

# CATHEDRAL CHOIR PROSPECTUS



**BRISTOL CATHEDRAL**

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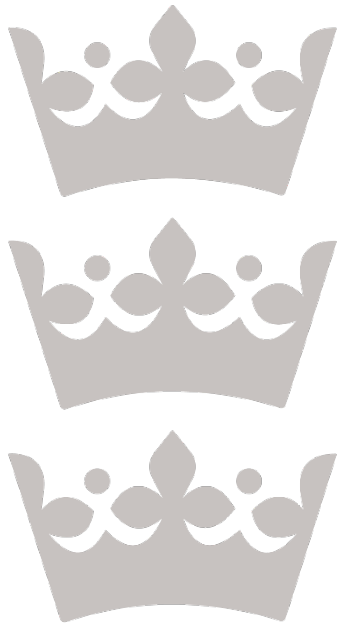
with

*you,*

yesterday,

today,

and tomorrow



# Introduction

Dear Parent / Carer,

Thank you for your interest in the Cathedral Choir and in your child's becoming a Probationary Chorister.

Being a chorister is an extraordinary experience, and our choristers have the joy and privilege of being at the very heart of the worshipping life of Bristol Cathedral, sustaining a pattern of worship that spans nearly nine hundred years and enabling those who attend our services to encounter God through their singing.

Throughout their time with us, our choristers are supported and nurtured so that they flourish and grow as individuals, as members of a talented and gifted team, as members of our Cathedral family, and as musicians – reaching a high standard of musicianship and learning some wonderful music along the way. The unique musical education and experience gained by being a member of the choir provides a firm foundation for developing teamwork skills, confidence, discipline, and motivation – qualities that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their life. We look forward to welcoming you and your family as important members of the Cathedral community.

The experience of being a chorister is one that will remain with your child for the rest of their life and can lead to a music-associated career. If, having read through this Prospectus, you consider that this commitment is a realistic possibility both for yourself and your child, please do get in touch with us. You should find all the information you need within this Prospectus.

Once again, we thank you for your interest.

**Tim Popple**  
*Music & Liturgy Officer*

## Becoming a Chorister

Becoming a chorister in Bristol Cathedral Choir will change your child's life.

As a chorister, your child will become part of a musical family, learning routine, teamwork, structure, discipline, and musicianship, playing a part in a story which has been told here in Bristol Cathedral for hundreds of years.

Becoming a chorister is, naturally, a significant commitment. It will demand a lot of your child's time and energy, and your own as well as you support them on this journey.

They will form friendships with children across other year groups, and you will form often close and lasting friendships with other chorister parents.

Becoming a chorister impacts life beyond your child's time in the choir. Almost all our choristers continue singing after they leave the choir, and many have gone on to make a career in music.

This prospectus will tell you everything you need to know about the choir and the Cathedral in order to help you make the right decision for your child and for yourself.

## What does "being a chorister" mean?

Choristers sing.

Those two words contain in their simplicity a world bursting with opportunity, diversity, excitement, and depth. From learning to read music, singing with others who share the passion for singing, exploring music they would rarely come across otherwise, being part of something bigger and older than they can imagine, choristers enjoy all the untold benefits that a musical education brings.

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*"I love being a chorister."  
Maddy, Year 8 chorister*

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Choristers sing almost every day, during term-time, with a regular timetable of commitments, as well as special events and opportunities to sing on important days like Easter Day and Christmas Day. Your child is not expected to be a Christian, but you do need to be sympathetic to the Christian faith. (Many choristers do choose to be baptized and confirmed, but that is an individual choice.) Your child will learn, grow, mentor, and live life as a chorister, as thousands have for centuries.

But, first and foremost, choristers sing.

## What does being a chorister involve?

The first step in becoming a chorister has already been made: you're reading this Prospectus, interested in what chorister life can bring you and your child.

The next step is to attend a Voice Trial. These are held in the Spring when your child is in Year 4. They involve preparing a short song for your child to sing, and some vocal and musical exercises. It lasts around 25 minutes. You will be informed whether your child has been successful by the end of the school year, in order to prepare to join the choir as a Probationary Chorister the following September.

Your child will then become a Probationary Chorister – or as they are usually called a “prob” – during Years 5 and 6. They learn the ropes, are mentored by a senior chorister, and gain confidence in singing.

In Year 7 your child will join Bristol Cathedral Choir School by merit of being in the Cathedral Choir. Just eight places are set aside for probationers, and having a guaranteed place at the choir school is one of the great privileges of joining the Cathedral Choir.

At the start of Year 7 your child will be admitted as a full chorister in the Cathedral Choir. Choristers are strongly encouraged to learn an instrument, in addition to singing,

and the cost for this tuition is paid through the generosity of the Choral Foundation for the duration of their time in the choir.

They will start to attend morning rehearsals and begin to find their place in the choir, with additional responsibilities like singing solos and, as they progress to Year 8 and 9, looking after the younger probationers as they were once looked after.

