



Exeter  
Cathedral



# *Chorister Parent Handbook 2025-26*





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# Welcome

Welcome to the community of Exeter Cathedral. Your child is embarking upon a life-changing journey of music-making, friendship, and being at the heart of all that we do at the Cathedral. Your support is vital and much appreciated. Indeed, the experience of being a chorister parent may also be life-changing for you!

This booklet brings together some information about the Cathedral to help you navigate what may appear to be a bewildering new world of clergy and musicians, of ancient services and strange routines. It is in no way an exhaustive guide, and we are always happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for all you have done to support and bring your child to this point, and thank you in advance for all you will do to support the Cathedral and its choir.

**Canon James Mustard, Precentor**  
**james.mustard@**  
**exeter-cathedral.org.uk**



*As Precentor, Canon James Mustard leads the Department of Liturgy and Music. He studied music here in Exeter and was a choral scholar at the Cathedral. Following a career as a freelance musician, he was ordained in 2005, and has served in the Dioceses of Norwich, London and St Albans before returning to Exeter in 2018. He is a governor of Exeter Cathedral School and a trustee of the Cathedral Music Trust.*

*Photos by Emma Solley/Exeter Cathedral.  
Bottom left photo by The Times.*

# *Introduction:*

## ***an overview of chorister life***

Your child joins us as a probationer . They spend their first term receiving specialist guidance and musical instruction as they adjust to chorister life. The following January, your probationer is installed as a full chorister. They receive their white surplice at a special evensong, and commit to choristership until the end of year 8.

In year 8, your chorister is invested as a senior chorister, taking on both musical leadership and a mentoring role over the younger children. At the final service of the year, called Valedictory Evensong, year 8 choristers are presented with leaving gifts. Leaving choristers keep in touch via The Old Choristers Association, which organises reunions every Easter Monday.



The basic pattern of chorister duties will quickly become routine. In general:

- Both sets of choristers rehearse each weekday morning except Wednesday, which is a day off.
- Choristers are met each morning at the West Wing door and taken to school after rehearsal.
- At the end of school, duty choristers are escorted to the cathedral by a chaperone.
- Boys sing evensong on Mondays and Thursdays.
- Girls sing evensong on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- Weekend duties usually alternate between boys and girls, with some weekends covered by voluntary choirs.
- Boys and girls sing together at Christmas, Easter and other special occasions for which details are shared well in advance.

## ***the weekly routine***

*The chorister routine is a major commitment for parents as well as children. Remember that we are here to help, and that we can only help with what we know about!*

<b>Monday</b>	8-8:10am all choristers dropped off at the West Wing for rehearsal	{4:30pm boy choristers escorted from school to cathedral for rehearsal}	5:30pm boy choristers sing evensong	6:15pm boy choristers signed out to parents
<b>Tuesday</b>	8-8:10am all choristers dropped off at the West Wing for rehearsal	{4:30pm girl choristers escorted from school to cathedral for rehearsal}	5:30pm girl choristers sing evensong	6:15pm girl choristers signed out to parents
<b>Wednesday</b>				
<b>Thursday</b>	8-8:10am all choristers dropped off at the West Wing for rehearsal	{4:30pm boy choristers escorted from school to cathedral for rehearsal}	5:30pm boy choristers sing evensong	6:15pm boy choristers signed out to parents
<b>Friday</b>	8-8:10am all choristers dropped off at the West Wing for rehearsal	{4:30pm girl choristers escorted from school to cathedral for rehearsal}	5:30pm girl choristers sing evensong	6:15pm girl choristers signed out to parents
<b>Saturday</b>		4:15pm duty choristers dropped off at the West Wing	5:30pm duty choristers sing evensong	6:15pm duty choristers signed out to parents
<b>Sunday</b>	8:45am duty choristers dropped off at the West Wing	10am duty choristers sing evensong  pick up from West Wing at 11:15am	2:45pm duty choristers dropped off at the West Wing	4pm duty choristers sing evensong  pick up from West Wing at 5pm



# More Detail:

## *who we are and what we do*

The staff in the Cathedral music office are responsible for your children whilst they are on our site. We work closely with Exeter Cathedral School to ensure that your children have the best possible chorister experience. We want to ensure that they reach both their musical and academic potential, and that they receive the highest standards of pastoral support.



