

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Liz Kavanagh meets Pilgrims' head chorister Angus Williams

Ask Angus, 12 and head chorister at The Pilgrims' School, what he likes most about being in the cathedral choir and he'll tell you it's singing with his mates in front of a really big congregation.

"It's also a lot of fun," he says, before divulging that the cathedral's director of music, Andrew Lumsden, who trains the choristers, has some great one-liners as well as an ability to wink his approval.

"Best of all is Christmas," Angus continues. "That's why everybody wants to be a chorister." It's because at Christmas, when the rest of the school have gone home for the holidays, 22 choristers stay behind at The Pilgrims' School to sing at the cathedral services, enjoying free run of the school for all sorts of festive activities.

Choristers are boarders at The Pilgrims' School, allowing them to participate in cathedral services with the cathedral choir outside the school day. On Christmas Day there are stockings in the dormitories before the boys wake up headmaster Tom Burden with carols outside his house in the Inner Close.

Pilgrims' boys who want to sing in the cathedral choir are invited to audition in Year 3 or 4 with others, joining them from schools from all over the world, often with scholarships and bursaries.

"We're a bit like a big team," says Angus, who came to Pilgrims' from a local primary school. "There's a lot of practice involved and we have to be able to work together as well as get things right individually."

But there's also dedication involved in being a chorister. It's part of an education which Pilgrims' headmaster says prepares his boys for life in a world where being committed really counts.

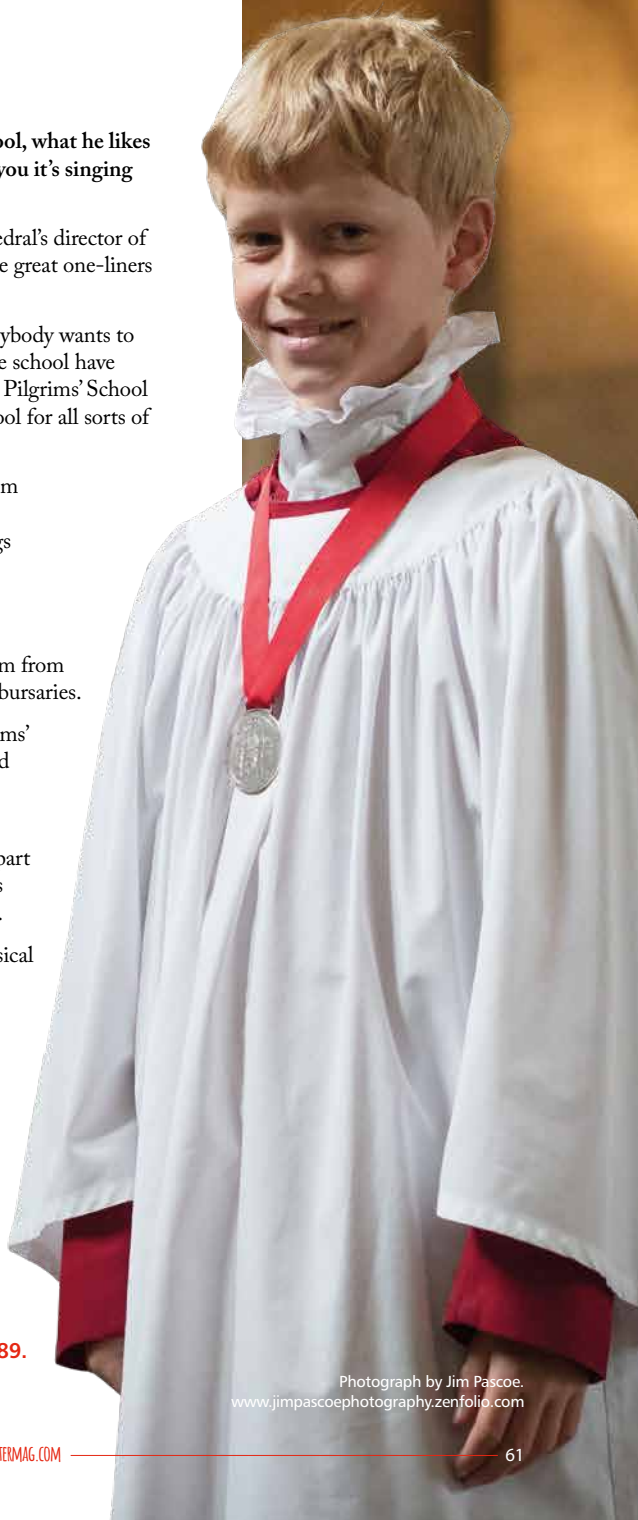
Not all boys at Pilgrims' are musical, but many take up a musical instrument as part of their studies: Angus remarkably fits in time to play the piano and clarinet.

"It's a busy life," he says, before telling me about the out-of-school activities, the sports teams and the evening camaraderie with fellow boarders. "Being a boarder means every day ends with a giant sleepover with all your friends," he adds.

Are there midnight feasts at Pilgrims'? Not really, according to Angus. "We don't have time for them," he says with a smile, before heading off to join his friends for football.

To find out if your son has the potential to be a chorister, contact The Pilgrims' School on 01962 854189.

www.thepilgrims-school.co.uk



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