

Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral Choir

Code of Behaviour for Choristers

1. Introduction

This Code of Behaviour has been developed with the cooperation of the Cathedral Select Vestry, parents and music department staff in the belief that a partnership approach to policy development encourages everyone affected by Cathedral policies, to support them and to work as a team to create the best possible environment within the music department to the benefit of everyone concerned. It also closely follows the guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) 2008.

Choristers must follow the music department's Code of Behaviour while attending choir practices, singing at services, when representing the Cathedral or when involved in Cathedral related events.

Fundamental to a happy and effective music department is the department's climate as experienced by staff, pupils, parents, worshippers and visitors. It is reflected in the level of our staff morale and the quality of relationships between choristers, staff and parents. It is essential that respect for self and for others, and that kindness and consideration for others is a fundamental expectation that sets the standard for the behaviour of everyone in the music department.

In the belief that the most effective music departments tend to be those with the best relationships with parents, every effort will be made by the Director of Music, Assistant Director of Music and voluntary staff to ensure that parents are kept well informed, not only when their child is in trouble but also when they have behaved particularly well. The music department provides a welcoming atmosphere towards parents, and encourages parents to communicate with their child's instructors about any concerns they may have.

In order that choristers have a sense of responsibility for, and understanding of, their behaviour, and have a positive attitude towards choir rules, it is the music department's policy to allow the choristers, with the guidance of their instructors, to develop rules at the start of each choir year. Choristers are also involved in deciding the consequences for misbehaviour, and in this way, they will support the rules and feel that the consequences are fair.

In the Music Department of Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral we aim:

- (a) To cherish all choristers equally so that they will be given every opportunity to succeed and to overcome any difficulties experienced during their time in the Cathedral Choir.
- (b) To provide each chorister with opportunities to realise his/her full potential.
- (c) To help each child in the development of his/her musical skills.
- (d) To nurture a love of music, to cultivate the motivation to apply himself/herself with enthusiasm to his/her duties as a chorister and to develop a sense of good self-esteem in each child.
- (g) To help each child to appreciate his/her own religion and culture and to respect the beliefs and cultures of others within the framework of the Cathedral's Anglican choral tradition.

2. Promoting Good Behaviour

Staff Responsibilities

(a) To ensure that choristers are fully aware of the expectations of them in regard to behaviour, rehearsals, theory lessons, Cathedral services and concerts and that the consequences for not fulfilling these expectations are clear, fair and consistent throughout the whole music department. Consideration will also be taken of each child's age and any special needs.

- (b) To reward and affirm good behaviour and reinforce effort.
- (c) To engage in effective, structured and consistent management of rehearsals and theory lessons which will involve the children as active participants in their own musical education, which will promote good self-discipline and will encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.
- (d) To communicate regularly with parents/guardians and welcome those who wish to discuss their children's progress and behaviour.
- (e) To speak with parents/guardians to make them fully aware of difficulties their child may have, either behavioural or musical, and seek their co-operation if these difficulties persist.
- (f) To establish communication with choristers and try to understand the reasons for any unacceptable behaviour.
- (g) To encourage choristers to articulate any difficulties they may have, to help them understand their own behaviour, the reasons for it and how to take responsibility for their behaviour and relationships.
- (h) Music department staff will record all incidents of misbehaviour (with the exception of isolated minor incidents) and these records are securely kept and are subject to Data Protection law as per the Cathedral's Data Protection Policy. These records will be kept until the chorister reaches the age of 21.

Choristers' Responsibilities

- (a) To respect the authority of music department staff.
- (b) To respect Cathedral property and that of others.
- (c) To behave politely towards worshippers and visitors to the Cathedral.
- (d) Not to behave in a way that will endanger their own safety or that of others.
- (e) Not to bring any dangerous or illegal item or substance into the Cathedral.
- (f) Not to interfere with the musical education of others.
- (g) To respect the opinion of others.
- (h) To be kind to other choristers and considerate of their feelings.
(Please also see the music department's Anti-Bullying Policy)
- (i) To dress appropriately for services.
- (j) Where there is a problem to co-operate with music department staff to understand the problem from the other pupils' and the staff members' points of view.
- (k) Work with music department staff to seek solutions to problems.

Cathedral Select Vestry's Responsibilities

The Cathedral Select Vestry will be supportive of all the partners in the application of a fair code of behaviour within the choir.

3. Consequences of Misbehaviour

Each member of the music department's staff has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within the Chapter House, the Cathedral and other ancillary premises. Issues in relation to discipline will be discussed regularly at staff meetings.

The overall responsibility for discipline within the Cathedral rests with the Director of Music and, in particular, he/she is responsible for discipline where a chorister is referred to him/her for serious breaches of discipline or repeated incidents of disruptive behaviour.

Staff endeavour to give praise and positive affirmation to encourage good behaviour. However staff exercise a common sense approach in assessing the gravity of a chorister's misbehaviour and deal with such misbehaviour within the framework set out below.

Incidents of misbehaviour are considered to be one of the following:

MINOR – single incident or repeated.

(Where minor incidents become persistent they may be treated under the Serious category.)

Examples of minor incidents are: Disrupting rehearsals, talking out of turn or during services, leaving seat/rehearsal space without permission, etc.

