



Croydon  
**Minster**

# CHOIR HANDBOOK

*(October 2018)*

Croydon Minster  
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## **WELCOME**

We are very glad to welcome your son or daughter into membership of the Choirs of Croydon Minster. The following information will be of use to you as a family, and gives an explanation of how the choirs function. If you have any other queries, please do not hesitate to contact Ronny Krippner via email: [organist@croydonminster.org](mailto:organist@croydonminster.org).

Membership of the choirs requires a high level of commitment and effort, and involves the whole family. The Anglican choral tradition is the envy of the musical world, and the benefits to those who sing are considerable. Your child will be provided with a unique musical education, free of charge. Choristers receive tuition in singing and music theory, are paid a termly stipend, experience domestic and overseas travel, and have the opportunity to make commercial recordings and to sing concerts with The London Mozart Players and other professional instrumental ensembles. Furthermore, the life skills that they develop during their time in the choirs will be of lasting benefit to them.

Members are welcomed into the Minster Choirs regardless of religious background. However, since their primary job is to lead the musical and spoken portions of the church's liturgies, choir members must be willing to lead worship in those ways. Because of the intensity of rehearsal and performance, it is not possible for choristers to attend on a part-time basis, e.g. rehearsing only one day a week. Parents should be clear about the long-term commitment of the choir and the impact this has on other activities. Direct conflicts on rehearsal days or Sundays must be avoided.

Once they are in the choir, we are always available to discuss matters concerning your son or daughter and we look forward to close co-operation with you. Thank you in advance for your support.

## **THE MUSIC STAFF**

Ronny Krippner, *Organist & Director of Music*

Tom Little, *Sub-Organist*

Martin How MBE, *Organist Laureate*

The work of the Music Department is led by Ronny Krippner, who has direct responsibility for all choirs. He has considerable experience of working with choirs of all types, having held organ posts in both German and British cathedrals. He is assisted by our Sub-Organist, Tom Little, Martin How MBE, formerly a key member of staff at the Royal School of Church Music, and a Graduate Organ Scholar. All liturgical decisions are made in collaboration with the Minster's Priest-in-Charge, The Reverend Canon Dr Andrew Bishop.

## **IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE**

Great civic churches, like cathedrals, are centres of excellence and we therefore strive for perfection and the offering of only the very best to God. The choristers are encouraged to adopt this perspective. At Croydon Minster, only the best is good enough in all things musical, in appearance, in attitudes and behaviour. This approach cultivates in the choristers a mature outlook on life and confidence far in excess of their years. They are also trained to behave like professional musicians, for that is indeed what they are. The choristers are engaged in an adult activity in which they are solely and constantly measured by adult standards and values.

## **PROBATION**

Each boy or girl, having been successful in audition, will be required to undergo a period of probation. This is much for the sake of the child as for the church, and involves the gradual learning of all the disciplines required of a full chorister, including singing technique and music theory. The period of an individual child's probation varies, depending on age and experience. For a chorister to succeed in his or her probation they must demonstrate a commitment to the choir in attendance, musical ability and behaviour. If a probationary chorister has reached the appropriate standard, he or she will be admitted as a full chorister by the Vicar at a service.

Initially, probationers attend two rehearsals a week on a Tuesday & Thursday (Boys) or Wednesday & Friday (Girls). The second stage is for the boys or girls to start coming on Sunday mornings in addition to the weekday practice. Once admitted as a full chorister he or she will adopt the relevant chorister schedule (see below).

If it should become clear that full membership of the Minster Choirs is not in the best interests of the child or the church then this is the time to make an amicable withdrawal.

## **LEAVING THE CHOIR**

At the end of a chorister's time in the choir they are presented with their hymnbook. There are opportunities for girls aged 16 + and boys with changed voices to sing with the adult singers as Choral Scholars, and all choir graduates are welcome to serve the Minster in other ways once they have left the choir (such as serving at the altar). Special help is available to those who are considering applying for Choral or Organ Scholarships at universities.

## **FINALLY**

Although there is no requirement to do so, choir parents need to know that they are very welcome to share in the life of the Minster and that it is an encouragement to the choristers to see their parents at services and concerts. We are enormously grateful to you for the support you have already shown and look forward to a growing relationship between yourself, ourselves and the Minster in the coming years.

## BOYS' REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

<b>Sunday</b>	8.30am	Arrival at the Minster
	8.45am-9.45am	Rehearsal in the church
	10.00am-11.15am	Sung Eucharist
<u>or</u>		
	5.00pm	Arrival at the Minster
	5.15-6.15pm	Rehearsal in the church
	6.30pm-7.30pm	Choral Evensong

*The boy and girl choristers usually sing one service each on a Sunday, rotating between the morning and evening services. Please see the Choir Diary for more information.*

<b>Tuesday</b>	4.00pm	Arrival at the Minster
	4.30pm-5.20pm	Chorister rehearsal
	5.30pm	Choral Evensong
	6.15pm	Finish
<b>Thursday</b>	4.00pm	Arrival at the Minster
	4.30pm-5.30pm	Probationer rehearsal
	4.30pm-6.15pm	Chorister rehearsal

