



Westminster Abbey

Guidance for Teachers for School Visits

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS FOR SCHOOLS VISITS

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INTRODUCTION

For close on twelve hundred years – perhaps for longer – it is believed that a religious community has existed in the area we think of today as ‘Westminster Abbey’ and its precincts. Divine service has been celebrated within the walls of the Abbey church on its present site for over nine hundred years, and Westminster School, which had its origin in the monastic school, remained even when the Chapter had been expelled during the Commonwealth. There are other centuries-old links: the Benedictine tradition of welcome to visitors; the coronation church of all the crowned sovereigns of England since William I in 1066, the burial place of royalty, of the great in peace and war, of the lesser men and women who have served the Abbey, and of those who have been benefactors or who simply lived near by.

The Abbey has evolved as a building having been enlarged several times over the centuries, but always at its heart has been the daily rhythm of prayer and worship. Because of this it is a superb educational resource and we welcome those who wish to learn from this most remarkable building.

Your School Visit

Teachers will know that because the building contains so much that will be new to children that a little careful planning, forethought and information will help make your visit a success.

Arrange

- Dates and times for your visit.
- Where to begin your tour.
- Charges and recommended numbers for visit.
- Lavatory facilities and where to find them.

Advise

- Planning the day.
- Ratio of children to teachers.
- Coach setting-down or picking-up points.
- Place for eating packed lunches.
- Using the Abbey shop.
- Health & Safety advice.

Suggest themes for the visit e.g.:

- Westminster Abbey – an aid to children’s understanding of Christian worship.
- The Abbey as the Coronation Church.
- 20th Century Martyrs, the Statues on the West Front.
- Saints, what relevance their lives have now.

How to book

Standard pre-booked tours (without a guide) contact the school bookings either by telephone on 020 7654 4871, fax: 020 7654 4891 or by email schools@westminster-abbey.org.

Please telephone a couple of weeks before your proposed visit to ensure that the Abbey is not closed for a special service or other reason and to ensure you receive our reduced entry fee.

There is a host of pre-visit material on Westminster Abbey's website www.westminster-abbey.org to help plan your visit, or you may purchase guide books from our shop. They can be contacted on 020 7654 4920/4922 or by emailing bookshop@westminster-abbey.org.

Any University or School group wishing to attend during the summer months, July and August, should be advised that this is our peak visiting time and the Abbey can get quite crowded. For this reason these groups can **only** visit with a Blue Badge Guide. There is no reduced entry fee during this period. Please email tours@westminster-abbey.org for more information or visit the [Schools](#) section of this website.

We look forward to welcoming you and your School to Westminster Abbey.

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS LEADING A SCHOOL VISIT

This document is designed to support teachers as they plan a visit to Westminster Abbey. We hope that this document will provide sufficient information to help teachers guide children in a self-supported visit, and that it will be useful in preparation and follow-up time in school. It is also to be used as an information document for health and safety guidance and other aspects, to help ensure that the visit will not only be educational and informative but above all memorable and safe.

A School visit to Westminster Abbey is often an awe-inspiring event for children. The building itself as well as its monuments, carvings, stained glass windows and vivid colours, is designed to stimulate thought and emotion. There is so much to inspire, and children can sometimes be confused by the wealth of new information. Children do need time to '*stand and stare*' in order to reflect on what they are seeing. Given the opportunity to look, children usually respond very positively indeed to the Abbey.

Children's tours fall into two main categories – 'self-guided', or 'specialised'.

SELF-GUIDED educational tours conducted by Teachers following the Abbey's normal 'visitor route' with our tourism leaflet or Children's Trail, using this booklet as a guideline.

