

Grace Garden School Assemblies and Festivals Policy	
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INTENTION AND IMPACT

Our School and Children's home provisions at Ruskin Mill Trust provide our children and young people with a varied, rich and deep curriculum experience in which our PSTE method is braided in order that our pupils experience learning which begins via feeling safe and secure and 'doing' (Head, Heart and Hand) and prioritises outdoor learning whenever possible.

Grace Garden School provides a weekly gathering during the school day, in which our children and young people may experience spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their ongoing learning whilst at the school and home.

Grace Garden School is a community in which the curriculum is devised in collaboration with the natural world (Field 1 and 3). We encourage whenever possible our students to contribute to our assemblies their own craft work and artistic expression so that their growing sense of self ('self-generated conscious action') may be formed within the ongoing context of RMT which emphasizes healthy relationships with 'Universe, Earth and People.'

Many of our students have compromised experiences of their selves within the structure of time. Our weekly assemblies attempt to connect them practically, visually, artistically and kinesthetically within the wider flow of time beyond the daily timetable, that in time helps them to develop a more grounded sense of identity within their own biography. This means consciously connecting with the seasonal year through festivals and include exploring the narratives of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and humanism and other traditions.

We also celebrate Festivals which are inspired by the rich tradition of seasonal gatherings as developed by Rudolf Steiner inspired learning environments. We seek to engage with the content of this rich tradition and bring it into our modern context suitable for the needs of our children and young people.

Our Assemblies will happen in the outdoor environment wherever possible so that the seasonal changes are experienced as a community and a narrative of those changes are built into the content of the Assembly.

Our Assemblies are divided into Autumn 1, Autumn 2, Spring 1, Spring 2, Summer 1, Summer 2, Each term a theme is set which includes British Values, Safeguarding and PSHE.

Our Assemblies are always related to our curriculum themes which extend into our homes.

The seasonal tables in the classroom and home help anchor the experience of the Festivals in the everyday environment, and visually represent our connection to the great seasonal cycles and the changing year.

Each week is themed around how we foster positive relationships and the assembly is based around these themes.

Each term will include a variety of festivals corresponding to the major religions and other aspects which relate to British values, including celebrations of student's own cultural religious beliefs and heritage. Birthdays are celebrated within the Residential home and the student's classroom, not during the Assemblies.

Each term we will celebrate Festivals which align with Field 1 and 3 of RMT’s Fields of practice and our lineage as a learning environment inspired by the insights of Rudolf Steiner and Steiner inspired cultural forms. These festivals are:

- Michaelmas - Autumn 1 - Warmth
- Advent - Autumn 2 - Warmth to earth
- Candlemas- Spring 1 - Earth
- Easter - Spring 2 - Earth to Water
- Ascension - Summer 1 - Water to Air
- St Johns - Summer 2 - Air

Advent: First 4 weeks of December (Fire to Earth)

Advent is a time of preparation. The mood is one of peace and calm, but also of joyful anticipation – particularly for the children – in the coming of Christmas. On the first Sunday of Advent we build an Advent Spiral, a spiral path of evergreen leaves. The students carry unlit candles to the centre, where one lit candle stands. By the end of the celebration the path is beautifully lit, and we are reminded that even in the dark days of Winter, not all is gloom.

Martinmas: November 11th (Fire)

Saint Martin, who gave half his cloak to a freezing beggar, was known for his kindness, gentleness and his ability to bring light and warmth into those in darkness. As Autumn gives way to Winter we celebrate the carrying of light in the darkening days with a Lantern Walk. The children, often make brightly coloured candle lanterns and gather to sing songs and experience the starry Autumn evening together.

Michaelmas: September 29th (Fire)

This festival marks the harvest and thanksgiving. The Archangel Michael symbolizes courage and a great force for good triumphing over evil, often portrayed as a dragon. Michaelmas is a reminder of the spiritual in our world, of our ability to do good. Light in the darkening days with a Lantern Walk. The students, often make brightly coloured candle lanterns and gather to sing songs and experience the starry Autumn evening together.

St. John’s Day: 24th June (Midsummer - Air)

Traditionally, fires were lit on Midsummer’s Day to encourage the sun to shine and ripen the crops, and we revel in the warmth of Summer. Some schools celebrate with a wood fire over which children and teachers are encouraged to jump!

