



# Diocese of Leeds Music Schools Singing Programme



## Application Pack

### Assistant Director of the Schools Singing Programme

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Closing Date: Monday 24 March 2025, 5pm

 dioceseofleedsmusic

 @dolmusic



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## Welcome

I am delighted that you are considering an application to work with Diocese of Leeds Music, which shares music-making and teaching of the highest quality with some of the UK's most disadvantaged children. After reading the information in this application pack, I hope you will consider making an application. Colleagues working in the programme have described it as some of the most stimulating, occasionally challenging, yet extremely rewarding work that they have experienced in their careers and this role offers a wealth of opportunity to the successful candidate.

Please note the following dates carefully:

**Closing date for applications:** Monday 24 March 2025, 5pm

**Shortlisting:** Tuesday 25 March 2025

**Interviews:** Tuesday 1 and Wednesday 2 April 2025

The application form can be accessed as a [Word document](#) or using [Google Docs](#). Completed forms should be sent to [recruitment@dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk).

Informal enquiries and visits prior to application are very welcome – please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to arrange this. I am very happy to speak to interested candidates by phone or in an online meeting.

The role starts on Monday 1 September 2025, but we are able to offer an earlier start date in the summer term.

With best wishes and thanks for your interest in the role,



Thomas Leech  
*Director of the Schools Singing Programme*

## Working at Diocese of Leeds Music

Diocese of Leeds Music is at the forefront of cathedral music in the UK. Its award-winning Schools Singing Programme has provided the catalyst for the new National Schools Singing Programme and the cathedral choirs are among the most broadcast on BBC radio and television. Today, we employ 17 staff in the delivery of singing and instrumental provision and have been awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for our work with young people. This work has attracted ongoing partnerships with The Sixteen and Gabrieli and internationally with the Universities of Notre Dame, Vanderbilt and Texas.

The role of Assistant Director of the Schools Singing Programme occupies a central position in our team and offers a wealth of opportunity to the successful candidate. In this pack we have outlined an illustrative schedule – a high degree of flexibility is possible, and we encourage all interested candidates to contact us for a conversation prior to application.



### About the role

This role provides an excellent opportunity for a choral leader with a desire to nurture creativity, foster expression, and shape the voices and musical foundations of future generations. We're looking for a skilled leader of children's voices who will play a key role in developing our singing and keyboard programmes, leading provision in the Cathedral Choir School and supporting an outstanding team of Choral Directors and Keyboard Tutors.

### Programme management

Management of the programmes is shared between the Director of the Schools Singing Programme, the Assistant Director and the Music Programme Manager. Together they develop our outstanding provision, maintain a close relationship with the Diocese's 92 schools, drive the achievement of our after-school choirs and support the excellent work of the Choral Directors and Keyboard Tutors.

The Assistant Director is currently responsible for the direct line management of two Choral Directors and the Keyboard Tutors, with more general support through observation of sessions, planning and reporting shared across the team. This support includes playing a key part in organising and directing programme-wide events – recent examples include a BBC Radio 4 recording and several large concerts for the Diocese's academy trusts.

Strong frameworks are in place for management and curriculum, and the role includes responsibility for building relationships with key external partners, including music hubs, local universities and higher education institutes, and professional and international partnerships.

### **Leeds Cathedral Choir School**

Since its launch in 2009, Leeds Cathedral Choir School has integrated choral music into the life of inner-city Holy Rosary and St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Chapeltown. This 21st-century choir school places musical excellence at the core curriculum with every child given the opportunity to sing. School choirs contribute to the choral activities in its two parish churches – Holy Rosary and Leeds Cathedral – with pupils also offered instrumental lessons as part of the Keyboard Studies Programme.

The Choir School Choral Director will build on Laura Steelyard's excellent work, leading a rich singing curriculum for every class, whole-school singing, regular class and school Masses and after-school KS1 and KS2 choirs. This provision connects with the school's music curriculum and Catholic life, offering progression routes into the choirs of Leeds Cathedral. Previous performance highlights include BBC Radio 4 Daily Service, Midnight Mass on BBC One, and singing for the visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the UK.



