



SUMMER NEWS LETTER

SCHOOLS OF SANCTUARY



St Francis Catholic Primary school

Standing Together with our Schools of Sanctuary

Over the past weeks, we have sadly witnessed far-right hostility directed towards the Schools of Sanctuary movement across the UK. Inflammatory and misleading claims have been circulated online, deliberately distorting the positive work that schools are doing to create safe and welcoming environments for all children.

Here in Bristol, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Schools of Sanctuary. We know that the recent letters and online narratives can feel intimidating and unsettling, but they also remind us why this work matters so deeply. Every young person deserves to feel safe, valued and included in their school. Every parent should be reassured that their child's school is a place of kindness, curiosity and learning – not fear.

We are encouraged by the swift and united responses from across our network. Schools like [Cotham](#) have spoken out publicly, demonstrating values-led leadership in the face of threats, while all schools are doing what is right to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of their pupils. Avon & Somerset Police encourage schools to report any incidents related to far-right hostility via : www.avonandsomerset.police.uk. Organisations such as [Hope Not Hate](#) and [SARI](#) are providing monitoring, resources and confidential support, ensuring that no school has to face this hostility alone.

This is a moment to reaffirm what the Schools of Sanctuary programme is truly about: celebrating diversity, sharing truthful information about people seeking sanctuary, and standing against racism and inequality in all its forms. Far-right hostility only strengthens our resolve.

We are proud of our schools, proud of our young people, and proud of this movement. Together, we will continue to nurture spaces where compassion outweighs hatred, and where every child can flourish.



Celebrating Schools of Sanctuary – 2025 Ceremony

On 27th June, schools, partners, and special guests gathered at We The Curious for the Annual Schools of Sanctuary Celebration. The event highlighted the ongoing efforts of Bristol schools to foster inclusive and welcoming learning environments for all pupils. The ceremony opened with a beautiful performance by **Sukina Noor**, Bristol's City Poet, who shared a heartfelt poem about Bristol and what it means to her as "Home." Her words set a powerful tone for the event and reminded us all of the importance of belonging.

We were delighted to welcome The High Sheriff of Bristol, **Kalpna Woolf**, who spoke about the power of compassion and the role schools play in shaping a more inclusive future. **Cllr Andrew Varney**, Deputy Lord Mayor, then presented the Schools of Sanctuary awards to our newly accredited schools.



Sukina Noor- City Poet

“

..And neither is our present perfect:
anti-immigration marches throughout
the city, violence against refugee
housing, racial attacks—
We all know there is still work to be
done.

But despite this, there is still
something special here.

A flicker of hope.

A glimmer of promise.

A desire for better.

A commitment to community.

There are people here who genuinely
want to be part of change -
And that is what makes Bristol a city of
sanctuary.

When I moved back to Bristol, I saw
signs in windows that read;
Black Lives Matter and Vote Green.
Many of those homes weren't
inhabited by Black families, but by
allies.

To me, that was a declaration:
We stand in solidarity with the
oppressed. We care about the earth we
share.

That spirit is what makes my beloved
Bristol, a city of sanctuary...

”

Home by Sukina /noor



Newly Awarded Schools



This year, we were proud to present the Schools of Sanctuary award to the following schools:

- Filton Avenue Nursery
- St Bernard's Catholic Primary School
- St Francis Catholic Primary School
- Parson Street Primary School
- Hillcrest Primary School
- Ashton Park School
- St Brendan's Sixth Form College (reaccredited)

We celebrate the dedication and effort each school has put into creating an environment where all pupils feel safe, valued, and included. The day was a beautiful reminder of the strength and compassion found in our school communities

The First Nursery Of Sanctuary!

This year, we were especially excited to recognise **Filton Avenue Nursery** as Bristol's first Nursery of Sanctuary. It's a wonderful step forward, showing that the values of welcome and inclusion can be nurtured from the very start of a child's educational journey.

Headteacher Kate Tector shared:

"We are delighted to become the first Nursery of Sanctuary in Bristol. Our first, annual Culture Café during Refugee Week was a huge success in bringing our community together over food. We're already preparing for the next one and we're really excited to move forward with improving our inclusive and welcoming Nursery School to become a beacon of the community."