Candlemas: 2nd February (Earth)

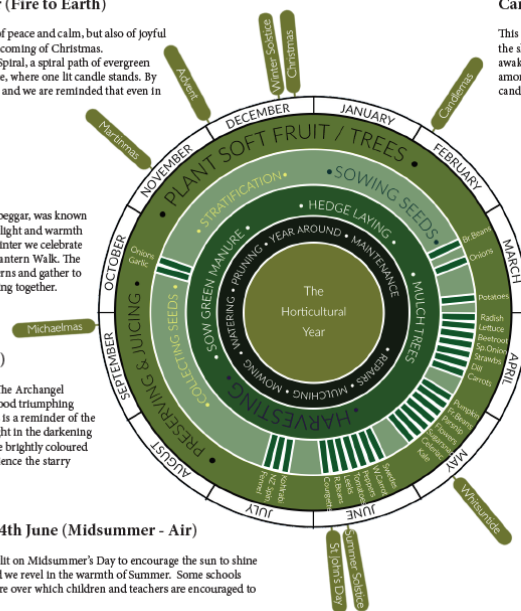
This ancient festival marks the mid-point of Winter, being half-way between the shortest day and the Spring equinox. We celebrate the gift of newly awakening growth forces in nature, and the promise of fresh friendships amongst all of us as light and warmth move in again. The students may make candles at this time.

Easter (Earth to Water)

Easter is a moveable feast celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon of March. Originally a festival of rebirth and fertility. Often celebrated with an Easter Egg hunt, making and painting eggs for an Easter tree.

Whitsuntide / Ascension (Water to Air)

Held on the 7th Sunday after Easter This festival reminds us that Summer is coming, and with it the warmth of the sun. Crafts include paper making – origami flowers and birds. Picnics are often held to celebrate this festival.



Our intention is that the Assembly honours each individual in the context of community. We are inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s motto for a healthy social life:

*“The healthy social life is living
 When in the mirror of each human soul
 The whole community finds its reflection
 And when in the community
 The value of each one is living”*

IMPLEMENTATION

Each Assembly will happen in a suitable outdoor environment as much as possible and the whole community is invited.

It is key that assemblies are developed by groups of staff, whereby the themes are developed and understood enough for those carrying the assembly to really embody the quality or idea they are trying to convey. This is especially important for the major seasonal and religious festivals and a festivals group to facilitate these is strongly encouraged.

It will happen in a circle which helps our students visually and emphasizes that each individual is equal within our community.

It will begin with a welcome, and the Grace Garden School Verse in order to cement the identity of our community, and to build a sense of warmth.

We will celebrate with music and seasonal singing when appropriate.

Each young person is encouraged to contribute to the assembly by bringing a craft item or artistic expression related to the theme which has been prepared in class or home in the lead up to the Assembly.

Students are encouraged to perform roles in the Assembly, be that participating in the narrative of that week or reading the verse or other readings which has included original compositions by the young people. The narrative will be supported by sound, colour and other sensory experiences ie. the use of incense in specific festivals ie. Shiva Day or Buddha day in May. This also helps our children with visual impairment.

Each assembly will end with a period of quiet and reflection.

We acknowledge the gathering power of silence when participated in by the whole community.

The Assembly will end with our Grace Garden School Verse said together if possible.

RECORDING

Reviewing the successes, learning opportunities and student progression arising from Assemblies is integral to our internal QA systems. We will record Assemblies from different perspectives:

- Class teachers and tutors will observe the participation and engagement and learning opportunities for each of the students in their class. Progress and participation will be recorded in students' ILPs, with particular reference to learning with PSHE
- The Senior Leadership will attend and reflect on student and staff participation and engagement with Assemblies. Assemblies will be discussed at SLT meetings on a weekly basis, to ensure they are successful, well attended, meaningful, well planned across staff teams and inclusive for all students.
- Student and staff feedback on Assemblies will be welcomed and collected formally on an annual basis as part of the QA cycle through the staff & student questionnaires.

- The Senior Leadership team will collate a portfolio of photographs and documents relating to each Assembly, to support the planning and review of each term and the whole year for the SIP.

- Photographs and successes from Assemblies can be communicated to parents/carers and outside agencies, as well as be included in school and Trust wide newsletters, with all permissions granted.

COVID 19

At Grace Garden School we recognize the challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic. We also seek to balance this with the positive effects of the Assembly in terms of Individual and community wellbeing.

All our assemblies will take place outside in the current conditions. This allows for appropriate social distancing and maintenance of 'bubbles' when necessary.

The community will be discouraged from handling shared objects except when appropriate in line with the guidance in specific bubbles.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy and information report will be reviewed by the HEaRT Leader each year. It will also be updated if any changes to the information are made during the year.

It will be approved by the Senior Leadership Team

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

PSHE Policy

SMSC Policy