### **Leeds Cathedral**

Leeds Cathedral Choirs – numbering some 150 young singers across seven choirs – sing for eight services (Vespers and Mass) weekly, give concerts, record, and feature frequently on BBC Radio 3 and 4, with numerous past BBC television live Christmas broadcasts. Ongoing partnerships with The Sixteen and Gabrieli provide further opportunities for our choristers. Through the work with the Cathedral Choir School, the Assistant Director will be closely linked to and develop pathways into these groups.

- [View the Cathedral music list for Spring 2025](#)

## Job Description

<b>Post Title</b>	Assistant Director of the Schools Singing Programme
<b>Reporting to</b>	Director of the Schools Singing Programme
<b>Time Commitment</b>	Full-time (37 hours per week)
<b>Location</b>	Leeds Cathedral and the Diocese of Leeds
<b>Date of Commencement</b>	1 September 2025 or earlier by negotiation
<b>Contract Type</b>	Permanent
<b>Probationary Period</b>	Six months
<b>Remuneration</b>	£33,000 to £38,000 per annum.  Mileage allowance in fixed profit car scheme and contributory pension scheme available.
<b>Conditions</b>	Music Programme staff must adhere to the Church's policies for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.  This post is subject to an Enhanced with Barred Lists check from the Disclosure and Barring Service.  This post requires travel in the Diocese and a full UK driving licence.  Sympathy to the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church.

## Responsibilities

### Share the management of the Music Programme

- To lead and line manage Choral Directors and Keyboard Tutors.
- To support colleagues across both the singing and keyboard programmes.
- To foster effective working relationships, acting as an ambassador and advocate with schools and other partners.
- To assist in the development and implementation of our curriculum content.
- To comply with and prioritise the Church's safeguarding policies.
- Where necessary, to deliver whole-class provision and work with after-school choirs.

### Cathedral Choir School Choral Director

- To deliver whole-class singing sessions across the entire school, liaising with the head teacher and teaching staff to ensure the best provision for the school.
- To establish progression routes into after-school choirs that aspire to the highest standard of performance opportunities (e.g. BBC broadcasts, commercial recordings).
- To embed a broad singing culture within the extended school community.

*N.B. This is a broad description of responsibilities which may be tailored to the strengths and interests of the successful candidate.*

## Person Specification

### Knowledge and Qualifications

- Passion for music education and the transformative role that singing plays in schools.
- Education to degree level (or equivalent experience) in any subject.
- Knowledge of effective practice in music education.
- Understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and best practice.

### Experience

- Considerable experience of and a proven record of musical excellence in choral teaching with children of all abilities.
- Experience of line managing a team.
- Experience of performing a wide range of repertoire in school and performance contexts, including at the highest standard.

### Skills and Abilities

- Ability to plan and prioritise work, and work on own initiative.
- Ability to respond flexibly and resiliently to manage competing demands and work independently to deadlines.
- Strong communication and IT skills.
- Ability to perform all duties and responsibilities in the work locations, with reasonable adjustments if necessary (Equality Act 2010).

## Frequently Asked Questions

We are happy to answer any and all questions that you might have, so please do not hesitate to get in touch! These are some of the questions we are often asked:

- **Will my salary increase over time?**

Yes, we offer cost-of-living increments and a five-point salary development scale.

- **Do I have to be Catholic?**

There is no requirement to be Catholic. All employees of the Diocese are expected to be sympathetic to the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church and to uphold the values and principles of safeguarding within the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

- **How do I find out more?**

Please look at our [website](#), [Facebook page](#) and the [Schools Singing Programme](#) YouTube channel to see and hear some of our work.

We encourage enquiries prior to application and if you would like an informal conversation with Thomas Leech (Director of the Schools Singing Programme), please contact us by email at [recruitment@dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk).

- **I've not got much (or any) experience working in church music, is it worth applying?**

We have worked with colleagues from very varied musical backgrounds, and provide full support with both planning and delivery in less familiar areas.

- **What might a typical week look like?**

The Music Programme's working week runs from Sunday–Thursday. The timetabling in this role will be decided in consultation with the successful candidate. As a guide, a term-time week might run as follows:

**Sunday:** Directing or assisting with choirs at morning Masses, planning time in the afternoon, with occasional meetings, rehearsals or concerts.

