

# Becoming a School of Sanctuary

*Activity & Resources for Irish  
Primary Schools*



# Dear teacher...

We hope you find the activities and suggested resources in this pack useful. The intention here is to bring your school's "Sanctuary journey" into the classroom. The Schools of Sanctuary programme is based on three principles- Learn, Action and Share. This book naturally focuses on the "Learn" piece but there are lots of actions you can take to make your classroom a sanctuary space also- take a peek at the "Action" section of our [Learn, Action, Share booklet](#).

## Guidance:

Teachers will readily identify where there may be potential for sensitivity among their students in some of the exercises suggested here. We ask teachers to always be mindful of the lived experiences of students in their classroom. Even when referring to a particular country, ethnic group etc, students can feel "spotlighted". Teachers might find it helpful to:

- let the students know in advance about the lesson
- flag the lesson/activity/topic with parents and guardians in advance, as appropriate
- plan to ensure that students are not put on the spot or feel compelled to participate or share
- plan for methodologies where students can opt in/opt out
- plan for what to do if a student gets upset during the lesson

As always, children and young people can amaze us with their resilience, openness and their innate sense of justice. We urge teachers not to be afraid of sensitivities or "difficult" topics. Let students and teachers figure it out together- we are all learning all the time!

This pack was designed in summer 2023. We will endeavour to update this pack in line with all further curriculum changes in the coming school year and beyond.

## Thank you, teachers!

Sincere thanks for their contributions and feedback to this resource pack to:

**Dr Ailbhe Kenny**, Associate Professor in Music Education at Mary Immaculate College and an Irish Research Council Laureate ([More about Ailbhe](#))

**Dr Aoife Titley**, lecturer in Global Citizenship Education in Maynooth University Froebel Dept. of Primary and Early Childhood Education ([more about Aoife](#))

**Dr Maria Dervan**, lecturer in Inclusive and Special Education, Mary Immaculate College ([more about Maria](#))

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# Wellbeing in the Primary School of Sanctuary

If being a School of Sanctuary is being a place where students are safe, included, equally respected and valued and supported by the whole school community, it is clear that 'Sanctuary' is very closely linked to 'Wellbeing' in many ways. One derives from and benefits the other. Indeed, the wellbeing of teachers should also be a benefit of working in a School of Sanctuary.

In serving many of the remits of Wellbeing for the whole school community, schools are inherently engaging with the Sanctuary Principle of 'ACTION'

- **Culture & Environment**

- schools take actions to create a safe, welcoming, representative and inclusive environment for all students, especially vulnerable groups
- the classroom culture facilitates the wellbeing of students whose needs are bespoke and/or acute

- **Policy & Planning**

- wellbeing promotion is served through anti-racism and anti-bullying policies
- planning and facilitating the contexts and needs of the student body also fosters wellbeing
- SPHE planning can have a concurrent wellbeing and sanctuary focus.

- **Relationships & Partnerships**

- the voice of the minority student is heard and understood by teachers and peers
- their families are welcomed and facilitated
- links with "Sanctuary" organisations in the community that support student wellbeing are forged.

In the process of the Wellbeing SSE/Promotion Review or its general ongoing Wellbeing approach, a school is therefore concurrently building up the ACTION piece of its Sanctuary portfolio.

## WELLBEING IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM:

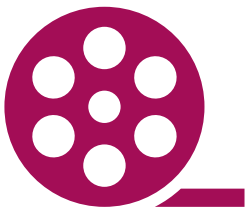
In the classroom, the Sanctuary ethos and Wellbeing are closely linked. When students are learning about and experiencing wellbeing through the vehicles of Aistear, SPHE, RE, PE (and more), they are inherently engaging with the Sanctuary Principle of 'LEARN'. Equally, thinking about Wellbeing through a Sanctuary lens enhances that practice as students develop empathy for the wellbeing of others.

