LEARNING GROUPS
Essential Pre-Visit Information
WELCOME
from the Canon Missioner, Reverend Maggie McLean

“Our vision for students visiting York Minster is that they will be intrigued and inspired by this sacred space. That, through the experience of being here and discovering the Minster’s story, they will learn about the important place the Minster holds in our nation's heritage and its continuing life of faith and discipleship.

What you will find in these pages is the essential information you will need in order to make your visit an inspirational and special experience for your group. We very much look forward to welcoming you on your visit.”
York Minster has been a place of mission and learning since the year 627, when King Edwin of Northumbria built the very first incarnation of the magnificent cathedral you see today. Heritage and Participation Officers deliver a wide variety of formal and informal learning activities designed to engage young audiences with the rich history and fabric of the Minster. Tours and learning sessions take place on the Minster Floor and in our dedicated teaching space, St Stephen’s Chapel. Our team is based in the Old Palace in Dean’s Park, which is the home of York Minster’s library and archive service.
OPENING TIMES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

• Usually the Minster is open to all for visiting from 9.30am to 5.00pm.
• The last entry for self-guided groups is at 3.45pm.
• Evensong or Evening Prayer takes place at 5.30pm.

SUNDAY

• The Minster is open in the morning for worship only.
• Usually the Minster is open to all for visiting from 12.30pm to 3.15pm.
• The last entry for self-guided groups is at 2.30pm.
• The Minster is dedicated to private prayer only from 3.15pm until the evening service.

Please be aware that opening times may be varied in response to further government announcements about Covid-19. Please check our website www.yorkminster.org for up-to-date information about opening times and feel free to contact the Bookings Team at any time in advance of your visit for information about how any changes may affect you.
WELCOME TO
YORK MINSTER

1. Main Entrance
2. Minster Shops
3. Chapter House Yard
4. Old Palace
5. Dean’s Park
6. St William’s College
7. York Glaziers Trust
8. York Minster Works Department
9. Minster School building
10. Masons’ Lodge

01904 557275
bookings@yorkminster.org

YORK MINSTER

YORKMINSTER.ORG
The Minster is an active place of worship, where all are welcome to visit and attend services. Services are always free, but may need to be booked.

- School groups must be accompanied at all times by a teacher or supervising adult and remain the responsibility of these guardians throughout their visit.

- We require a minimum adult to pupil ratio of 1:10 for all school groups. The Minster is a large and busy place, so for primary school groups we recommend an adult to pupil ratio of 1:5. If groups arrive without the minimum required ratio of 1:10, we reserve the right to decline the visit. Any adults providing 1:1 support for individual children should be additional to this ratio. Please note: all adults supervising school groups are admitted free of charge.

- Many people visit the Minster for prayer or quiet reflection. We ask all visitors to respect this holy place and other visitors by not shouting, running or making unnecessary noise.

- All activities in the Minster stop at regular intervals for a few minutes of silence while short prayers take place. We ask everyone to stand or sit quietly while these are said and remember that York Minster is a place of prayer and pilgrimage for many people.

- The service of Holy Communion takes place daily while we are open for other visitors to enjoy the rest of the building. Please ensure that groups remain quiet when present in areas where worship is taking place.

- Please respect the Minster as a living church and allow congregations to worship in a peaceful environment by refraining from taking photographs during services and acts of worship.

- We do not have a formal dress code and welcome visitors who are dressed casually, but recommend warm, practical clothing as the Minster can be cold even during the summer months. Visitors are welcome to keep their hats on inside if they wish to.

- Please keep your belongings with you at all times. Discretionary bag checks may occur upon entry.

- Everyone is welcome to use their mobile phone as a camera, but please ensure all devices are set to silent mode and refrain from making or taking calls inside.

- Flash photography is allowed throughout the Minster with the exception of the Undercroft and Treasury (for the protection of the delicate objects on display).

