



Bristol Cathedral



Bristol Cathedral Choir Prospectus

Join nearly 900 years of musical heritage

A CHOIR has been singing on the site of the Cathedral since the Augustinian monastery was founded in 1140.

When the church formally became Bristol Cathedral in 1542 its statutes required that provision be made for the development and maintenance of the choir, whose role was to sing the praises of God.

The passing of the centuries has modified but not destroyed the pattern. The choir consists of around 28 choristers (14 boys and 14 girls), all of whom are educated at Bristol Cathedral Choir School

'Wherefore with my utmost art I will sing thee.'

George Herbert, 1593-1632

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A more comprehensive version of this document is available as the Chorister Handbook. Music Administrator July 2014



From the Canon Precentor

Dear Parent / Carer,

Thank you for expressing an interest in your child's becoming a Probationary Chorister at Bristol Cathedral. The Choir lies at the heart of life at the Cathedral, sustaining a pattern of worship that reaches back nearly nine hundred years.

Our choristers learn some wonderful music, discover what it is to work in a talented team and, whilst still very young, perform at an exceptional level. They and their families are important members of the Cathedral and form part of the wider community.

The experience of being a chorister is one that will remain with your child for the rest of their life, and frequently leads to a music-associated career.

If, having read through this Prospectus, you think that this commitment is a realistic possibility both for yourself and your child, please see page 13 for what to do next. You should find all the information you need in this Prospectus. Do please note that the commitment we expect is that a Probationer will enter Bristol Cathedral Choir School in Year 7, and then remain a full chorister for three successive years after that.

Once again, we thank you for your interest.



The Revd Canon Nicola Stanley
Canon Precentor

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An Introduction from the Music Administrator

BECOMING A CHORISTER in a Cathedral Choir is a big commitment. It is one which will demand a lot of your child's time and energy, and your own as well. But it is one which will reap huge rewards. Your child will become part of a tightly-knit social group, and will learn routine, teamwork, structure, discipline. He or she will experience the joys of singing in a beautiful and ancient building every week. And you will form often close and lasting friendships with other chorister parents.

As well as being the Music Administrator, I am also a Lay Clerk in the Cathedral Choir, and a former cathedral chorister myself. I know only too well the commitment expected, and the rewards that being a chorister can bring.

What this document sets out to do is give you a flavour of the commitment expected of your child.

If successful, your child will join the Cathedral Choir in Year 5. For the first two years in the Cathedral Choir, your child will be a Probationary Chorister, or 'Probationer' as they are known (or often colloquially just 'probs'). (To aid with clarity, where the term 'chorister' is used, this refers to those full choristers in Year 7 and above. It does not generally include probationers.) This is a time when your child will 'learn the ropes', mentored by an older chorister. They attend fewer services in Year 5 (P5), and then in Year 6 (P6) sing the same services as full choristers. Once your child reaches Year 7 they are expected to attend the Cathedral Choir School. They then begin morning rehearsals before school as well as after school.

It sets out the day to day details of what is expected of choristers – everything from dress and make up to procedures and foreign tours.

It also sets out the Faith Criteria for



Admission for the Cathedral Choir School. This effectively shows that, having been full participating members of the Cathedral Choir as probationers, your child will have met the Faith Criteria needed to join the Cathedral Choir School.

It details the schedule of rehearsals and singing which your child can expect to undertake. Please look at it carefully to get to know what the commitment will be.

This Prospectus sets out the commitment expected of Probationers with a look ahead at Chorister life. If you would like a more comprehensive version of this document, detailing all chorister commitment expectations, please contact me.

Finally if you have any enquiries, there is a list of contacts on the back page. In the first instance for any enquiries you may have, you can contact me. If you wish to arrange a voice trial, you can contact Mr Mark Lee, the Master of the Choristers & Organist.



Tim Popple

Music Administrator

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When will my child be expected to attend?

The commitment to the choir increases within the two years as a probationer, and again when your child becomes a full chorister in Year 7. This gives an idea of the weekly routine to which your child will be expected to commit, both as a probationer, and as a chorister. The probationary period in the Cathedral choir is a time for observation and absorption. They will not be expected to participate fully in all services, but will be given clear directions as to when they might contribute musically. However they will participate at the rehearsal stage, thereby gaining knowledge of the repertoire. There is an expectation of greater responsibility for the Year 6 probationers.