Children's Trail

Our Children's Trail takes in many of the most famous sites to be seen in the Abbey including tombs and memorials, chapels and the architecture of the building. It encourages close observation so that children will often glean far more than the casual visitor passing by. The Trail is especially suited to children of primary school age (5-12 years) accompanied by their parents or those who are visiting as part of a school group. The Trail is available in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

SPECIALISED

1) Edward Trail (in English only)

The Edward Trail focuses upon why King Edward the Confessor built Westminster Abbey and visits one of the most sacred parts of the Abbey, the Shrine of St. Edward. It also includes some of the oldest parts of the Abbey examining their uses together with aspects of life for the monks who once lived, worked and worshipped here. The Edward Trail is designed specifically for primary school groups as a guided tour and is available on weekdays only. As a guide may not always be available on the day requested, flexibility and advance booking are essential.

A copy of the Trail will be sent in advance of your visit. Copies for the children to work on will be given to you on arrival.

2) Maths Trail (Key Stage 2 – English only)

The Maths Trail is suited to advanced Key Stage 2 pupils and includes a number of monuments commemorating famous scientists and composers as well as some of the Abbey's chapels, principal tombs and the Shrine to St. Edward. Other areas featured in the Trail are the Chapter House and the Cloisters. Areas of study/skills incorporated in the Trail are: Estimation, Units of Measurement, 2D and 3D Shape, Rotational Symmetry and Roman Numerals. There are some facts and figures included in the booklet to help with some of the calculations and puzzle questions!

The Maths Trail is designed specifically for primary school groups as a guided tour and is available on weekdays only. As a guide may not always be available on the day requested, flexibility and advance booking are essential.

A copy of the Trail will be sent in advance of your visit. Copies for the children to work on will be given to you on arrival.

SCHOOL VISITS: there are NO pre-booked school visits during the months of July and August.

GUIDANCE NOTES

The following information will help you to plan your visit:

Before the visit

- We advise you to pre-book your visit using the fax-back form or by emailing us and wherever possible to arrive 10-15 minutes before the set time.
- There must always be one teacher or helper to every 10 schoolchildren.
- The charge for your visit - for aged 10 and below, £2 per child: 11 to 15, £3 per child: 16-18's, £5: the same charge in the appropriate grouping applies to teachers (in the correct ratio only, additional adults pay full price). If you are a self-guided group you may pay on the day.
- A roll must be kept to be called in case of emergency.
- The children should be prepared for the visit by telling them something of what they will see and learn.
- We would suggest it would be helpful for each child to have a clipboard with several sheets of A4 paper for sketching or making notes for later use in the classroom.
- Sensible shoes and clothing are worn and that they do not carry too much with them.
- We regret there is nowhere in the Abbey for storage of items and anything not needed for the visit should be left on the bus or back at School.
- Bring this booklet with you on the day for guidance.

The Visit Day

- There are limited public lavatories in the Abbey near Poets' Corner – but there are also the Westminster City Council lavatories in front of the QE II Conference Centre in Broad Sanctuary, a charge is made for their use.
- The coach set down point is in the Sanctuary, at the front of the Abbey. The School teacher must arrange the collection point with the coach driver. This is normally Tothill Street where coaches may park a short distance from the Abbey.
- The recommended numbers are for no more than thirty children in any one group for specialist tours, other visits large groups will be split into smaller groupings.
- Packed lunches may be eaten in the Cloisters daily or in College Garden on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Please do not leave any rubbish, there are bins provided.
- The children are more than welcome to visit our shop, with adequate supervision, to make purchases.
- During your tour and if you need help or answers to questions from the children you cannot answer, please ask one of the Abbey Marshals (in red gowns) or an Abbey Volunteer (in green gowns) and they will be very happy to provide the information.
- Children with restricted mobility can enjoy visiting the Abbey and its environs. There may be some difficulty for those using wheelchairs in some of the chapels. No admission charge is made for wheelchair users or their carers.
- We regret that no photography or filming is allowed within the Abbey.

HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION AND GENERAL NOTES

We do all that we can to ensure our visitors have a safe and enjoyable visit. It is important that teachers remember that the Abbey is a living church – a place for Christian worship, but it is also an historic and ancient property. Some areas of the Abbey might be dimly lit and the floors and steps are uneven in most areas. There are also a number of low doors and steps that may not be immediately obvious and care should be taken.