- You must not use images or sound recorded inside the Minster for any commercial purpose or upload them online without our prior consent. All commercial rights in all images created inside the Minster remain the property of The Chapter of York.

- If you plan to film any part of your tour, you must obtain the permission of the member of staff or volunteer guide leading your tour before the tour starts. You must also gain written approval from us in advance of the visit if you plan to publish or broadcast any material for any other purpose than teaching within the classroom or private use.

- Please do not bring food or drinks into the Minster, apart from securely bottled water. A lunch space is bookable in the Old Palace Upper Hall for school groups who have also booked guided sessions. Self-led groups will not have access to this space. After the visit groups can take advantage of the cafes and food stalls around the Minster and in Dean’s Park.
WHAT IS IN THE UNDERCROFT AND TREASURY?

• The Undercroft and Treasury spaces contain our Accredited Museum, featuring the *Revealing York Minster* exhibition and temporary displays.

• The Undercroft space was created beneath the ground floor of the Minster 1967-72 during major engineering works, which were needed to save the building from imminent collapse.

• After the works were completed, the Undercroft was kept as an exhibition space to display the uncovered archaeology and share access to the many objects and books from the Minster’s collections.

• Dynamic audio-visual interactives and artefacts in the Undercroft reveal an inspirational and human journey of two thousand years. Walk in the footsteps of Roman soldiers; discover dramatic events that threatened the existence of the Minster; and explore the lives of the people – past and present – who have made this one of the greatest cathedrals in the world.

WHERE ARE THEY?

The entrance to the Undercroft and Treasury is located in the South Transept, next to the Information Desk.

• The Treasury leads into the Crypt, which may be accessed directly from the East End (see floorplan).

• For visitors with reduced mobility, there is a lift next to the entrance and ramp access throughout. The Crypt can be accessed via the lift in the Treasury.

WHEN CAN I VISIT?

• The Undercroft may be accessible during general visiting hours. Currently opening hours are restricted due to Covid-19 social distancing measures.

• Access may change in the event of special services or extraordinary closures. We do our best to inform schools about the availability of areas before a visit, but please check with our Bookings Team in advance to be informed of any last-minute changes.

• We do not take bookings for the Undercroft specifically. However, please be aware that there are Health & Safety limitations to the number of visitors we can accommodate at one time and there may be delays during busy times if you bring a large group.

• You may visit the Undercroft without a guide.
DIVIDING GROUPS

• The Undercroft is divided into six sequential chambers, which lead into the Treasury.

• The passageways are narrow, so we recommend splitting your class up into smaller groups to ensure comfortable access for you and other members of the public. Each chamber can accommodate up to approximately 15 pupils at a time.

• If you are bringing a number of smaller groups, please stagger your entry to the Undercroft; we recommend leaving at least 10-minute gaps between groups.

• We recommend allowing around 45 minutes to explore the whole of the Undercroft thoroughly.

• Each group of pupils must be accompanied by teachers or other responsible adults when going around the museum, as elsewhere in the Minster.

TOP 5 THINGS TO SEE

1. Remains of the Roman fortress or principia discovered under the Minster, along with a wall fresco and ancient drain that still works today!

2. The 1,000-year-old Horn of Ulf, which once belonged to a Viking nobleman. This may have been given by Ulf himself as a gift to the Minster, or it may have come from King Cnut.

3. A video showing how the Norman cathedral was transformed into a Gothic masterpiece.

4. The King’s Book of Heroes, which lists many of the people of York who gave their lives during the First World War.

5. The 1,000-year-old York Gospels, which are still in ceremonial use at the Minster today.

THE CHAMBERS

Chamber 1       Roman Archaeology
Chamber 2       Anglo-Saxon and Viking Archaeology
Chamber 3       Normans and Building the Minster
Chamber 4       Rites of Passage in the Church
Chamber 5       The York Gospels
Chamber 6       Learning Space
The Treasury    New Exhibition

The Heart of Yorkshire: Creativity and Culture in York Minster’s Collections
**THE CENTRAL TOWER**

### TOWER TRIP AVAILABILITY

- Please advise us when booking if you would like to include the Tower in your visit. Extra charges apply.