**Timothy Noon** has been **Director of Music** at Exeter Cathedral since 2016. He rehearses the choristers every morning and conducts the majority of cathedral services and concerts.

He was a chorister at Hereford Cathedral, before holding posts at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, St David's Cathedral in Wales, Cathedral of Christ the King in Liverpool, and Auckland Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, New Zealand.

[timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

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**Michael Stephens-Jones** is **Assistant Director of Music**. He shares responsibility for rehearsing the choristers, and accompanies most services on the Cathedral organ.

He has previously been Organ Scholar at St Paul's Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, Selwyn College, Cambridge and Guilford Cathedral.

[michael.stephens-jones@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:michael.stephens-jones@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

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**Michael D'Avanzo** is **Organ Scholar**. He assists the Directors of Music in playing the organ and training the choristers.

Michael was a chorister at Hereford Cathedral and has held Organ Scholarships at St David's Cathedral, Southwell Minster and St John's College, Cambridge. He also performs regularly as a singer.

[michael.davanzo@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:michael.davanzo@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)



**Eleanor Clark** is **Choir Chaperone and Music Administrator**. She registers and chaperones the choristers at weekday morning rehearsals. She meets regularly with ECS and the Volunteer Chaperones to discuss safeguarding, pastoral, and logistical concerns.

Eleanor is a former Exeter chorister and has previously worked as chaperone for the choristers at Merton College, Oxford.

[eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

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**Zoe Cooper** is **Lead Evening Chaperone**. Zoe collects the choristers from school on weekday evenings and accompanies them to the Cathedral for rehearsals and the services. She signs choristers out to parents at the end of the day.

Zoe is also an art teacher at ECS, offering a point of continuity between school and Cathedral life. As a former boarding houseparent, she offers a wealth of experience in both teaching and pastoral care.



[zoe.cooper@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:zoe.cooper@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

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Eleanor and Zoe are assisted by a dedicated and experienced team of **Volunteer Chaperones**: Rachel Norris, Petrie Murchison, Mary Moore, Helen Friend, Tamsin Bullocke and Claire Whiter. The Chaperones assist Zoe with weekday evensongs, and share weekend duties between them.





The “Back Row” which provides the lower parts (Alto, Tenor and Bass) of the Cathedral Choir is made up of two groups. There are six **Lay Vicars**: experienced singers who have careers as professional musicians which they pursue alongside Cathedral duties. There are six **Choral Scholars**, younger singers who are usually full-time students at the University of Exeter or students undertaking a pre- or post-University gap-year.



**Andrew Downton** is the Cathedral's **Singing Development Leader**. He conducts Devon County Junior choir (DCJC) and Schola Exe and works on the Chorister Outreach Programme. He also meets regularly with our choristers to provide individual and small-group vocal training.





## *others you may see around the Cathedral*



The Reverend Dr **Mike Harrison** is the **Bishop of Exeter**. He has oversight and care for the whole Diocese of Exeter, which includes all the Church of England parishes in Devon.

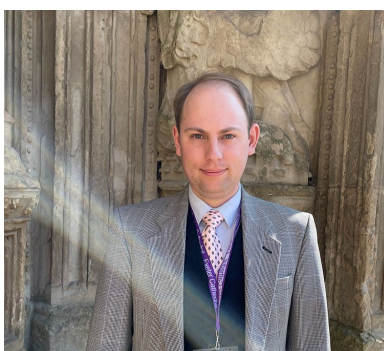


**Jonathan Greener** is the **Dean of Exeter**. The Dean is the Chair of the Chapter, the group which is responsible for running the Cathedral and its



**Chris Palmer** is **Canon Treasurer**. He is taking a lead on our development project and building works.

**Deborah Parsons** is **Canon Chancellor**. She is responsible for pastoral care in the Cathedral, and for Christian nurture.



