useful if they were starting a new school. They also helped to make some of the items in the packs.

Each pack includes:
- a pencil case with stationery
- a water bottle
- a welcome card made by the pupils of the school
- a booklet with information on key staff, class teacher and support staff (translated where possible)
- communication cards with the student’s own language and English
- a visual lunch menu

A new initiative, the Whinhiller Welcome Packs have so far been well received by parents and children. The aim is for these packs to be a small gesture of welcome and belonging, whilst also breaking down some barriers they might experience.

Do you have News from Your School?

We are now accepting submissions for the next Schools of Sanctuary newsletter, published in April 2023.

We aim to include stories of creative ways of learning about immigration and best practice in inclusive practice.

If you think you have something to share, please get in touch with Megan at megan@uk.cityofsanctuary.org by the 24th March. Submissions should be between 150-300 words in the third person and include some photos (in jpeg).
We’d like to extend a congratulations to the schools that were (re-)awarded as Schools of Sanctuary in the last school term:

Dundela Infants’ School, Belfast
Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School, Belfast
Nettlefield Primary School, Belfast
Holy Rosary Primary School, Belfast
St Clare’s Primary School, Belfast
Springhill Primary School, Belfast
Buncrana Mhic Reachtain, Belfast
Dundonald Primary School, Belfast
Cromwell Junior and Infant School, Birmingham (reaccredited)
Oasis Academy Foundy, Birmingham (reaccredited)
Our Lady & St. Kenelm Primary School, Birmingham
St Columba’s Primary School, Birmingham
The City Academy, Bristol (reaccredited)
Beech Hill Primary School, Calderdale
Model Primary School, Derry/Londonderry
St Ethne’s Primary School, Derry/Londonderry
Derry/Londonderry
Browndedge St Mary’s Catholic High School, Preston
Atkinson Road Primary School, Newcastle
Walkergate Primary School, Newcastle
West Walker Primary School, Newcastle
Central Walker Primary School, Newcastle
Broadwood Primary School, Newcastle
Bridgewater Primary School, Newcastle
St Catherine’s Primary School, Newcastle
Our Lady and St Anne’s Primary School, Newcastle
Hotspur Primary School, Newcastle
Christ Church Primary School, Newcastle
Hawthorn Primary School, Newcastle
Aylisham High School, Norfolk

Scunthorpe CE Primary School, Scunthorpe
Hinde House Academy, Sheffield
St John the Baptist Primary School, Stockton
Peatmoor Community Primary School, Swindon
St Bridget’s CofE Primary School, Wirral
Woodlands Church of England Primary School, Wirral
Coop Woodslee Primary School, Wirral
St Michael’s and All Angels Primary School, Wirral
Well Lane Primary, Wirral (reaccredited)
Hayfield Primary, Wirral (reaccredited)
Dunstall Hill Primary School, Wolverhampton (reaccredited)
St Luke’s Primary School, Wolverhampton (reaccredited)

We are now a network of 389 recognised schools, nurseries and Sixth Forms with a whopping 370+ settings working to be recognised.
Topic of the Term

Asylum 'Support' Myth Busting

A big part of Schools of Sanctuary is helping students and staff be better able to navigate and dismiss misleading and hostile media headlines and narratives, many of which revolve around the support provided to people seeking asylum in the UK.

This term we encourage schools to learn about this theme and breakdown the facts about the little support people seeking sanctuary receive.

People seeking asylum receive only £5.84 per day to cover all their food, travel, mobile data, health and hygiene items and other essential needs. At the same time, they are banned from working whilst their asylum claim is being processed, meaning that are solely reliant on this support whilst their skills, experience and enthusiasm all go to waste.

Currently, around 50% of people seeking asylum have to wait over 6 months to have their claim processed, with hundreds waiting many years, all the time staying in limbo.

This term, to help students learn about this subject, get them to think about how they would budget with this money, for the essentials and thinking how much that might leave them if they had to travel to an immigration reporting centre, or if their phone broke, or if they needed a new winter coat. Is it possible? What would they have to go without? Which foods would they not be able to have?

Then, help students think about how it might be different if people seeking asylum could work and support. Currently, they must wait 12 months to request to work and even then, only those on the very limited shortage occupation list are able to find jobs.

Use Refugee Action’s ‘Lift the Ban: Common Sense’ report to look at the stories of people seeking asylum who were denied the right to work and how this made them feel.

As of March 2022, 81% of the public believe people seeking asylum should be given the right to work - what do your students think?

Campaigning Corner

Lift the Ban: High Street Challenge

Do you want to help develop your young people as ethically informed and active future leaders? The put the power in their hands to develop their campaigning skills, this term with the ‘Lift the Ban’ campaign! Following on nicely from the asylum support myth busting topic of the term, by taking part in the High Street Challenge, students can learn practical transferable skills about creating positive change.

