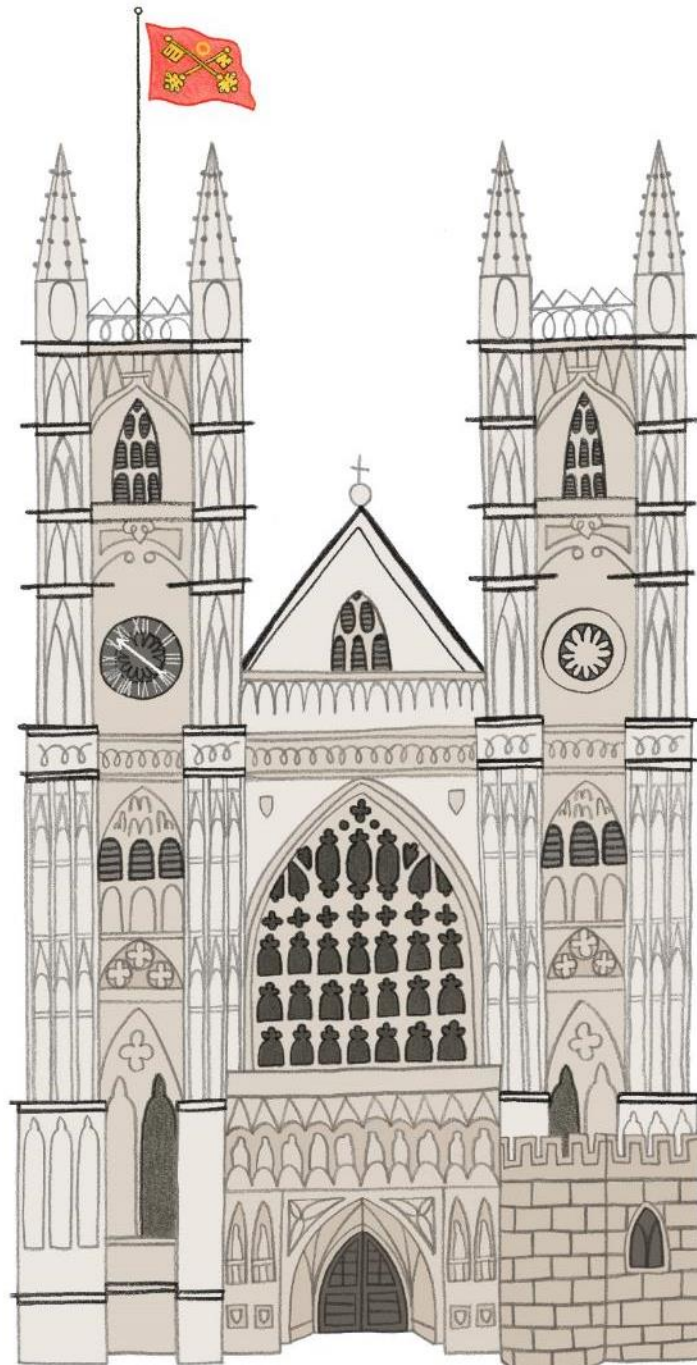




# Self-Guided School Visits 2024-25



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# Welcome

Working with formal learners the Learning Department aims...

...to welcome all, inspire wonder, and reveal the stories of the Abbey.

We love to welcome school groups, and believe that Westminster Abbey is a fantastic educational resource whatever your faith background. Our hope is that educational visits can serve as an inspiring introduction to the Abbey.

This booklet is intended to support you in planning your visit.

It contains information regarding:

- Charges
- Payments and Cancellations
- Safety, Security and Safeguarding
- Preparation and on the day of your visit
- Terms and Conditions for self-led Groups



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## Booking your visit

We offer a range of guided visits, themed tours and workshops. Please see our [current programme](#) on the website for details. If you prefer to book a self-led visit you can still contact us to discuss your plans by emailing [learning@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:learning@westminster-abbey.org) or by phoning 0207 654 4965.