# Junior & Senior Infants

The Aistear learning and developmental principles, “the child’s uniqueness”, “equality & diversity” and “children as citizens” can all be brought joyfully into life in the Sanctuary classroom. This beautiful sentiment from the Aistear Framework is “sanctuary” in a nutshell....

“ You may have to treat me in a different way to other children, to ensure I feel equal. Thank you for respecting my cultural identity and that of my family. Remember too that I may need you to help me to integrate into life in Ireland. ”

## SPHE



The beautiful short film (no spoken language) called “Home” by Save the Children UK is a wonderful way for children to engage with many strand units of the SPHE curriculum

(myself and my family, relating to others, living in the local community, feelings and emotions) [This SoS created worksheet](#) includes the link to the film, with suggested follow up exercises. The exercises also explore elements of visual art and oral language acquisition.



Explore the [Junior Primary playlist on our YouTube channel](#) for age-appropriate videos selected by or produced by Schools of Sanctuary. Stories of

welcome and inclusion give children an insight into “Myself & the Wider World”. There’s even a bilingual twist to the SoS story-telling videos.

### Linkage:

- 1) Geography / Human Environments / People & Places in Other Areas
- 2) Visual art
- 3) Oral language

## SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

### Geography: A sense of place



Explore a sense of place and community through a diversity lens by using stimulus photos of different kinds of dwelling places. Children can then do their own drawings of these. At a local level, it might be a block

of apartments, a hotel, a halting site, a country house. At a global level, you could look at traditional rural dwellings like teepees, igloos, huts etc.

### History: Stories



A Sanctuary Ambassador might visit the school to tell a story about their past in another country. This will offer students an opportunity to understand how events in the past can have an impact on

our feelings and lives today. Your school can request a Sanctuary Ambassador visit by contacting your SoSI coordinator.

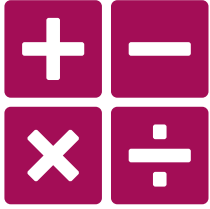
### Linkage:

- 1) SPHE: Myself and the Wider World
- 2) Visual Art



# Junior & Senior Infants

## MATHS



Make some suitable choices from the 193 flags of the world to explore Numbers, Shape & Space and Measures. How many stripes are there? Are the lines in the flag the same or different length? Are there any shapes on the flag? (Naturally, this activity can link to strands of geography curriculum and it also links into GCE)



When exploring the strand units of weight, height and shape, ask children to bring in an object that they know is from another country and/or has non-English language written on it, e.g. a food package. The items

can be placed on an investigation table in the classroom and explored via a vis weight/height/shape while also integrating elements of the language curriculum and making space for intercultural curiosity.

### Linkage:

- 1) Geography / Human Environments / People & Places in Other Areas
- 2) SPHE: Myself and the Wider World
- 3) Science: Estimating & Measuring

## VISUAL ARTS / DRAMA



Using icecream sticks, empty paper rolls or similar, students can make little people puppets to explore similarities and differences. Discuss hair/eye colour, size and shape. The puppets can be used to discuss emotions and feelings too or to create little dramatic scenes<sup>1</sup>.



**For more Visual Art/Drama guidelines & ideas, please see p9**



**For Music guidelines and ideas, please see p10**



**For PE guidelines and ideas, please see p11**

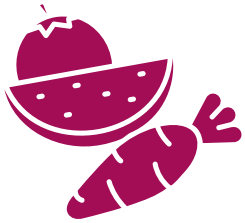
**Religious/Ethical Education** is inherently interwoven into many of the above activities. Teachers can further bring the Sanctuary message into RE/Eth Ed as is appropriate to the school's ethos.

**Oral Language** is also supported by many of the activities. Additionally, a visit by a Sanctuary Ambassador will expose children to different voice sounds (accents).

*1. This suggestion taken from "Education Authority of Northern Ireland, "Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School"*

# First & Second Classes

## SPHE



When learning about food and healthy eating, learn about different foods from around the world. One country could be chosen and students could learn about typical foods that are grown and eaten there. Students could also be asked to bring in a healthy item of fruit or veg from home and discuss where and how it would grow. Insert Maths/Geography into this exercise by looking at the distance between Ireland and the country where the fruit was grown. This can introduce the idea of food miles/sustainability.



