



Application Pack

Westminster Abbey Choir School



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BACKGROUND

Westminster Abbey Choir School is a remarkable school. It exists to educate and care for the 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 keys to the smooth running of the boys' busy schedule.

Pupils are selected by audition and academic test at the age of 7 to start at the school in Year 4. At age 13 they normally move on to one of a wide range of leading independent schools, to which the great majority win music scholarships.

Although it provides one of the premier musical trainings available to boys, Westminster Abbey Choir School also 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.

However, the school is generously staffed with seven full time and four part time staff and this allows the full range of subject specialist teaching. Classes are very small - between five and eight - which not only ensures a great deal of individual attention but also encourages a lively and imaginative teaching approach.

In a school of this size, staff get to know each boy very well indeed. 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 intimate relationship with Westminster Abbey brings a special dimension to the boys' experience. They 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 of national or international significance. They also give public concerts both here and abroad, and make recordings.

Outside the normal run of music and lessons, there is a busy programme of extra-curricular activities to which all staff contribute. 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 cooking. 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 a non-academic programme of activities is arranged for them to which, once again, all staff contribute.

Teaching at Westminster Abbey Choir School is richly rewarding, but it is no easy option and a great deal is demanded of the staff. Curriculum time is necessarily restricted on account of the boys' choral commitments, and staff need to be very well organised in order to make best possible use of the time available. Flexibility is essential, since it is not uncommon for the timetable to be adapted day-to-day to accommodate special musical events or rehearsals. Choristers tend to be sparky individuals who benefit from demanding, yet sympathetic academic teaching. All staff need to be committed to the ethos of a choir school and it is important that they appreciate the very considerable demands made upon the choristers in their charge.

TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE POST

Salary

Starting salary is in accordance with the Westminster Abbey Choir School Scale. The scale takes into account the requirements of working in central London and the extra “non-academic” duties undertaken as a member of the Choir School staff. New members of staff enter the scale at the point appropriate to their teaching qualifications and experience.

Pension

The school participates in the Teachers’ Pension Scheme provided by the Department for Education. Staff who are not eligible to join this scheme may join the Group Personal Pension plan.

Appointment, Induction and Probation

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

All appointments are subject to a satisfactory medical examination by the Westminster Abbey doctor, to be undertaken at the school’s expense, and those appointed will be required to provide documentary evidence of all qualifications claimed.

All appointments will be subject to satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS and 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.

All appointments are probationary for the first year. In practice newly appointed teachers will be given a clear indication of their progress during their first term. All new teachers will have the benefit of guidance by an experienced mentor whose role will be to help them through the first months of their employment. The school believes in, supports and resources an extensive system of professional development and training, and all teachers are expected to participate in it throughout their careers.

Equality Statement and How to Apply

EQUALITY STATEMENT

Westminster Abbey aims at all times to recruit the person who is most suited to the job. Qualifications, skills and experience will be assessed at the level that is relevant to the job.

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 return the Equal Opportunities Monitoring form with your application. This will help us monitor our recruitment practice. The form will not be seen by the people making the selection decision.

Application Materials

Your application should include:

1. The completed application form
2. A supporting statement showing how you meet the requirements listed in the person specification
3. A letter explaining your particular interest in this post.

As well as your previous work experience, tell us about other relevant experience and your leisure and other interests. Clear information on how you meet the overall requirements of the job, with relevant examples, will help us with shortlisting, and we may not be able to shortlist you for interview if you do not provide this.

*Please note that we may contact referees **prior** to shortlisting and we will contact referees prior to interview.*

Please send the application to :

*The Headmaster's PA
Westminster Abbey Choir School
Deans Yard
SW1P 3NY
email: evelyn.neophytou@westminster-abbey.org*

Shortlisted candidates will be expected to spend a minimum of one half day in school which is likely to include a panel interview and an opportunity to demonstrate teaching skills by delivering a science lesson.

If you would like to learn more about the post before applying then you are very welcome to contact the Headmaster, Jonathan Milton, on 020 7654 4918.