



Music – A Guide for Parents

INTRODUCTION

St John's College School was founded to educate the choristers of one of the world's greatest choirs, and music remains at the heart and soul of the school. This guide endeavours to introduce you to the wealth and range of musical opportunities within the school and to answer some common questions. As you will appreciate, you have a vital part to play in many areas of your child's musical development, not least by giving support and encouragement and by helping to ensure that practice is habitual and effective. Communication is essential for the achievement of our goals; please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Music Department.

AIMS

The aims of the Music Department are simple and clear:

- enjoyment is our principal aim and motivation
- achieving a high level of inclusivity and the highest possible standards
- fostering the development of performing, creative and collaborative skills for children of all ages and abilities
- finding ways to give children the greatest access to music's benefits, opportunities and pleasures

CLASS MUSIC

Children receive weekly Class Music lessons from the Kindergarten through to Form 6. Skills taught fall into the broad categories of Movement, Listening, Performing, Composing and Appraising. Our approaches focus heavily on pupils learning to internalise their musical experiences through movement and singing. More detailed information is provided in the Curriculum Summaries published in the Teaching & Learning section of the website.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

When to Start?

The school offers instrumental lessons to children in T2 upwards, and a number of children begin to learn an instrument in T2 or Form 1. On very rare occasions, pupils may start instrumental lessons before T2, although this will be entirely at the discretion of the school – outstanding ability having been noticed, discussed and monitored by Music Department and Byron House staff – and not automatically as a result of parental requests. There is no upper age restriction, though it is worth adding that for many children it is best to start a stringed instrument sooner rather than later. However, children who start an instrument slightly later in their school careers will typically progress accordingly at a faster rate, due to increased general maturity. In all cases, though, it is, of course, crucial that a child is coping well with the academic, social and emotional demands of life at school and also returning home at the end of the school day with some spare mental and/or physical energy left over so that regular practice can be undertaken. Parents, class teachers and other members of staff may all have an input with regard to the most felicitous time to start. For some instruments, there are, of course, physical considerations (general size and strength, dental development, coordination, etc.).

Useful questions to ask regarding the timing of starting:

Is the motivation for taking up an instrument coming from your child, just from you, or from both? It is crucial, of course, that your child is really keen to take up an instrument, as a regular commitment is required, and very helpful if parents have the time and inclination to support and encourage.

Has your child showed signs of interest – which can be expressed in many different ways – in music (e.g. singing around the house, dancing/moving to music, tapping rhythms at the table, playing an instrument which is available at home, talking about music, etc.)?

Is your child coping with the academic, social and emotional demands of life at school?

Is your child returning home at the end of the school day with plenty of spare mental and/or physical energy? (Which of these two distinctive types of energy your child has left over should help us to work out which instruments may be more suitable for your child, as explained later.)

As a family, are you ready to take on this extra commitment? Regular practice (ideally as part of a routine – explained later) is required, as otherwise progress and enjoyment are unlikely to result.

Does your child persevere with hobbies?

If in doubt, do please seek advice directly from the Music Department staff and, in some cases, a period of waiting and reviewing may be the best solution. Please be aware that the Music Department may contact parents of some Byron House pupils, having consulted colleagues at Byron House, if we think that delaying the start of instrumental lessons or a different instrument would suit your child. This, of course, is meant to be an entirely positive process, as we seek to find a solution which will give your child the greatest access to the pleasures and benefits of music.

Which Instrument?

Children are given an overview of the various instruments in Class Music lessons, and by attending the biannual 'Showcase' concerts from T1 upwards. In these informal concerts, many of the orchestral/band instruments, recorders and piano are played by pupils, and discussion can follow in Class Music lessons. Reasons for children being attracted to a particular instrument are, of course, many and varied. A child may find the sound or the appearance of an instrument appealing, or perhaps a friend or relative already plays it. Any reason for a child's enthusiasm for an instrument is valid, provided it seems likely to prove an enduring enthusiasm, but it is also important that the child is suited both physically and temperamentally to the chosen instrument. Different instruments make different demands on the player, and we aim to find a solution which makes use of each child's strengths rather than making unreasonable demands of their weaknesses. It should also be said that any given combination of child and instrument will be experimental to some extent in the early stages; it is difficult to reach a meaningfully objective assessment of the child's aptitude for the instrument until lessons have been underway for, perhaps, a year or so.

