

Hello, my name is Ruth Sinhal and I have been teaching in Leicester City Schools for 25 years. Last summer, during the school holidays I was so moved by the "Refugee Crisis" that I set up "Leicester Schools Welcome Refugees" with the aim of encouraging all schools in the city to collect food and toiletry items to be distributed by The Red Cross in "Welcome Packs" for asylum seekers and refugees, living in our city.



It all began with my own school, Glebelands Primary and at first we were alone! We held a collection of food and toiletries and we contacted the local paper to promote the project. But no other schools contacted me to get involved despite Leicester City Council sending out information to every council school.

However, I was not going to leave it as that! So I set up a Twitter page @Leics\_refugees, began emailing individual schools directly and contacted the Leicester branch of The NUT, local MP's and any other agencies or groups which I thought could help.

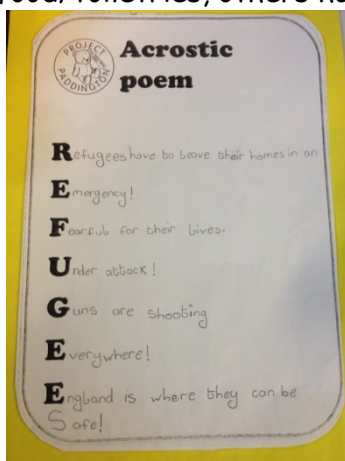


Gradually, schools began to join in and by Christmas we were a small, select group of six! Many of us took part in Project Paddington's What Would You Take Day and at Glebelands we had a visit from our local MP Liz Kendall and the local radio and newspaper!

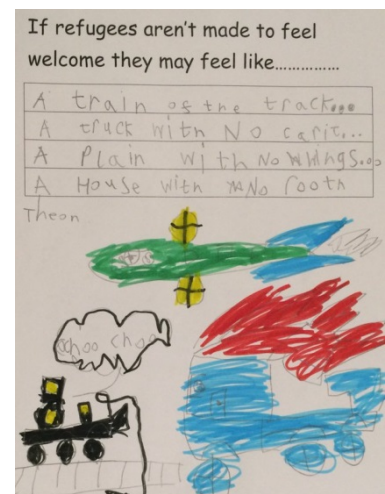


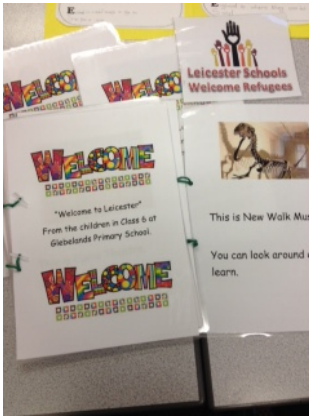
The word began to spread to more and more schools and now we have reached 31 schools from the county as well as the city.

Every school is different in how it supports the initiative. Some have held collections of food/toiletries, others have had fund raising events and others have worked on raising



awareness of the issues through lessons and assemblies. We have written poems, used the film Paddington to bring the issues to life for younger children and continued to try to persuade other schools to join us...my pupils even wrote letters to the Heads of other schools to help!





We made Welcome Cards and Welcome Books to be given to asylum seekers in Leicester and collected 300 teddies for children in Leicester to receive from The Red Cross. We have had Circle Times, Assemblies and PSHE lessons to raise awareness.



I have recently been approached by De Montfort University to work with them and soon Students will be acting as ambassadors for the project as part of DMU Square Mile. They will support this project in the schools they volunteer at already, taking on the work of organising lessons, assemblies and collections.

I have set myself a target of reaching 50 schools by June, when I turn 50!  
So, 50 by 50 is my new mantra!

At Glebelands Primary we have been working closely with Leicester City of Sanctuary to create a welcoming environment and share good practice. For this, we hope to become the first School of Sanctuary in Leicester. We are planning to combine receiving this award with a week of special days for Refugee Week June 20-24<sup>th</sup> So far I have planned five different days of fun and learning.....

- **Save the Children's" Den Day"** ...getting children to think about the issues of shelter, building shelters for lego people and building shelters in the playground
- **"Communication Day"**, where we will teach about communication problems for refugees, hold lessons where an adult speaks totally in an unknown language, sponsored silence, codes, non-verbal acts of kindness, stories about refugees, letter writing,
- **"Around the world in a day, Day"** taking a positive look at the cultures which are seen as the source of the "refugee problem" , eg Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan etc and finding out about stories, songs, food, important people.
- **"Boats, bridges and buckets Day"** focusing on water and overcoming challenges eg build a bridge from spaghetti and marshmallows, design and build a boat to carry a lego man, carrying water,
- **"When I grow up Day"** where staff and pupils dress up as their dream job {or just an inspirational job} and staff teach a lesson related to that career idea eg Scientist, Chef, this day would involve one cooking activity and the day would finish with a bake sale and parents coming in to buy cakes and see what we have been doing all week.

If you are would like to get involved, contact me [rsinhal@glebelands.leicester.sch.uk](mailto:rsinhal@glebelands.leicester.sch.uk)

If you have Twitter you can follow us on @Leics\_refugees

Ruth Sinhal