



Diocese of Leeds Music  
Schools Singing Programme

# Choral Director Application Pack

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Closing Date: Monday 1 June 2026, 5pm

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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 1 June 2026, 5pm

**Shortlisting:** Tuesday 2 June 2026

**Interviews:** Monday 15 June 2026

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 Tuesday 1 September 2026.

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 choral 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.

Our Bradford choirs and schools occupy a central position in the programme and offer a wealth of opportunity to the successful candidate. In this pack, we have outlined an illustrative schedule, and we encourage interested candidates to contact us for a conversation prior to application. We welcome applicants at any stage of their careers, including new graduates, and are experienced in tailoring our support and opportunities to our staff's needs.



From left: BCYC junior choirs record for Radio 4, March 2025; Leeds Cathedral Choir sings in Leeds International Concert Season; BCYC sings Mass on Christmas Morning live on BBC One.

## About the role

Working as a Choral Director in our Schools Singing Programme is an opportunity 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 direct the outstanding Bradford Catholic Boys Choir, Bingley and Keighley Catholic Junior Choirs and deliver the Schools Singing Programme in the Diocese's Bradford schools.

### Whole-class singing sessions

Whole-class singing sessions are the core of our Schools Singing Programme, and are currently delivered in 74 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, with 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



Whole-class school singing sessions.

### Bradford Catholic Youth Choir

Bradford Catholic Youth Choir is one of the longest established choirs in Diocesan family. The choir is made up of three mixed junior choirs (in Bingley, Bradford and Keighley), a boys' choir and a girls' choir. This post has responsibility for Bradford Boys Choir and the Bingley and Keighley Junior Choirs, working closely with our second Choral Director for Bradford, Adam Whitmore, to develop opportunities across BCYC.

The Boys Choir – with 30 members aged between 10 and 18 – rehearse weekly at St Bede's and St Joseph's Catholic College. The first of our Singing Programme choirs to be founded, they have broadcast frequently, including on BBC Radio 4 *Sunday Worship* (most recently in November) and *Daily Service* programmes, *Songs of Praise* and the live BBC One broadcast of Mass on Christmas Day. Tours (to Latvia, Rome and Lourdes), concerts (including Mahler 8, Carmina Burana and St Matthew Passion) and partnerships with other organisations (Gabrieli Roar) supplement regular sung Masses in parish churches across Bradford. Previous directors include Dr Christopher Ouvry-Johns (Director of Music, Leicester Cathedral) and Caius Lee (Director of Music, Worcester College, University of Oxford).

The Junior Choirs draw their members from schools in the Singing Programme and provide initial training before children move into the Boys and Girls Choirs. They sing for regular Masses, give concerts and participate in larger events with the two senior choirs.



From left: BCYC sings with Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort and Players; BCYC sings Carmina Burana with Bradford Festival Choral Society; BCYC on tour in Rome.

## What would my week look like as a Choral Director?

The Music Programme's working week runs from Sunday to Thursday during term time, with the after-school choirs also singing during Holy Week, on Easter Sunday and up to and including Christmas morning. Choral Directors typically work with between 10 and 12 primary schools each week, providing around 14 hours of contact time in 30-minute whole-class sessions.

Each Choral Director has responsibility for one or more of our after-school choirs, and is responsible for recruitment, planning and occasional tours and residentials. These choirs are based in schools or local parish churches and rehearse on weekdays after school, normally finishing by around 6pm. On Sundays, choirs will sing for morning Masses, with the afternoon available for planning, meetings and occasional additional rehearsals and concerts.

The current timetable for this role is:

	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
Morning	Choirs <i>Directing or assisting at Mass</i>	School <i>9.30-11.30</i>	School <i>10.30-11.30</i>	School <i>10.50-11.50</i>	School <i>9.30-10.30</i>
		Planning	Planning	Planning	Planning
Afternoon	Planning / Meetings	School <i>2.15-3.15</i>	Schools <i>1.15-3.15</i>	Schools <i>1-3.15</i>	School <i>1-3</i>
After-school		Boys Choir <i>Directing 4-5.30</i>	Junior Choir <i>Directing 4-5</i>	Junior Choir <i>Directing 4-5</i>	Girls Choir <i>Assisting 4-5.30</i>

## Job Description

<b>Post Title</b>	Choral Director
<b>Reporting to</b>	Director of the Schools Singing Programme
<b>Time Commitment</b>	Full-time (37 hours per week)
<b>Location</b>	St Joseph's Catholic Church, Bradford, and schools and churches in the Diocese of Leeds
<b>Date of Commencement</b>	1 September 2026
<b>Contract Type</b>	Permanent
<b>Probationary Period</b>	Six months
<b>Remuneration</b>	£30,610.08 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 and a full UK driving licence. Sympathy to the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church.