All choristers are expected to continue in the Cathedral Choir until the end of Year 9, with the option to continue into Year 10. Choristerships are offered on the understanding that the child is committed to the choir for their full term of service.

The choir depends on this commitment, first to bring the child up to the level of being able to contribute effectively (as a probationer), and then to benefit from this contribution (as a chorister). The worst of all scenarios is to have invested time and money in a chorister's training and for neither them nor the choir to benefit from that investment.

During their time in the choir your child will not be expected to reach any absolute level of achievement but, by hard work and enthusiasm, they are expected to make the very best of their training and talents. The secret to their success lies in children discovering that they can achieve

more than they (and indeed you!) imagine possible.

In order to maintain the high standard required of the Cathedral Choir, the Dean and Chapter expect every child to attend on time all practices and services. Permission to be absent may be requested in exceptional circumstances, such as a close family wedding or funeral, or for certain religious observances.

A chorister place in Bristol Cathedral Choir means that other extra-curricular activities need to be carefully fitted around choir commitments. We encourage our Choristers to be well-rounded individuals, with the understanding that the Cathedral Choir commitment comes first.

Rare clashes with school events are discussed between the Master of the Choristers and the Head of Bristol Cathedral Choir School, and avoided whenever possible. However, there will inevitably be occasions when choristers are unable to take part in an activity.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

On top of the usual weekly timetable, choristers are sometimes required to sing at special services and concerts in the Cathedral. These events are an exciting opportunity for the choir to sing music outside their usual repertoire, often to a larger congregation or audience. For example: appearing live on BBC One

on Christmas Day 2016, recording a CD in May 2017, and singing in front of The King and Queen Consort (The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall at the time) at the commissioning of the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales in December 2019. Choristers may also be asked to sing at weddings and funerals in the Cathedral: as a professional musician, your child will be paid for these events.

### **FOREIGN TOUR**

Your child may have the opportunity to tour abroad. The choir aims to undertake a foreign tour every other year; in the summer of 2022 the choir toured Portugal, and in 2018 the choir visited Belgium and the Netherlands. Foreign tours are a brilliant way for our choir to see how things are done in churches and cathedrals across the globe, and to experience singing in some of the most beautiful buildings imaginable. They are always exciting events and are paid for in part by choir fundraising.

### **PASTORAL CARE & SAFEGUARDING**

The Cathedral is committed to the safeguarding, flourishing and wellbeing of all those in our care. For us this is not just about keeping your child safe from harm when they are with us, but about providing a positive, nurturing environment that

promotes their wellbeing and enables them to flourish as whole people.

When your child is in our care we take full responsibility for their safety and wellbeing. To ensure the pastoral care we provide is as effective as possible it is important that we work in close partnership with our families. When your child becomes a chorister we commit to working with you, and to you working with us. Effective and timely communication is key to this partnership and helps to ensure the wellbeing of your child. The Master of the Choristers and the Chorister Tutor are always on hand to talk with and listen to parents.

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**“He realised that he would look back at this as one of the most incredible times in his life.”**

*Jenny, former chorister parent*

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## **AFTER LEAVING THE CHOIR**

When their commitment to the Cathedral Choir has finished, many of our choristers join the Cathedral Consort, a choir led by Paul Walton, for 11-19 year olds. The Consort sing one Sunday a month, alongside big Cathedral services at Christmas and Easter and occasional services and concerts around Bristol. This choir is an opportunity for teenagers to continue to sing choral music at a high level, and to continue the social life they will have developed during their time in the Cathedral Choir. Many choristers go on to take Choral Scholarships at prestigious universities.

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**“The hymns and prayers I learned to sing as a chorister have nourished and sustained me ever since, in good times and in bad.”**

*The Revd Jonathan Lloyd  
Minor Canon Precentor, St Albans  
and former Bristol Cathedral Chorister*

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## **MUSIC FORUM**

Every term a parent of one of the Head Choristers, a Probationer parent, and a Consort member, get together with the music staff at a Music Forum to discuss any ongoing issues or queries for open discussion. This is a chance for all involved to work together to improve the Choristers' experience in the choir.



# Choristers' Timetable

## Monday

8.15am Rehearsal (full)

*NB: the weekday morning rehearsals are Choristers only: probationers do not attend these rehearsals.*

3.50pm Light Tea (boys)

4.15pm Rehearsal (boys)

5.15pm Evensong (boys)

6.00pm Finish

## Tuesday

8.15am Rehearsal (girls)

3.50pm Light Tea (girls)

4.15pm Rehearsal (girls)

5.15pm Evensong (girls)

6.00pm Finish

## Wednesday

8.15am Rehearsal (boys)

3.50pm Light Tea (boys or girls)

4.15pm Rehearsal (boys or girls)

5.15pm Evensong (boys or girls)

6.00pm Finish

*[Wednesday Evensong alternates between the boys and girls.]*

## Thursday

8.15am Rehearsal (Year 7)

## Friday

8.15am Rehearsal (full)

The Light Tea is a great opportunity for fellowship and friendship between school and the rehearsal.