The children at all times should be quiet and respectful: therefore the control of the group by the teachers is essential. *The Abbey staff are not responsible for this.* Finally we ask that you respect any restricted area and do not enter any part of the Abbey that is marked Private or which has been roped or cordoned off to prevent access for safety reasons.

First Aid & Accident Provision

- It is also advisable that a Teacher accompanying the group is also first-aid trained.
- Should there be a need for First Aid there are Abbey staff trained in this. Please refer to a member of staff in red, black or green gowns or staff on the Information Desk if you need any help.

Fire & Emergency Procedure

- An announcement over the public address system will be made if an evacuation of the Abbey needs to take place. Please follow the instructions and directions given by the Abbey Marshals (red gowns).
- Take a roll call of the members of your party once outside.
- If a member of the party gets separated advise them to go to the Abbey Information desk and report to a member of staff.
- Teachers are responsible for the supervision and safety of the children in their charge at all times.

Additional Information

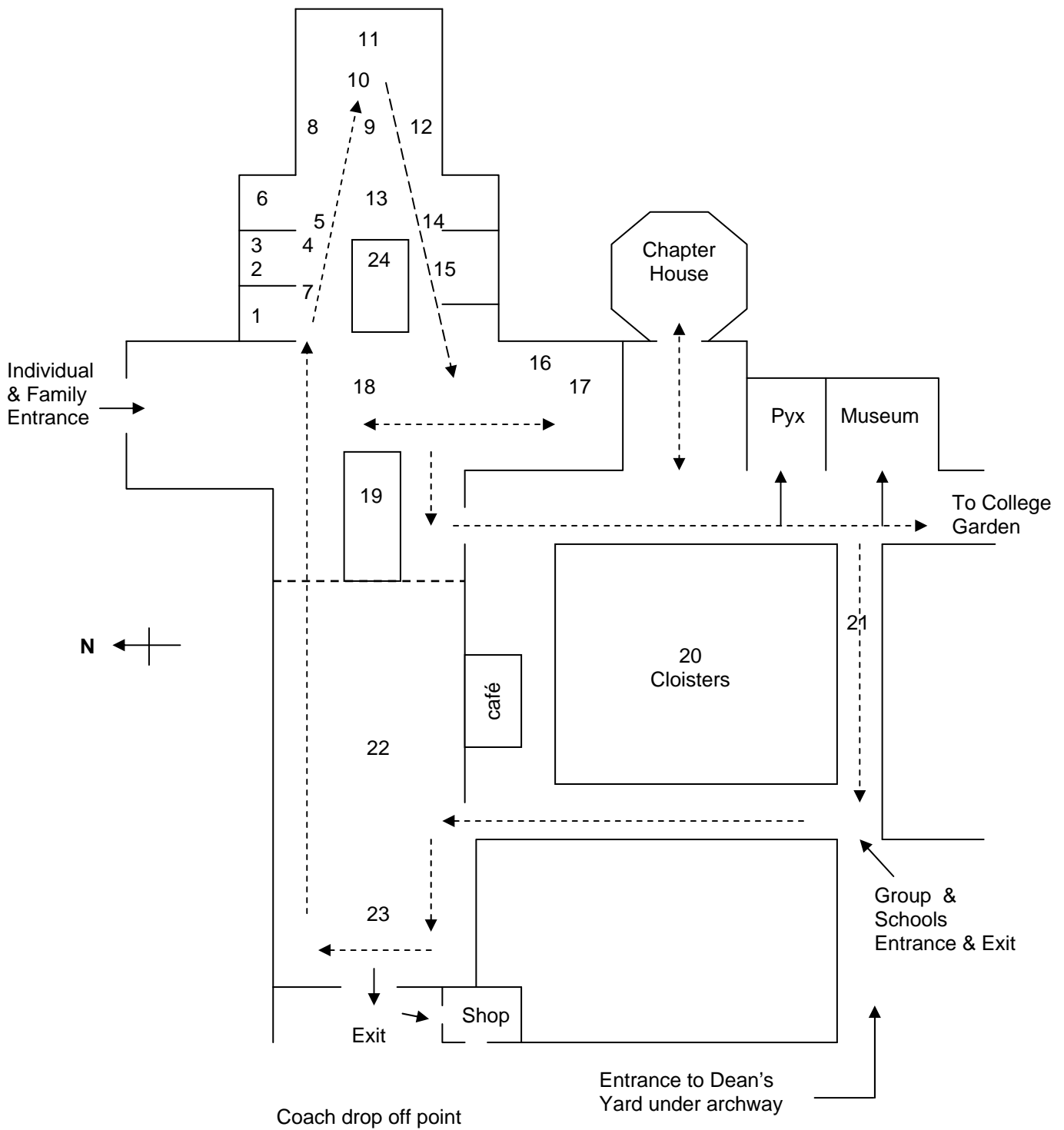
You might like to tell the children the following either at the start of your tour, at the end or during discussion back at school.

