



# Application Pack

**Ref: VOL14**

**School Governor (multiple posts)**

**Advert date: 12 February 2025**

**Closing date: 3 March 2025 (Noon)**

**Westminster Abbey Choir School**



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# A Letter from the Headteacher

Dear Prospective Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in Westminster Abbey Choir School. Our school is an incredibly special place. The pupils at our school are articulate, thoughtful and incredibly responsible young people. Their love of learning and exceptional musical talents mean that they are a joy to teach. As a full boarding community, the Choir School can often feel like an extended family. The staff team is an integral support network and works hard to ensure that all of our boarders cope with the significant demands of their busy schedule.

We are seeking several dedicated individuals to volunteer as an Independent Governor at our school. At Westminster Abbey Choir School, we value strong governance that supports the welfare and educational development of our pupils. As an Independent Governor, you will bring an objective perspective to our Board, ensuring decisions are made with the best interests of the students at heart. Our school is unique in educating only the Choristers of Westminster Abbey, with a close-knit community of up to 30 pupils. This offers a rare opportunity to make a significant impact within a small, highly focused environment.

If you have any questions about the role, I would be delighted to answer them and I can be contacted through my PA, Jennifer Benjamin at [headteacher@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:headteacher@westminster-abbey.org). I can thoroughly recommend working at the Choir School – I may be biased, but I think it is a once in a lifetime opportunity!

Best wishes,



Dr Emma Margrett  
Headteacher



# About Westminster Abbey Choir School

Westminster Abbey Choir School is a remarkable school. It exists to educate and care for around 30 boy choristers of Westminster Abbey. Unique amongst choir schools, Westminster Abbey Choir School admits only singing boys, who are boarders in the relative peace and calm of Dean's Yard in the centre of London. It is thus a small, tightly knit community, with a strong sense of shared purpose both among pupils and between pupils and teachers. The school has a warm, cooperative atmosphere in which flexibility and teamwork are key to the smooth running of the boys' busy timetable.

Boys are selected by audition and academic test at the age of seven to start at the school in Year 4. At age 13 they move on to one of a wide range of leading schools, to which the many win music scholarships.

In addition to providing outstanding musical training, Westminster Abbey Choir School maintains a full academic curriculum leading to the Common Entrance Examination at 13+, and in some cases to academic scholarships to senior schools. High standards are expected of both pupils and teachers. This inevitably makes for a busy weekly schedule in which academic and musical commitments have to be balanced.

The school is generously staffed with eight full time and three part time academic staff, eight support staff and over 15 peripatetic music staff. As a department of Westminster Abbey, the school forms part of the Abbey's overall administrative structure, drawing on its maintenance, finance, IT and human resources departments.

In a school of this size, staff get to know each boy very well indeed and several of the staff live on the premises. Central to the school's ethos is an informal, supportive atmosphere in which all of its members – pupils and staff – treat one another with consideration and respect. Indeed, this culture is common to the whole community of Westminster Abbey.

The close relationship with Westminster Abbey brings a special dimension to the school. The boys sing in the Abbey almost every day of the week and develop a special affinity and love for this church, which is both an ancient place of Christian worship and a high-profile national symbol. They are regularly called upon to sing at special occasions such as the state funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of HM King Charles III. They also give public concerts and recitals both here and abroad, and make recordings.

Outside the normal run of singing and academic lessons, there is a busy programme of extra-curricular activities. In addition to the usual array of sports, boys may be found in a range of pastimes, from sailing and rock-climbing to origami and chess. A special feature of the school year are the periods leading up to Christmas and Easter when the choristers are required to sing in Westminster Abbey. The boys eagerly look forward to these periods and the school continues with a programme of seasonal events.

The Dean and Chapter funds 80% of the fees for all pupils at the Choir School and there is the opportunity for parents to apply for additional, means tested, bursaries which can cover up to 100% of the fees.

The school is committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Details of the safeguarding policy can be found on the Choir School website: <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/safeguarding-rse/> and a summary is provided in Appendix 1.

