



# Celebrating Festivals

at The Sheiling Ringwood

# Why

## do we celebrate with festivals?

The calendar at The Sheiling Ringwood marks many festive occasions throughout the year.

At the numerous points of the year, festivals from a wide variety of nations and religions are observed. This helps to deepen our experience of all cultures.

We aim to create a beautiful and inspiring annual cycle of celebrations. This guide gives a little taste of the festivals that we enjoy as a group where both school and college students and staff can join to celebrate together.

We feel it is important to provide opportunities throughout the year for practical learning and for a rich, imaginative curriculum.

# The importance of our festival calendar

The festivals address the basic human need for rhythm and repetition. They form the heartbeat of school and college life.

Each festival has its place in the cycle of the year and can be looked forward to and looked back on as well as being experienced at the time.

Festivals give our children and young people an orientation in time, in a society where many of the natural rhythms of life can be lost.

We also aim to cultivate feelings of reverence and wonder through rich and diverse experiences. Celebrating the festivals especially encourage these feelings through the weaving together of live music, singing and movement.

It can help us develop personal growth and essential human qualities such as calm focus, patience, deep listening and the ability to look after things, by using the same objects and beautiful decorations year in, year out, as well as nurturing the soul.

We encourage the understanding of respect for beauty, goodness and truth and the wonders of the natural world.

# Our Festivals

## we celebrate together

To encompass inclusivity, without imposing, we choose to follow the passing of the seasons of nature as a central theme for our festival calendar.

The seasons passing occurs year after year, with room for variations and development. There are connections with religious festivals, stories and customs with the seasons of the year - while at the same time offering an immediate link to our students' own daily experiences of their natural surroundings.

To include religious and non-religious images and ideas from many traditions in an inclusive way, not based on a faith but on the belief in the infinite value of every human being, living in a universe that can be both nurturing and challenging.

To do this following Rudolf Steiner's interpretation of the cycle of the year in its connection with the life of the human soul.





# Candlemas

Candlemas is a time of year when the lengthening of daylight hours becomes noticeable. This is celebrated because it means that winter will soon be over, and Spring will come. The time of darkness will give way to new light and life-sustaining growth will come to us.

Candlemas is typically celebrated with the candles representing the purifying nature of light, both spiritually and physically. We enjoy this love of light, with the warmth and colour of candles, both making and lighting. We enjoy walking and singing together.

# Easter

Like Christmas, Easter takes place during the holidays. The time leading up to Easter is, nevertheless, a time of preparation, making decorations and painting colourful eggs.

Spring is in the air as nature around us begins to reawaken. It is a time of resurrection and transformation which each class celebrates in age-appropriate ways.

# Annunciation

The feast of the Annunciation marks the visit of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, during which he told her that she would be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is celebrated on 25 March each year.





# Pancakes and Carnival

Over the years, this festival has become one of the highlights of the calendar for all of our children and young people. Our staff enjoy the day equally as much!

Teachers and students dress up, there are high-spirited pancake races and pancake eating. There is a carnival parade full of vibrant music, dancing and laughter. We enjoy a visual feast of colour from the student crafts, masks and costumes.

Classes often perform jovial sketches and songs for one another.



# May Day

Fresh flowers symbolising the arrival of Spring and new growth and a rainbow of coloured ribbons provide the backdrop for dancing around the Maypole.

In ancient times, May Day celebrated the beginning of Summer. The Maypole represented the tree of life and fertility, while children and adults wore flowers as a symbol of the Spring Goddess Flora and a reminder that warmer days are ahead.

# Whitsun

Students and staff assemble in the hall and often there is a wonderful reading in as many different languages as the school and college can muster. A story is told with communication and a beautiful song in eight parts written for the occasion is sung. There are many opportunities for our children and young people to use their wonderful craft skills to make decorations.

# Midsummer

Midsummer Festival is the turning point of the year, the longest day and shortest night in the Northern Hemisphere. It is the mirror opposite of Christmas, or Winter Solstice. A day of fun and merriment and games, activities, music and dance are enjoyed by all.



# Ascension Walk

Ascension is a time of renewal and is important to us all and we look toward spending a rejuvenating day within nature, taking a long walk to a vantage point on higher ground and appreciating the elements surrounding us.

With such beautiful locations all around us, we find it hard to choose where to visit.



# Michaelmas

Here we mark the time of year when nature loses its vitality and goes to sleep; human beings, by contrast, need to wake up.

We are called upon to wake up to the negative forces within us and to work on them and to control them, in order to achieve the right balance within ourselves.

It is a time for initiative and looking to the future. We celebrate with a community meal, a harvest festival and sing Michaelmas songs.





# Sports Day

Always eagerly anticipated by students, parents and staff. A day where both school and college hold Sports Days. This day is full of fun and action packed activities with something for everyone.

Games and sports are an integral part of social and cultural life. They promote physical agility, grace, social awareness, self-esteem and cooperation. Above all, it is a day of community, light-hearted competition and an abundance of delight and support for each and every participant.

# Diwali

There are many ways around the world to celebrate the changing seasons and time of year. Diwali is the Indian Festival of Light. This traditional festival can be celebrated with dancing, colourful costumes and delicious food. A wonderful creative and colourful experience.

# Eid

Eid is a religious festival which is celebrated by Muslims all over the world. It marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Eid is the first day after that month and this festival can be celebrated with music, gifts, decorations and joining together for a delicious meal.

# Autumn Joy

Martinmas, or the festival of St. Martin, is celebrated with a night-time lantern walk. Often followed with songs and autumn treats.

Like Halloween, Martinmas is rooted in Christian ritual but is now more of a cultural event, anticipated by children in many European countries.

Chiefly celebrated by making lanterns and going on a lantern procession after dark, it is spectacular, inspiring and beautiful.





# Hanukkah

Many celebrations embrace the need for light in the darkness, a way to anticipate mindfully the return of the light as the seasons progress and pass. Another celebration that occurs in the later part of the year is Hanukkah. Providing time for us to join together as a community.

# St. Nicholas

The precursor of our modern Santa was, in fact, a third century bishop of a place called Myra, in what is now Turkey. He was renowned for his love of children and became an important figure all over Europe from the 15th century onwards.

Children left their shoes out at bedtime, often filled with some food for his horse, only to find them filled with goodies on the following morning.

If we are in luck, St. Nicholas sometimes visits a classroom or two in person, in full costume, where he is received with much respect. St. Nicholas often leaves a gift for our children and young people.

# Shepherds Play

A medieval mystery play from the island of Oberufer in the Danube. These plays were discovered by Rudolf Steiner to be virtually unaltered since they were first performed in the Middle Ages and were subsequently translated into English and other languages.

They are performed in Steiner schools throughout the world. We tend to perform our plays over and over because of the beautiful simplicity of both the language and the images, ideal for presenting to young children.

# Christmas

Christmas is, of course, celebrated during the holidays, but the time leading up to it is magical for children and adults alike. It is a time full of anticipation and excitement, not just about receiving but also about giving.

Our classrooms become hives of activity, filled with craft work, the making of cards and decorations and highlighted with the tantalising smell of baking.

Classes share a special advent celebration on the first Sunday in Advent, to which parents and friends are invited, which includes the children walking into an Advent spiral to light a candle.





For further information about our annual festivals  
please get in touch

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