Explore the [Junior Primary playlist on our YouTube channel](#) for age-appropriate videos selected by or produced by Schools of Sanctuary. Stories of welcome and inclusion give children an insight into *“Myself & the Wider World”*.



Think about journeys that people in our communities make or have made- ourselves, our families, our neighbours. How and why do they travel? If you had to leave home suddenly to go somewhere new, what are the 6 most important things you would bring with you? (this is also known as the “Pack Your Bags” exercise)

### Linkage:

- 1) Geography / Human Environments / People & Places in Other Areas
- 2) Maths/ Measures/ Length
- 3) Science: Estimating & Measuring

## SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

### Geography: a sense of place



Children could redesign a tennis ball, sliotar or similar to be a mini globe. Draw or stick on little people on various different parts of the ball to represent global citizenship.



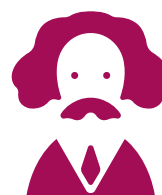
Explore a sense of place and community through a diversity lens by using stimulus photos of different kinds of dwelling places. Children can then do their own drawings of these. At a local level, it might be block of apartments, a hotel, a Traveller halting site, a country house. At a global level, you could look at traditional rural dwellings like teepees, igloos, huts etc.

### History



As well as exploring how Irish feasts and festivals were celebrated in the past, explore the history and customs of other feasts, e.g. Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Chinese New Year etc. These are fantastic cross-curricular ways for children to learn history through an intercultural lens. How are these feasts celebrated in Ireland?

### Science



Did you know that one of the most famous scientists ever, Albert Einstein, was a refugee? [Learn about Einstein's life and his achievements.](#)

# First & Second Classes

## MATHS



Explore the theme of the long journeys that some people make by foot to find safety, when exploring “Measurement” (strand unit). The student walks in a straight line from a designated spot X to a designated spot Y in the room/school/yard and they calculate the distance travelled using a measuring tool. That distance can be compared to the calculated walking distance from Point A to B, e.g. Aleppo (Syria) to Istanbul (Turkey). Explore the [journey of Little Amal](#) to enhance this exercise.



Comparing and ordering numbers, e.g. greater than/less than equations, in combination with measuring money and capacity, can touch lightly upon issues of equality vs inequality. Activities No.1 and No. 2 in this [Amnesty UK education resource](#) are recommended for 7 year olds; the activities involve sequential and fractional processing as part of learning about fairness.

### Linkage:

- 1) Geography / Human Environments / People & Places in Other Areas
- 2) SPHE: Myself and the Wider World
- 3) Science: Estimating & Measuring

## VISUAL ARTS / DRAMA



Use [this video and activity resource made by Kazzum Arts](#) <sup>2</sup> to explore the link between visual depictions and emotions. It’s also an interesting way for children to explore the “colours” of emotions. This could be developed into a dramatic exercise where costumes are curated/created to indicate a specific emotion.



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*2. Film and activity pack created by Kazzum Arts (UK) in collaboration with Arji Manuepillai, Maria Askew and Paul Andrew. Illustrations: Woven Ink. Design: Kathryn Corlett.*



# All Classes



## VISUAL ARTS / DRAMA

- Look at your art supplies and play areas. Do these include toys, dolls and dress-up clothes that represent children from a variety of backgrounds? Can all children draw and paint themselves with accurate skin colour? <sup>1</sup>.
- Plan a whole-school art project to produce a large-scale multi-material message(s) of welcome. Think about making one big sign that is made up of lots of little elements produced by the students. Elements could be things like painted ice cream sticks, embroidered/knitted patches, handmade postcards etc- all brought together to make up the letters of a sign like “Welcome Refugees” ( “Fáilte Roimh Theifigh”), “All Are Welcome” (Fáilte Roimh Cách), “Diversity is Our Strength” etc.
- If your school celebrates the Christian Christmas story with nativity plays etc., think about how to interweave the theme of seeking sanctuary into it. The story of the nativity is one of a family seeking sanctuary in Bethlehem who are turned away from several places before finding the stable. This story can also be explored dramatically in a non-religious way.