**Thomas Mitchell** is **Custos/Head Virger**. He is responsible for the teams of Virgers, Cleaners and Seamstresses to ensure smooth daily operation.



**Cate Edmonds** is the **Canon Steward**. She works to develop the Cathedral's relationship to the wider Diocese, especially schools.

**Catherine Escott** is the **Chief Operating Officer**. She oversees the management of Cathedral staff and the Chapter's strategy.



# Procedures:



## Rehearsals

- Rehearsals are held in the Song Schools. There are two Song Schools, usually used for boys and girls separately. Sometimes, senior and junior choristers may also be rehearsed separately in each room.
- There are boys and girls loos in between the two rooms, as well as a water fountain. These are for chorister use only during rehearsal times and the chaperone ensures this rule is kept to by other Cathedral staff.
- If a child needs the loo during rehearsal, they can ask the Director of Music to be excused.

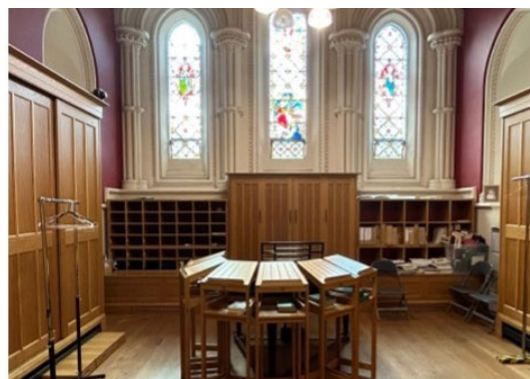


## Sundays – Chorister Care

- Choristers who cannot go home between Sunday Eucharist and Evensong may attend Chorister Care at ECS.
- Chorister Care involves supervised lunch and activities, led by **Mr Wojciech Mazur**, who teaches pre-prep at ECS.
- Parents are asked to email [eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk) one week in advance to enrol their child in Sunday care.

## Drop-off and Pick-up

- This is the West Wing, where choristers must be dropped off for morning rehearsals between 8 and 8:10am.
- Choristers will always be met by a member of staff, so we ask you not to linger in the car park; Cathedral Staff are arriving at the same time.
- You may park in Palace Gate outside the school. Please ask ECS to add your vehicle to the Cathedral's ANPR system to avoid a fine for parking.
- If you change your vehicle, please alert both Tom Salmon at [liturgy@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:liturgy@exeter-cathedral.org.uk) and ECS at [reception@exetercs.org](mailto:reception@exetercs.org)
- Sign-out after services takes place at the West Wing, with Zoe Cooper or another Chaperone.



## Services

- If a chorister feels unwell or needs the loo during a service, they can quietly leave the choir stalls and go to the chaperone, who will escort them out.
- If a child cannot sing but is well enough to watch the service, they may sit with the chaperone for the remainder.





## Communication

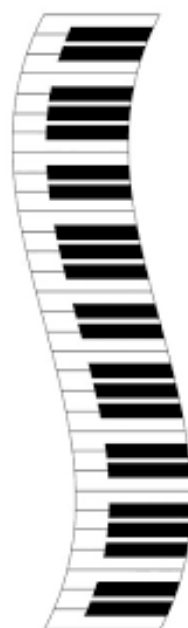


- If your child is running late, text the chorister phone. A member of staff will ensure their safe admission to the building.
- If your child is ill and will not attend morning rehearsal, text the chorister phone and email ECS.
- If your child is taken ill during a service, the chaperone will use this number to contact you.
- If you are running late to collect your child, please text the chorister phone with an ETA.
- During offsite activities, the chorister phone number will keep parents updated about return times, sometimes via group chats on Telegram.
- If your child has a mobile phone, it will be collected before morning practice and returned either after school or after Evensong. We therefore ask you not to text your own child about arrangements.

For non-urgent or ongoing logistical and pastoral concerns, you can always get in touch with the music office staff by email.