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## GIRLS' REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

<b>Sunday</b>	8.30pm	Arrival at the Minster
	8.45am-9.45am	Rehearsal in the church
	10.00am-11.15am	Sung Eucharist
<u>or</u>		
	5.00pm	Arrival at the Minster
	5.15-6.15pm	Rehearsal in the church
	6.30pm-7.30pm	Choral Evensong

*The boy and girl choristers usually sing one service each on a Sunday, rotating between the morning and evening services. Please see the Choir Diary for more information.*

<b>Wednesday</b>	4.00pm	Arrival at the Minster
	4.30pm-5.20pm	Chorister rehearsal
	5.30pm	Choral Evensong
	6.15pm	Finish
<b>Friday</b>	4.00pm	Arrival at the Minster
	4.30pm-5.30pm	Probationer rehearsal in the Choir Vestry
	4.30pm-6.15pm	Chorister rehearsal in the church

Occasionally there are times when these schedules are amended to take into account extra services, and Christmas and Easter are particularly busy but rewarding times of the year.

## ARRIVAL & COLLECTION

The Choir Vestry will be open and staffed from 4pm during weekday rehearsals/Evensong, from 8.30am on Sunday mornings and from 5pm on Sunday evenings. Your son or daughter should arrive no later than ten minutes before the beginning of a rehearsal. It is imperative that children are brought to the Choir Vestry Door and collected at the Choir Vestry Door punctually by their parents (or a member of the family), as it is not always possible to arrange for someone to stay with them after the normal finishing time. In the interest of the children's safety, it is not possible to release children from the Choir Vestry to meet their parents outside the Minster – parents *must* be collecting their children in person.

## CHOIR DIARY

A Choir diary for the upcoming term is issued in August, December and April. As far as it is possible, choir terms follow the pattern of school terms. With several different schools represented among the choristers it is not always possible to make this agree exactly.

The Michaelmas Term runs from early September until and including the Sung Eucharist on Christmas Day. The Lent Term runs from the beginning of January until and including the morning and afternoon services on Easter Day. The Trinity Term runs from the end of April (depending on the date of Easter) until mid-July. In each term there is a half-term holiday of at least seven days, which includes a Sunday.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

All rehearsals of the Minster Choirs are mandatory. This must be so in order to maintain the high standards for which the choirs are known. When a chorister misses a rehearsal, he or she is immediately several hours behind the rest of the group and, consequently, holds the group back at subsequent rehearsals.

Lateness: faithful attendance includes punctuality. Choristers who arrive late and miss warm-ups join the rest of the group less alert vocally and mentally. Lateness causes disruption to the practice and thus the efficiency with which the choirs can rehearse. Obviously, circumstances beyond one's control sometimes conspire to prevent timely arrival at rehearsal, and the details of these must be conveyed to the choirmaster so that attendance records may be accurately kept. Choir stipends are reduced for unexcused lateness.

Absences: Serious illness, death in the family, and required school events are excused absences. Children's birthday parties *are not* an acceptable reason to miss choir duties. Absence from 'dress rehearsals' for concerts and major services is not excused. It is especially important that the choirs be at full strength for all the major festivals of the Church year, including Christmas and Easter. Time off is always given to the choirs following these two festivals. Choir stipends are reduced for unexcused absences.

***Should your child not be able to attend a choir rehearsal/service/concert, please ensure that you email Mr Krippner directly prior to the event:***  
[\*\*\*organist@croydonminster.org\*\*\*](mailto:organist@croydonminster.org)

## MINSTER BULLETIN BY EMAIL

A weekly ***Minster Bulletin*** with updates about changes to the choir diary are sent to families by mail or email. Please ensure you do read it carefully to avoid disappointment.

## CHORISTER DEVELOPMENT

There are essentially four phases in a singer's development as a chorister.

- Probationer [*White Level; White Plus Level*]
- Chorister [*Light Blue Level; Dark Blue Level*]
- Bronze Chanter
- Silver Chanter
- Head Chorister

As a Probationer, emphasis is on the basics. These young choristers need to learn how to follow the music, concentrate and listen attentively, look at the conductor at intelligent times, acquire the basics of a musical vocabulary, learn to walk in procession, and rehearse and understand the spoken responses and order of worship for the services the choir typically sing (Evensong and Eucharist). Probationers are awarded their white 'surplice' on becoming full choristers.

Choristers in the next stage of development should have acquired good basic habits of singing and working cooperatively with others. This is the stage when they must develop their vocal leadership skills and music-reading ability, taking ever-increasing responsibility for the sound of the choir, and learn to mentor less-experienced choristers. This is often the longest and most challenging phase of chorister development. The length of time a singer remains in this learning stage depends largely on the determination of the individual and his or her capacity for self-motivation. Parents can be particularly helpful by encouraging their children to follow instructions, learn to focus their attention, and keep trying.

Intermediate choristers who are performing at a high level and have successfully passed the *RSCM Bronze Award Exam* are promoted to the level of 'Chanter' which is an ancient English word for chorister and is still in use in many churches in the UK.