# About Westminster Abbey

Above all else, the Abbey is a church, a place of prayer and praise and holy ground at the heart of the nation. It is also a treasured part of Britain's heritage and a leading venue for tourism. The Abbey has occupied a central place in the celebration of great events for the nation and remains one of the most beautiful architectural masterpieces in Britain.

A living Church, Westminster Abbey is where the coronation of Kings and Queens has taken place since 1066, and where many of the Kings and Queens of England and of the United Kingdom are buried. Principal among them is St Edward the Confessor, King of England from 1042 to 1066, whose shrine is at the heart of the Abbey Church. Beside and around them are buried or commemorated many of the great women and men from almost every century of British history: statesmen and politicians, lawyers, warriors, clerics, writers, artists, musicians.

Neither a cathedral nor a parish church, Westminster Abbey (or the Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster to give it its correct title) is a Royal Peculiar under the jurisdiction of a Dean and Chapter and with direct accountability to the Sovereign. This relationship with the Sovereign dates back to the origins of the Abbey over a millennium ago, but its current form stems from the Charter granted to the Abbey by Elizabeth I on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1560.

We are a welcoming community, but also complex and multi-faceted, with nearly 600 highly committed employees and volunteers. We have deep respect for the heritage of which we are the custodians, but we evolve continuously to meet the opportunities of the future. In recent times this has included the creation of new departments to focus on transforming our digital presence and delivering a significantly expanded programme of public and community engagement. In addition, our newly created Employee Engagement Forum and Social Engagement Statement is helping us to support and develop our staff and volunteers. We have reshaped our governance arrangements, including a new Strategic Board to help us navigate the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades.

## **Westminster Abbey's mission is:**

- To offer daily divine Worship to Almighty God and resource the Church in this vocation;
- To serve the Sovereign;
- To proclaim the Gospel to the nation and Commonwealth, celebrating the distinctive witness of the Christian faith and engaging with our shared and public life;
- To provide a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment for all who come to the Abbey;
- To care for the precious resources entrusted to us: our people, partnerships, buildings, heritage and money.

## **Our Values:**

As one we serve each other, our visitors and the wider world in all we do with:

- Truthfulness
- Integrity
- Empathy
- Excellence

Following the State Funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, which were broadcast to national and international audiences in their millions, interest in the Abbey is very strong. We attract over a million visitors from around the world every year, and our summers and peak period are incredibly busy. However, we receive no regular income from the State, the Church of England or the Crown, and rely almost entirely on income from visitors.

**It is an exciting time to join the Abbey, and we look forward to receiving your application and if successful, welcoming your contribution to the Abbey's history.**

# Job Description

**JOB TITLE:** Independent Governor

**ACCOUNTABLE TO:** Board of Governors

## **MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Know and support the aims of the school and ensure that these are achieved by the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Determine the overall direction and development of the school through good governance and clear strategic planning.
- Promote and develop the school so that it improves and maintains its relevance in society.
- Provide support and challenge for the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Ensure that the school and its representatives act within the legal and regulatory framework of the sector and in line with the school's governing documents.
- Always act in the best interest of the school, beneficiaries and future beneficiaries.
- Maintain sound financial management of the school's resources, ensuring expenditure is in line with its objectives.
- Interview and appoint the headteacher and monitor the work and activities of the senior leadership team.
- Maintain absolute confidentiality about all sensitive/confidential information received in the course of governors' responsibilities to the school, and to comply with the conflicts of interest policy.
- Contribute expertise to the discussions of the Governing Body.

# Further Information

## Introduction

The role of Independent Governors is to provide impartial oversight and guidance to the school's governing body. They contribute to strategic decision-making, ensuring that the school's policies and practices align with its values, objectives, and legal requirements. Independent Governors bring an external perspective, helping to challenge and support the leadership team while remaining objective and unbiased. They play a crucial role in monitoring the school's performance, safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders, and promoting the overall effectiveness and transparency of governance. Their independence allows them to make decisions in the best interest of the school without conflicts of interest, ensuring accountability and the continued success of Westminster Abbey Choir School.