As a general guide, you should consider the specific requirements and demands of each instrument and compare these with your own child's strengths and weaknesses. For example, the piano requires the student to sit still for long periods of time, to take part in a solitary activity, to have strong reading and processing skills (as the music is written on two lines as opposed to the one line for other instruments), to have well-developed fine motor skills, and to be a patient learner, as progress at this difficult instrument is for most pupils slower than on other instruments; in other words, the instrument requires lots of mental, rather than physical, energy. So, if your child is physically very active, gregarious, not a strong reader and without strong coordination or patience in their learning, the piano is unlikely to be the pupil's best route to finding music's benefits and pleasures, whereas there are other instruments likely to be much more suitable.

The instruments tend to fit distinctly into two groups – those which require more physical energy (woodwind, brass and singing) and those which require more mental energy (piano and strings, including guitar and harp); percussion fits somewhere in between – and so a good starting point is for you to consider whether or not your child has spare mental or physical energy at the end of the day, when instrumental practice is likely to be

done. Of course, some wind instruments require less physical energy (the flute or recorder, for example) and some require more (the oboe and the brass instruments).

It is worth mentioning that it is not necessary for a parent to possess any expertise on the chosen instrument! The best support a parent can give their child is through taking an interest, offering encouragement and making sure that practice is part of the daily routine.

Pupils in T2 are generally limited by physical size to the 'cello, piano, recorder and violin, although developments in smaller-scale instruments now make the bassoon, clarinet, double bass, flute, harp, horn, oboe, trombone and trumpet possibilities for many children, too. If we know that your child is keen to play a particular instrument, or if we consider your child to have a talent that should be fostered, you will be contacted. Likewise, please contact any member of the Music Department if you have a query about instrumental music provision.

Obtaining an Instrument

You are advised not to acquire an instrument before receiving confirmation that your request for lessons has been successful. Do please ask your child's instrumental teacher for advice with regard to acquiring an instrument; an unsuitable instrument could severely hinder progress and enjoyment. The school keeps a modest stock of certain instruments which are available for hire at a reasonable termly charge. It is strongly recommended that piano pupils have access to a proper piano, and not just a keyboard or clavinova. The school can recommend the following suppliers, some of which may offer worthwhile rental schemes for an initial period:

The Music Gallery, 10-12 King's Hedges Road, Cambridge, CB4 2PA • Tel. (01223) 424999, incorporating **Cambridge Pianoforte Centre** • Tel. (01223) 424007 • www.cambridgemusic.net

Wood, Wind and Reed, 106 Russell Street, Cambridge, CB2 1HU • Tel. (01223) 500442 • www.wwr.co.uk

Cambridge Strings, 72 King Street, Cambridge, CB1 1LN • Tel. (01223) 323388 • www.cambridgestrings.co.uk

Ken Stevens & Miller's, 12 Sussex Street, Cambridge, CB1 1PW, (01223) 354452
www.millersmusic.co.uk

Instrument Maintenance and Repair

If a running repair undertaken by the teacher will not suffice, the teacher will advise on the action required. You are responsible for the care and maintenance of a school instrument on loan to a pupil, and may be asked to meet the cost of necessary maintenance and repair. All instrument cases and music bags must be clearly named, and some distinguishing mark such as a discreet sticker can help to avoid unintentional swaps! Do take care not to leave instruments near radiators, in cars, or in places where the temperature and/or humidity fluctuates significantly, as this will affect the performance of the instrument.

Insurance

It is essential to insure an instrument for its full replacement value. Most household contents policies should cover this but, particularly if the instrument is a valuable one, it is wise to include it as a named item on your policy. For specialist musical instrument insurance, Allianz Cornhill Musical Instrument Insurance is a market leader.

School instruments are covered by the school's policy. Parents and pupils should care for school instruments as if their own, and you may be asked to provide new strings or reeds for an instrument on loan to a pupil.

Lesson Organisation

The Music Lesson Request Form (included in mailings and available from the school offices) should be returned at the earliest opportunity, and as far as possible according to the following schedule:

To start lesson in the Michaelmas Term: by the deadline set in April/May

At other times: please contact the Music Administrator in the Music Department Office

Please note that it can prove less straightforward to arrange lessons starting during the course of the school year (*i.e.* in the Lent and Summer Terms). Although every effort will be made to arrange lessons requested after the above deadlines, spaces may not always be available, and a waiting list will be created, if necessary.