## Responsibilities

### Whole-class singing sessions

- Deliver whole-class singing sessions, incorporating content from the NSSP Curriculum.
- Plan sessions and provide termly class reports using our resources and templates.
- Liaise with the head teachers and teaching staff to ensure your provision meets the schools' needs, including organising appropriate performances and contributions to school and parish Masses.
- Work with colleagues to provide progression routes from school sessions into the after-school choirs.

### After-school choirs

- Lead choirs that attain high standards of musicianship and vocal performance, recognised in a variety of opportunities, from local concerts to national broadcasts.
- Provide support to colleagues in their choir rehearsals and performances.
- Communicate effectively and promptly with parents to ensure good recruitment and attendance.
- Arrange rehearsals and performance opportunities.
- Plan appropriate and varied repertoire.
- Nurture individual vocal and musical development for members of the choirs.

*This is a broad description of responsibilities, many of which are supported by colleagues and our administration team, and these may vary over time in your role.*

## 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 current issues, developments and effective practice in music education.
- Understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and best practice.

### Experience

- Experience of and ability to provide musical excellence in choral teaching and performance with children of all ages.

### 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.
- It is desirable to have the ability to lead a rehearsal from the keyboard.
- 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.

- **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).

- **How much musical autonomy will I have?**

Choral Directors choose their own repertoire for school sessions and choirs. Some of the curriculum is delivered using specific material (particularly the musicianship strand) but much of it can be taught using your own material.

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

We have worked with many early career musicians, including new graduates, and provide full support with both planning and delivery. It will be hard work initially, but give you a vast range of highly sought-after teaching and musical skills.

- **I'm an excellent keyboard player. Will I be able to use these skills?**

We are very flexible and would be very happy to adjust schedules to accommodate teaching and playing opportunities within our programme on both piano and organ.

- **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.

- **If I'm shortlisted, how do the interviews work?**

The interviews and auditions will take place on Monday 15 June, with the interviews in the morning, and practical sessions in the afternoon, ending by 6.15pm. We endeavour to schedule as conveniently as possible for travel times, and where necessary can arrange overnight accommodation.

## 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, eight Choral Directors and four 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



## After-school choirs in the Schools Singing Programme

In addition to the whole-class singing sessions, 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

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

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

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 three digital instruments.



## 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 38,650 children in 437 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 75 new or expanded Choral Director roles across the UK.



NATIONAL SCHOOLS SINGING PROGRAMME

26 Catholic dioceses and  
7 Anglican cathedrals

38,000 children

430 state schools

75 Choral Director jobs



Programme Planned



Programme Underway



## A snapshot of musical life in the Diocese of Leeds: What's happening in 2025/26?

### September

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

### October

- Choristers from Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral visit to Leeds Cathedral

### November

- Weekend workshops and concert with Harry Christophers and singers from *The Sixteen* and *Genesis 16*
- Cathedral Choir Remembrance Sunday concert
- BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship broadcast from Bradford

### 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 Christmas Day broadcast (pre-recorded)

### January

- Training session for school teachers

### February

- Weekend workshops and concert with Paul McCreech, singers and instrumentalists from *Gabrieli*

### March

- NSSP Conference, hosted in Leeds, including a wide range of speakers and workshops
- Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust Schools Concert

### April

- Holy Week and Easter Masses

### May

- Leeds International Organ Festival
- Visit by students from Vanderbilt University
- BBC Radio 4 Daily Service recordings

### June

- Leeds International Organ Festival
- Community Choir concert
- Diocesan Junior Choirs Festival
- Diocesan Senior Choirs Festival

### July

- Leeds International Organ Festival
- Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust Schools Concert
- Choristers take part in *Gabrieli Roar* residential in Norfolk