



CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

LLANDAFF ♦ CARDIFF



Becoming a Chorister *Frequently Asked Questions*

- **What are you looking for in a chorister?**

An enthusiasm for music and, in particular, singing! New choristers start off as a *Probationer* for up to three terms, during which time they learn many of the skills needed to become a fully-fledged chorister. We look for a *sparky* personality in potential choristers as well as concentration and focus, good reading skills, an ability to work as part of a team, and a supportive family. We don't expect children to already be able to read music or to have had much, if any, vocal training, but we are on the lookout for the beginnings of a good musical ear.

- **I worry that my child will get quite tired.**

Though it is a very involved life, choristers quickly get used to the routine of rehearsals and services. During term time, there are rehearsals before the start of the school day on four mornings and two services after school each week. In addition, each set of choristers has duties every other weekend. There are also duties in the school holidays at Christmas and Easter, though most choristers would agree that these are the best times of the year!

- **What does chorister training entail?**

Choristers learn their craft by doing it! The younger choristers naturally copy their senior colleagues and, singing almost every day of the week, they learn to read music and to manage their voices in the most natural way possible. In addition, during their first few terms in the choir, Probationers have a programme of training which prepares them to be choristers. This includes work on singing and music theory during the morning rehearsal slots. In addition, Probationers perform in services with the choir right from the very start of their time as choristers, helping to integrate them into the team.

- **When will their Choristership end?**

Probationers are usually *made up* to full choristers (gaining their white surplice in addition to their coloured cassock) at the start of Year 5, progressing through the ranks of the choir. Choristers usually leave the choir at the end of Year 8 or, in some cases, Year 9. If a boy's voice changes before this, then he may have to stop singing with the choir early.

- **What happens in a Voice Trial?**

We ask candidates to prepare one or two songs to sing to us to show off their vocal potential. In addition, there are some simple aural tests to see how the musical ear is developing and a short passage of text to read. Finally, if candidates play an instrument, they can choose to play a piece. The whole audition lasts only 15 or 20 minutes and our music team do all they can to make the audition a friendly, enjoyable experience in order to set candidates at ease and ensure they perform to the best of their ability.

- **How does the work of a chorister fit in with the school day and other activities at the Cathedral School?**

The chorister schedule fits around the school day so that no academic lessons are missed. Every care is taken to try and ensure that choristers can take part in residential trips, sport, drama and the wider co-curricular life of The Cathedral School. There are occasions when chorister duties have to come first, but a careful dialogue is maintained between Cathedral and School to ensure clashes are kept to a minimum.

- **Does my child have to be a pupil at The Cathedral School?**

Yes. Candidates for choristerships will be required to meet the entry criteria for the School, before a place at school and therefore, a choristership is offered. In order to arrange a place in the school, there first has to be a place within the appropriate year group. Then parents have an appointment with Mrs Walsh, Head of Primary, and register their child. Registration is completed when we hold a registration form and non-refundable fee of £100. A taster and assessment day follows. This gives the child a chance to see what a day at The Cathedral School is like and for us to see them in a classroom setting as well as undertaking some one-to-one assessments with them. We need to make sure that academically, The Cathedral School is the right school for them, and they will be happy and thrive in this environment.

- **What are the financial arrangements for being a Chorister?**

We require parents to sign a chorister specific contract with us and then the fee discount is applied to fee invoices. This is in addition to the contract between parent and school, for the academic place.

When a choristership ends the fee discount no longer applies. Many pupils will apply for a Year 7 music scholarship and if awarded this is on an honorary basis until the choristership ends. That scholarship award is then applied.

- **What does the weekly schedule look like?**

Day	Boys	Girls	Time	Collection
Monday	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	08:00	
		Evensong	16:30	18:10
Tuesday	Rehearsal	DAY OFF	08:00	
	Evensong		16:30	18:10
Wednesday	DAY OFF	Rehearsal	08:00	
		Evensong	16:30	18:10
Thursday	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	08:00	
	Evensong		16:30	18:10
Friday	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	08:00	
	Evensong (occasional)	Evensong (occasional)	16:30	18:10
Saturday	DAY OFF			
Sunday (alternate weeks)	Choral Eucharist	Choral Eucharist	09:45	12:20
	Evensong	Evensong	15:00	16:45