- Timed Tower Trip slots are bookable in advance, subject to the discretion of the Bookings Team and any Covid-19 safety procedures.

- Up to 50 places are available on each trip. This may be reduced at times due to Covid-19 restrictions.

- Tower Trips are not guided tours but do need to be booked. They take place at timed, regular intervals.

- Be advised that the Tower can be closed at short notice due to adverse weather conditions, essential building works, or emergencies.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

- No children under 8 are allowed to climb the Tower.

- There are 275 steps up to the top of the Tower and we strongly recommend that anyone with a health condition that may be affected by the climb should discuss the potential risk with their GP. Minster staff are authorised to decline access to the Tower.

**Further Risk Assessment Information about the Central Tower is set out on page 16.**

### SUPERVISION REQUIRED TO CLIMB THE TOWER

- Climbing the Tower is not included in visits conducted by Heritage and Participation Officers.

- Any group wishing to climb the Tower with over 10 children (aged 16 and under) must be accompanied by a minimum of 3 school-approved adults.

- One adult should lead the climb and descent, one should walk in the middle of the party, and one should remain at the back.

- It is the group leader’s responsibility to ensure no children ascend or descend the Tower ahead of the lead adult. This controls the pace of ascent and descent, and also leaves one adult to escort anyone down the Tower who may need to leave.

- Groups of 10 or less may climb the Tower with two adults (one front, one back) on the condition that if anyone needs to be escorted down the Tower the whole group must come down with them.

**If you require more information to plan your visit, you can contact Bookings on:**

**01904 557 275**
ATTENDING EVENSONG

• Evensong and Evening Prayer are services held at York Minster. All are welcome to attend. Please see our online calendar to find out when they take place.

• The service lasts approximately 45 minutes and includes choral singing by the choir (which may include girls, boys, women and men), readings from the Bible, and occasional hymns.

• Evensong uses the pattern of worship laid out by the Book of Common Prayer authorised in 1662.

• We welcome people of all faiths and none to join us at the service, to participate fully or simply observe how we come together as a diverse community.

• Many people attend the service as part of their regular worship at York Minster, and the words and music have great meaning for them.

• All those attending Evensong are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes in advance and stay for the whole of the service, in order to minimise disruption.

If you would like your group to attend Evensong, please contact the Booking Team in advance so we can arrange for you all to be seated together. Social distancing measures will be organised by the vergers when you attend.
• During your visit you will see metal stands throughout the Minster holding small tea light candles, which are called votive candles.

• Everyone is welcome to light candles for whatever reason: as a way of expressing love for others; reflecting on our own lives; or saying a prayer to God.

• To Christians, candles symbolise the presence of Christ in all people, places and situations, which may appear covered in darkness and without hope. Christians believe that God’s love includes the whole of creation: people of all faiths and none, as well as those who may consciously reject God.

• We ask everyone to respect the prayers, thoughts and feelings of those who choose to light a candle.

• You might also see prayer cards available for people to write on. Usually these are left in the prayer boxes for our clergy to see, and some of these will be read aloud during the next service.

• At times these prayer cards may not be available due to Covid-19 social distancing measures.

• Everyone who visits the Minster is welcome to use these prayer cards.
OVERVIEW

• We welcome group leaders to make a pre-visit to risk assess York Minster for your group, for which there is no charge. Please contact us on 01904 557 275 or email bookings@yorkminster.org to arrange this.

• School groups should be aware that there will be members of the public in the Minster during the visit.

• Individual children and groups must be accompanied at all times by a teacher or supervising adult and remain their responsibility throughout the visit.

