



Application Pack

Ref: VOL15

Choir School Volunteer

Advert date: 12 February 2025

**Applications are reviewed on a
termly basis**

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 currently seeking dedicated individuals to volunteer at Westminster Abbey Choir School. As a volunteer, your primary role will be to provide enthusiastic and supportive assistance to our pupils, both inside and outside the classroom. This will include helping during boarding time and accompanying students on school trips. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to support teachers with classroom displays and lesson preparation as needed, contributing to the overall growth and development of our school community.

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. 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 21st 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

ROLE TITLE: Choir School Volunteer

KEY CONTACTS: Headteacher, Deputy Head, Director of Studies

ROLE SUMMARY: The Westminster Abbey Choir School Volunteer's main role is to be an enthusiastic and supportive presence within the school, supporting pupils inside and outside of lessons, during boarding time and on school trips; and supporting teachers with classroom displays or lesson preparation as appropriate.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ROLE:

- Enhancing the lives and learning of the choristers.
- Supporting the headteacher and other members of staff in achieving the school's aims.
- Voluntary and unpaid in nature with time commitment to suit the school and the volunteer

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- Classroom Support
- Assistance with visits or events
- Administrative support
- Mentorship
- Supporting with the implementation of the transformation of the learning environment
- Assisting on school trips or in workshops

This is an opportunity to become part of a vibrant community that fosters musical excellence and personal growth. Your contribution as a volunteer will make a meaningful impact on the lives of our students.

Volunteers bring a wide range of skills and expertise to schools. They can offer new perspectives, knowledge, and experiences. Volunteers offer their own particular skill set and expertise for the benefit of the pupils and staff at the school and an appropriate timetable for volunteering which draws upon those skills will be devised for any volunteer working within the Choir School.

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 and a criminal record check. References will also be required.

SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Qualifications/Training
 - Relevant educational qualification and/or training.
2. Knowledge/Skills
 - Strong interpersonal skills with a warm and welcoming manner and the ability to work well with children in the 8-13 age range.
3. Experience
 - Experience in education and of working with children.
4. Attributes
 - Flexible, reliable and adaptable.
 - Patience, reliability, and a positive attitude.
 - A passion for music and education.

BENEFITS TO THE VOLUNTEER

- Gain hands-on experience in the unique educational environment of Westminster Abbey Choir School.
- Work closely with talented educators and musicians.
- Contribute to the personal and musical development of the choristers.
- Opportunity to attend performances and events.

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.

Additional Information

Due to the close-knit environment in a full boarding community, applications from close family members of current choristers will not be considered.

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. Please mark your email "Application for Choir School Volunteer role."

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend a 'Westminster Abbey Choir Recruitment Workshop', which are held throughout and will include an opportunity to meet relevant colleagues from the school and attendance at a panel interview.

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.

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>.