Lessons are given by highly qualified and skilled teachers and in a very wide range of instruments (please see the Music Lesson Request Form for the full range offered). If your interest is in an instrument which is not listed, please consult the Director of Music. Solo singing lessons are also available for those children, usually older pupils, who show particular flair in the context of class singing and choral activity.

Lessons are usually thirty minutes in duration. Almost all lessons take place during the main body of the school day; children typically have a rotating lesson time, which ensures that they do not miss the same class lesson too frequently. While children at Senior House are expected to check their lesson time before the registration period on the day of their lesson and are regularly reminded to do so, you can be sure that, at Senior House and Byron House, the children will be 'found' by the teacher if necessary!

Group music-making usually takes place during lunch breaks, morning registration or after school. The school currently organises around 30 instrumental ensembles which rehearse weekly.

What am I Charged For?

Parents are billed for individual lessons directly by the music teacher, typically at the start of term. The lesson rate which teachers charge is reviewed annually. In addition to the charge for individual lessons, there is a small fee for group Theory and Aural Tuition.

Lessons missed due to the pupil's absence from school (due to illness, for example) are charged to parents. While every attempt is made by the school and the music teacher to rearrange lessons which will otherwise be missed because of the teacher's absence, school examinations, or attendance on a school trip or other outside activity arranged by the school, if an alternative solution cannot be found the lesson will not be charged to parents.

Group music-making and choirs are provided without charge.

Cancellation of Lessons

A half term's notice in writing will be required by the Visiting Music Teacher to discontinue music tuition, otherwise one half term's fees are payable in lieu of such notice. The main reasons for this are, of course, to safeguard the visiting music teachers against sudden, unexpected reductions in income and to allow teachers to plan ahead in enlisting other pupils. Notice should be received by the Visiting Music Teacher not later than the first day of the half term at the end of which the lessons are to cease. At the same time, please inform the Music Administrator in the Music Department Office of your intention for your child to cease lessons, so that the resulting administrative tasks can be planned. Please do communicate with us if you have any questions.

Channels of Communication

Regular communication between teacher and parent is highly desirable in order for a child to maintain good progress. The teacher will make contact with you shortly before the first lesson, providing an opportunity for you to raise any questions. The teacher will also outline how you can help to make the tuition a success, especially with regard to the practice routine. You can communicate with the teacher by letter to the school (or email) or, most effectively, through your child's practice notebook, and you may ask the teacher to telephone you if you have a particular concern. If direct contact with the VMT has not resolved your

question/concern, please contact Simon Kirk, Director of Music (Senior House pupils) or Jan Fletcher, Assistant Director of Music (Byron House pupils). In the vast majority of situations, direct communication with the VMT will result in the swiftest and most effective action. In addition, parents are most welcome to attend an instrumental lesson, by appointment with the teacher.

Formal written reports can be requested in the Michaelmas and Summer terms but are not routinely offered; instead, VMTs and parents are encouraged to set up online meetings to discuss the children's progress in those two terms. Additionally, the Music School is open throughout the year for parents to attend a lesson, by prior arrangement; other arrangements for communication between parent and teacher may be made as necessary.

Group Playing

One of the greatest pleasures in instrumental music comes from playing with others. A seven-year-old cannot play rugby or netball with thirteen-year-olds, but he or she can make music with them with every success, and the demands of playing with others underline the need for careful individual preparation. Group performance combines the rigour of solo playing with the need to be responsive and sensitive to others.

At St John's, once a pupil has mastered the initial aspects of instrumental technique, the teacher will arrange for the child to join an appropriate group. It can often be at this point that the pupil's rate of progress begins to increase more rapidly. Groups exist to cover the ability range from the near beginner to the advanced. The ensemble programme aims to reflect the needs and skills of the children and so changes from year to year, although a typical range would include various large string ensembles, string trios/quartets, a guitar ensemble, mixed wind ensembles, brass ensembles, a flute ensemble, a Big Band, a clarinet/sax ensemble, a percussion ensemble, a Jazz ensemble and piano ensembles. Membership of these groups, which usually rehearse during lunch breaks, morning registration or after school, is free of charge to parents.

Where appropriate, the teacher will suggest that a pupil would benefit from membership of the Cambridge Holiday Orchestra, Musicale Holidays, young National Schools Symphony Orchestra, the National Children's Orchestra, or similar. Such courses take place during school holidays.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!