We are thrilled to celebrate this milestone and look forward to seeing more nurseries follow in Filton Avenue's inspiring footsteps.



Kate Tector receiving the award for Filton Avenue Nursery

The First Academy Trust Of Sanctuary!

St Francis Primary School in Nailsea has a few refugee families but believe that it is important to hear the stories of sanctuary seekers and learn about the positive contribution they make to our community.

"Along with St. Nicholas of Tolentine Primary school, which was re-accredited last year, and St. Bernard's Catholic Primary school who received the award this year, our vision is for all of the schools in Cardinal Newman Trust to become Schools of Sanctuary."

Ceri Bowen, Teacher.



Ceri Bowen receiving the award for St Francis Catholic Primary School



The celebration was filled with creativity and heartfelt contributions from pupils across our Schools of Sanctuary. They shared songs, poems, stories and presentations that reflected their understanding of welcome and belonging. A particularly moving moment came from **Meredith Davis** from Ashton Park School, who read her powerful poem, A Sense of Belonging. This won the Bristol's First 500 Words Competition and touched everyone in the room.

Sinan Yousif, also from Ashton Park read a speech about his lived experience as a refugee student



"... At Ashton Park we celebrate lots of cultures and have a culture week where I was able to wear the clothes I used to wear in Iraq. The school also helped me and my family with regards to my housing problems and I am truly thankful..."

by Sinan Yousif



*"...We arrive in a place,
That seems scary and new,
The buildings are tall,
I can't understand you.
I want to go home,
But we cannot look back.
The place we call safe,
Is not coming back.
..."*

by Meredith Davis



Hillcrest Primary students reading their poem about Sanctuary



St Brendan's Sixth Form College Receiving the Award. They presented their video of Fashion Catwalk and Dance on their Diversity day celebration.



Dovetail Orchestra: A Song of Harmony

We were thrilled to be joined by the Dovetail Orchestra, the first orchestra of Sanctuary, featuring the talented Colombian singer Esme, accompanied at the keyboard by Jonathan James. Their lively Colombian songs and music brought joy, whose lively Colombian songs brought joy, rhythm, and energy to the room. Children, staff, and guests alike joined in the celebration with smiles and dancing.



Activities and Workshops!

A creative badge-making workshop ran throughout the event, giving pupils the chance to design their own colourful badges and express their ideas in a fun, hands-on way.

After the ceremony, pupils and staff explored the exhibitions at We The Curious, thanks to the generous offer of free museum tickets. It gave opportunity for pupils to connect and explore together.



Refugee Week

Family Food Festival at Parson Street!



One of the highlights of the year at Parson Street Primary School was their Family Food Festival, held as part of their journey toward becoming a School of Sanctuary. Families were invited to bring a dish from their culture to share after school, with the playground transformed into a vibrant outdoor feast. Each dish was labelled in both the home language and English, alongside the flag of the family's country of origin.

What made the event truly special was the way it brought people together, families discovered shared backgrounds, made new connections, and even brought in more food the following week for teachers who had missed out!

In the words of the school:

"Receiving the School of Sanctuary award is so important to us. We work hard to make sure everyone who walks through our door feels welcome and that they belong. Our children show real kindness and empathy, and they're learning to become compassionate, open-minded citizens of the world."

Miles For Refugees at Ashton Park

The Ashton Park School community gave themselves one week to swim, cycle, walk and run 1627 miles - Kiev to Bristol, one of the most well-trodden refugee journeys of recent times. This was to raise money for Aid Box, a Bristol-based humanitarian organisation set up by a group of ordinary people in response to the continuing refugee crisis. Ashton Park School smashed that target with a total of 8241 miles, raising a total of £1599.



A Day of Welcome at St Bernard's

To celebrate Refugee Week, St Bernard's hosted a vibrant Day of Welcome. Pupils brought in traditional dishes—many homemade- and everyone had the chance to try food from a range of cultures. With a fantastic turnout from parents, the event was a joyful celebration of community, connection, and belonging.