Although 81% of the British public believe people seeking asylum should be given the right to work this has yet to be reflected in policy change. The Lift the Ban Coalition are asking for YOUR help to involve local businesses and raise the profile of the campaign in your community. With a shortage of workers across a range of businesses, it is up to your students to help local business owners learn how by lifting the ban, they could find experienced, skilled and committed workers for their business.

It’s easy to get involved:
Step 1) Get started with the High Street Challenge Handbook
Step 2) Connect with other campaigners in your area by emailing lifttheban@asylummatters.org
Step 3) Choose some businesses in your community
Step 4) Download the resources
Step 5) Approach businesses and explain the campaign to them
Step 6) Turn support into action – ask the business to become a Lift the Ban business ally
Step 7) Maximise their support – share on social media, get press coverage and share with decision makers
Step 8) Keep growing support- you can use our templates letters to contact policymakers!
Practice Focus
Careers and Higher Education Advice

According to statutory guidance all children from years 7-13 should have access to careers guidance and ‘opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each pupil. A school’s or college’s careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.’

This means that schools’ careers provision should make sure that it recognises the distinct circumstances from students from migratory and forced displacement backgrounds and how this might affect access to the job market and/or further and higher education courses. Careers counsellors must understand the policies that restrict people seeking asylum from working, along with the funding implications for FE and HE courses. For example, people seeking asylum must pay international rates for Higher Education unless they can get scholarships and are unable to claim student finance loads. Equally, certain universities aim to widen access for refugee students by offering scholarships and access courses that help refugee students overcome periods of missed education or qualifications to still attend top universities.

Make sure your careers provision recognises these challenges for students seeking sanctuary and identifies resources and opportunities to support them.

Start by looking at the Displaced Students portal and reading the guidance for practitioners sheets from Refugee Education UK.

Upcoming Events & Celebrations

24th January - Int’l Day of Education
27th January - Int’l Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust
1st February - World Interfaith Week
20th February - World Day of Social Justice
21st February - Int’l Mother Language Day
2nd March - World Book Day
15th March - Int’l Day to Combat Islamophobia
21st March - Intern’l Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

CPD Opportunities

NB: Have a look at our list of free trainings and resources for school staff to develop their professional expertise in meeting the needs of sanctuary-seeking students.

Using Graphic Organisers to Support Learners Who Use EAL Webinar - The Bell Foundation (31st January at 12.30)
Empowering Student Voice and Leadership Webinar - Schools of Sanctuary & Oxfam (31st Jan 4-5pm)
The EAL Co-ordinator: Leading on EAL in Primary Schools (Part 2) Webinar - The Bell Foundation (1st Feb 4pm)
The EAL Co-ordinator: Leading on EAL in Secondary Schools (Part 2) (Webinar) - The Bell Foundation (2nd February 4pm)
EAL and SEND Meeting - NALDIC Yorkshire and the Humber RIG (23rd Feb 4-6pm)
Supporting advanced EAL learners Meeting- NALDIC North East RIG (26th April 4-6pm)

Interfaith Dialogue for Combating Extremism Online Course - FutureLearn
Migration and Cities Online Course - Future Learn
Communicating with Children Online Course - FutureLearn
Exploring Equality and Equity in Education Online Course - The Open University
Get Involved

Looking for some easy ways to get involved with the national Schools of Sanctuary network this year? Look no further! Have a look below for some easy ways to engage with and support the network (and help you fulfill criteria 8).

1. International Day of Education

The International Day of Education falls on the 24th January and this year we ask that you help us share why it’s so important that school is a place of sanctuary!

Ask students, teachers and staff to take a photo with or of a thing, person or place in school that represents sanctuary to them. Share on social media, introducing the person along with a few words explaining how and why this is so important. This is a fantastic way to celebrate all the ways your school makes people feel welcomed, safe and respected!

When tweeting, make sure to copy in @SchsofSanctuary and use the hashtag #internationaldayofeducation.

Let’s raise the profile of sanctuary in school!

2. World Book Day

This World Book Day, on 3rd March let’s fill Twitter with love for books by and about refugees once again. Get students, teachers and other staff to share a photo of them holding their favourite book with a short review and share on social media.

When tweeting, make sure to copy in @SchsofSanctuary and use the hashtag #worldbookday2023.

Want to take it a step further? Get in touch with your local library and ask if you can display your pictures and reviews in the library - helping to encourage other members of your community to pick up these important books and learn more about the experiences of those seeking sanctuary. As always, make sure to share photos with us!

Need book inspiration? Look here: https://arts.cityofsanctuary.org/resources/books

Research Requests

Welcoming Hong Kongers

The Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers is looking for schools who have enrolled new pupils from Hong Kong in the last year to take part in its research project.

The Committee and the think tank British Future are carrying out a research project on how schools welcome, settle and integrate new pupils, developing on research carried out earlier in 2022.

In the second stage of the project the team would like to hear from schools about how children and families from outside the UK are settled and integrated. The team would particularly like to hear about what has worked well to help pupils and parents feel part of school. They are especially interested in any work involving Hong Kong families, but are keen to hear about approaches which have worked across groups of new arrivals.

Your participation would involve an interview either online or through a school visit, according to your availability.

The findings will be combined with survey and other data in a report on what works to settle and integrate Hong Kong pupils and their families.

If you’d like to be involved, or to find out more, please contact Heather Rolfe, Director of Research at British Future heather@britishfuture.org. Here are the links to the websites for the Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers and for British Future.
Research Requests

16-18 year old Asylum Seekers’ Education

Marit Pauwelyn, a student at the London School of Economics, is conducting a qualitative research study examining educational responses to asylum-seeking students’ arrival in English secondary schools, specifically looking at 16-18-year-olds.

She is therefore looking for secondary school teachers in England to interview in order to understand how schools and teachers respond to their arrival and what potential challenges they might face in integrating them academically and socially.

Interviews would last about thirty minutes and would take place between mid-January and March 2023, either online or in-person, subject to participants’ preferences and availability. For more information about this research and/or if you are interested in participating, email m.j.pauwelyn@lse.ac.uk.

Latest Resources

Learning Resources

Migration Museum - Are you wanting to take a nuanced approach to learning about forced migration and how it fits within far wider patterns of migration? The Migration Museum has a raft of resources available to look at different periods throughout history, local stories of migration and plenty more. Teacher training on embedding migration in the curriculum is also available. The Migration Museum also worked closely with Pearson on developing their GCSE History Migration module.

Our Migration Story - This resource-packed website offers stories of migration to the UK for over 100 years and comes with contemporary sources, lesson plans and classroom activities to help you develop a scheme of work around the chosen story. Completely free, so check it out!

The Swimmers - Now available on Netflix, this biological drama based on the story of two Syrian sisters addresses both a refugee’s experience and shows a young athlete’s determination to succeed against all odds. Only suitable for secondary age students, show with caution to those with lived experience.

Other Resources and Opportunities

Welcome to UK Parliament - FREE guided visits, workshops, interactive sessions and more offered by UK Parliamentary Outreach. The perfect resources and opportunities to learn about UK parliament, the roles of the House of Commons and House of Lords, how we are represented in parliament and how to have their voices heard.

An Introduction to Schools of Sanctuary (Event Recording) - The recording of our October event is now available online, perfect for those getting started on their journey.

Welcoming Ukrainian Children in School (Event Recording) - You can also catch-up on the recording from our webinar delivered in partnership with Refugee Education UK from November 2022.

UK Trauma Council’s ‘Creating an Environment Conducive for Recovery for Displaced Children’ (Event Recording) - An hour and a half event recording hearing from experts in mental health and psychology and those directly working with resettled families and children.

‘The Waiting Place’ Workshops and Free Book Give-Away - Expressions of interest to host an in-person or online event with Dina for your school may be directed to TheWaitingPlace@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Children and their Rights to British Citizenship - Guidance for parent/carers but helpful for school staff too: not all children born in their UK automatically get citizenship.
Help us Sustain Schools of Sanctuary

Schools of Sanctuary is growing - FAST.

From 297 awarded schools in October 2021, to 389 schools in January 2023 our networks are multiplying, helping to build a UK-wide culture of welcome, safety and belonging for those seeking safety.

Your support is vital for us to maintain this momentum.

Whilst we are committed to keeping the award, our events and all the resources we offer completely free, we ask that - if you can - your school donates to help us safeguard the long-term sustainability of the Schools of Sanctuary stream.

Can your school make a donation or organise fundraising efforts to help us continue to support schools to welcome children seeking sanctuary?

If you can, please chip in to our emergency fundraiser.

The Sanctuary Store

Can’t donate?

Another way to support us is to shop at the Sanctuary Store for all the tees and totes* you need to say it loud, say it clear: "refugees are welcome here!"

SHOP AT THE SANCTUARY STORE

Can’t donate?

Another way to support us is to shop at the Sanctuary Store for all the tees and totes* you need to say it loud, say it clear: "refugees are welcome here!"

* a range of styles, sizes and colours available
Connect and Engage

Schools of Sanctuary Website

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

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

Connect with Schools of Sanctuary

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

Connect with City of Sanctuary UK

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