

# Holocaust Memorial Day

## 'Torn from Home'

Our school was delighted to be invited to take part in an evening of commemoration and celebration at Holocaust Memorial Day at The Quad in Derby. Read on to find out how we work in partnership with Derby refugee Centre to help provide a welcome to those seeking sanctuary from persecution.

**Monday**  
**28th January**  
**2019**



School of Sanctuary

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## 'Torn from Home'

DRAC - Derby Refugee Advice Centre

At DRAC we aim to try to understand and support, in as many ways as possible, those 'torn from home'. Dignity, respect, trust and education, are our key words.

One way to give asylum seekers and refugees a meaningful and rewarding experience and to give children the opportunity to learn and develop, is to build up relationships with schools

We have done that with Crich Junior School and it really has become such a special relationship as well as hopefully the basis for many more schools to follow. Children and staff from the school come to our Centre where the children arrange and set up a variety of activities and bring in the necessary equipment, be it musical instruments, lego or origami paper!

We also visit Crich and on our first group visit to the school we went into the hall with all the children and staff there and sat down to listen to the choir. Spontaneously and totally out of the blue one of the pupils got up and came and hugged a young Sudanese man. This young man had only recently arrived in the UK and like so many had experienced a long and dangerous journey and an incredibly traumatic parting from family and country.

The 24 year old and the 10 year old then looked at each other and smiled and I and many others in the hall held our breath. That moment of connection crossed every divide. We then went on to have the first of several amazing days as guests of the school.

As adults let us learn from that 10 year old and the other children. We so often base our judgments of people on economics, political ideology, fear and unfounded prejudice. Children are able to start from a different and more balanced perspective. Crich Junior School are nurturing informed and positive young people who will have the strength to make a difference .



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Janet Fuller - Volunteer Manager of DRAC

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Every journey begins with a small step. It is amazing that our journey with DRAC started with a small act of taking a group of children to donate some food and toiletries to the development of fantastic experiences and relationships being built. The children have the opportunity to see the work that is needed at the centre, they ask questions and try to understand the needs and difficulties of people seeking sanctuary in their country, in Derby, their community.

One particular visit was made after the Manchester terrorist bombing. The centre held a minutes silence but before we took part, interpreters explained the reason for the silence in many different languages. The children (and everyone there) were deeply moved. It demonstrated quite poignantly how it doesn't matter who you are and where you are from, we can all have empathy and respect standing together for what is right.

This message is a key part of our curriculum. The children are constantly encouraged to think how their actions can have an impact on others and in the community. They are taught about the importance of human rights and the fundamental need for everyone to feel safe and have the right to live in a place that respects you for being you. Children are brilliant at recognising when something isn't fair. We encourage them to ask questions, to think about other people's lives.

Some plans we have made for the spring and summer have developed from the interest our visitors showed in the school garden. On their next visits we will be planting, harvesting and cooking. Sharing skills to create multicultural meals to enjoy together.

There are also plans for some of the refugees to come and talk in our geography lessons and tell us about the countries.

Katy Shakespeare - Class Teacher at Crich Junior School



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Inclusion is at the very heart of our school. Our vision statement is Our, Happy, Caring Community School - a place where we have striven for many years, often against a tide of educational challenge, to provide a warm welcome and support to pupils, families, staff and outside agencies - no matter what their needs, gender or faith is.

I never thought that when we gave our first donations to DRAC that it would be the start of a relationship that would have such a big impact on me personally, on our school and community and now in a wider context within Derbyshire.

When we received the invitation to be considered as a School of Sanctuary - it couldn't have delighted us more. Not a badge of status because we had ticked predetermined boxes but a recognition that we welcome everyone as equal, valued members of our community. Recognition of the essence of what our school is about - human connection.

Our curriculum has developed, over the last few years, to have at its core human values, respect, tolerance & empathy for those who have been 'torn from home'. Indeed, central to this work has been looking at our own family histories, and for many of us - staff included - coming to the realisation that in many of our own family histories we have stories of flight. I think a significant realisation for many of us in our community, is that in our ever changing world, we don't know what is around the corner.

We regularly update our community about our work with asylum seekers and refugees through our local village magazine. The response has been mindblowing. Hopefully - the photos will have given you a flavour of the human connection between our wider community and those 'torn from home'.

- Old and young sharing knitting skills
- Sharing music and song
- Playing, that world wide favourite - football
- The sharing and enjoying of a meal together

These connections can make a difference & they have made a real difference to one of our ex pupils. Life has not been easy for Charlie but when I suggested he come to school to play football with our young asylum seeker friends he gladly came. There was an immediate rapport between him and a couple of the lads - chatting away about their different lives and Charlie developed a real understanding and respect for what these young people had been through. A while later Charlie's mum came with great pride to tell me how Charlie had challenged at work unhelpful comments and been able to confidently give a different perspective on the plight of asylum seekers.

Since we've had recognition as a School of Sanctuary we've been asked to share our work with Lead Education Officers in Derbyshire, various groups and schools, as well as information about our work as a School of Sanctuary appearing on the back of Derbyshire Employee wage slips. I believe that there is a growing belief and a swelling tide of change amongst our educators that we need a real focus on promoting, amongst our young, the skills to connect with all human beings.

Cheryl Julian - Headteacher at Crich Junior School