SERIOUS – single incident or repeated.

Examples of serious misbehaviour are: Being repeatedly disruptive in rehearsals, stealing, damaging other choristers'/staff/Cathedral property, bullying, back answering a member of staff or voluntary worker, using unacceptable language or gestures etc.

GROSS

Examples of gross misbehaviour are: Deliberate serious damage to Cathedral/staff property, behaviour which is a threat to the safety of the other choristers and staff, behaviour which is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the rehearsal process, aggressive/threatening/violent behaviour towards staff or other pupils etc.

(Please note these lists are not exhaustive.)

The following strategies may be used. The order of the strategies will be at the discretion of the Director of Music or other staff member, according to the level/nature of the incident:

- Reasoning with the chorister
- Ongoing communication with parents
- Reprimand (including advice on how to improve)
- Temporary separation from peers, friends or others
- Loss of privileges
- Referral to the Director of Music or the Dean

4. Recording of Misbehaviour

Music department staff will keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour, of sanctions applied as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive choristers.

Before resorting to serious sanctions e.g. suspension, the normal channels of communication between the music department and parents will be utilised. Parents will be involved at an early stage, rather than as a last resort. Records are subject to Data Protection law. These records will be kept until the chorister reaches the age of 21.

5. Communication with Parents

Communication with parents will be verbal, by email or by letter, depending on circumstances.

The parents concerned will be invited to come to the Cathedral to discuss their child's case. For gross misbehaviour, suspension will be considered. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a member of staff or volunteer will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour, depending on circumstances.

Where there are repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, the Dean will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the Cathedral to meet the Dean and the Director of Music. If the parents

do not give an undertaking that the chorister will behave in an acceptable manner in the future, the chorister may have to be suspended for a temporary period.

In the case of gross misbehaviour, the Dean or Director of Music can sanction an immediate suspension, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents. Expulsion from the choir may be considered in an extreme case.

6. Suspension

a) Definition

Suspension is defined as requiring the chorister to absent himself/herself from the choir for a specified, limited period. During the period of suspension, the chorister retains their place in the choir.

Suspension will be considered on the following grounds:

- the chorister's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the musical education of other choristers or the ability of the choir to rehearse or function without disruption.
- the chorister's continued presence in the choir at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- the chorister is responsible for serious damage to property
- aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a staff member or voluntary worker will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour, depending on circumstances.

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

Suspension will

- enable the music department to set behavioural goals with the chorister and their parents
- give music department staff time to plan other interventions
- impress on a chorister and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour

b) Procedures in respect of suspension.

Fair procedures will be applied when proposing to suspend a chorister:

- the chorister and their parents will be fully informed about an allegation and the processes that will be used to investigate and decide the matter
- the chorister and the parents will be given an opportunity to respond to an allegation before a decision is made and before a serious sanction is imposed
- where immediate suspension is considered warranted by the Director of Music for reasons of the safety of the chorister, other choristers, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension, the parents will be notified, arrangements made for the chorister to be collected and a formal investigation conducted immediately following the imposition of the suspension

c) Authority to suspend.

The Cathedral Select Vestry has the authority to suspend a chorister. This authority has been delegated to the Director of Music in consultation with the Dean.

d) The period of suspension.

The period of suspension will be for the shortest time necessary for the chorister and their parents to reflect on their behaviour while avoiding undue loss of rehearsal and performance time and loss of contact with the positive influence of the choir.

e) Implementing the suspension.

The Director of Music, as well as meeting with the parents/guardians, will notify the parents in writing of the decision to suspend and will confirm

- the period of suspension
- the reasons for the suspension
- arrangements for returning to the choir
- the provision for an appeal to the Cathedral Select Vestry

To maximise the impact and value of suspension, the Director of Music will meet with the parents/guardians to emphasise their responsibility in helping the chorister to behave well and to offer help and guidance with this. The chorister will be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start the music department will expect the same behaviour of this chorister as of all other choristers.

f) Appeals

The Cathedral Select Vestry will give an opportunity to appeal a Director of Music's decision to suspend a chorister.

7. Expulsion

a) Authority to expel

A chorister is expelled from the choir when the Cathedral Select Vestry takes a decision to permanently exclude him or her from the choir.

b) Grounds for expulsion

Expulsion is a very serious step and will only be taken in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

The music department will always take significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a chorister including, as appropriate:

- meeting with parents and the chorister to try to find ways of helping the chorister to change their behaviour
- making sure that the chorister understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist
- ensuring that all other possible options have been tried

A proposal to expel a chorister requires serious grounds such as:

- the chorister's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning and concentration of others or to the rehearsing/teaching/performing process.
- the chorister's continued presence in the choir constitutes a real and significant threat to safety
- the chorister is responsible for serious damage to property
- Cathedral authorities have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the chorister's behaviour.

c) Procedures in respect of expulsion

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Director of Music.
- A recommendation to the Cathedral Select Vestry by the Director of Music.
- Consideration by the Cathedral Select Vestry of the Director of Music's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing involving parents and Director of Music
- Cathedral Select Vestry deliberations and actions following the hearing.
- Confirmation of the decision to expel

Date Adopted: _____

Signed: _____

Review Date: _____