Boy Probationers' Timetable

The normal weekly timetable is as follows:

Every Monday

3.50pm-4.15pm – tea

4.15pm-6.00pm – rehearsal & Evensong

(Two Mondays a month, this service is sung by either the Gentlemen of the Choir or the Cathedral Consort, and the boys are not required. This will be detailed in the termly Choir Diary.)

Every Wednesday

3.50pm-4.15pm – tea

4.15pm-6.00pm – rehearsal & Evensong

Every other Saturday (Year 6 probationers only)

2.00pm-4.15pm – rehearsal & Evensong

Every other Sunday

9.00am-11.15am – rehearsal & Eucharist

2.45pm-4.30pm – rehearsal & Evensong

Girl Probationers' Timetable

The normal weekly timetable is as follows:

Every Tuesday

3.50pm-4.15pm – tea

4.15pm-6.00pm – rehearsal & Evensong

Every other Saturday (Year 6 probationers only)

2.00pm-4.15pm – rehearsal & Evensong

Every other Sunday

9.00am-11.15am – rehearsal & Eucharist

2.45pm-4.30pm – rehearsal & Evensong

How do I find out details of specific services?

Choir Diary

The Music Administrator sends out the Choir Diary termly. This will give a detailed view of exactly what services your child will be expected to sing, depending on whether he or she is a probationer, or a chorister. Any unusual services will be included in this diary.

Date	Service	Girls			Boys			Lay Clerks	Choral Scholars	Consort
		Choristers	P6	P5	Choristers	P6	P5			
Sunday 08 Jun	10.00am Eucharist with Independent Schools Confirmations									
	3.30pm Evensong									
Monday 09 Jun	All Day - Gents' Singing Lessons									
	5.15pm Evensong									
Tuesday 10 Jun	5.15pm Evensong									
Wednesday 11 Jun	5.15pm Evensong									
Thursday 12 Jun	5.00pm Rehearsal									
Friday 13 Jun	5.15pm Evening Prayer									
	7.30pm Concert Polish Church (rehearsal 5pm - 7pm at the Church)									
Saturday 14 Jun	5.15pm Evening Prayer									
TRINITY SUNDAY										
Sunday 15 Jun	10.00am Eucharist									
	3.30pm Evensong									
Monday 16 Jun	5.15pm Evensong									
Tuesday 17 Jun	5.15pm Evensong									
Wednesday 18 Jun	5.15pm Evensong									
Thursday 19 Jun	5.00pm Rehearsal									
Friday 20 Jun	5.15pm Evensong									
Saturday 21 Jun	3.30pm Evensong									
	Evening - Tour Fundraising Barn Dance - Details to follow									

This is a sample of what the Diary will look like. Where a box is filled in, that indicates where attendance is expected. P6 and P5 refers to probationers in Years 6 and 5 respectively, and the indication here mirrors the commitment notes in the Timetable, above.

1. You can see where surrounding events are detailed, such as the rehearsal which accompanies the concert on Friday 13 June.
2. Note in this sample that Trinity Sunday, as a major feast day in the church's calendar, calls for both girl and boy choristers, and as a result does not require probationers. This is a good example of where Sundays sometimes differ from the normal timetable.
3. Occasionally not all details are present at the time when the Choir Diary needs to be distributed. On these occasions it will be noted that details are to follow or be confirmed, and these details will be emailed out nearer the time.

Emails

Communication between the Cathedral and choir parents is by email. Please ensure that the email address we have for you is up-to-date, and that you read carefully any correspondence sent. Often they will contain information of upcoming events, or any unavoidable changes to the diary.

Who's who at the Cathedral?

There are several key people with whom you will come into contact at the Cathedral.

Useful contact details can be found on the back page of this document.

Canon Nicola Stanley – Canon Precentor

Canon Nicola is primarily responsible for worship and liturgy in the Cathedral. She also has the over-arching responsibility for the Cathedral Choir and the musicians.



Mr Mark Lee – Master of the Choristers & Organist

Mr Lee is responsible for the training, direction, and management of the Cathedral's music. He will be the main point of contact for Probationers and Choristers.

Mr Paul Walton – Assistant Organist

Mr Walton accompanies and assists in the training of the Cathedral Choir.