This maxim is never more true than in Music, provided that the practice is of good quality, most importantly, and of an appropriate quantity. An insufficient week's practice often results in a less than satisfactory lesson, and frustration for the pupil; if this continues, the outcome is an increasingly negative trend. Even the best teacher's efforts are wasted on the pupil who does not practise satisfactorily.

The development of instrumental proficiency is a process demanding a high degree of mental and physical co-ordination. Just as children accept that they must train regularly to acquire and hone sports technique and fitness, so they also need to understand that playing an instrument successfully demands the same kind of regular regime.

For How Long and When and, Most Importantly, What Type of Practice?

A regular and efficient practice routine is the route to success with an instrument and, in all stages of learning from the outset, it is the quality rather than the quantity of practice which is of prime importance. The optimal amount of practice will depend on the age and the concentration span of the individual pupil, and the teacher will give a more precise indication of what is required and guidance on effective practice strategies. Certainly, for a child starting an instrument, ten minutes of good quality practice on at least 4 or ideally 5 days of the week is infinitely preferable to a frantic last-minute session on the day before the lesson!

It is important that you take a positive interest in the daily practice session and, so that a routine is established and maintained, it is good if the practice is fitted conveniently into the domestic routine and happens at around the same time each day as far as possible. Occasional 'hiccups' are by no means uncommon. Children, particularly those who are younger, tend to respond best when they are in fact quite closely supervised and directed in their practice – but with the appearance to them that this is not the case! Clearly, this is not an easy balance to strike. The essential point is that, since instrumental study is an elective activity, the business of

practising must not come to be seen by the child as a chore. If, after a while, there is too much parental contribution, a situation can arise in which the child struggles to gain the independence necessary to take them further with their studies. With judicious encouragement, children gradually become aware of the correlations between thoughtful practice, successful lessons and rewarding progress overall. Ultimately, enjoyment has to be the foremost motivation.

Some tips for successful practice follow (further advice is sent to parents from time to time):

Careful observation of the teacher's advice and work set in the practice note book.

Careful planning of time. Try dividing the practice time up so that there are clear and achievable targets in each section of the practice. Reasonable time should be given to every aspect: warm-ups; scales and arpeggios or exercises; pieces; sight-reading.

The warm-up will vary from instrument to instrument. A musician's muscles need warming up just like those of an athlete so that damage is not done to the specific muscles which are required for the activity. Woodwind and brass players and singers need to take particular care to do this properly. Use the warm-up exercises the teacher has given to your child, or the ones the teacher uses at the start of lessons. These will also help the pupil to build up coordination, technique and stamina.

Scales and arpeggios are the foundations of the musical language and appear in almost every piece of music, and careful work on them will really help to improve a pupil's technique and coordination. Pupils should aim to play scales fluently, at a consistent tempo and without mistakes. Pianists should pay real attention to correct fingering, an even touch and exact coordination between the hands; wind players should think carefully about breathing, coordination between hands and mouth and intonation in particular; string players should listen to their tuning very carefully and pay close attention to different bowing patterns. Slow practice is good at first to help to achieve these, and playing scales with a metronome is also very helpful.

Pieces should rarely be played from start to finish in a normal practice session. It is common for pupils to play through their pieces a few times each, and they think that this constitutes proper practice; in fact, it does not sort out the most difficult parts and serves only to ingrain inconsistencies. Instead, pupils should work methodically on the sections that their teacher has suggested; that is to say playing individual bars or short sections slowly until they are correct every time – pianists should practise with separate hands at first until each hand is correct before putting the two hands together slowly. The more patient and diligent the approach at first, the quicker the progress will be; the more impatient pupil will always end up actually taking longer to learn the piece properly, and will probably never do so. This approach requires real maturity, but it will become second nature if applied from the outset. Practise slowly: learn quickly.

Sight-reading is a skill which can really help a musician (as a soloist and in an ensemble situation) to learn new music more quickly and thus make quicker progress. It is also an important part of the graded exams and can only be improved with regular practice; there is no alternative. Working at one exercise per practice will really make a difference. Pupils should aim for rhythmic fluency and stability whilst sight-reading, even if there is the odd wrong note.