You can also send an enquiry via our online form: [School self-led enquiry \(westminster-abbey.org\)](#)

Useful information to provide in your initial email or phone call:

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice of date
- Number of students and adults (particularly if you wish to bring a larger group).

We do not offer self-led visits at during July or August as there are so many visitors and pupils may not have a satisfactory experience. You may, however, visit if accompanied by a Blue Badge Guide during these months. This needs to be booked directly with the British Guide of Tourist Guides via their website: [Westminster Abbey Tour - British Guild of Tourist Guides \(britainsbestguides.org\)](#) rather than with us.

All other self-led groups need to book with us.

### Prices & Payment

#### *Students*

Self-led Tours            £2 per primary student (KS1 & 2)  
                                     £6 per secondary student (KS 3-5)

#### *Adults*

1 adult per 10 students (one adult per five students for KS1 students) is free of charge  
Any other adults        £14

**Payment must be made on the day at the entrance to the Abbey. BACS payment is not accepted in this instance. Payment must be made by card or cheque only.** It may be possible to pay by invoice but you should give at least two weeks' notice of this and once the invoice is raised we are unable to alter it e.g. if fewer students come on the day.

### Access to the Queens Diamond Jubilee Galleries

Groups wishing to visit the Galleries will need to book a separate ticket to visit of that area. Please [contact us](#) to discuss this.

### Group sizes

Large groups will need to be split up and at busy times your entry into the Abbey may be staggered over a 30 minute period. A class of 30 children is best split into two groups of 15.

### Cancellations & Unexpected closures

Please let us know as far in advance as possible if you wish to cancel your visit. This will enable a school on the waiting list to have time to organise their trip.

The Abbey is a working church and may alter its opening hours at short notice for special services. We endeavour to give you as much as notice as possible if this happens.

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## General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

We hold the email addresses of teachers booking visits on our secure Customer Relations Management system in case we need to make contact about the booked visits. For this reason, we are only able to take bookings from school email addresses and not private ones.

Once the visit is completed, we retain the teachers' email information linked to the school but we do not use it to make contact again unless a new booking is made.

On our booking form, we also ask for a contact mobile number in case we need to make contact on the day of the visit. This information is not kept electronically, and the hard copy of the booking form is destroyed after one term.

We also have a [teachers' mailing list](#). You can sign up for this on our website or just tick the box on the booking form and an email will be sent to you to confirm your preferences. This mailing list keeps you updated about annual programmes as they are published. You can opt out of this list at any time.

## Home Educated Groups

Providing individual families book a self-led visit with the Education Department on a **weekday during school term-time**, they are entitled to the concession rates afforded to school groups. However, you will not be able to access the multi-media guide without paying for individual entry.

Prices for children are the same as for school groups. One adult is admitted free per group of up to 10. Additional adults £14.

Families visiting at the **weekend or during school holidays** will have to pay the normal entrance charges: Check the Abbey [website](#) for booking information, opening times and charges.

Please see our Home Educators Booklet for more information.

## Self-led trails

The Learning section of the Abbey website has a number of [self-led learning trails](#) available for you to. There are also accompanying notes for teachers/adults accompanying the groups.



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# Planning your visit

## Access

People with restricted mobility can enjoy visiting the Abbey but there are some steps and uneven floors. There may be some difficulty for those using wheelchairs in some of the chapels. Please let us know on the booking form if you have pupils or staff who have such access needs.

## Pre-visits

We recommend that teachers book to come on a pre-visit. Please contact us to arrange a time. The Abbey is not open on Sundays and is open for shorter times on Saturdays; please check our [website](#) for full opening hours. Teachers on pre-arranged visits are admitted free of charge but those accompanying them are asked to pay.

## Preparation Activities

### *Video Conferences*

You can book a [primary virtual classroom session](#) or [secondary virtual classroom session](#) with our team. These live, interactive sessions can be tailored to your requirements at a time to suit you.

### *Virtual Tour*

We have a [virtual tour](#) available on our website which allows you to explore the Abbey at your own pace and find out more about some of the highlights.

### *Visual Stories*

Our [visual stories](#) help to prepare students for their visit. The story guides them through each step of the visit, helping to them with the places they might see and the people they might meet.