Mr Tim Pople – Music Administrator

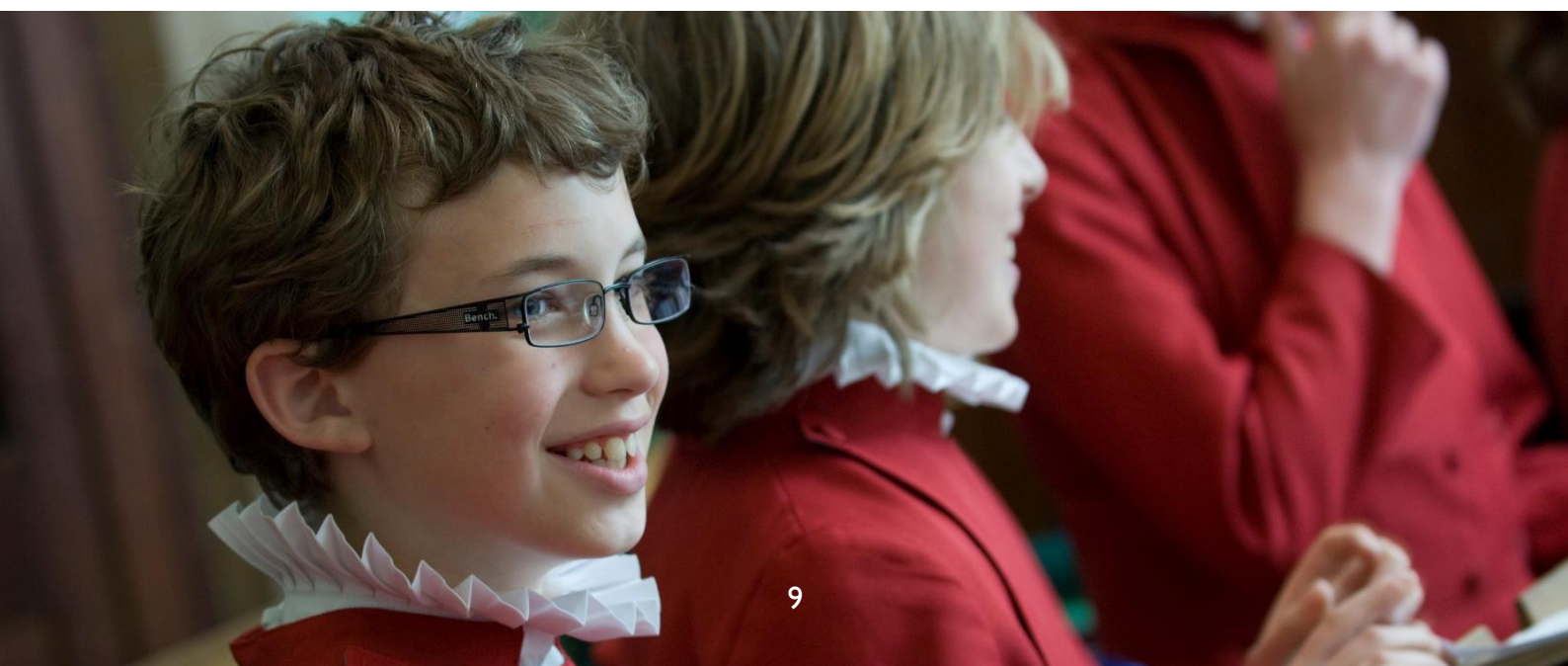
Mr Pople is responsible for the administration of the music within the Cathedral. He creates the Choir Diary, and will be your main point of contact for all administrative enquiries.

Mrs Sarah Jenkinson – Chorister Tutor

Mrs Jenkinson is a member of the Bristol Cathedral Choir School staff. She facilitates communication between the Cathedral, the school, the parents and the choristers. The chorister tutor attends staff meetings, and keeps staff informed of additions to the choristers' workload, which may necessitate flexibility regarding homework deadlines etc.



When possible, the Chorister Tutor will attend chorister tea in order to spend time with the choristers pastorally. When the choristers are required to attend a rehearsal or service outside the normal hours, the Chorister Tutor will try to offer supervision for those choristers who may need it. The Chorister Tutor will accompany choristers on trips whenever teaching and personal commitments allow.



How will my child be expected to conduct him or herself?

