



WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

School Organist + Organ Teacher – person specification

	Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications/Professional Development	Degree in Music or equivalent qualification	Yes	
	Post-graduate qualification or equivalent in musical performance (Organ)	Yes	
	A teaching qualification		Yes
Knowledge/Experience	Proven track record of teaching organ in other schools/organisations	Yes	
	Current ongoing performance opportunities at a professional level		Yes
	Knowledge of safeguarding	Yes	
	An understanding of, and commitment to, the School's Equal Opportunities policies and a willingness to promote equality of opportunity in all aspects of the work	Yes	
Skills and abilities	Accompany a choir on the organ to a professional standard	Yes	
	A professional standard of sightreading ability	Yes	
	The ability to improvise with an extremely high level of creativity in keeping with the context of the liturgy	Yes	
	The ability to transpose accompanied repertoire as appropriate to the context	Yes	
	The ability to work as part of a team	Yes	
	Confident performer and communicator	Yes	
	Excellent communication skills (both verbal and written) with children and adults alike	Yes	
	Well-developed organisational, administrative and IT skills	Yes	

	An enthusiasm for music and teaching organ	Yes	

About the School

Westminster is an ancient boarding and day school with a unique sense of place. It is, in fact, the only long-established school to remain on its original site in the centre of London. The School's origins can be traced to a charity school established by the Benedictine monks of Westminster Abbey. Its continuous existence is certain from the early fourteenth century. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540, Henry VIII personally ensured the School's survival by statute. Elizabeth I, confirmed royal patronage in 1560 and is celebrated as the School's Foundress.

For several hundred years the School continued to be joined with Westminster Abbey, forming one collegiate foundation, until the 1868 Public Schools Act established the school as an independent body. The School still enjoys a close relationship with the Abbey and the Dean of Westminster is an ex officio member of the School's Governing Body.

In 1943 the School expanded its educational scope by forming Westminster Under School, educating boys from the age of 7. Initially both sections of the School shared a site, until 1951 when the Under School secured its own premises. Then in 1973 the School expanded its scope once again, admitting girls as full members of the school at 16+. Today the School proudly educates boys and girls in the Sixth Form and approximately 70 girls join the school each year.

2026 will see the start of one of the most significant and exciting set of changes in the almost 500-year history of Westminster — the introduction of girls into all years, and a new pre-prep. Girls and boys will join a brand new pre-prep in Reception year at Westminster Under School, and girls will also join boys at Westminster Under School in Years 3 and 7. Later, in 2028, girls will join boys in Westminster School's Year 9 Fifth Form.

Music has always been a very important part of life at Westminster. Many world-famous musicians have been educated at Westminster including Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Roger Norrington, Ian Bostridge, George Benjamin, Julian Anderson and Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, as well as the pop stars Mika and Dido.

Both Schools are situated close to many of the world's most exciting music venues on the South Bank and in the West End. Pupils are encouraged to attend concerts and recitals as well as performances of opera, ballet, and musicals in order to expand their musical horizons.

Music at Westminster Under School

The theatre has a Steinway model B grand and a Viscount Prestige 3-manual digital organ. These instruments can be moved through to the Green Room for teaching. The school also owns a digital chamber organ by Copeman Hart and has use of St Stephen's Church, Rochester Row, where morning services are held on Thursdays. The school theatre is used for the majority of concerts and events.

The WUS Senior Choir leads the singing at the school's weekly church services in St Stephen's, Rochester Row, and regularly performs at prestigious London venues, including Smith Square Hall, the Barbican Hall, and Westminster Abbey. They have performed live on BBC Radios 3 and 4, have appeared on BBC, LWT and Channel 4 television, and have recorded theme music for two BBC

television series. The choir has also appeared with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Southbank Sinfonia. They have been finalists three times in the National Choir of the Year Competition (formerly the BBC Radio 3 Choir of the Year). The school's annual carol service is held at St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey and is led by the choir with professional tenors and basses. Biennial tours have taken the choir throughout Europe and to the U.S.A., Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China and South Africa, and their varied repertoire includes many works that have been composed especially for them by various composers such as Giles Swayne, John Woolrich, John Gardner, Edmund Jolliffe and Chris Hazell.

Music at Westminster School

There are presently twenty organ pupils at the senior school. Although there is currently no pipe organ within the School itself, pupils receive tuition and have regular access to a 3-manual Eminent Organ in the School Chapel and a new 4-manual Hauptwerk Organ in the school hall, as well as from time to time a 3-manual Walker instrument in St Margaret's Westminster, a 2-manual Mander in St Matthew's Westminster and a 3 manual Harrison & Harrison in the Guard's Chapel. The successful applicant will help shape the future as the School looks hopefully to raise funds for a new pipe organ.

In 2017, the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey funded the inaugural Henry Purcell Organ Scholarship. This award is worth 10% of the day school fees and offers free instrumental tuition on up to two instruments, including weekly organ tuition. The intention of the Dean and Chapter in endowing this award, which is now funded by the School, was to encourage the promotion in the School of excellent organ playing, both in relation to the liturgy and more widely in performance, and to add a further strand to the strong links which exist between the School and the Abbey.

In 2024, Westminster became an accredited institution of the Royal College of Organists. Each year, pupil organists apply for university organ scholarships with regular success.

As well as singing for twice-weekly services in Westminster Abbey, the Choir embarks on an exciting programme of concerts and tours both in the UK and abroad. Recent engagements have included a performance of cantatas and masses by J.S. Bach conducted by James O'Donnell in Westminster Abbey, and the release of the Choir's debut album on the Signum Label, *Now may we singen: Music for Advent and Christmas*, which was recording of the week on Classic FM's Drive and reviewed in Gramophone Magazine and BBC Music Magazine which included it in its top ten Christmas playlist.

The Choir of Westminster School regularly performs at venues including Westminster Abbey, the Barbican, and the Royal Festival Hall, where recent performances have included Duruflé Requiem, Brahms Ein Deutsches Requiem, Poulenc Gloria, Britten Rejoice in the Lamb and McDowall The Girl from Aleppo.