### *Welcome film*

Please ensure that all your pupils and adult helpers have a chance to view our [welcome film](#) before you visit.

## Services

School groups are welcome to attend Holy Communion at 12.30 or Evensong at 5pm. Let us know before your visit so we can accommodate you.

## Travel

### *By coach*

Coaches can drop school groups off in The Sanctuary, outside the West Door of the Abbey by prior arrangement only. Coaches will need to park elsewhere; the closest coach parking is in Tothill Street and is a Pay-by-Phone service. See [www.westminster.gov.uk](http://www.westminster.gov.uk) for details of this coach parking.

More information about travelling to the Abbey can be found on our [website](#).

## Clipboards

Clipboards are available to borrow for self-led groups by prior arrangement.



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# On the day

## Arrival

Please arrive 10 minutes before your entry time to allow time for payment. If you arrive later than your booked entry time your admission cannot be guaranteed. The entrance time you have booked is only a guide and you may have to wait for other groups to enter ahead of you.

Please enter the Abbey via the Group Entrance in the Cloisters. This is accessed by coming to the West end of the Abbey and going past the security barrier, under the archway and into Dean's Yard. Turn left and the Cloister entry point is the corner. The group leader should make themselves known to the Marshal on duty who will arrange entry. The group leader will be asked to make payment, by card, on arrival.

You may be asked to divide into smaller groups before entering the Abbey. A class of 30 is best divided into two groups of 15 pupils.



During your visit if you need help please ask one of the Abbey Marshals (red gowns) or Guides (blue gowns) and they will be happy to provide information.

## Toilets

There are public lavatories in the Cloisters. Please note that these are open to the general public and can be very busy. Please ensure that pupils are adequately supervised at all times.

## Lunch

You may eat in the Cloisters by prior arrangement. It can get very cold here on a winter's day. Behaviour in this area should continue to be appropriate to a place of worship. **Please take your rubbish with you.**

## Bag storage

Unfortunately, this is not available to self-led groups.

## Briefing your students

Make sure your students know:

- Westminster Abbey is a Christian place of worship. Some people come here to say prayers and take part in services.
  - The importance of Westminster Abbey to the history of the nation and the Christian faith.
  - That there will be tombs and ensure that the pupils are comfortable with the idea of visiting a place which has people buried.
  - A prayer is said every hour by a priest and we ask people to stop and listen.
  - To prepare them in advance you might like to [download a trail](#).
  - give pupils a small number of key things to look out for
  - visit the Abbey on the [Virtual Tour](#)
  - watch our [short film](#)
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# Safeguarding & Security

## Safeguarding

The Abbey is a public building and can be very busy at times. Children should be supervised and teachers are expected to abide by the safeguarding guidelines of their own schools. Self-led groups and those eating in the Cloisters may use the public toilets in this area but should supervise pupils appropriately.

The Abbey requires a ratio of 1 adult to 10 pupils (1:5 for KS1 and younger) and provides free entry for staff on that basis.

A copy of the [Abbey Safeguarding Policy is available to download here](#).

The Abbey Safeguarding Officer can be contacted on 07394 562778.

## Security

The safety and security of all our visitors is very much a part of Westminster Abbey's daily life.

We understand we have a very important responsibility when it comes to your safety.

As the security situation in the UK is ever changing, we are constantly reviewing our safety and security arrangements, including:

- Comprehensive CCTV coverage, monitored 24 hours a day.
- A professionally trained security department.
- Constant patrols by both police and security staff.

Additionally, we maintain very close operational links with the Metropolitan Police, giving us good knowledge of any known risks as they occur, as well as a quick response in the event of an incident.

### *Evacuation or Lock Down*

An announcement over the public address system will be made if an evacuation or lockdown of the Abbey needs to take place. Please follow the instructions and directions given by the Abbey Marshals (red gowns). If in any other part of the Abbey precincts, please follow Abbey staff instructions.

During a visit your class may be in small groups; not all groups will be evacuated to the same muster point. Each group leader must have a copy of the list of children in their group in case of an evacuation.

