



Registered Charity No. 1075236

MILTON KEYNES YOUTH CHOIR CODE OF PRACTICE

1. WELCOME

This document welcomes you and your children to the membership of Milton Keynes Youth Choir ("MKYC"). It provides some background information on the choir and sets out the conditions of membership. It also outlines normal choir procedures and we encourage you to read it.

2. INTRODUCTION

The choir was founded in 1997 with a grant from the National Lottery. It is an inclusive choir and is open to young singers from age 8 to 18, boys and girls. Those in Year 10 and above are invited to join the senior choir, which tackles more challenging music. MKYC sets high standards and undertakes quite demanding music; the choir regularly sings in two and three parts and on occasions have been challenged with more. It has a wide-ranging repertoire from classical choral pieces to jazz, folk and pop songs and our members have successfully sung in English, Latin, French, German and African languages!

The choir embraces the opportunity of appearing in local concerts. We have appeared with several Milton Keynes based adult choirs and youth music groups and participated in fundraising events for local charities. As well as appearing with other choirs, we aim to hold twice yearly concerts for ourselves and to fund raise at least once a year, busking at Central Milton Keynes Station in December.

The choir is a registered charity administered by trustees and a committee. Both the trustees and the committee are made up of choir parents who serve on a voluntary basis. Our Musical Director and pianist are paid.

3. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We welcome parental help and support in several different areas.

Help and expertise

We encourage all parents to offer their expertise and talents to benefit the choir and our committee. The Chair might occasionally ask parents to help with specific projects. Examples of the expertise which parents might be able to offer are ICT, fund-raising, publicity, Human Resources and legal advice.

Serving on the committee

We ask parents to consider serving on the committee. We value the views and experience of all our parents and serving on the committee is a great way of contributing to the life of the choir. In normal circumstances, the committee meets twice per term and there is an AGM each Summer.

Supporting events

We rely on parents to support all choir activities and this includes:

- publicising and attending concerts;
- supporting the choir in competitions;
- looking out for new members;
- providing transport for their children to and from venues;
- helping their children with organisational matters like time-keeping, taking care of music and uniform requirements.

Record keeping

We ask you to ensure that contact details and other records (such as medical conditions/allergies etc) are kept up to date by notifying our Chair of all changes.

4. FINANCIAL MATTERS

The choir does not receive any state aid or regular grants. The main source of income is subscriptions from parents which are currently £25 per half-term (with a £5 reduction for siblings). This money is used to fund the hire of our rehearsal hall at Christ Church, Stantonbury and the fees paid to our Musical Director and pianist. It also pays for uniforms, sheet music and other running expenses like insurance. Please ensure that subscriptions are paid promptly and if appropriate, please use the Gift Aid scheme so that we can reclaim any tax deducted to boost our income. Our preferred method of payment is BACS transfer to MKYC (Sort Code 20-57-44, Account Number 83310132). Otherwise, please bring cash or cheques (payable to "Milton Keynes Youth Choir") along to rehearsal.

Regular income is designed to cover regular outgoings. All projects other than regular rehearsals (such as hiring performance venues/paying for professional musicians/producing CDs) are funded from extra revenue. We try to make MKYC as inclusive as possible by keeping subscriptions low and, in order to do this (and to provide some level of financial security), the choir needs to engage in fund raising activities during the year. We ask all parents to help with these events. We welcome any suggestions of new ways of raising money.

We also welcome donations from parents and other friends of MKYC. Donations and fund raising allow us to buy extra sheet music and to participate in more performances. If you would like to make a donation, please speak to our Treasurer or go to the website where you can download a donation form.

5. INFORMATION

Basic contact information on our choir members is collected from the registration form which is given to all new members. Parents are requested to notify our Chair of all changes to this information.

Most choir information is communicated verbally by our Chair at the end of rehearsals and via email, but we also produce a regular Newsletter which contains important information on organisational matters and forthcoming events. The Newsletter will generally be distributed by e-mail as this is quicker and more cost effective than providing hard copies but if you do need a hard copy, please let our Chair know.

Other information about the choir (including policies) can be obtained from our website at www.mkyc.org.uk

6. CHOIR PERSONNEL

The committee

This is composed of trustees and elected parent volunteers. The committee meets to discuss the strategic development of the choir and to execute decisions and policies. It also organises regular activities and special events and the choir could not exist without it. The current Chair is Imogen Allen the Treasurer is Tessa Cox and the Secretary is Jane Thorpe. The committee is elected or re-elected at the AGM, to which all parents are invited and which is a forum for parents to make their views known.

Music personnel

Our Musical Director is a qualified musician who, amongst other things, is responsible for the training and musical development of members of the choir. The post is currently held by Craig McLeish. Our pianist is Penny Miller.

7. REHEARSALS

Venue and timings

Regular rehearsals take place in the worship area of Christ Church, Stantonbury Campus, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes on term-time Tuesday evenings. They start at 6:00pm and finish at 7:10pm with senior choir carrying on until 7:25pm (we are currently exploring the possibility of increasing time for the senior choir). The Chair or another committee member will be present at the church from approximately 5:50pm and all choir members should arrive and be ready to sing by 6:00pm, allowing us to take full advantage of our rehearsal time. Parents are generally invited to join the rehearsal from 7pm to listen to the choir. Parents are reminded that rehearsal times and venues can change in the run up to performances so please take note of any changes announced by the Chair or detailed in Newsletters. Choir members might also be required to attend additional rehearsals in the weeks leading up to a performance.