## Safeguarding

- During term time, weekly pastoral meetings take place between the Cathedral music office staff and **Mrs Emma Ross**, the **Designated Safeguarding Lead at ECS**.
- This ensures a joined-up approach to care across both organisations, whether we are responding to a concern raised by a parent, chorister or teacher, or to observations made by chaperones.
- Within the Cathedral, the Precentor has safeguarding responsibility for the Choir, and attends our weekly pastoral meetings.
- The team are advised by **Mrs Sarah Reddington**, who is the **Cathedral's Safeguarding Adviser**. She is also a former teacher at ECS.
- You can raise a concern with Sarah at: [safeguarding@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@exeter-cathedral.org.uk).
- The Dean is ultimately responsible for safeguarding across the Cathedral as a whole.



# *Frequently Asked Questions:*



## ***Does the choir ever go on tour?***

Yes! Most recently we had a successful tour to France in July 2025. The Cathedral Choir aims to take years 7 & 8 on tour every other year. The Dean & Chapter has a Tour Fund to cover costs, but this relies on fundraising from the Choir Association and other sources.

## ***What if my child is unhappy?***

Whilst choristership is fun and rewarding, it can also be tiring and at times pressurising for children. We observe choristers all the time to ensure their wellbeing, but if you are ever concerned, please email Tim Noon and Eleanor Clark to arrange a chat.

## ***Does the Cathedral offer activities for my non-Chorister children?***

Cloister Club is our activity programme for children, taking place during term time Sunday Eucharists from 10-10:45am. To find out about our Junior Choir, DCJC, contact [andrew.downton@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:andrew.downton@exeter-cathedral.org.uk).

## ***What opportunities do choir parents have to get involved at the Cathedral?***

Choir parents have been, and are, volunteers in the Cathedral. Their roles include helping as tour guides, sidesmen, stewards and servers. Occasionally, choir parents may also serve as extra chaperones at larger services or concerts.

## ***Can my child learn a musical instrument?***

Of course! The Dean and Chapter funds lessons in one musical instrument for each chorister, in addition to their scholarship to ECS. Additional lessons will not be funded by the Cathedral.

## ***What if we have financial concerns?***

We appreciate the commitment of both time and money that parents make to choristership. If you have concerns about funding school fees, please contact Steven Webber at ECS as soon as possible, at [s.webber@exetercs.org](mailto:s.webber@exetercs.org). The sooner he knows about the situation, the sooner he can try to help.



***If my child has other commitments, can they miss a service?***

We know our choristers are often multi-talented children, but we do ask that choristership takes priority over other activities. Family weddings and funerals are acceptable reasons for a planned absence; sporting fixtures and family holidays are not. Please write to Mr Noon well in advance to request an absence.

***What happens if my son's voice changes before the end of year 8?***

Each year, one or more of our boy choristers may lose their treble voice before the end of their time in the choir. This can be a sensitive time for boys, and each child's vocal development and needs will be different. Mr Noon will work with you and your son to find the best way for him to conclude his chorister career. Often, if a boy is unable to sing in the choir, he enjoys assisting in the organ loft or library. A boy chorister's scholarship is honoured to the end of year 8 even if he is no longer able to sing in the choir.

***What can I do if I am concerned about something or someone at the Cathedral?***

If someone is in immediate danger, always phone 999. For safeguarding concerns, contact the Safeguarding Advisor on 01392 294969. For other concerns, such as bullying or harassment, you may use the complaints procedure found at [bt.ly/ec-complaints](https://bt.ly/ec-complaints).

***What if my child is falling behind at school?***

At weekly meetings between School and Cathedral staff, we have opportunities to notice when children are struggling. If you are concerned and would like to arrange a joint meeting, please email Eleanor Clark, Timothy Noon, and your child's form tutor.

***How can I arrange baptism or confirmation in the Cathedral?***

Confirmation is offered to children in years 7 and above. Choristers, siblings and family members can speak to James Mustard about preparing for confirmation. To arrange a baptism, please contact [liturgy@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:liturgy@exeter-cathedral.org.uk).

***How do I learn about my child's musical progress?***

Mr Noon writes reports for each chorister, but you can always get in touch at other times by email.