### *Searches*

You and your students may be required to open your bags on entry to the Cloisters. Our trained security staff monitor entry to the Cloisters.



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## Health & Safety

Please ensure that pupils are aware that the Abbey is an ancient building and that they to keep certain things in mind in order to keep safe during their visit:

- Remind children to look where they are walking as there are uneven floors and steps.
- There are also some low doors and steps that may not be immediately obvious.
- It can be very busy. Keep children together and count them regularly!
- Abbey staff are trained in First Aid.
- Please refer to a member of staff/volunteer in red or blue gowns or staff on the Information Desk if you need any help.
- An announcement over the public address system will be made if an evacuation of the Abbey needs to take place. Please follow the instructions and directions given by the Abbey Marshals (red gowns).
- If a member of the party gets separated advise them to go to the Abbey Information desk and report to a member of staff.
- Teachers are responsible for the supervision and safety of the children in their charge at all times.
- A ratio of 1 teacher to every 10 pupils is required.
- Do not enter any part of the Abbey that is marked 'Private' or which has been roped or cordoned off to prevent access for safety reasons.





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## Steps in the Abbey

The Abbey is an ancient building and, unfortunately, not all areas are accessible without climbing stairs. Please indicate on your booking form if you have a pupil with physical access needs. The Education Centre, The Lady Chapel, the Chapter House and the Shrine of St. Edward are not accessible without climbing steps. Those who are unable to climb can use a multi-media guide for those sections but will need an adult to remain with them. Please check with our staff at the beginning of the visit.

More details and photographs are available on the Access Able website: [Main Building | AccessAble](#)

| Location                                 | Number of steps                          | Material | Handrail  | Other notes            |
|--|--|----------|---|------------------------|
| West Cloister Door, into Nave            | 5  | Stone    | Yes   | Heavy door at the top. |
| Lady Chapel                              | 15 (12, plus 3 smaller steps)            | Stone    | Yes, but not for bottom 3 steps<br>1 further step into the chapel itself. | Rail on one side only. |
| Side chapel (Elizabeth I and Mary I)     | 3  | Stone    | No  | Very narrow entrance   |
| Side chapel (Mary Queen of Scots)        | 3  | Stone    | No  | Very narrow entrance   |
| East Cloister Door, out of Poets' Corner | 5  | Stone    | Yes   |                        |
| Queens' Diamond Jubilee Galleries        | 108                                      | Wood     | Yes   | Lift available         |
| Chapter House                            | 10                                       | Stone    | No  |                        |
| Pyx Chamber                              | One bump (not quite a step but not flat) | Stone    | No  |                        |
| Great West Door                          | 3  | Stone    | Yes   | Ramp available         |

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# Terms and Conditions for Self-led Groups

By signing the booking form for your self-led visit, teachers agree to abide by these terms and conditions.

Please ensure that ALL ADULTS have read this and understand what is expected of them.

- Large groups must be split up into smaller groups accompanied by at least one adult.
- The Abbey requires a ratio of 1 adult to 10 pupils (1:5 for KS1 and younger) and provides free entry for staff on that basis.
- Teacher/adult helpers are responsible for the behaviour of the students in the Abbey and precincts. Please ensure all adults are aware of their responsibilities.
- You are expected to abide by the instructions given by Abbey staff at all times.
- Groups causing disruption may be asked to leave.
- Photography is permitted in the Abbey but please be sensitive to others. Filming is NOT permitted.
- Be aware that members of the public may take pictures which might include your students. We ask them not to photograph school groups but we have no legal powers to prevent this. Your help in requesting that they do not do so is appreciated.
- Please dispose of any gum before entering.
- If eating in the Cloisters or Abbey Gardens, please take all your rubbish with you.
- Teachers are expected to have conducted a risk assessment for their visit
- Teachers are expected to abide by the Safeguarding guidelines of their schools and the Abbey.
- Schools arriving after their allotted entry time are not guaranteed entry. If you are running late please contact the Learning Department on 020 7654 4965.