Being a Cathedral Chorister requires dedicated commitment. They are very much on display in performance, and in appearance. Choristers are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism, as they are, to all intents and purposes, professional musicians. As such, the following guidelines for conduct are in place.

Mentors

Each new probationer is assigned to a full chorister who will provide support.

Dress

Probationers should, wherever possible, comply with Chorister dress codes. When their school has no uniform, they may purchase a choir hoodie or polo shirt to wear with black trousers or a skirt.

Hair

Boys must have reasonably short hair and if girls have long hair, it must be tied back off the face in a single ponytail using a black accessory provided by the chorister.

Equipment

All choristers are equipped with a pencil when in the Cathedral, and should look after it. A handkerchief is advisable at all times and could be kept in cassock pockets.

Rankings within the Choir

Probationers – New entrants into the Choir will normally remain a probationer for at least two years. Probationers in Year 6 (P6) will be distinguished by the wearing of an additional collar. Probationers will be considered for admission to Bristol Cathedral Choir School under the **Faith Criteria** (see page 15).

Time Keeping

All choristers should arrive at the Cathedral 5 minutes before rehearsals are due to begin. Parents should **not leave their children unsupervised** until they ensure the member of staff taking the rehearsal has arrived.

Discipline

Cathedral Choristers are members of two high-profile institutions, The Cathedral, and the Cathedral Choir School, and are therefore 'on show' most days. A high standard of discipline, behaviour and thoughtfulness to others is expected at all times. All choristers are expected to maintain high standards.

Pastoral care

This is a paramount concern and the Master of the Choristers and Chorister Tutor are available to see parents whenever necessary. Please telephone to arrange an appointment or try something more *ad hoc* after Evensong.

Absence

If a chorister is absent due to illness, it is very important that parents inform the Master of the Choristers at the earliest opportunity. See the contacts list at the back of this booklet.

While we would expect all choristers to put in 100% attendance, aside from illness there may be other occasions, such as major family events, where absence is desired. In these circumstances please contact the Master of the Choristers to discuss at the earliest convenience.

Term plan

Choristers are required to sing until Christmas Day in the Michaelmas term, until Easter Day in the Lent term and the Sunday after the end of the Trinity term. One weekend of each half term is free from choir duties, usually, but not always, the first. Please check before making any firm plans. In addition there is a Saturday off in each calendar month. (Year 5 probationers do not sing Saturdays in any case.)

Special Services

Over and above the statutory services outlined in the timetable, there are various special services throughout the year at which the Choir is required to sing whenever possible. These will be outlined on the Choir Diary. There will occasionally be services of national importance at which the Cathedral Choir would be expected to sing at, necessarily, relatively short notice.

Foreign Tour

We aim to tour every two years to a foreign destination. However, it should be noted that the Cathedral's resources are slim, and the maintenance of the daily worship is the priority. The establishment of a tour will always require fund raising activity from all involved. Year 6 probationers have the opportunity to join the choristers for foreign tours.

Voice-care

Choristers are, in effect, first study singers. As we know, the voice is a very delicate instrument: it must be looked after. Parents, please regulate a reasonable bedtime for your child. A tired body cannot sing well, and damage may occur.

Fees

Choristers receive a fee for singing at weddings and funerals in the Cathedral. This sum is enhanced by 50% if the service is sound-recorded or 100% if video-recorded. There are other occasional fees which are dealt with individually as and when.

On joining the Choir, choristers should complete the appropriate form to enable funds to be transferred directly to bank accounts. (*See also Chorister Information Pack for further details.*)

Incentives

Probationers receive termly financial assistance for travel reimbursement.

Services and Concerts

Please try to encourage friends and family to come and hear our performances whenever you can. We have a good product – let people know about it!



How can I get involved?

As in any other Cathedral, the Music Department works beyond the limits of its brief and therefore beyond the time limitations of the small number of music staff. As a philosophy, however, we believe that the extra activities we take on enrich and enliven the music making of the Cathedral and enhance the Choristers' enjoyment.

We have had some wonderful help from parents over the last couple of years. If anyone *can* offer any time to help out in some way, we would be very grateful. If you cannot, but you have got time to come to services and hear your child sing, we will be delighted to see you.