Careful maintenance/cleaning of the instrument, as required and as advised by the teacher (strings, woodwind and brass in particular)

As for holiday practice, although we do not expect all pupils to maintain their full practice routine throughout the holidays, some regular practice is crucial if the pupil is not to regress significantly in terms of technique, stamina, note-reading, etc; the Visiting Music Teachers set holiday preparation accordingly and, in particular, potential scholars, those taking music exams or performing in concerts imminently must continue to work diligently if they wish to achieve true success.

Boarders' Practice

Choristers and probationers have supervised practice sessions for half an hour after breakfast each weekday, and the choristers have additional time on Saturday mornings. Other boarders are allocated daily supervised sessions before school.

The Practice Notebook

The practice notebook is a simple but effective tool of communication between teacher and parent. The week's tasks are set out and technical and musical advice is given. This will assist you in supervising your child's practice effectively. Do please communicate with the teacher through the notebook, perhaps commenting on the week's practice or requesting a telephone call.

ABRSM MUSIC EXAMINATIONS

The school enters over one hundred candidates each year for the examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity College London, and the VMT will discuss with you if they think it would be worth your child entering for an exam.

The school believes that the benefits of such a system are:

To provide parents and the school with a formal appraisal of the pupil's attainment and progress (albeit based on one regulated examiner's snapshot view of a child's performance on one day)

To encourage sustained and purposeful practice

To provide an internationally recognised syllabus of work for teachers and pupils

To provide solo performance opportunities of an exacting nature

Whilst the system is in the main a good and fair one and our candidates achieve highly creditable results, we always take care to ensure that exams do not hinder a child's progress, as they can; an exam which does not fit naturally onto a child's line of progress (*i.e.* they have been pushed to take the exam too soon, or delayed for some reason), may cause short-term and, possibly, longer-term problems.

Good communication between you and the teacher will enable you to be aware well in advance that an exam entry is planned. Examiner-led sessions are held at the school once a term, usually falling in December, March and July; the exact dates are published in the calendar and a timetable is displayed about a week prior to the examination. Video-recordings for exams can be made at any time and submitted throughout the year. Piano accompaniment for the exam (and for some rehearsal time beforehand), where required, will be provided by the teacher, the Director of Music or another member of the Music Department. Your crucial part in the process is to ensure that the daily routine of effective, well-directed practice is maintained.

Passing the graded examinations at appropriate intervals offers some convincing evidence that good progress is being maintained, though equally this can be seen in concert performance, too. The considerable achievement of passing even the initial grades should not be underestimated and, at every level, successful candidates deserve sincere congratulations.

It should be added that the Associated Board examination system will not suit all pupils. Needless to say, equal concern is shown for the needs of gifted pupils and those less able who, while enjoying and benefiting from their instrumental playing, may well not take examinations. Ultimately, pupils' progress and enjoyment is more important than the taking of exams, and great care is taken by the music teachers to ensure that the timing or taking of an exam should not obstruct a child's longer-term progress.

Many children do not take exams and they are still able to fly with their music, perhaps even more so in some cases, as they are not held back by the limitations of an exam syllabus. With so many performing and ensemble opportunities at St John's, music exams are not an essential motivating force in a child's musical education here, as there are by necessity in some schools.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that it is not desirable or advisable to move straight from one grade syllabus to the next, as pupils will miss the opportunity to explore a varied repertoire and to develop the range of musical skills that will be needed to satisfy fully the requirements for the next grade, and their longer-term musical progress will suffer as a result.

Associated Board Aural Tests

The Visiting Music Teachers are responsible for preparing pupils for the aural tests which are a component of all practical examinations. Individual/Group tuition may also be offered to candidates at higher grades at a small additional cost on the recommendation of the teacher.

Theory of Music

The class teaching staff and Visiting Music Teachers strive with shared purpose, systematically to develop each pupil's musical knowledge, appreciation and literacy.

All pupils at St John's receive a structured introduction to the rudiments and theory of music as a constituent part of Class Music lessons. Aspects of music theory are encountered within the context of works studied in the classroom, class performance and during individual and group instrumental lessons.

All choristers and probationers attend a weekly theory class, as do other advanced instrumentalists who need to prepare for the Grade 5 Theory examination (a prerequisite for entry to practical examinations at Grades 6, 7 and 8).

PERFORMING OPPORTUNITIES

Individual practice and group rehearsal should ideally be focused on the ultimate discipline and inspiration of performance, whether in a formal examination or a concert. A performance goal reinforces the need for thorough long-term preparation and control of nerves – a good preparation for later life! Ensemble performance additionally fosters skills of teamwork and the ability to respond with sensitivity to others.