**Monday–Tuesday:** Focussed on Choir School delivery, including after-school choirs.

**Wednesday–Thursday:** Focussed on Schools Singing Programme management and development.

- **Do you allow full-time employees to carry out freelance work?**

We encourage colleagues to take musical opportunities outside of their employed timetable – recognising that these can provide valuable extra skills and recognition for our programmes and musicians. There is a formal and simple framework for requesting permission to carry out additional work.



## About Diocese of Leeds Music

Diocese of Leeds Music provides a world-class programme of music education to children in state schools. Through the Schools Singing Programme and Keyboard Studies Programme, it nurtures the potential of over 7,500 children and young people across the diverse communities of West and North Yorkshire each week.

Our current staff include Benjamin Saunders, Thomas Leech, Laura Steelyard, seven Choral Directors and six Keyboard Tutors, with a wide range of previous professional experience, musical interests and education. Alongside regular musical broadcasts, our work has been featured on BBC radio and television and in numerous publications, recently including *The Times* and *The Observer*.

**'The mission of this Diocese in Leeds is entirely bound up with music. Look at all those young people singing ... from all different parts of the Diocese. What a marvellous lesson to many of us. Music and the arts have to be at the core: that thirst for beauty, truth and goodness – a triumvirate of terms that are absolutely intertwined.'**

— Sir James MacMillan

**'I was so pleased with the performance of my piece – many thanks to all taking part. It was sung so musically and with a rich and intense atmosphere. It seems wonderful to me that these singers are coming up through your own singing programme. A ray of optimism!'**

— Dame Judith Weir

**'A truly groundbreaking initiative bringing the benefits and joys of singing and learning together to primary schools while also rapidly broadening the foundations of the UK's world-leading choral tradition.'**

— Sir John Rutter

**'It is clearly possible to make a success of bringing state school pupils into a cathedral choir. That's evident from what has happened over the past decade in Leeds [where the] cathedral sends music staff into 70 primary schools in its diocese and trains thousands of children to sing.'**

— The Times, December 2024





## Schools Singing Programme

Whole-class singing sessions are the core of our Schools Singing Programme, and are currently delivered in 75 primary schools, reaching around 6,500 children every week. Led by an expert team, these school day sessions cover a wide range of sacred and secular repertoire and support schools' overall offer for music. Our schools singing curriculum has been developed in consultation with Dr Rebecca Berkley at the University of Reading and a musicianship and notation resource written for us by Lucinda Geoghegan.

**'The children's enjoyment is evident and they truly sing like angels! Visitors and parishioners over the years have often commented on how beautifully our children sing and that's down to your excellent provision.'**

— Diocese of Leeds primary school headteacher



Our after-school choirs – juniors, boys, girls and youth choirs based in towns and cities across Yorkshire – provide further opportunities for children who have shown particular interest and potential in our school sessions. They include the seven choirs of Leeds Cathedral and provide liturgical music for parishes, give regular concerts and participate in tours, BBC broadcasts and recordings. Many of the choirs enjoy partnerships with world-renowned ensembles including Gabrieli, The Sixteen and several US universities.

**'My experiences with the Bradford Catholic Boys' Choir have shaped me as a person. Growing up in inner-city Bradford with limited options, the choir gave me the confidence to aspire to more. From singing weekly vespers at the local church to performing on TV in front of millions, each experience has proven invaluable in my life journey and I will continue to draw on the lessons of resilience and perseverance gained here as I move on to my next chapter at the University of Oxford.'**

— former member of Bradford Catholic Boys Choir

**'As a Choral Director, I feel so supported by a large team of other musicians. Our programme is filled with top-quality choral leaders and people. I learn so much from my colleagues – we share repertoire, pedagogical insights, tea-making duties, and most importantly the desire to make music education as accessible as possible for every child.'**

— Lizzie, Choral Director

## Keyboard Studies Programme

Organ lessons are given to the Cathedral Organ Scholars, choir members and at two of the Diocese's high schools where instruments are available. We benefit from a close relationship with the Royal College of Organists, the University of Leeds, the University of Huddersfield and Leeds Conservatoire. Currently we are creating a new tutor book for beginner organists with inspiration and musical creativity as its driving force.

