



**Could *your* son be
a Cathedral Chorister?**



November 2012

Introduction

For hundreds of years, Cathedrals in this country have maintained a unique tradition of daily sung services, performing a wide range of music to the highest possible standards. The choir of Guildford Cathedral is among the newest additions to this ongoing tradition, and in fifty years it has established an enviable reputation for the quality of its singing.

The boy choristers of the Cathedral Choir (a separate group of girl choristers was formed in 2002), are all educated at Lanesborough School, the Cathedral Choir School. They rehearse at school four mornings a week before school; and the full choir of boys & men sings at Evensong in the Cathedral on Tuesdays and Thursdays; there are currently three choral services on Sundays which are shared between the boys & men and the girls & men. There are also duties at Easter and Christmas. Boys begin as 'probationer choristers' in year 3 and build up choir duties throughout the year so that initially they come to one Sunday service at the Cathedral (for more details see page 3). The main activity of the choir is the maintenance of regular sung services in the Cathedral, but in the last few years the choir has also toured in France, Belgium, the USA and the Netherlands. The choir has also made CD recordings; broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and has performed in concerts and the film 'St Trinians II'.

Vacancies exist each year for musical boys who are interested in becoming choristers; the Chapter of the Cathedral awards educational bursaries to boys selected for the choir. It is sometimes possible to secure additional funding for boys whose family circumstances prevent their parents from contributing to the cost of school fees. Having a son who is a chorister is a commitment for the whole family, but there are great rewards. Many choristers go on to pursue careers in music, and all benefit from the experience of teamwork and sense of achievement the choir gives them; in particular, ex-choristers often go on to achieve music scholarships and other awards at leading senior schools and choral scholarships at University.

Audition Process

Most boys are auditioned when they are in the Michaelmas term of year 2, with a view to starting as a probationer chorister when they enter year 3 the following September. If offered a place in the choir they are expected to stay until their voice changes or until they reach the end of year 8.

Auditions are offered to boys already in Lanesborough Pre-Prep or boys who have accepted an offer to start at Lanesborough in year 3. See the Lanesborough website for school admission details.

If you are interested in exploring this idea further, do please contact the Organist and Master of the Choristers; no commitment is expected at this stage. If you decide to proceed further after meeting the Organist, the next step is a short and informal audition, at which your son will be given some very simple tests to check his sense of pitch and rhythm. On the basis of the audition your son may be offered a place as a probationer chorister. We are not looking for trained voices at this age, but for a quick ear and lively, intelligent personality.

Further information is available from:

www.guildford-cathedral.org and www.lanesborough.surrey.sch.uk

Contact Details

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Guildford Cathedral Choral Scholarships at Lanesborough School

1. The Chapter of Guildford Cathedral awards choral scholarships to cathedral choristers. These scholarships are tenable at the Guildford Cathedral Choir School, Lanesborough School. Many of the scholarships are sponsored by individuals or organisations. The scholarships take effect when a boy becomes a full chorister. The value of the scholarship per academic year is as follows:

Year 3 (probationer)	nil
(or probationer in a different year group)	nil
Year 4 (chorister)	£750
Year 5	£750
Year 6	£2000
Year 7	£2000
Year 8	£2000

2. Boys who enter the choir do so first as probationer choristers and this entails their attending the full chorister practices at 8am on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. During the course of the full chorister practice, probationer choristers are taken for a separate practice with the Sub-Organist or Organ Scholar. They will also be expected to attend on Sunday mornings during the choir term for a practice at 9am and the Cathedral Eucharist at 9.45 - 11am (approx).

The period of probation is normally one year depending on vacancies in the choir and the age of the boy concerned. When the probationary period has been successfully completed the boy is installed as a full chorister and is then expected to fulfil the termly duties of the choir, which are laid out in a schedule issued at the start of each term.

3. Normal practice and service times are as follows:

<u>Weekdays</u>	08:00-08:50	Practice at Lanesborough (<i>except Wednesdays</i>)
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<u>Tuesdays & Thursdays</u>	16:35-17:25	Practice at the Cathedral <i>(after tea at Lanesborough, transport to the Cathedral by coach accompanied by a member of the music staff)</i>
	17:30-18:15	EVENSONG
<u>Sundays</u>	09:00-09:40	Practice at the Cathedral
	09:45-11:00	CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST
	11:30-12:20	MATTINS
	17:25-18:25	Practice at the Cathedral
	18:30-19:30	EVENSONG

In addition, the choristers are taught music theory by the Cathedral music staff, at school, during Friday lunchtimes.

Exceptions to the above are notified on the schedule before the start of each term, and may include:

- (a) The girl choristers usually sing either the morning or the evening services on a Sunday, giving the boys a morning or afternoon off.
 - (b) The boys will be needed for occasional Saturday engagements and weekday evening Eucharist services at 7pm for occasions such as All Souls, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Ascension Day etc.
 - (c) Wednesday is the normal choir day off, however, exceptions are the 7pm Ash Wednesday Eucharist and occasional BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong broadcasts.
4. The start of the choir terms usually corresponds to Lanesborough terms, though the first Evensong of term is not usually sung until the boys have been back at school for two or three days.
 5. Choir terms normally go on longer than the school terms as the choir must be on duty at the Cathedral over Christmas and Easter. Depending where Easter falls, the choir holidays are taken before, after or either side of Holy Week (with 3 weeks holiday in total).

Choir holidays are: **Christmas** - Boxing Day to start of school term
Easter - 3 weeks
Summer - 7 to 8 weeks

The Summer term will normally finish around 14 July. The choristers are given a half-term each term, including one Sunday.

6. All choristers should learn piano and at least one other musical instrument. Several boys from the choir have gained music scholarships to public schools over past years.
7. All choristers remain in the Cathedral Choir until the end of year 8, unless their voice changes before this time, or the family has to move from the district.
8. The Choristers are experienced in broadcasting and recording - they have made CDs, performed on TV, radio and in a movie. They also travel both inside and outside the Diocese to give concerts, and undertake foreign choir tours. Recent tours have been to France, Belgium the East Coast of the USA and the Netherlands.
9. The Organist is happy to audition prospective choristers at any time of year, although most auditions happen in the Michaelmas term for entry the following September. Those who are successful must also satisfy the normal entrance requirements for Lanesborough School. At all stages the Head of Lanesborough is consulted as to a boy's suitability for the choir with a view to maintaining satisfactory academic progress.