• Minster staff keep up to date with any essential works or other factors which could affect the health and safety of school groups on visits. Bookings will contact group leaders (in advance, where possible) to advise of any extraordinary risk factors.

• Currently a temporary lunch space is available for school groups at the Old Palace and there are designated school portaloos.

• York Minster Police are fully DBS-checked and are present 24 hours a day. They manage all emergency situations: fire, bomb alerts, safeguarding, and first aid. All direction goes through them unless or until emergency services take over.

• There is an organisational lost child procedure in the event that a child loses contact with their school group. The Minster floor teams are briefed not to let children exit without their accompanying adult.

• Candles with small naked flames are present at various points throughout the Minster. Every candle stand is equipped with a fire blanket.

• If the fire alarm sounds or an evacuation is announced, groups will be evacuated via the nearest available exit as directed by Minster Staff.

• Some maintenance work may be carried out during visiting hours.

• All hazardous areas will be roped off and warning signs displayed where necessary.

• The interactive models, exhibits and other artefacts included in our displays are safe for normal handling with appropriate care. Please read and follow any handling instructions provided with the display.

• On days with severe adverse weather please take care when moving around on the stone steps, ramps and pathways outside the Minster.

• If you see anything suspicious or dangerous, you must report it to a member of Minster Staff straight away.

• Health and Safety policies are in place and are reviewed regularly.

FIRST AID

• There are designated qualified first aiders on site. If there is a medical emergency in the group you must report it immediately to a member of Minster Staff or the Minster Police. All accidents must be reported and entered in the accident book.

• Two Automated External Defibrillators are kept in the York Minster Police Cabin and at the Tower Top.

• Injuries requiring more than York Minster First Aid attention will be dealt with by calling an ambulance.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR RISK ASSESSMENTS - if you need any more information from us for your own risk assessment purposes, please let us know in advance of your visit.
ACCESSIBILITY

- The Old Palace is a historic building and is situated a short walk from the Minster across Dean’s Park. The bookable temporary lunch space is currently only accessible by stairs. If this would present any problems for your group, please let Bookings know in advance so we can discuss alternative arrangements.
- Internally all of the Minster is accessible via ramps, excepting the High Altar Sanctuary in the Quire and the Zouche Chapel, which are only accessible via steps.
- Externally there are steps (fitted with hand rails) and ramps to enter and exit the Minster.
- Wheelchairs are available on request.
- The Minster floor is fitted with a hearing loop, although this does not extend to the Chapter House.
- A tactile model of the Minster and handling materials are available upon request (embroidery and glass).
- Assistance dogs are welcome in the Minster.
- The stone flooring is generally sound but uneven in places. Groups should wear practical footwear.
- The Minster can be cold even during the summer months. We recommend dressing warmly and guided groups should bring waterproofs for the outdoor walk between the Minster and the Old Palace venue.
- Accessible toilets open to the public are available and include adjoining baby changing facilities. York Minster toilets are open to the general public. Please ensure your group is supervised at all times.
- The structure, floor and furnishings of the Minster are in places highly patterned and ornate. This may be a challenge for anyone in your group who is vulnerable to an adverse reaction (such as over-stimulation) when they encounter these features of the building.
- Maintenance works may cause sudden loud noises.

THE UNDERCROFT

- Due to Health & Safety controls there is a limit to the number of people with mobility or assistance needs that the Undercroft can accommodate at any one time. If several members of your group have such needs, please contact us in advance so that we can help you to manage this aspect of your visit.
- A lift offers accessible entrance and exit to the Undercroft, where the floor level changes gradually through the use of ramps.
- A further platform lift is available to access the Treasury and Crypt from the Undercroft.
- Some areas have low levels of light.
- Hands-on interactives are positioned at a height that is accessible to wheelchair users.
- Electrical interactives are Portable Appliance Tested.
- The Undercroft is an enclosed underground space. It is lit artificially throughout and has no natural light.
- Some areas are accessed by narrow corridors, which can create bottlenecks. Access will be subject to review regarding government social distancing guidelines.
- Heritage and Participation Officers will do their best to forewarn groups of any issues as they move around the Minster on tours, but prior discussion with teachers about any special needs is strongly advised.
- In the event of an emergency evacuation the accessible exits are via lifts or a stairclimber, which has a maximum weight limit of 160kg or 25st. Wheelchair users must be able to get from their wheelchair and into the stairclimber assisted by their teacher, supervisory adult or carer. If this would not be possible, please let us know in advance of your visit.