- Worship takes place every day in the Abbey, usually four services daily at 07.30, 08.00, 12.30, 17.00 and there are five services on Sundays at 08.00, 10.00, 11.15, 15.00, 18.30.
- Hourly Prayers – are said from the pulpit hourly, it helps to remind visitors of the Abbey's primary purpose as a church. Please ask the children to keep still and quiet at these times and invite them to pray if they wish to.
- Special services take place here, including those for schools.
- Other services, Royal occasions, memorial services and funerals, occur throughout the year: (the Abbey is closed for these.)
- Special events also take place including concerts, lectures and poetry readings.
- It is a large and beautiful building filled with many wonderful and ancient treasures.

Allow the children time to look up and around and to sit quietly for a minute and ask questions. The best tours and the most lasting memories will respond to the natural inquisitiveness of the children. It is vital to give them space for their response to the building rather than bombarding them with facts, which they will struggle to assimilate. Let them enjoy their time with us.

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster welcome you and hope that you will enjoy sharing the sights, sounds and special atmosphere of this extraordinary church with the children in your care.

House of God and House of Kings



Key

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 1 | Chapel of St Michael | 13 | Coronation Chair |
| 2 | Islip Chapel | 14 | Tomb of Edward III |
| 3 | Chapel of t John the Baptist | 15 | Tomb of Richard II |
| 4 | Tomb of Edward I | 16 | Tomb of Geoffrey Chaucer |
| 5 | Tomb of Henry III | 17 | Memorial to Shakespeare |
| 6 | Chapel of St Paul | 18 | Lantern and High Altar |
| 7 | North Ambulatory | 19 | Quire |
| 8 | Tomb of Elizabeth & Mary I | 20 | Cloisters |
| 9 | Chapel of Henry VII | 21 | South Cloister Exit |
| 10 | Tomb of Henry VII & Queen Elizabeth | 22 | Nave |
| 11 | Royal Air Force Chapel | 23 | Grave of the Unknown Warrior |
| 12 | Tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots | 24 | Shrine (closed to visitors) |



Westminster Abbey

School Visits fax-back Booking Form to 020 7654 4891 or please provide the following information in an email to schools@westminster-abbey.org.

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| Name of School: | |
| Contact: | |
| Telephone: | |
| Fax: | |
| Mobile: | |
| Date of Visit: | |
| Number of Children: | |
| Ages: | |
| Key Stage: | |
| Guided Edward Trail/Maths Trail required: | |

- Cheques should be made payable to ‘Dean & Chapter of Westminster’: Send one month in advance to: Schools Visit Officer, The Chapter Office, 20 Dean’s Yard, Westminster Abbey, London SW1P 3PA.
- There are NO pre-booked school visits during the months of July and August.
- We regret that no photography or filming is allowed within the Abbey.
- For more information: www.westminster-abbey.org