Music Forum

Every term a representative parent of one of the head choristers, a probationer parent, and a Consort parent, get together with the music staff at a Music Forum to discuss any ongoing issues or queries that maybe are more appropriate within a group environment, for open discussion. Details of this are emailed out nearer the time, and the date is given in the Choir Diary.

Teas

There are a couple of occasions a year where chorister parents get together to organise tea, or slightly more substantial meal. These are usually organised by the head chorister parents. These events include a buffet style bring-and-share tea to end the academic year; a tea before the Nine Lessons and Carols service; a meal before the Carols by Candlelight concert in December. Details are given each time, and where the event is not bring-and-share, expenses paid. These are great social gatherings for parents to get to know each other.

Volunteering

Many chorister parents become part of the wider Cathedral community. At the Cathedral we have a strong network of volunteers, but more are always welcome, as others retire, or move. In the past chorister parents have helped fill that time between dropping off their children, and attending Evensong, by helping polish brass, or in the beautiful cathedral garden, as a volunteer in an education capacity... There are many opportunities, and you can email pastoral.admin@bristol-cathedral.co.uk if you would like to help.

What do I do next?

Having read through this document, talk through with your child the commitment and expectations, and decide whether you want to take the next step.

If you would like any further information, in the first instance contact the Music Administrator, or the Chorister Tutor. Both have personal experience of chorister life, as a former chorister, and as a mother of two former choristers, respectively.

If you would like to arrange a voice trial, please contact Mr Mark Lee, who will discuss what is required.



Bristol Cathedral Choir School

Probationer Chorister – Faith Criterion

Bristol Cathedral Choir School is a Church of England Academy faith school. The school will admit up to 8 probationer choristers, of the Year 7 intake, as a demonstration of faith based on their membership of the probationer chorister programme with the Cathedral. This fulfils the faith criterion for Bristol Cathedral Choir School.

The details of the Faith Criterion for Admissions is detailed below.

Capacity of the Probationer Chorister Programme

The Cathedral can only offer a limited number of places on the probationer chorister programme due to a series of constraints.

Admission to Probationer Chorister Programme

The Cathedral will apply the standard voice aptitude trial before admission to be a probationer, on the understanding that the applicants are entering a relationship with the Cathedral at this stage, not with the Bristol Cathedral Choir School.

Attendance

The number of sessions (rehearsals and services) attended as a percentage of the number held during the probationer chorister programme.

Session

A 'session' is a service/concert plus its attendant rehearsal beforehand. It may occasionally comprise a rehearsal alone which will be clearly delineated in the Termly Choir Diary as requiring probationer chorister attendance.

Registration

Attendance at the sessions will be registered by either the Master of the Choristers, or his Assistant. The register will be kept in a locked office in the Cathedral with the date being analysed on a half termly basis.

Probationer Chorister Programme

The probationer chorister programme period runs from September 1st of Year 5 to the Bristol City Council Coordinated Admissions closing date in Year 6, for admission to Year 7 in the following academic year.

Absences

Absence due to illness will require a phone call in the first instance i.e. occasion 1, followed by written explanation for continued absence, and a doctor's certificate if more than 3 consecutive sessions are missed. Under exceptional circumstances, allowance will be made for absence, at the discretion of the Special Circumstances Committee.

Special Circumstances Committee

Terms of Reference: To make decisions on legitimate absence based on available evidence.

Composition: Master of the Choristers, Assistant Principal Student Support, Former Chorister Parent

Attendance Codes

Accepted Attendance codes will be used in the keeping of the register.

‘C’ which means authorised absence will be at the discretion of the committee and will be considered in cases of professional performance or family circumstances.

Lateness

Lateness should be notified by phone whenever possible. Should more than half the rehearsal time be missed an ‘absence’ will be recorded.

Faith Oversubscription Criteria

1. % attendance
2. Random Allocation in front of an independent scrutineer

Waiting List

Bristol Cathedral Choir School will operate a waiting list for the faith criterion. If a place under this criterion becomes available the oversubscription criteria will be applied to those who have requested in writing to remain on the waiting list.



Useful Telephone Numbers & Email Addresses

Cathedral Office

0117 926 4879 (*office hours*)

Bristol Cathedral Choir School

0117 353 5000

Canon Nicola Stanley

Canon Precentor

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Mark Lee

Master of the Choristers and Organist

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Assistant Organist & Director of Cathedral Consort

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