With this in mind, a variety of performance opportunities (currently numbering around 60 per year) exists throughout the school year. These range from the informal lunchtime concert series to the more formal occasions of the Summer Concert at the West Road Concert Hall in which many of the school's choral and instrumental groups perform. As a middle ground, evening concerts for brass, harp, percussion, piano, strings, voice, woodwind, and two Byron House Showcase Concerts, are held during the year. Parents are welcome to attend the informal lunchtime concerts, the evening concerts and the Summer Concert, whilst pupils of all ages from T1 upwards can attend the Showcases. Many class concerts also take place.

Other occasional concerts take place during the year to which parents and children are warmly invited.

CHORAL MUSIC

As the largest Choir and Preparatory School in existence, and educating as it does the choristers of one of the world's most illustrious choirs, you would expect St John's to afford special opportunities for choral music-making.

Not every child has the motivation or the aptitude to play an instrument, but each child in the school has a singing voice to be developed and the capacity to sing chorally. The human voice is for many the most natural vehicle for musical expression. Even weaker singers gain enormous satisfaction from participating in a large choir, in which they can sense that their contribution is as worthy as that of a more accomplished singer. Many children are members of one of our six school choirs.

All children are taught singing techniques with the supporting skills of musical literacy as a component of the Class Music curriculum, and membership of a choir is open to all from T2 upwards. The choirs perform in the Services in Preparation for Christmas at the end of the Michaelmas Term, in the Summer Concert and at other times of the year, in school and out of school.

The Chamber Choirs at Byron House and Senior House select for membership by audition, whilst the Senior T2 Choir, Junior Choir, 3rd and 4th Form Choir and 5th and 6th Form Choir are non-auditioned groups, the choral structure overall demonstrating an emphasis on providing opportunities for all and extending the most able.

MUSIC AWARDS TO SENIOR SCHOOLS

The school enjoys a highly impressive record of achievement with regard to pupils securing music awards to senior schools. The majority of single-sex and co-educational schools offer such awards. It is usual for candidates for awards to offer an orchestral instrument and piano at audition, although voice and percussion (orchestral, such as timpani and xylophone, and drum kit) can also be offered. The monetary value of such awards is usually no more than 5% or 10% remission of fees, although additional bursary funding up to 100% may be available in some cases. Music Scholars are expected to play a leading part in their senior school's musical life.

Musical standards vary quite significantly from school to school, rendering it difficult to make any meaningful generalisations about the levels of achievement necessary to gain an award. As a broad guideline, however, to gain a major award at a school of good musical standing, Grade 5/6 Distinction or Merit at age thirteen would be a typical expectation. A minor award, perhaps an exhibition or instrumental lesson fee remission, may be gained with lesser qualifications. Above all, though, senior schools look for ability, enthusiasm and potential, and it is not at all essential that candidates have recently taken any grade which might have been suggested as a guideline.

If we feel that your child may have the potential to gain a music award, you will be approached in good time for the necessary planning to get underway (though you are most welcome, of course, to discuss such prospects with us at any stage). Discussion would ensue with the Headmaster about choice of schools, taking into account academic compatibility and other extra-musical factors; parents would then visit a number of schools before electing first and second choices. St John's will arrange for candidates to have an informal 'pre-audition', typically in the Michaelmas Term of Form 6, and feedback is given by the senior school's Director of Music afterwards. The final scholarship audition, which generally consists of practical performance, sight-reading, aural tests and a short interview, usually takes place in the late January/early February of Form 6.

CHORISTERSHIPS

The College offers valuable choristerships (representing a two thirds reduction of the boarding fee, free singing lessons and free tuition in one instrument) to boys aged between about seven and ten on the date of the Voice Trials, normally held once each term. Most of the awards go to younger boys, and there is considerable national – and sometimes international – competition for places.

If you wish to explore the possibility of a choristership for your son, you should in the first instance contact the school's Director of Music or Assistant Director of Music. Parents of boys whom we believe to have the vocal, musical and overall potential to become choristers may also be approached by the school. This typically happens during the T2 year, but can also happen at a later stage. Potential candidates will then be heard by the college choir's Director of Music, Andrew Nethsingha, and parents informed of his opinion. If it is decided to proceed to the Voice Trials, appropriate preparation will be arranged and all the facets of a choristership, including boarding, will be discussed with parents.