

HEMDEAN HOUSE SCHOOL



POLICY ON COLLECTIVE WORSHIP & SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

Review Date Summer 2017

Statement of Policy

The school is committed to promoting the development of pupils within a moral environment and to offering a spiritual and religious dimension to their lives. While Christianity is the predominant faith, the school welcomes pupils of all faiths and none, and expects tolerant and sensitive behaviour from everybody concerned with the school.

Assemblies for the whole school, or sections of it, provide the opportunity

- to meet for religious or spiritual purposes;
- to promote desirable behaviour inside and outside the school community;
- to offer moral guidelines on appropriate issues;
- to share experiences.
- to celebrate achievements and successes
- to perform to an audience

Organisation

Assemblies involving the whole school take place at 8.55 in the Gym and usually last for 15 minutes. Smaller group assemblies take place where those involved decide as appropriate.

Monday Assembly involving the whole school from Year 11 to Reception planned and delivered by the Head Teacher.

Tuesday A whole-school assembly planned and presented by a single class on a rolling programme (list with dates fixed at the beginning of each term by the Head). Once or twice each term this assembly takes the form of a hymn practice.

Wednesday Senior school assembly (Years 7 -11) planned and presented by different senior school teachers, pupils, the Head or Deputies
Infant assembly (Years Rec – 2) delivered by infant form teachers and followed by a combined Religious Studies lesson.

Thursday Junior school assembly (Years Rec – 6) planned and delivered by junior form teachers as detailed on a rota provided by the Head.

Friday Upper junior assembly (years 3 - 6) each form in turn leads a “show and tell” presentation.

Special Assemblies

Some special whole school assemblies are held, for example at the beginning and end of every term. These involve the celebration of achievements in the previous term with certificates and trophies being awarded for individuals or for school Houses. Some acts of Christian worship are usually involved.

Religious services are held for Harvest, Christmas (at St. Peter’s Church in Caversham) and Easter to which parents are invited. Nursery pupils also attend. Various members of staff help to plan and organise pupil involvement in the services; visiting clergy or lay preachers from local churches or schools may be invited to take these services. Representatives of charities supported are sometimes invited to speak about their work.

Content of Weekly Assemblies

Monday

The Head’s assembly begins with news for the coming week and reports on events of interest in the previous week or at the weekend (e.g. PTA activities). Commendations are occasionally read out, special achievements are mentioned and certificates may be presented (e.g. Drama, Music, Games, Ballet etc.). The religious and/or moral content of the assembly varies according to the season of the church year, appropriate anniversaries of famous people or events, or topical events to provoke thought. School rules are usually emphasised at the beginning of the school year and on other occasions if necessary. While the readings used are sometimes from the Bible, they are always chosen with either a moral purpose common to all religions, or to be construed as general knowledge for pupils of other faiths, or no religious belief and backgrounds. Questions may be asked as appropriate during assembly.

Assembly ends with a hymn, the Lord’s Prayer or the Grace, said by everyone, and, often, a closing prayer by the Head.

Tuesday

These assemblies vary in format depending on the age of the class concerned and the style of presentation decided upon. They may include reading prepared pieces and extracts, using visual aids, acting a story with or without a narrator etc. There is always a moral or religious message which may or may not be connected with school life or work. A hymn is chosen by the class, the Lord’s Prayer is said and often a prayer written by the class. Parents are sometimes invited to these assemblies when their young children are leading the assembly.

Wednesday

The **Senior School** assembly takes a variety of forms such as whole-group discussions, “brainstorming” of ideas in small groups, listening to music and readings, or taking part in

activities designed to encourage group awareness and co-operation.

The subject of the assembly may be based on events occurring in school or anywhere in the world, or internationally recognised special days or weeks which may or may not be of a religious nature. Frequently scientific advances and health issues are discussed in order to encourage a sense of wonder and respect for the working of mind and body.

Wherever possible moral and ethical issues raised during the assembly are made relevant to the pupils' lives. When appropriate the assembly closes with a prayer.

Infant assemblies follow the Programme of Study in the Policy for Religious Education. Videos and worksheets may be used. The assembly is led by one of the three teachers of Years Rec to 2 in turn. The teacher introduces the theme, may read the story from the Children's Bible, picture book etc, use a video if appropriate, conduct a Question and Answer session and close with a short prayer. At least one hymn or song, usually with actions, is sung.

Thursday

At Junior School assemblies, special praise is given to pupils with the most 'happy faces'; they stand and are applauded.

Other achievements and successes from school or home are celebrated

A story with a moral is read and related to the pupils' school situation and experiences e.g. sharing, caring, gratitude, courage etc. occasionally special presentations may be done e.g. before the Year 5/6 PGL trip. Questions are often asked. A hymn is usually sung with or without musical accompaniment.

Friday

Upper Junior assemblies are pupil led and give each class the opportunity to share experiences with a larger group of people. Pupils develop speaking and presentational skills using pictures etc, and talking about their work and items or activities of interest. Each member of the class leading the assembly has the opportunity to speak. The others learn to listen, to ask questions and to value the contribution of others.

Parental Choice

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from collective worship. The Head teacher would expect to discuss the matter with parents first, however parents would not be obliged to state their reasons for seeking withdrawal. The withdrawn child would be expected to bring a reading book and sit in the room adjacent to the assembly hall, during the assembly.