

# Schools of Sanctuary Charter and Pledge

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## Introduction

A School of Sanctuary is a school that is committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment that benefits everybody, including anyone in its community who is seeking sanctuary. It is a school that helps its students, staff, parents, and the wider community to understand what it means to be seeking sanctuary, and to extend a welcome to everyone regardless of their status.

## Why become a School of Sanctuary?

Becoming a School of Sanctuary provides schools with a valuable toolkit for school improvement, links schools to a strong and growing network, and equips pupils of all ages to be a strong, confident voice for inclusion, diversity and equality in a twenty-first century Ireland, where the demographics are changing rapidly.

The School of Sanctuary journey will:

- Create a culture that makes newcomers feel safe and included, especially those who are seeking sanctuary in Ireland;
- Provide learning opportunities around global issues, human rights, international protection and diversity;
- Access valuable resources to build better communication and links with parents from new communities;
- Build a school culture that reduces intolerance, hate speech and bullying;
- Celebrate diversity and the rich cultural heritage brought by refugees and other newcomers.

## How to become a School of Sanctuary

Schools make a commitment to the three core principles:

1. **TO LEARN** about refugees and migrants, including hearing their stories;
2. **TO TAKE ACTION** to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion within your school and the wider community;
3. **TO SHARE** your vision and achievements with the wider community and other schools.

## How can Schools of Sanctuary Help You?

Every school is unique and will create their own way of embedding these core principles into school life. It is likely that your journey has already begun! We at Schools of Sanctuary Ireland promise to do all we can to make the journey a joy and not an onerous task!

We will help you with resources, advice and, where needed, visits to your school. We will also link you with an established School of Sanctuary and local volunteers.

## What are the First Steps?

First of all, ensure that your whole school supports this idea, including all staff, management and the board of management. Right from the start, find ways of involving your students; most schools form a committee with class representatives from every year group. When the school is ready, you can arrange a day to sign the pledge form, ideally involving the whole school and making the event into a celebration. Signing the pledge will give you School of Sanctuary Member rights, with access to our resources and support team. Some schools have decided to have a signing celebration at the start of every academic year, to ensure that the commitment is renewed and to give new arrivals a chance to sign.

## Minimum Criteria to become a Recognised School of Sanctuary

- The leadership and governance of the school is fully supportive of the process.
- Learning activities about refugee/asylum/migration learning issues are included into school life, appropriate to age-groups and curriculum.
- The School demonstrates how it has embedded the concept of welcome and inclusion in the school. This should show how the school will continue to develop and sustain a culture of welcome beyond attaining the award.
- Celebration or community events which highlight the contribution of different cultures to the life of the school and community.
- Commitment to active involvement of the student body in planning and executing the welcome activities of the school.
- The school publicly highlights its commitment to being a School of Sanctuary in its communications including on its website and social media streams, and introduction messages to new staff, parents and students.
- Commitment to sharing resources, ideas and achievements with other schools in the area and beyond.

Details of how and when to apply for national recognition as a School of Sanctuary can be found on the website <https://schools-ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/> and in the Resource Pack. Recognised schools will be publicly celebrated at an awards event and presented with a plaque and certificate. Awarded schools continue on the journey, sharing their learning and good practice with other schools locally and nationally.

If your school is ready to make a commitment to this journey, please have representatives of the Management Board, teaching staff and students body sign the pledge form below. Then please send a copy of the signed form to [schools@ireland.cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:schools@ireland.cityofsanctuary.org) and proudly display the pledges in your school for all to see.

## SCHOOLS OF SANCTUARY PLEDGE FORM

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Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_

School email address: \_\_\_\_\_

We.....pledge our support to the vision that schools in Ireland will be a welcoming places of safety and belonging for all newcomers, and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. We recognise the contribution of refugees, migrants and people seeking sanctuary to Ireland and our schools. In working towards becoming a School of Sanctuary we pledge to:

1. **Learn** what it means to be seeking sanctuary and about the lives of refugees, migrants and marginalised groups in Ireland.
2. **Take Action** to support sanctuary seekers and newcomers in the daily life of the school.
3. **Share** this new knowledge and understanding with the school's wider community & the Schools of Sanctuary network.

We are committed to working towards becoming a recognised School of Sanctuary and we are willing for our school to be added to a list of Member Schools of Sanctuary Ireland.

**Signatures below should include representatives of management, staff and students**

Name/Position/Class	Date
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

Further signatures may be added on extra pages.

Please email a copy of this completed form to us at [schools@ireland.cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:schools@ireland.cityofsanctuary.org). We also advise you to display the signatures as a reminder to the whole school community of your commitment.