Register

Sheets are provided by the entrance to the worship area for sign in and out. Please can all parents of singers under 16 years of age sign for their singer(s) as they leave at the end of rehearsal (Singers of 16 and over should sign for themselves). For fire safety reasons, any choir member arriving late or leaving a rehearsal before its conclusion must sign in or advise the register-holder (normally, but not always, the Chair). If singers are going to miss a rehearsal, then please can parents let the Chair know in advance.

Breaks

During rehearsals, there is a short break for choir members to have a drink and a biscuit. Choir members should bring a bottle of water to use during the rehearsals. Choir members should not leave the building during the break without the prior consent of their parents, and, if that consent is given, must make the Chair, or other committee member, aware of where they are going and why.

Summarised Rules for Delivery and Collection

- Children are asked to arrive 5-10 minutes before the rehearsal is due to commence so that a prompt start can be made at 6:00pm;
- For their own safety, younger children should always be accompanied inside the church building by their parents;
- Children who are dropped off outside the church remain the responsibility of their parents until they enter the building;
- Children must be collected promptly at the end of rehearsals at 7:10pm or 7:25pm;
- Parents should sign their singer(s) out at the end of rehearsal.
- It is strongly recommended that the children should be collected from the worship area or lobby and not picked up in the car park, particularly in the Winter months;
- The choir cannot take responsibility for children who leave the Church at the end of the rehearsal to meet up with their parents outside;
- If a choir member is leaving a rehearsal or concert with an adult other than their parent, please inform the Chair, or committee member in charge, of this arrangement in advance.

Please do not be offended if we ask who you are and who you are collecting. It is often hard to keep track of all parents' faces and we only do this to protect your singers.

8. OTHER ACTIVITIES

Arrangements

Parents will be provided with full details of all special activities. The information will normally be announced by the Chair at the end of rehearsals and also confirmed in the Newsletter and by email. It is therefore very important that contact details are kept up to date. If email is not your preferred method for contact please let the Chair know so that alternate arrangements can be made.

Attendance

Parents will also be asked to confirm whether their child will be attending events. We encourage choir members to attend all events, particularly performances, as missing members can have a serious impact on the performance of the choir. For the same reason, parents are expected to notify the Chair immediately if their child is unable to attend, having already agreed to be there.

9. UNIFORM

MKYC has a uniform which is worn for all performances. It consists of black dress and tights or black trousers with black shirt or tunic for girls, and black shirt and trousers for boys, and smart black shoes for all. A red scarf (or tie), provided on the day, is worn with this.

10. Choir/Home Agreements

Discipline and behaviour within the choir is a partnership between the Chair, the committee members in charge, the music personnel and the singers. During rehearsals and performances, members are expected to behave appropriately and respect the requests of these adults. If a choir member consistently misbehaves, the matter will be discussed with their parents and they could be asked to leave the choir. To reinforce these expectations, choir members and their parents are asked to sign a Choir/Home Agreements which outlines the behaviour we expect.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The venue

Regular rehearsals take place in modern premises owned and operated by the Church of England and so the choir relies on the management team of the Church to ensure that the venue is a safe environment for children of choir age. However, the choir committee will notify the Church of any concerns they might have about the safety of the premises. In the case of all other premises used by the choir from time to time, the committee will carry out a risk assessment in relation to safety issues, as appropriate.

For security reasons, at least two adults (normally a committee member and a parent) will be in attendance in the church lobby during rehearsals.

Fire Safety

The choir endeavours to follow the fire safety regulations laid down by the Church management team and a committee member is appointed each year to take responsibility for this. At the start of each term, emergency fire procedures will be explained to the members of the choir and there will be an annual drill. In the event of fire, members will proceed to the designated muster posts where a register will then be checked by the Chair.

First aid

The choir does not require its music personnel or committee members to be trained in First Aid and so we cannot take responsibility for administering First Aid. In the case of a medical emergency, the Chair or music personnel will call the parents and/or the emergency services. Parents will be contacted using the contact details they have given to the Chair. Parents should make the Chair aware of any allergies or medical conditions which may be relevant to any part of choir activities.

13. BELONGINGS

Although precautions are taken to prevent unauthorised access to the Church during rehearsals, the choir cannot take responsibility for the loss or theft of items belonging to choir members. Where possible, we strongly recommend that valuable items are not brought to rehearsals or concerts but if they are, members of the choir should keep their belongings with them at all times. Mobile phones must not be on during rehearsals and concerts.

14. SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

MKYC has developed a Safeguarding Policy. A full copy of the policy document can be viewed or downloaded from the website. MKYC regards safeguarding and good working practice as extremely important. It has developed its Safeguarding Policy with the aims of:

- Providing members of the choir with appropriate safety and protection;
- Providing guidance for all staff and committee members in relation to child protection issues;
- Providing a procedure for the recruitment and selection of those working with the choir;
- Providing a structure and procedure for reporting and dealing with safeguarding concerns.

MKYC recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that the welfare of the child or young person is paramount. The policy is designed to provide a framework for adults to work with children and young people in an environment in which everyone feels secure and confident. MKYC recognises the unique and individual worth of each child and young person and is committed to nurturing, safeguarding and protecting children and young people. MKYC's Safeguarding Policy consists of the Safeguarding Policy Document (available on the website) and this Code of Practice. MKYC reviews its Safeguarding Policy annually. Our Safeguarding Officer is Alex Cirigottis.