Celebrating cultures and diversity at Hillcrest

Hillcrest Primary has been actively celebrating the rich cultural diversity within their school community. Pupils and staff came together to explore and share different traditions, languages, and stories, highlighting the importance of inclusion and belonging.

The children created a video that reflects the pride in their school's diversity. You can watch the video here:

<https://youtu.be/bFq5w4FfOUg>

*"...At Hillcrest, someone smiles each day,
They help me find the words to say.
It's knowing I can make mistakes,
And still feel safe in every way.*

*Sanctuary is a place to grow,
To read, to draw, to just be me.
At Hillcrest I can take my time,
And be exactly who I need to be...."*



sanctuary poem by Hillcrest Primary School Diversity Committee



City of Sanctuary Education Champions

From September 2025, they can support EAL families to have positive conversations with schools, helping to resolve issues and providing important information and signposting. They can support families with a smooth transition to secondary school, and at upcoming parent meetings in Term 1 or 2.





Education Support Drop-ins



Are you having problems with your children's school?

Do you find it hard to put forward your views and understand the school system?

Is English not your first language?

Come to our multilingual drop-in sessions to speak to our Education Champions, who can offer support and help you communicate with schools.

Every Tuesday 10:30 - 12:00
Easton Christian Family Centre (ECFC), Beaufort St.,
Easton, BS5 0SQ at the Refugee Women of Bristol drop-in
(reception area)

Fortnightly Thursday 10:30 - 12:00 (from 12/06)
Somali Resource Centre, 43 Ducie Road, Barton Hill,
BS5 0AX (reception area)

Every Friday 10:30 - 12:00
Easton Christian Family Centre (ECFC), Beaufort St.,
Easton, BS5 0SQ at Sadaga Women's Group
(main hall drop-in)

For further inquiries, please contact:
bristol@cityofsanctuary.org or coordinator@bristol.cityofsanctuary.org



Opportunities For the Schools in September/ October

Find out more about the Schools of Sanctuary programme

New schools can learn more, ask questions, and discover how to get started on their journey.

National SoS online Twilight meeting- Tuesday 16th of September, 4-5 PM.

Please register [Here](#)

Bristol SoS Twilight Meeting- Tuesday 23rd September at 3:30-4:30pm (Online).

Please join Zoom meeting [Here](#)



SRASPS Meetings – Supporting Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Pupils in School (Online)
Bristol Schools of Sanctuary and the Bristol Attendance and Belonging team run termly SRASPS meetings. We aim to provide an opportunity for those working with sanctuary seekers to meet together and share the best possible support and current guidance. The next meeting is on **Thursday 25th September, 3:30-4:30 pm**. We will focus on: **Positive Induction and Welcome of sanctuary seeking pupils**. We will be sharing ideas and resources.

Dates for the 2025–26 School Year:

Term 1: Thursday 25th September 2025

Term 2: Thursday 20th November 2025

Term 3: Thursday 29th January 2026

Term 4: Thursday 19th March 2026

Term 5: Thursday 7th May 2026

Term 6: Thursday 2nd July 2026



International Rescue Committee - Healing Classrooms

They have spaces available for sessions in September and October. Please see the [Healing Classrooms website](#) for more details. There are both morning and afternoon training sessions to suit your availability.

If you are planning CPD for academic year 25/26, try and book in sessions or conferences early to secure training dates.

Contact them at healingclassrooms.UK@rescue.org.

Register for HC Basics (September 9:30 AM).

Register for HC Basics (September 4 PM Wednesdays).

Register for HC Basics (September 4 PM Thursdays).

Register for HC Basics (October).

HEALING CLASSROOMS

A handbook to accompany the Healing Classrooms programme of the International Rescue Committee, UK

2024/2025



Six Steps to Success

IRC collated 6 top tips, with resource links, to help support newly arrived students as they begin the new academic year in the UK.

Please see below other new IRC resources, including a Classroom Strategy Tip Sheet and IRC's Approach to SEL.



6 Successful Steps

