 

**Lancashire's first Schools of Sanctuary**

Last month three schools in Lancashire were awarded with a special status for developing a culture of acceptance and support. They were presented with a certificate in recognition of their achievement at a presentation ceremony by Paul Duckworth (Senior Adviser, School Improvement Service) and Jeff Morgan (The City of Sanctuary National Trustee in the North West) on behalf of the national City of Sanctuary movement and Lancashire County Council.

English Martyr's Catholic Primary School in Preston, The Cathedral Catholic Primary School and Our Lady's Catholic College, both in Lancaster are the first schools in the county to receive the status of Lancashire School of Sanctuary.

Schools awarded this status help pupils, staff, parents and the wider community understand what it means to be seeking sanctuary. They also extend a welcome to everyone as equal, valued members of the school community. Welcoming displays around the school each focusing on a different theme i.e. art, architecture ,language, cultures in all classrooms help children to settle in English Martyrs Catholic Primary School in Preston and in The Cathedral Primary School in Lancaster.

Pupils show consideration to anyone joining the school and not knowing much about the culture or the language. In The Cathedral Catholic Primary Lancaster during multi faith and refugee week, they had visitors who spoke about their religion and beliefs, children learnt about different faiths in comparison to their own.

Negative myths surrounding refugees and asylum seekers have also been dispelled in the schools. Our Lady's Catholic College Lancaster prepared a display about refugee crisis which pupils and staff visited and everyone had an opportunity to write a message of hope to a refugee, pictures drawn by of Syrian children were displayed as well.

Each school engages in positive and enthusiastic activities involving their own pupils and parents, and others from all over the world. Our Lady's Catholic College Lancaster run a competition on the Refugee week theme "Different pasts ,shared future" where students presented artwork, poems and dramas representing this theme.

We hope that there will be many more schools in the future being able to demonstrate the ethos of fostering a welcome environment to all new arrival and being keen to be recognised as a place of sanctuary.

Our service can help your school to achieve this. We can support the school with staff training and awareness around asylum/refugee issues and EAL aspects, and signpost with local community members and organisations supporting inclusiveness.

We will be able to connect your school with another school who can help you through the process. The resources to support you through the process will be sent out to you electronically.

Please contact izabela.zalewska-ratajczak@lancashire.gov.uk if you would like our help in developing a schools of sanctuary initiative at you school.

