

OXFORD YOUTH CHOIRS CODE OF PRACTICE

1. WELCOME

This document welcomes you and your children to membership of Oxford Youth Choirs. It sets out the rules and conditions of choir membership, and gives basic information on choir procedures. We hope that you will find here all the information you require about the workings of the choirs and our code of practice.

2. INTRODUCTION

The choirs have been in existence since 1984 when the music director, Richard Vendome, founded the Oxford Girls Choir for girls excluded from the vocal training available to boys in the choir schools. While this remains the central musical project, the choir has grown in scope. There are now over 170 members, spread through the Prep Choirs (for ages 4-8), the Boys, Junior, and Senior choirs. The entire organisation is called Oxford Youth Choirs: the senior girls perform in public as the Oxford Girls Choir.

Entry is initially determined by the age of your child, and subsequent progress within the choirs is dependent upon age and ability. Entrance into the senior choir is by audition for those coming in from outside and as a result of discussions within the musical staff for those progressing from within.

We are a registered charity administered by trustees and a committee. Both the trustees and the committee are made up of choir parents. The music staff are paid, as is the administrator. Much of the running of the choirs relies on the help of volunteer parents and a great deal of time and energy from the music staff in time outside their teaching duties.

3. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Help and skills

We welcome and rely on parental help and support in a number of different areas. We encourage all parents to offer their skills and talents; there is a section of the registration form which asks for such information. The administrator keeps a register and will call upon parents when necessary for specific projects. Examples of the skills parents offer are computing, fund-raising, publicity, medical, foreign languages, and of course, serving on the committee.

We also keep a register of all parents who sing: we frequently need tenors and basses to enable the girls to perform mixed four-part choral repertoire, and even sopranos and altos are sometimes called upon.

Parent rota

All parents are called upon to serve on the termly rota., which is circulated with the termly invoices. A parent from each choir is obliged to act as a supervisor and assistant to the music staff in the interests of the children's safety. It is the duty of parents on the rota to find a substitute if they are unable to attend on the specified date. Duties are clearly explained on the rota, and attendance is essential for the smooth and safe running of the choir. Parents who do not attend will be phoned by a senior choir assistant.

In practice this is not an onerous duty, as names are unlikely to come up more than once a year, and it gives parents an excellent opportunity to observe the work of the choirs in action.

Keeping informed

Parents are urged to keep themselves informed about regular choir activities and extra events by the means outlined below under INFORMATION.

4. FINANCES

The choirs do not receive any state aid or substantial grants of a regular nature. The main activity is the musical training on Saturday mornings. This is self-financing in that each member pays a termly fee, but it should be stressed that the fees cover the Saturday morning expenses ONLY. All other projects have to be funded from extra revenue.

Supplementary activities

- ? Frequent public performances in Oxfordshire, elsewhere in the UK, and abroad.
- ? The choirs often perform with professional instrumentalists, and this enhances the quality of the music-making. But this expenditure is not covered by the income from the Saturday morning activities.
- ? Choir tours abroad: these are enormously valuable for those who take part and good for the profile of the choirs; they are funded by the members themselves.
- ? The choirs commission new music, give first performances and make occasional professional recordings.

It has to be stressed that public performances and tours lose the choir money. Thus, we have a continuing need for financial help and voluntary donations. Parents might consider an annual covenant in the form of a standing order.

For any donations, please make use of the Gift Aid scheme: forms are available from the administrator or treasurer.

5. INFORMATION

Registration forms are given to all new members from which we maintain a database. We encourage you to supply an e-mail address. This enables us to send information quickly and cost-effectively.

Information about the choir comes in the following forms:

- ? The choir code of conduct and policy statement
- ? The termly invoice which, apart from its financial function, gives parents the opportunity to make changes to information held about them and choir members on the database.
- ? Global emails to parents
- ? The choir website which is updated constantly with dates and practical arrangements
www.oxfordgirlschoir.co.uk

Parents are encouraged to visit the website regularly. Please read and respond to all information as promptly as possible. In addition parents should phone the administrator with any queries.

6. CHOIR PERSONNEL

Administrator processes registration forms, sends invoices and information to parents via email, as well as arranging concerts and concert venues. Parents should also send written notice of members' leaving the choir to the Administrator. Please contact Emma Britton (email: emmalbritton@btinternet.com or tel. 01865 557624)

Committee is composed of trustees, music staff and elected parent volunteers. It meets regularly to discuss choir development and strategy and to execute decisions and policy. The current Chair is Susan Lea, Treasurer is Catherine Dilnot and Secretary is Judith Thomas. The committee is elected or re-elected at the annual AGM to which all parents are invited and which is a forum for parents to make their views known.

Music Staff are all qualified musicians and are responsible for the training and musical development of members within the different choirs. Current staff are:

Richard Vendome 01865 714046
Joyce Morris 01865 375922
Camilla Stephenson 01993 883730
Sophie Reynolds 01865 553394
Daisy Venables 07814 921144

Nominated Parent are parents who have volunteered to assist the music staff and to act in a supervisory capacity for specific events. They will exercise their judgement as reasonable parents in assisting the staff and ensuring discipline and health and safety procedures. As emphasized above, such parents are volunteers and have no professional expertise or qualifications for the help they provide.

Senior Choir Assistants are members of the Senior Choir who have been nominated to help the music staff with the training of younger members or with general choir administration.

