

Pastoral care of choristers

Twenty-four pointers for assessing pastoral care

1. Who delivers any form of pastoral care? What procedures do we have, and does everyone understand them? Are they ever reviewed or discussed? Are resources and training available to those who deliver pastoral care?
2. Who are the choristers' role models, and what are they modelling? Faith may be 'caught not taught'.
3. How do we open the Word to choristers? How do we teach? Is homiletical content ever relevant to their needs?
4. How do we engage choristers with the sacraments?
5. How do we develop liturgical understanding, making explicit what is implicit?
6. Do we develop understanding of these areas and encourage discussion as they move up the choir, or just when they are probationers? Do we adapt our approach to their changing age and perspectives?
7. In an environment where the institutional and procedural aspects of religion are clear, how do we encourage the 'encounter with the divine' among choristers, and a growing relationship with God?
8. How do we help choristers understand the cathedral and their identity within it?
9. How is a child's contribution to worship perceived or valued?
10. How are choristers incorporated into the life of the cathedral? How are different stages of their life as a chorister marked?
11. Are all the main providers of pastoral care (cathedral, school, music staff) communicating properly? Do they understand their responsibilities?
12. Are choristers treated fairly in all the environments in which they operate?
13. Is discipline positive? Does it enable a sense of self-worth and teamwork, and encourage positive behaviour? What point do different sanctions have, and are they explained? How do we manage reconciliation?
14. How is criticism managed and how do we teach self-reflection and self-criticism in a helpful way?
15. Is advice tailored to the needs of individuals as well as being given to larger groups?
16. How do we motivate choristers?
17. Is leadership training provided for older choristers, and on what principles?
18. Is Safe-guarding well practised in all areas in which choristers live and operate (school, boarding house, music department, cathedral)? Is there proactive advice, help and training for staff?
19. Is there a culture of care throughout the communities of school, choir and cathedral?
20. Is hospitality well provided for choristers and their families? Are Chapter members involved?
21. Are parents and families given information, help and guidance, made to feel at home in cathedral services (especially if unchurched or from a different worship tradition), and given regular feedback on their child's life and progress as a chorister? Are they introduced at the start to those who will look after their children?
22. Do choristers and parents know what to do and whom to contact in case of different problems or crises?
23. What is dialogue like with choristers and parents concerning voice change? Are the emotional effects of vocal and wider physical change well dealt with?
24. What care do we provide for choristers and families between audition and starting as a chorister, and after finishing as a chorister?