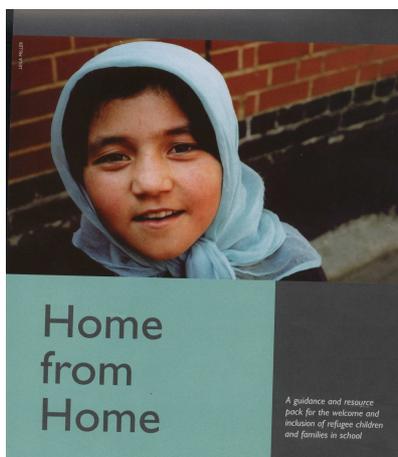


## **'Home from Home' – a guidance and resource pack for the welcome and inclusion of refugee children and families in school**

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Salusbury WORLD (Working On Refugees Learning and Development) was set up as a charity in 1999 and is the only refugee centre in the country based in a primary school (Salusbury Primary School in Brent, London). It operates out of a single small room at the side of the main school building (a splendid red brick Victorian building) and above its entrance are carved the words 'Manual Instruction' – a relic from the school's utilitarian past no doubt but still happily indicative of the hands-on and practical approach the team takes to its work and reflected on every page of this wonderful book, made even more attractive by the evocative photographs taken by Leila Miller, professional photographer and volunteer at the centre.

The project provides educational, social and emotional support for refugee children through its EAL tuition and programme of after-school/holiday activities. It also provides support to their parents and the wider refugee community by offering advice and home-school liaison services, family workshops and outings. Out of this work has come this book, which is every bit as excellent and exemplary as the holistic practice from which it stems. It provides a model for this area of work and sets the standard for future publications in this area. It's so good that I'm tempted to finish writing right now and simply tell you to stop doing whatever

you're doing and go and order a copy immediately, but that wouldn't satisfy the editor so here's my review, which can in no way do justice to the original.

Following the introduction the book is divided into four main sections:

1. Welcoming and including refugee children and families
2. Developing play opportunities
3. Involving refugee parents
4. Providing advice and support

Each section consists of:

- An introduction and overview
- A discussion of key issues
- Advice and guidance
- Practical strategies and suggested activities
- Further information on related resources and organisations

To give you a flavour of it, Section 1 includes guidance on welcoming refugee families to school with practical suggestions on developing clear admission and induction procedures (for example, highlighting the need to decide how information will be recorded in a way that is most useful to staff; who needs to be involved in meeting the child and parents; what day(s) interviews will take place – to enable EAL or bilingual support to attend; which day(s) of the week and time of day the new arrival will start – imagine starting your career at a new school in a new language with a literacy hour session followed by a numeracy class; who can advise families on applying for free school meals and other grants, if applicable; who will assess the child's language and learning needs. As Sarah Reynolds, the centre's Director, made clear to me when I visited the centre recently, the crucial thing is to get the initial application and induction process sorted out. Once that's in place then everything else will run much more smoothly. This is followed with practical tips on how to run an effective admission interview – including providing parents with a 'welcome-pack' and lots of sensible ideas about what that might include such as information about the school (handbook, uniform, term dates, rules, curriculum, home-school agreement); information on the local area (tube and bus map, street map); adult education and ESOL classes; health (NHS Direct number, list of GPs in the area, local health advocacy services); advice (a list of local organisations); general information (sport and leisure facilities, services such as Sure Start, mother and toddler groups, etc.); information for refugees and asylum-seekers (available online from the Red Cross and Refugee Council). This section also includes advice on identifying refugee and asylum-seeking pupils, with lists of countries and languages that refugees are likely to come from – always with the caveat that you should never assume that people from those countries are refugees. There is a sample of

Salisbury Primary School's policy on refugee pupils that would serve as a model for any other school. There is also a really helpful section on a 'buddying' scheme with an example of their guidance leaflet to buddies and a set of activities that might be undertaken to support the new arrival during their early days at the school (such as taking digital photographs of the school and staff and producing labels for the student to be shown/attach; a 'welcome to our class' book and photos of all the children in it with a few lines written by each child about themselves). The section ends with 11 pages of annotated sources of further information on topics such as home-school liaison, welcoming refugees and other mid-phase admissions, peer support, resources for circle time, emotional support and well-being, learning about refugees, resources for supporting bilingual pupils – bizarrely not including the NALDIC website or eal-bilingual mailing list, my only criticism of an otherwise thoroughly researched cornucopia of delights!

The other three sections are as equally comprehensive and replete with photocopiable resources on all sorts of things such as educational fun activities such as making masks, collages, sock puppets, mosaics, outings, etc.

The section on working with parents is particularly helpful as we all pay lip-service to how important that is and how valuable it can be but our actual practice rarely lives up to our aspirations because it can also be very daunting for teachers not quite sure of how best to approach the often tortuous issues it can throw up. So the eminently practical advice given here on involving refugee parents that any school could benefit from is extremely helpful, as is the section on the legal aspects and procedures related to refugee status and asylum-seeker applications.

The book is further enhanced by the many examples of good practice that other schools could use to extend their own capacities. It would be possible to feel intimidated by all that's on offer here but the point is that whatever your starting point there is always something you could do differently or more of to be more inclusive and welcoming to refugee children and their families. And, of course, what's good practice for them is good practice for all. Testimony to this is borne out by the words of the children and parents themselves that are dotted throughout the book and help complete the picture. What wouldn't we do for a comment like this one about our school?

*My mum said I had to go to another school because I was bullied. I hoped I didn't have to go through what I had. I went to Salisbury School. When Mrs Sullivan asked who would look after me, lots of people put up their hand. I felt better.* Mariam, 11, from Somalia.

It's not a recipe book and it's not a route map either and everyone at Salisbury WORLD is only too aware of what a lengthy process of learning they went through to get where they are today. That said, we can all benefit from standing on the shoulders of giants and what this book provides is a clear view of the terrain so we can see where we might go to from where we are now and what we might do along the way. It's a book full of helpful hints, guidance, information, insight, knowledge and good old-fashioned wisdom that left this reader breathing a sigh of gratitude and relief. 'I closed the book and I felt better.' Frank, 47, from Liverpool.

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'Home from Home' is available from:

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Salisbury WORLD also provides a training and support package for primary schools. Further information and details from:

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