The **Chester Beatty**, is a museum and library in Dublin. The museum’s collections are displayed in two galleries: “Sacred Traditions” and “Arts of the Book”.

Both displays exhibit manuscripts, miniature paintings, prints, drawings, rare books and some decorative arts from the Persian, Islamic, East Asian and Western Collections. The Chester Beatty is home to one of the most significant collections of Western, Islamic and East & South East Asian artefacts.

These [Chester Beatty online resources](#) are a fantastic way for schools to engage with art and culture from all over the world, offering opportunities for students to learn more about the rich global histories and heritages. We highly recommend a school visit to the Chester Beatty if possible!

*1. This suggestion taken from “Journeys: Exploring Migration & Migrant Rights in the Primary Classroom” from the Curriculum Development Unit at Mary Immaculate College, written by Brighid Golden (DICE Project) and Aideen Roche (Doras Luimní)*

# All Classes



## MUSIC

A sanctuary-giving and intercultural approach to music education can bring huge joy and vibrancy to your school community. It's a great way to artistically showcase your school's commitment to inclusion.

Opportunities for rotating leadership roles (e.g. the conductor, solo performer, sound designer) to develop agency and recognition.

Valuing all contributions, multiple musical genres, as well as the many ways of making music in and out of school.

Sensitivity to diverse religions and cultures. Stereotyping (e.g. of musical preferences) should be avoided.

Connecting to local musical communities for creative, community-led and integration opportunities

### 1. Composing

Consider soundscapes! Soundscapes focus on the sounds of everyday life. Composing one as a class, in small groups or individually opens up many creative possibilities in the classroom.

- As a first step, journaling or creating sound lists helps children actively listen to the world around them. Guided questions might include: How do I hear my school? What does home sound like? What does the sound of the kitchen/playground/street/etc. mean to you?
- Children can collect sounds using recorded environmental or found sounds as well as vocal or instrumental sounds to create a collection of audio clips. These clips can then be used to create a soundscape that tells stories relevant to the children's experiences.
- Reflecting on the soundscapes generates dialogue and respect in the classroom. Guided questions might include: Why did you choose that sound? What did you notice when you listened? How did it make you feel?

### 2. Listening and Responding

As well as browsing through Youtube and Spotify, the following sources are useful:

[Smithsonian Folkways Recordings](#)  
[World Music Central](#)  
[BBC3 World Music Archive](#)  
[The Irish Traditional Music Archive](#)

Active responses to the music might include:

- **Movement** - a balance of structured responses such as tapping, clapping, foot tapping etc. and more spontaneous, expressive responses.
- **Listening maps** - sound is captured visually (e.g. shape of the tune, silences, beat and structure of the music). These maps can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole class activity.

### 3. Performing

The [Song Seeking Songbook](#): this collection of songs includes opportunities to interact socially, improvise and interpret, as well as enjoy the music together. Pieces can be simplified according to your class level and group.

Younger primary classes can enjoy Songtime! song-learning videos on the [SoSI YouTube channel](#).

# All Classes



## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Infants/First/Second Classes

- While students are doing individual or partnered PE activities, they could encourage the child next to them by saying “good job”, “maith thú” or similar in any other language of your or the children’s choosing!
- Occasionally choosing to specifically do PE activities without any equipment whatsoever can give a platform in which to discuss disadvantage and poverty. Ask the children to suggest what activities could be done if they found themselves in a place where there were no balls, goalposts etc.
- Consider dance traditions or folk dancing of different countries or cultures when exploring the dance strand. Maybe some children’s parents would have suggestions or there’s always YouTube!