Treasurer plans and monitors choir budgets and oversees all financial matters. If parents wish to discuss any financial issues other than routine invoices (dealt with by the administrator), especially covenanting and donations, please contact Catherine Dilnot, 72 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HP; 01865 559395.

7. SATURDAY MORNING ROUTINE

Register

A register will be taken at the beginning of each rehearsal by the music staff or senior choir assistants. Any choir member leaving a rehearsal before its conclusion must sign off the register.

Notice of absence or lateness should be given in advance to the musical director of the member's choir. Members may be absent for no more than two rehearsals in one term without good reason.

8. TIMETABLE

(1) Regular Saturday rehearsals

The Saturday sessions currently take place at the Cherwell School North Site, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford.

Prep and Boys Choirs Anna Haxworth Music Block
Juniors Main hall until 10.00; from 10.15 Anna Haxworth Music block
Senior Choir Main hall

The times for the different groups are as follows:

Prep Choir (younger class) 09.15 - 10.15

Prep Choir (older class) 10.30 – 12.00

Boys Choir 09.15 - 10.30

Junior Girls 09.15 - 11.15 (break Time 10.00)

(Musicianship classes commence 10.00)

Senior Girls 10.30 - 1.00 pm (break Time 11.45)

We encourage choir members to be aware that rehearsal times and venues change in the run up to concerts, and to take note of any changes given out by music staff. Members must be prepared to attend extra rehearsals in the weeks preceding concerts or tours. Check the website for information: all standard and extra rehearsals are posted up.

(2) Breaks

Prep choir members should bring a snack and a drink. For the rest of the choirs a tuck shop operates during the breaks so please ensure that members have a small amount of pocket money. Any profits are ploughed back into the choir funds.

(3) Outside events

- ? Advance notice will be given to parents by the musical directors and through the information channels in INFORMATION above.
- ? Permission slips will be circulated to parents in advance
- ? Participation in events is dependent on the return of slips.

9. RULES ON DELIVERY AND COLLECTION

Arrival and Collection

- ? Children must arrive at least 5 minutes but not more than 15 minutes before the rehearsal is due to start.
- ? Members of the Prep, Boys and Junior choirs must be accompanied to and from the car park through to the Music Block.
- ? Children must be collected promptly at the end of rehearsal sessions or performances.
- ? The choirs cannot take responsibility for children left 15 minutes before or 15 minutes after the end of a rehearsal.
- ? The choirs take no responsibility for children not participating in the choirs, and who may be watching.

10. DISCIPLINE

We are not a school and discipline within the choirs is a partnership between the music staff and the girls. In the event of a member misbehaving he or she will be asked to leave.

Disciplinary rules

- ? During regular rehearsals members must obey the music staff at all times.
- ? Members must behave appropriately at all times.
- ? When on tour or in public performance, in addition to members of the music staff, there may be one or more nominated parents who must be obeyed in matters of discipline and otherwise.
- ? In cases of misbehaviour, choir members may be expelled or sent back from the event.

Nominated parents are parents who have volunteered to act in a supervisory role for a specific event.

11. FIRE AND EMERGENCY

The choirs as a licensee of the Cherwell School (a secondary school) are entitled to assume that the school is a safe environment for children of 11 years old and upwards. Parents of children younger than 11 must accompany them to and from rehearsals (as advised above under Delivery and Collection).

The Cherwell School's caretaker is on duty on Saturday mornings and is familiar with the fire alarm system.

At the start of each term a member of the choir committee or music staff will describe fire procedures to each choir.

In the event of fire, members will proceed to the designated muster posts:

Anna Haxworth Building: School Field

Main Hall: paved area outside

a register will then be checked by the music staff.

First aid

No member of the music staff holds first aid qualifications. A basic first aid kit will be held by the music staff.

The initial registration form has a tick box to the effect that you will allow your child to receive treatment from the nominated members of staff who will use their own discretion (as reasonable parents – which may include calling emergency services), in your absence.

In the event of an emergency parents will be contacted using the contact details they have given to the administrator. Parents are therefore responsible for keeping these up to date. Parents should declare on the initial registration form any allergies or medical conditions of which the music staff and nominated parents need to be aware.

12. BELONGINGS

Mobile phones must not be on during rehearsals and concerts. We cannot take responsibility for loss or theft of items belonging to choir members.

We have no access to Cherwell School between rehearsals nor can we contact the caretaker outside Saturday mornings. In the event of a valuable or necessary item being left at the school

please contact the school on 01865 558719. In real emergencies only please contact the choir administrator, who may then contact the caretaker.

13. CHILD PROTECTION

Oxford Youth Choirs has a child protection policy. The policy statement is available on the website and copies of the detailed policy are available from louise.gullifer@hmc.ox.ac.uk

14. EVENTS OTHER THAN SATURDAY REHEARSALS

Consent forms for all events will be sent to all parents in advance and must be returned to the administrator by the date specified. Failure to do so will exclude the choir member from the event.

Transport

Group transport will be arranged by minibus or hired coach. Minibuses will be driven by suitably qualified drivers. At least one member of the music staff or nominated parent will always accompany each vehicle.

Choir members **MUST ALWAYS**

- ? wear seat belts at all times
- ? obey instructions from music staff or nominated parents

Tours

The **Oxford Youth Choirs Code of Practice for Events and Tours** is available separately. Parents will be notified well in advance of tours and will have the opportunity of reading the code. Different consent forms will be issued for tours.

September 2006, rev. January 2010