The fourth stage of choristership is one in which choristers have developed both musical and interpersonal leadership skills, and carry out the responsibility of exercising them judiciously and habitually. Bronze and Silver Chanters must serve as leaders and examples to their juniors, and their ability to do this is often largely the result of maturity and self-motivation. Such choristers especially enjoy the reward of being highly competent musicians.

Each rank of chorister is denoted by a badge with a coloured ribbon worn at all choral services.

**There is an expectation for boys to remain in the choir until their voice breaks and for girls to remain in the choir until the end of Year 11.**

## CHOIR PERSONNEL LISTS

The Minster Administrator keeps lists of choir personnel. Please make sure that you have completed a Chorister Details Form as well as the Data Protection Agreement and please inform us if your address or telephone number changes. Records are kept in strict accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018).

## **BOYS' DRESS CODE**

Boys are expected to attend all Minster occasions (rehearsals, services, concerts, exams etc) in *either* their **School Uniform** or in **Choir Uniform** as described below:

### *Boys' Choir Uniform*

White uniform shirt

black trousers

black shoes and black socks (black trainers or sport shoes are not acceptable)

grey v-neck sweater

***If the appropriate attire is not worn, the Minster staff reserve the right to contact you to request you collect your son as he will not be permitted to sing.***

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## **GIRLS' DRESS CODE**

Girls are expected to attend all Minster occasions (rehearsals, services, concerts, exams etc) in *either* their **School Uniform** or in **Choir Uniform** as described below:

### *Girls' Choir Uniform*

white blouse

black skirt \*

grey cardigan

black tights

black shoes (black trainers or sport shoes are not acceptable)

Long hair should be tied back with a black scrunchie and no other headgear (scarves etc) is permitted.

**NO MAKE-UP OR NAIL VARNISH TO BE WORN AT ANY TIME.  
STUD EARRINGS ONLY TO BE WORN.**

***If the appropriate attire is not worn, the Minster staff reserve the right to contact you to request you collect your daughter as she will not be permitted to sing.***

*\* due to the design of the girls' choir robes, we regret that it is not possible for girls to wear trousers.*

## **BEHAVIOUR**

It is expected that the department of choir members will reflect a spirit of genuine hospitality and respect. Choristers need to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate at all times during rehearsals, services and concerts, before and after rehearsals and services, and in the Choir Vestry. For reasons of personal safety, running in the church buildings is not allowed. Cooperation with the priests, choir directors, Parish Administrator, and church personnel is required of all choristers. Evidence of bullying, threatening or abusive behaviour will be taken very seriously by the Director of Music. The church reserves the right to demote, suspend or permanently exclude any chorister at any time.

Respect for others includes respect for their property (music library items as well as other choristers' personal property) and their privacy. In order to do their work well, members of a choir must learn to support and encourage one another.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

Croydon Minster has both a full Child Protection policy and a Child Protection Officer. All areas of parish activity involving children and young people are covered by a written policy which follows the guidance in these matters given by the House of Bishops. All Minster staff who have regular contact with children are required to have 'Enhanced Disclosure' clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau.

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Your son or daughter will be given the opportunity to prepare for Confirmation at an appropriate age so that they can participate fully in the Eucharist. This of course is only done after consultation with parents. The final decision to prepare for Confirmation or not is the personal decision of the chorister, and there is no requirement for a chorister to be confirmed.

## **STIPEND**

At the end of each term each chorister receives pay according to their seniority. This is payment for attendance at services and also a reward for commitment. A system of modest financial rewards and penalties is operated (see Attendance Policy) and the final sum is awarded accordingly. Choristers receive half of their termly stipend on the last day of term, whilst the other half is saved up. All saved-up stipends will be paid upon successful completion of a chorister's career (girls: end of Year 11; boys: end of Year 8 or when their voices break); saved-up stipends will *not* be paid out should a chorister leave the choir before having successfully completed his or her time in the choir (girls: end of Year 11; boys: end of Year 8 or when their voices break).

## **VALUABLES**

Choristers' possessions will be left in the Choir Vestry whilst they are at the church and this will be locked when not occupied. However, it must be clearly understood that the Minster is not responsible for the costs of loss or damage to choristers' possessions and they are not covered by the church's insurance. Choristers are strongly discouraged from bringing large sums of money or expensive items such as handheld computer games, mobile phones, and MP3 players with them.

***Due to recent incidents, we ask all choir members to put all valuables in their pockets and take them into church (mobile phones must be switched off).***

## **FRIENDS OF MUSIC AT CROYDON MINSTER**

Friends of Music at Croydon Minster are an organisation designed to fund and encourage music at the Minster above and beyond worship services, and works to promote the parish's music programme to the wider community. Annual events, such as the popular Candlelight Carol Concert, as well as orchestral concerts are sponsored by the Friends.

*Parents of choristers automatically become Friends of Music and an annual subscription fee of **£45.00** is due at the start of September of each calendar year. Families with more than one child in the choir will be requested to pay at least one annual subscription fee.*