### 3rd/4th/5th/6th Classes

- Learn about the Refugee Olympic Team, which first appeared in 2016 at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Here’s an [SoS informational resource](#). In response to the learning, have an Olympic-themed athletics PE class. Relay races are particularly great for teamwork and inclusion. It’s important too to learn about the Paralympics and the Special Olympics. You might even be lucky enough to be able to organise a visit from one of the many Irish Paralympians or Special Olympians!
- Orienteering and outdoor adventure walks, even learning about water safety, can comprise learning about the journeys some people are forced to take to find safety. Students could find out how long the distance is from e.g. Khartoum in Sudan to Tripoli in Libya, and decide to walk a small fraction of that distance \*
- Students could create their own obstacle courses to represent a journey that someone would take if they had to travel somewhere for safety reasons. What would that person have to carry with them, what kind of obstacles would they face? \* 1

*\* Particular sensitivity to the lived experiences of any refugee children in your classes is advisable in these exercises.*

*1. This suggestion taken from “Journeys: Exploring Migration and Migrant Rights in the Primary Classroom”, developed by the Curriculum Development Unit Mary Immaculate College, The DICE Project and Doras Luimní (2017)*

# Third & Fourth Classes

## SPHE



Make a poster or welcome booklet about your community/village/town that would help a newcomer to learn about the place. What facilities and amenities are available? (shops, sports grounds, walks, doctor, dentist) Can those facilities and amenities be represented with images rather than words? What makes your area a nice place to live?.



In the Media Education strand, explore how different countries are represented in the media or on the internet. Compare, for example, the first ten images that come up in an image search for Afghanistan with ten for, e.g., Spain. Discuss why there are such differences of tone and how the negative images make you feel.



Introduce students to the language of migration and human rights by exploring the short videos on the [SoSI-curated Senior Primary YouTube playlist](#)

### Linkage:

- 1) Geography / Human Environments / People Living & Working in the Local Area
- 2) Geography / Human Environments / People Living & Other Lands
- 3) Visual arts

## SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

### Geography



In learning more about the statistics of refugees in the world, the class could do a project on one specific non-European country (strand unit: *People & Other Lands*) that is notable in those statistics. Learn more about the general topography, population, language, culture, tradition and food/agriculture of that country. This will promote a positive perspective of the country, including for those students who may have direct connections to that country.



As students explore how people help each other and depend on each other (*Human Environment: People and Communities*), discuss what kind of things a community needs to do or have so that people with, for example, a physical disability (including a blind/deaf person) or someone new to the community can feel included and safe?

### History



Consider learning about the rich storytelling heritage of the Irish Traveller community and explore how these stories contribute so much to Ireland's *oral* history tradition. Similar storytelling traditions exist in other nomadic cultures throughout the world. Children could do a story-sharing exercise where they tell their partner a story and vice versa and then they have to tell the story to a new partner to see how much they remember, how details can change etc. No note-taking!

# Third & Fourth Classes



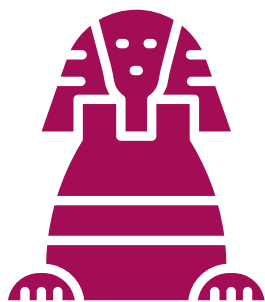
The oldest board games in the world originate in what is called modern day Iraq, Iran and in China. Learn about these ancient civilisations by exploring some of these board games (*Games and pastimes in the past*). Many of them can be played online. This will bring the added bonus of children understanding the “universality” of many common games.

## Science



Learn about migrating animals such as emperor penguins, Canadian geese, swallows, humpback whales, wildebeests and many more. Students could explore why climate change is making life difficult for these, and many other, mammals.

## MATHS

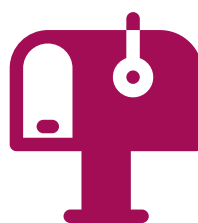


Teachers might like to explore a little about the ancient history of mathematical methods which originate in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), Egypt and an ancient Syrian kingdom called Ebla.

As [this Wikipedia page](#) explains, from 3000 BC, arithmetic, algebra and geometry was used in all of these countries to understand nature, astronomy, time and for systems of trade and commerce.