RISK ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

We are very happy to discuss any special requirements you may have in advance.
**ST STEPHEN’S CHAPEL**

- Some learning activities may take place in St Stephen’s chapel, which is at the East End of the Minster.

- Activities include dressing up and object handling. All items will be cleaned and quarantined according to government guidelines and our own safety procedures.

- The chapel is furnished with materials consistent with the rest of the Minster floor, including angular wooden or stone corners of tables and tombs, as well as spiked metal railings around the chapel perimeter.

**THE CENTRAL TOWER**

- There are 275 stone steps to the top of the Tower.

- The climb is made through long narrow passageways and narrow, spiralling and uneven stone stairways.

- Part of the climb uses a walkway on the outside of the building, which is fitted with a guardrail.

- The top of the Tower is enclosed in a safety cage.

- Tower Trips are not suitable for anyone with heart conditions, angina, high blood pressure, vertigo, claustrophobia, breathing issues (asthma, hay fever, bronchitis), decreased mobility, or who are pregnant.
SAFEGUARDING

• York Minster is open to the general public and learning sessions will take place in shared areas such as the Undercroft Museum and Treasury.

• On booked guided tours and sessions groups will be accompanied by a Heritage and Participation Officer for the duration of their visit, except in cases where there is a lunch break.

• Heritage and Participation Staff are DBS-checked to an enhanced level and are not left to supervise children without a teacher or accompanying adult.

• Learning Volunteers are DBS-checked and are not left to supervise children without a teacher or accompanying adult present.

• School staff and accompanying adults must always remain with their groups for the whole of their visit.

• Images and video are monitored and recorded in and around York Minster as part of security footage for the purposes of crime prevention and public safety. This scheme is controlled by The Chapter of York.

• York Minster toilets are open to the general public. Please ensure that your group is supervised at all times and that you follow your own safeguarding procedures if using the public toilets.

• Designated school portaloos outside the Old Palace can only be accessed by groups who have booked a led session with a Heritage and Participation Officer.

• An accessible toilet is available inside the Old Palace and the entrance is at the back of the building. Heritage staff will direct school staff accompanying any children who need to use this indoor facility.

If you have any queries please contact the Chapter Safeguarding Advisor, Dee Cooley, on 07843 339980 or email deec@yorkminster.org for further information.
PARKING

• York is often busy and congested; please leave ample time to arrive and park using public facilities.

• The Minster has no public car park.

• The city centre is mainly pedestrianised and within 10 minutes’ walking distance of the Minster.

• The nearest coach park to the Minster is Union Terrace on Clarence Street (see map on page 19).

• It is not possible to bring coaches inside the city walls, or to be dropped off outside the Minster.

TERMS OF BOOKING

• The Chapter reserves the right to vary arrangements at York Minster and we apologise if any parts of the cathedral are inaccessible at the time of your visit.

• If a booking is cancelled without giving 28 days’ notice, schools may be charged a cancellation fee.

• If for any reason outside its control the Chapter is obliged to cancel or postpone a school booking, the Chapter will not be liable for any costs of transport, accommodation or any other costs which may have been incurred in relation to the visit being cancelled.
Please Note:

Kent Street Coach Park is now closed. Coaches approaching from the South of the city should use St. George's Field Coach Park, which is approximately a two minute drive North West of Kent Street, just off Tower Street and is indicated by the yellow circle on the map.