The Keyboard Studies Programme has access to an excellent selection of Diocesan instruments. In addition to Leeds Cathedral's organ, there are many recently restored or new instruments, including a number of new mechanical organs by Skrabl, in our 98 churches. For practice and additional teaching, the Cathedral Chambers facility has four small pipe organs and five digital instruments.

We offer tuition on the piano and classical accordion, the latter of which is a pioneering programme in the UK which has been inspired by work in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Keyboard Studies Programme instrumental tutors teach from beginner to advanced levels and support regular pupil concerts.

**'The work dynamic among Keyboard Studies Tutors fizzes with creativity, as we share repertoire, performance opportunities, techniques of teaching musical concepts to children, and much more. Most importantly, I feel we are supported and valued in our endeavours to bring keyboard music education in all forms – be that piano, organ or accordion – to as many children as possible.'**

— Anthony, Instrumental Tutor, Diocese of Leeds

A large part of the KSP's work takes place in state primary schools during the school day with Introduction to Keyboard Studies sessions on the melodica, giving children a secure musical foundation using our comprehensive and innovative learning scheme. More information on why the melodica is such an effective instrument for primary school music can be found in [this article from \*The Observer\*](#) and the programme has enjoyed superb feedback.

**'The melodica sessions have perfectly complemented the singing we already did in school and allow children an opportunity to experience playing an instrument – one they might not get anywhere else.'**

— Diocese of Leeds primary school headteacher



## National Schools Singing Programme

In addition to our work with schools across West and North Yorkshire, we lead the [National Schools Singing Programme](#), which is now underway for Catholic dioceses and Anglican cathedrals across the UK. This is based on the model developed in the Diocese of Leeds since 2003 and benefits from £5 million of grant funding from the Vinehill Trust and Benefact Trust.

The programme is led by Benjamin Saunders, alongside fellow consultants Thomas Leech and Callum Tempest. It currently reaches 32,000 children in 400 schools across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This has established an immediate network where colleagues can share best practice and support one another through nearly 75 new or expanded Choral Director roles across the UK.



NATIONAL SCHOOLS SINGING PROGRAMME

27 Catholic dioceses and  
7 Anglican cathedrals

32,000 children

400 state schools

75 Choral Director jobs



Programme Planned



Programme Underway





## A snapshot of musical life in the Diocese of Leeds: What's happening in 2024/25?

### September

- National Schools Singing Programme (NSSP) curriculum training
- Cathedral Girls Choir Pergolesi Stabat Mater concert, with baroque strings and continuo

### October

- Visit from the University of Texas at El Paso singing with the Cathedral Choirs and working in the SSP
- Visit from Liverpool Junior Choirs
- Parish Musicians Workshop: Preparing for the new lectionary translation

### November

- Weekend workshops and concert led by Eamonn Dougan and singers from *The Sixteen* and *Genesis 16*
- Cathedral Choir Remembrance Sunday concert

### December

- Leeds International Concert Season Christmas concert
- Carol services for all choirs
- Huddersfield choirs and schools gala Christmas concert, Huddersfield Town Hall
- BBC Radio 4 Midnight Mass Broadcast

### January

- Cathedral Junior Choirs visit to Liverpool Cathedral
- Instrumental teaching training day with Paul Harris

### February

- Parish Musicians Workshop: Leading from keyboard

### March

- *Choral Vespers* broadcast live on BBC Radio 3
- BBC Radio 4 *Sunday Worship* recording
- NSSP Conference, hosted in Leeds, including a wide range of speakers and workshops

### April

- Holy Week and Easter Masses

### May

- Leeds International Organ Festival
- Keyboard Studies Programme Celebratory Concert

### June

- Leeds International Organ Festival
- Bradford and Huddersfield choirs sing for Diocesan Eucharistic Procession
- Parish Musicians Workshop: Brush up your keyboard skills
- Diocesan Boys Choirs Festival
- Diocesan Girls Choirs Festival

### July

- Leeds International Organ Festival
- Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust Schools Concert
- Bradford and Huddersfield Choirs Pilgrimage to Lourdes
- Choristers take part in *Gabrieli Roar* residential in Norfolk