## Time Commitment

- Attend as many meetings and school events as possible.
- The Governing Body meets 3 times each academic year, falling once in each term, usually 2-4pm on a Monday or Tuesday afternoon.
- Governors also serve on one of the two committees of the Governing Body, one of which meets 3 times and the other 2 times each academic year, falling once in each term, several weeks before the Governing Body meeting usually 2-4pm on a Monday or Tuesday afternoon.
- School events that governors are expected to attend at least occasionally include Evensong and Eucharist services in Westminster Abbey, termly instrumental concerts, annual musical production, annual valedictory luncheon. 3-4 events per academic year would be the minimum expectation.
- Be prepared to commit sufficient time to visit the school periodically during working hours and meet the pupils and staff 1-2 times per academic year; to read the necessary reports and papers in preparation for the 3 Governing Body and 2 or 3 committee meetings each year and attend them; and serve on additional working groups or attend ad hoc meetings as required.
- Attend mandatory training courses and seminars, particularly on NB there is almost always the option to complete these online.

## **The governing body is interested in receiving applications from people with expertise in some of the following areas:**

- Educational Strategy
- Legal
- Boarding School
- Marketing
- Healthcare

## **The following skills are also of interest to the governing body so candidates with these experiences are encouraged to apply:**

- Education, particularly Specialist Education (e.g. experience of chorister schools or other specialities such as dance, drama etc.)
- IT
- Choral Music
- Safeguarding
- Project Management
- Finance

Apart from the skills that they bring to a governing body, governors should be capable individuals of sound judgement with strong interpersonal skills. Without doubt the role is very rewarding and enjoyable.

# Volunteering with Westminster Abbey Choir School

## **Employment Status and Salary**

This post is unpaid and voluntary.

## **References**

Shortlisted candidates will be required to provide proof of their identity and right to volunteer in the UK when attending for interview.

All appointments will be subject to satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS and a minimum of two references satisfactory to the Choir School. Applicants should note that the school's policy is always to contact referees for verification of references and, in addition, follows best practice to ascertain the reasons for the termination of any previous employment in all cases where a candidate has worked with children.

## **Equality statement**

Westminster Abbey aims at all times to recruit the person who is most suited to the role.

The Abbey and the Choir School will ensure that their shortlisting, interviewing and selection procedures avoid discrimination in any way, including on grounds of age, disability, gender, marital status or civil partnership, race, nationality or ethnic origins, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Please ensure the equality section of the online form is completed. This will help us monitor our recruitment practice. The equality form will not be seen by the people making the selection decision.

## **Safeguarding**

Westminster Abbey is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk. To prevent them from harm, we undertake appropriate checks on staff and volunteers and require them to complete relevant safeguarding training. Offers are subject to a relevant level of criminal record check, receipt of references satisfactory to Westminster Abbey, right to volunteer in the UK and, where applicable, proof of professional qualifications and medical clearance, which may include a work health assessment through our occupational health provider.

## How to Apply



You are advised to read the role description and person specification carefully and think about how your experience, skills and abilities help you to meet the requirements listed in the role description. Use the 'Supporting Statement' section of the form to tell us how you meet each of the requirements. Tell us about other relevant experience such as community and voluntary experience. Clear information on how you meet all the requirements of the job, with relevant examples, will help us with the selection decision, and we may not be able to shortlist you for interview if you do not provide this.

Please email your completed application form to: [volunteers@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:volunteers@westminster-abbey.org). Please mark your email "Application for WACS Independent Governor role."

Your completed form should arrive no later than 12 noon on Monday 3 March.

## **The Recruitment Process**

Interviews will be held on Tuesday 18 March.

If you would like to learn more about the post before applying then you are very welcome to contact the Headteacher of Westminster Abbey Choir School, Dr Emma Margrett, via her PA on 020 7654 4918 or email: [headteacher@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:headteacher@westminster-abbey.org).

Please also note that the school website contains further information which informally give an insight into life at the Choir School: <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/choir-school>.