Choose a number of complex patterned flags of the [193 national flags of the world](#) (e.g. Cape Verde, Guyana Seychelles) through which to explore concepts of ratio, fractions, measurement. In digital or manual methods, students could learn how to recreate these flags mathematically accurately.



Doing a mathematical project on the postal system in Ireland can extrapolate into a really interesting cross-curricular project. How does our post move around the world? How long does it take? What are the different costs? Now expand on these conversations by thinking about how people move around the world. Make comparisons and discuss. .



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# Fifth & Sixth Classes

## SPHE



In the “Developing Citizenship” strand unit students can explore prejudice and racism. It is recommended that students learn how they can deal with racism online or in society and

how to [report a racist incident](#)



In the Media Education strand, explore how different countries are represented in the media or on the internet. Compare, for example, the first ten images that come up in an image search for Afghanistan with ten for, e.g., Spain. Discuss why there are such differences of tone and how the negative images make you feel. It could be interesting to examine how different media outlets present different images.



Consider a Sanctuary-theme photograph with which to do a ‘Reading the Photograph’ exercise. You can find a great choice of appropriate photographs [here](#) (Getty images) What is happening in the photo? What is the photographer trying to tell us? What emotions is the photographer trying to convey?

### Linkage:

- 1) Geography / Human Environments / People Living & Working in the Local Area
- 2) Geography / Human Environments / People Living & Other Lands
- 3) Visual arts: Reading a Photograph

## SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

### Geography



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SoSI greatly encourages the choosing of the “Development and Aid” topic in the strand unit: *Trade and Development Issues*. This will complement the other learning about migration that your students may have acquired. It can introduce students to the important work of [UNHCR Ireland](#) and to other similarly focussed national and local organisations. Explore the [SoSI-curated Senior Primary YouTube playlist](#) for useful videos to enhance this learning

### History



If teachers choose to teach the strand units of The Great Famine, World Wars or Life in 18th and 19th century Ireland, important opportunities will emerge at which to refer to refugees. Think about the people who now come to Ireland’s shores to escape famine, religious persecution and lack of freedom, as Irish people did in the past. We also recommend watching [this video from our specially curated YouTube playlist](#) (*Teachers may consider it only appropriate to watch until 4:18*)

# Fifth & Sixth Classes



A Sanctuary Ambassador can visit the school to tell a story about their past in another country. This will offer students an opportunity to both understand the refugee experience and to do an

experiment as a historian. Students should be encouraged to write down a brief account of the story as if they were recording history- include as much factual detail as possible, spell names correctly, try to be objective in the writing.

## Science



It is predicted that climate breakdown will be the main driver of population displacement in the near future. There are already millions of “climate refugees”

in the world. Education about climate change, its causes and its effects, will be enhanced by considering how it will force people all over the world to move, migrate and flee. Many of the poorer countries in the global south have the least financial means to combat the effects of climate change- what can richer countries like Ireland do to help?

## MATHS



Learning about International Poverty Lines (absolute poverty and relative poverty) can help students to explore statistics, data, large numbers and fractions, currency exchange rates etc.

This learning can be linked to Sustainable Development Goal No. 1 “*End poverty in all its forms everywhere*”. Ensure you are working with up to date figures (which change frequently). [This fact sheet](#) is from February 2023.



As part of the previous exercise, students can learn to understand the value of commodities, money and budgeting. A particularly poignant exercise would be to research what you could afford

in the supermarket in Ireland if you only had €38.10 available to spend every week. This is the amount that people seeking asylum in Ireland receive as a weekly allowance (*as of Sept 2023*)



More important statistics! Learn about the numbers of people who are displaced throughout the world and in what numbers they are living in different countries etc. Again, figures

change regularly but [this UNHCR report](#) is from May 2023. Keep up to date with UNHCR’s latest “[Figures at a Glance](#)”



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Schools of  
**Sanctuary**

<https://schools-ireland.cityofsanctuary.org>



Places of Sanctuary Ireland



O'LLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY