

School of Sanctuary



School of Sanctuary
Newsletter – Autumn 2024

At Balshaw's C.E High School we are proud to be an inclusive community that values diversity, providing outstanding education for all children irrespective of their race, religion, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation knowing that they will succeed in our school as each child is unique in God's eyes. Every child is treated as an individual and given the nurture, care and many forms of support they need pastorally, socially, emotionally and academically to thrive and fulfil their own potential.

It is for this reason we began our journey to become a 'Schools of Sanctuary' as we believe their values encompass our own Gospel Values of Love, Patience, Respect, Tolerance, Forgiveness and Trust in our caring school environment and we want to ensure all of our school community welcome everyone and provide a 'sanctuary' for many.

What is School of Sanctuary? Schools of Sanctuary is an initiative which aims to:

- Promote positive attitudes within schools and their communities around people seeking sanctuary.
- Support schools to take positive steps and to be proud of being places of safety and inclusion for all.
- Recognise and celebrate schools that are committed to welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.

Why are we becoming a School of Sanctuary?

Part of our work to become a "School of Sanctuary" is based on our vision to strengthen our links with the local community and increase student voice and active citizenship. We want to create a sense of safety and inclusion that is beneficial to all members of the school community. To support us in doing this, we feel that becoming a School of Sanctuary supports our vision and ethos.

We started our launch with a pledge to the Sanctuary Foundation which we have displayed in all classrooms in school.

What have we done on our sanctuary journey so far?

We launched our bid to become a School of Sanctuary in Summer term 2024. We made a pledge to support the City of Sanctuary initiative and in June celebrated Refugee Week with a variety of different activities in school. In PSHE Y8-10 learned about the journey of Refugees from Iraq and studied a poem by Brian Bilston called "Refugees". Bilston's powerful poem helped us to look beyond stereotypes and to try understand the life of those less fortunate than ourselves. The poem is here. Read it down to the end and then read it from bottom to top for two very different messages about Refugees.



They have no need of our help
So do not tell me
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are
Chancers and scroungers
Layabouts and loungers
With bombs up their sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves
They are not
Welcome here
We should make them
Go back to where they came from
They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries
Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not okay to say
These are people just like us
A place should only belong to those who are born
there
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way

Refugee Week Activities

We launched the week with an Act of Worship - The Sanctuary Foundation's 'Great Big Live Assembly' led by our Chaplain Luke Blakeley. The theme for the week was "Home" and we completed activities in Tutor time and PSHE lessons from the National Literacy Trust which made students think about the theme of "Home and the Refugee experience" from a range of creative writers and illustrators. The Lower School Council held a Cake Sale which lots of children contributed to by making their own cakes. This raised £92.71 for the Sanctuary Foundation.

Year 7 made Welcome flags in different languages and were asked to consider what their home means to them. They also learned about Refugees who have had to flee their homes due to danger in their homeland and then have to seek sanctuary in another country. Years 8, 9 and 10 students learned about the plight of a young refugee from Iraq who was struggling to settle into life in England. Year 8 and 9 also took part in a welcome message (see below) for our School of Sanctuary work as we commit to being a safe and welcoming place for everyone, especially those seeking sanctuary.



Year 7 Flags from around the world



What next?

- We have started the term well and have plans to celebrate “Black History Month” in school in October and to celebrate the “Windrush generation” and the contribution Caribbean migrants and their families have made to the UK.
- We have activities and a Remembrance Service for Year 7 in November to commemorate Armistice Day as well as raising awareness of Holocaust Memorial Day in January to remember the plight of all people from around the world affected by these significant events and the cost of freedom

- We have created a “Welcome” board and will be showcasing a refugee language per month encouraging children to learn key words and the numbers 1-10 in the identified language. September’s language is Arabic.
- We have plans for a Parental Engagement Evening in October looking at what parents can do to support their children and their mental health and wellbeing and will be able to signpost any family who needs additional support.

We will keep you posted next term with more events and activities as we continue on our Sanctuary journey