# Cathedral Choir Association

The Cathedral Choir Association exists to work with the Dean and Chapter, and ECS, to promote the interests of choristers and to encourage the corporate life of the whole choir – which includes chorister parents! The profits of one pre-Christmas concert go to the Association fund and the profits of the winter Candlelight Concert go to its tour fund.

The CCA therefore:

- offers and organises treats and/or gifts for choristers
- organises social functions to encourage community and fellowship within the choir
- raises funds for projects nominated by the Association, the Chapter, and the Music & Liturgy department – eg. tours



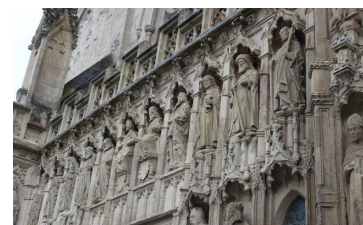
The CCA regularly organises:

- Holy Saturday Chorister Sports Day, often followed by Bring and Share lunch
- Meals after special occasions such as Installations and Valedictory
- Christmas Day lunch, held at School and subsidised by both ECS and the Cathedral



The CCA's members are:

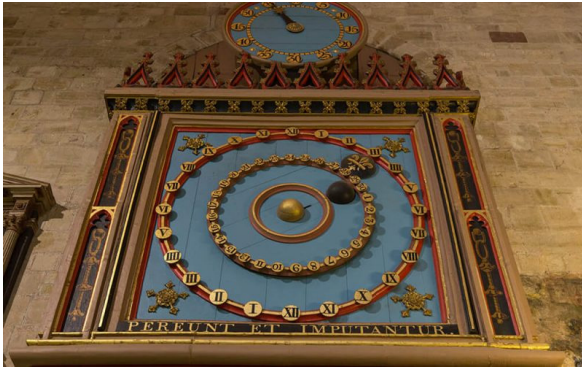
- Parents and legal caregivers of current choristers: from the date your child joins the choir until the AGM following their leaving the choir.
- Current adults in the choir.
- Cathedral Chapter, Cathedral Music office staff and the ECS Head are ex-officio members.
- The Committee comprises: Honorary Secretary, a member responsible for Financial Liaison with the Chapter, and four members (one an adult choir member) leading on social events, fundraising and planning.



The CCA meets:

- Annually, with dates given at least two weeks in advance.
- The meeting is chaired by the Precentor or a deputy nominated by the Dean.
- The meeting receives reports from the Chapter and Music Office, reviews the CCA finances and carries out elections.





# *Who to Contact:*

## **For questions about musical progress and absence requests:**

- the Director of Music: [timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- cc the Assistant Director of Music: [michael.stephens-jones@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:michael.stephens-jones@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

## **For questions about faith & spirituality, confirmations and baptisms**

- the Canon Precentor: [james.mustard@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:james.mustard@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

## **To let us know about chorister welfare, pastoral and logistical worries**

- the lead chaperones: [eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk) and [zoe.cooper@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:zoe.cooper@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- cc the Director of Music: [timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- cc other relevant School staff

## **To raise a formal safeguarding concern with the Cathedral**

- the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor: [safeguarding@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@exeter-cathedral.org.uk) and [sarah.reddington@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:sarah.reddington@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- cc the Canon Precentor if the issue relates to a chorister: [james.mustard@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:james.mustard@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

## **To raise a pastoral issue which relates to School, but may impact a chorister**

- the Designated Safeguarding Lead at ECS: [e.ross@exetercs.org.uk](mailto:e.ross@exetercs.org.uk)
- the lead chaperones: [eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk) and [zoe.cooper@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:zoe.cooper@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- cc the Director of Music

## **To confirm arrangements for a specific choir event**

- the music office administrator: [eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.clark@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

## **To share some good news with the Cathedral**

- the Canon Precentor: [james.mustard@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:james.mustard@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- the Canon Chancellor: [deborah.parsons@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:deborah.parsons@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)
- cc the Director of Music for news about a chorister

## **For prayer requests**

- Priest Vicar Ian Morter: [ian.morter@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:ian.morter@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

# *Map of Exeter Cathedral*