## Sunday

9.00am Rehearsal (boys or girls)

10.00am Eucharist (boys or girls)

2.45pm Rehearsal (boys or girls)

3.30pm Evensong (boys or girls)

4.30pm Finish

*[Sundays alternate between boys and girls, with the addition of the Consort (the Cathedral's youth choir) singing one Sunday a month.]*

Choristers sing from September to Christmas Day, from January to Easter Day, and to the end of the BCCS school term in the summer

## What's next?

Having read this Prospectus, talk to your child about the commitment and expectations, and decide whether you would like to take the next step.

If you would like any further information don't hesitate to contact the Music & Liturgy Officer or the Chorister Tutor. Both have personal experience of chorister life: Tim is a former chorister and current Lay Clerk; Sarah is the mother of two former choristers.

If you would like to arrange a voice trial, please complete an Application Form, which is available from Tim Popple.

# Who's who at the Cathedral?

The people you and your child will meet if your child becomes a chorister:



**The Revd Mel Takáč**

*Minor Canon for Worship & Liturgy*

Mel is primarily responsible for worship and liturgy in the Cathedral. She also has oversight of the pastoral care of the Cathedral Choir and the musicians.



**Mark Lee**

*Master of the Choristers & Organist*

Mark is responsible for the training, direction, and management of the Cathedral's music. He will be the main point of contact for Probationers and Choristers.

[mark.lee@bristol-cathedral.co.uk](mailto:mark.lee@bristol-cathedral.co.uk)



**Paul Walton**

*Assistant Organist*

Paul accompanies and assists in the training of the Cathedral Choir. Paul also directs the Cathedral Consort, the Cathedral's youth choir which takes children aged 11-19.



**Tim Popple**

*Music & Liturgy Officer*

Tim is responsible for the administration of the music and liturgy within the Cathedral. He creates the Choir Diary, and will be your main point of contact for all administrative enquiries.

[tim.popple@bristol-cathedral.co.uk](mailto:tim.popple@bristol-cathedral.co.uk)



**William Forrest**

*Music Assistant*

William assists Mark and Paul by accompanying some of the services, taking rehearsals when required, and undertaking general administrative support for the music department. He also runs the choir at the Lord Mayor's Chapel.



**Sarah Jenkinson**

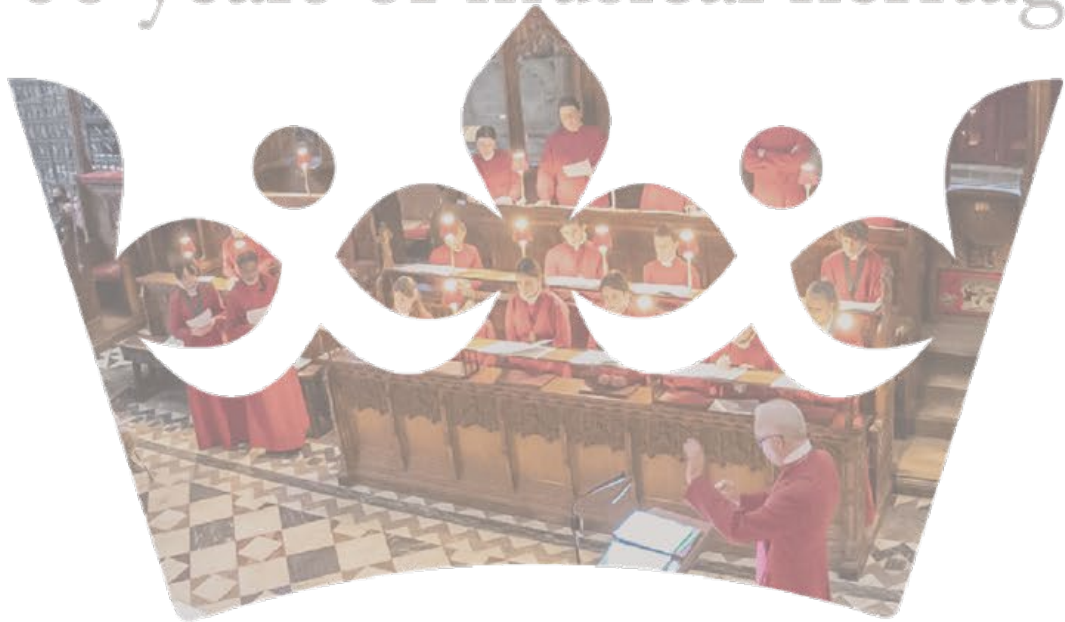
*Safeguarding & Pastoral Officer  
(inc. Chorister Tutor)*

Sarah has a pastoral role in the choir, liaising with families, safeguarding, first aid, supporting the choristers and probationers, and other more practical duties.

[sarah.jenkinson@bristol-cathedral.co.uk](mailto:sarah.jenkinson@bristol-cathedral.co.uk)



900 years of musical heritage



BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

