

Availability of Choristers for Engagements and Tours

Engagements during school terms

In principle, the children should not undertake engagements that would cause them to miss, or would otherwise adversely affect, their schooling. In practice, there is always flexibility in interpreting this rule.

The involvement of children in activities that disrupt their school life is monitored and reviewed to assess the level of risk to the choristers' schooling and well-being (the latter being an issue if the children's overall commitments become excessive).

Routinely, the commitments of the Choir (e.g. to College Graduation service, Joint Evensong with King's College) require the children's absence from school for at least part of a number of days during the year for rehearsals and performances.

Non-routine commitments need to be planned in the context of a clear understanding of the number of days per year when the children's schooling is already adversely affected.

In this regard, it is important to view decisions about specific potential engagements within the context of the history of routine and non-routine choir commitments that have already taken children out of school during a term or are already planned to do so.

The days within the **school year** (school holidays aside), when the children are readily available for engagements can be summarised as:

Michaelmas

A new school year also means a new Choir and engagements are therefore often inappropriate at such a time. Excessive commitment in September leads to tiredness later in the term.

Prior to the commencement of University Full Term, the children are free from Evensongs at weekends and are therefore, in principle, free for engagements, but the Lower Voices do not return until the beginning of October. This time is therefore given over primarily to preparation of the children for the routine demands of the Choir.

After the end of University Full Term, there may be a weekend when an engagement can be arranged before the end of the school's Michaelmas term. By this time, however, it is important to bear in mind the levels of fatigue of the children, who will have been engaged in the Advent Carol Services and are likely to have engagements after the end of term.

Lent

Prior to the commencement of Lent Full Term, one weekend may be available for an engagement or a recording.

One, or possibly two, weekends may be available for an engagement or a recording after the end of the Lent Full Term

Routinely, the choir commitments in the Lent Term that might disrupt the children's weekday school routines are:

- Album recording that includes Thursday and Friday recording sessions

- Ash Wednesday (when the service is broadcast, usually every other year)

Summer

One weekend may be available for engagements after the end of the Easter Full Term and prior to the resumption of Chapel Service in late June, although this is rarely used.

Routinely, the choir commitments in the Summer Term that disrupt the children's weekday school routines are:

- College Graduation Ceremony
- Joint Evensong with King's College
- A BBC broadcast Evensong usually in early May every other year (alternating with Ash Wednesday broadcast)

Planning for term time commitments

Throughout the year, arrangements for earlier than usual evening rehearsals prevent the Choristers from doing their homework. These and other relatively minor disruptions of the school routine can have a detrimental cumulative effect and need also to be monitored.

Occasionally during the year, it is possible for engagements to be arranged to replace commitments to the routine of College services.

As set out above, there are very few weekends when an engagement will not disrupt either the routines of the College Chapel or the routines of the children's schooling.

Weekend engagements should, preferably, be on Saturdays (albeit that the childrens' routine of instrumental practice is disrupted by Saturday engagements) or early on Sundays. Sunday evening engagements lead to a very late night for the children prior to their working week at school.

Weekend engagements abroad tend to require departure on a Friday and cause absence from school.

Holiday Engagements

Routinely, the children are in school for 15 days per year (5 additional days per term) to fulfil choir commitments during the school's half term holidays.

It is established practice that tours do not take place in all three of the major holidays. The 'slots' available for recording, engagements and international tours, are as follows:

- After the end of the Michaelmas Term, a possible touring slot of approximately ten days. The school term may end a little earlier in some years and it may be possible to arrange for it to do so, given substantial advance warning, to accommodate a more extended tour. The children must, however, be home for Christmas.
- The length of an Easter tour will depend on the dates of Easter (the children should be at home for the Easter Bank Holiday weekend, if possible) and the quantity of touring in the rest of the academic Year.
- There should not be a long pre-Christmas tour and a long Easter tour, as this would leave the children without a substantial amount of time at home between September and the following July.
- After the Summer Term, touring and recording generally take place early in the holidays. Leaving choristers will be required to start at their senior schools towards the end of August.

The maximum amount of school (weekday) and holiday time that will be lost to touring, recording and commitments in College will be no more than seven weeks in the course of an academic year (including Half Term stay on commitments). Within this overall amount, the minimum possible number of school days will be lost to routine or non-routine Choir commitments.