

# THE ROYAL SCHOOL ARMAGH



## ASSEMBLY POLICY

*"The foundation of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."*

*Dr Martin Luther King Jnr*

**Reviewed: May 2024**

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**Ethos and Rationale:**

All schools must provide an act of collective worship for all registered pupils and promote their spiritual, moral and cultural development.

The Royal School, Armagh believes that assemblies are fundamental in promoting the Christian ethos of the school, developing a sense of community and celebrating the success of other pupils and staff. The Royal School, Armagh seeks to use collective worship in school to promote the increase of learning and good manners. The ethos of the Royal School, Armagh places respect on the individual while the mission of the school commits it to, “an education which in its wholeness enables pupils to achieve their full potential in academic, moral, social and spiritual terms”.

This policy should be read, interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the school’s ethos and mission.

**Mission Statement as agreed by the Board of Governors:**

*The Royal School Armagh aims to provide its pupils with an education which in its wholeness will enable them to achieve their full potential in academic, social, moral and spiritual terms. The values of the School, both implicitly and explicitly, reflect and are informed by the reformed tradition of the Christian faith. The School warmly welcomes the presence of pupils and staff of other Christian traditions, other world faiths and those with no religious convictions.*

**The Aim of School Assembly:**

Assembly is of fundamental importance in promoting the ethos and values of the Royal School, Armagh and in helping maintain a well ordered and cohesive community. The majority of collective worship acts during any school term must be of a wholly or mainly Christian character, be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to God and reflect upon the message of Jesus Christ. The nature of daily collective worship shall not be distinctive of any particular religious denomination. (Department of Education Guidelines - Education and Libraries (NI) order 1986).

In keeping with its ethos and mission the Royal School, Armagh requires assemblies which are of a religious nature to adopt a Christian character.

Assemblies at the Royal School, Armagh should provide pupils with an opportunity for collective reflection and the consideration of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. On the basis of these values the assembly programme will encourage students to:

- Reflect on values that are Christian in nature.
- Reflect on their innate value and that of others.
- Become more aware of themselves and their place in the world.
- Develop an understanding of character, and personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Develop self-respect and self-discipline.

The school is committed to developing skills of citizenship and leadership and an awareness of the international dimension. Assemblies are designed to provide an opportunity to share community values and success. Assemblies should never be used to promote a narrow sectarian view or proselytize on behalf of any denomination. The Royal School is proud to have a diverse pupil body and encourages pupils of all faith traditions and none to attend assembly. Nothing should ever be said in assembly which is negative about another faith, or which

makes children who adhere to a different faith or who have no faith feel unwelcome at assembly.

Although assembly should encourage deeper thinking about current issues and good citizenship it should never be used to promote a specific political opinion.

Pupil participation in assembly is designed to help pupils to grow in confidence in public speaking and in sharing their own thoughts and reflections and listen to those of others.

**Suitable Themes for Assembly (*Please note this list is not exhaustive*):**

- The Christian Gospel
- Events of the Christian calendar
- Christian virtues
- International Days which are consistent with the character of assembly
- Promoting the school's ethos generally or aspects of it particularly
- Good citizenship
- Character development
- Ambition
- Tolerance
- Hard work
- Resilience
- Anti-Bullying (in all its forms)
- Anti-Racism/sectarianism
- Good manners
- Empathy
- International events
- Significant national events
- Significant historical events
- Safeguarding issues
- Democratic values

**Structure of Assemblies:**

Years 8 to 12 will have two whole school assemblies per week (at the time of writing this policy that was Tuesday and Thursday). The Tuesday assembly will be led by a member of the SLT. From time-to-time guests may be invited to address assembly on particular issues as the school leadership sees fit. All speakers will be invited on the understanding that their input will be consistent with this policy. Visiting speakers must be approved in advance by the Headmaster or Vice Principal Pastoral. Where possible parents should be advised in advance of the presence of visiting speakers. The Thursday assembly will be introduced by the Headmaster or a Vice Principal and led by a prefect.

Years 13 and 14 will have two assemblies per week. Year 13 will have assembly on a Monday and Year 14 on a Tuesday. Year 13 and 14 will have a joint assembly on Wednesdays led by a member of the SLT or a senior member of staff.

There will be individual year group assemblies on Fridays for one year group led by the Head of Year and relevant Form Tutors. A rota will be drawn up for the dates of these assemblies.

House assemblies occur on the last Friday of each month and are led by House staff

and Sixth Form House Captains. House Assembly provides an opportunity to develop a House identity, encourage healthy competition, develop character and organise pupils to represent their House in various activities.

Where possible pupils will be encouraged to participate in delivering assembly.

#### **Assembly Etiquette:**

- Pupils stand by form class in straight lines.
- Year Eight will stand nearest the stage with the other years in order behind them.
- Each Form Tutor must accompany their Form Class to assembly and stand with them.
- Pupils should wear full school uniform in good order – in times of warm weather they may remove their blazers.
- Pupils must not lean against the walls.
- When the person taking assembly is on the stage a hand bell will be rung, and pupils should fall silent.
- Pupils must remain silent throughout assembly, unless invited to participate in some way.
- At the end of assembly, the member of staff leading assembly will dismiss pupils to leave the hall under the direction of their Form Tutor.
- Pupils must not leave the hall until dismissed by their Form Tutor.

#### **Assembly format:**

Pupils will take their place in the Assembly Hall

- A hand bell will be rung when the person leading the assembly is on stage to indicate that pupils should be silent.
- The person leading assembly will read the announcements and make any presentations to pupils required.
- The assembly will be delivered.
- The person taking assembly may say a prayer of their own choosing or composition. That prayer to be of a Christian character.
- Assembly will finish with the Lord's Prayer and The Grace.
- Pupils will be dismissed under the direction of their Form Tutors.

***Note: there will be occasions when circumstances will require the format and etiquette of assembly to change.***

#### **Exemptions:**

Under article 21(5) of the Education and Libraries (NI) order 1986 parents have the right to withdraw their children from assembly. Pupils may be exempt from assembly on the grounds of conscience or on medical grounds. In each case written application must be made to the Vice Principal (Pastoral) who will issue an 'Assembly Pass'. Pupils who are exempt from assembly must go to another designated room where they will be supervised by a member of staff and announcements and information about pupil successes will be passed on.

Staff who wish to be exempted from assembly must request exemption in writing to the headmaster. Staff exempted from assembly may be assigned other duties.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

The **Board of Governors** is responsible for ensuring the policy is in place, and that it is regularly reviewed and amended to meet the needs of the school community.

The **Vice Principal (Pastoral)** has overall responsibility for the assembly programme including organising the assembly rota. The Vice Principal (Pastoral) will maintain a record of assembly themes to monitor quality and the variety of the themes delivered.

**Members of SLT and senior staff** have responsibility to fulfil their obligations on the Tuesday assembly rota or to seek a substitute if they are unavailable.

**Heads of year**, supported by **form tutors**, are responsible for overseeing the Friday assembly programme for their Year Group.

**Form tutors** have responsibility to ensure good order among their Form Class and attending to any pupil who feels ill in assembly.

**Heads of house** are responsible for organising monthly House Assemblies, in conjunction with the appropriate member of SLT and the various House Captains.

**Monitoring and Review**

The headmaster and Vice Principal (Pastoral) will monitor the implementation of this policy. The Board of Governors will regularly review this policy, amend it as necessary and make it available to parents.

**Linked Documents:**

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Form Tutor Handbook