

ST COLUMB'S CATHEDRAL

Bishop Mehaffey Organ Scholarship 2026/27

Information & Application Pack

St Columb's Cathedral invites applications for the Bishop Mehaffey Organ Scholarship for 2026/27. The scholarship is intended to give a developing organist practical experience and structured musical development within the life of a busy Cathedral, working alongside the Organist and Director of Music, Assistant Organist and Cathedral Choirs. In association with St. Columb's Cathedral and supported by the Mehaffey Family.

Purpose of the Scholarship

The principal aim of the scholarship is training and development. The successful candidate will be encouraged to develop the practical skills required of a church and cathedral musician, particularly service playing, choral accompaniment, solo repertoire, rehearsal technique and choir training.

The exact balance of duties will be tailored to the experience of the successful candidate. The Scholar will not be expected to arrive as a finished cathedral organist; rather, the post is designed for a musician with clear potential, commitment and a desire to learn.

Opportunities and Duties

- Play the organ at Cathedral services as appropriate and as experience develops.
- Accompany the Cathedral Choirs in rehearsals and services when required.
- Assist the Organist and Director of Music and Assistant Organist with rehearsals and musical preparation.
- Gain experience in service planning, psalm accompaniment, hymn playing, liturgical improvisation and other practical church-music skills.
- Develop solo organ repertoire and have regular opportunities to practise on the Cathedral organ, by arrangement.
- Observe and, when appropriate, assist with the training of choristers and other singers.
- Gain experience in conducting and rehearsal technique, including opportunities to rehearse sections of music under supervision.
- Assist with music-library and other reasonable music-department duties where appropriate.
- Take part in special services, concerts and other significant musical events in the Cathedral calendar by agreement.

Training and Mentoring

The Scholar will work closely with the Cathedral's music staff and will receive ongoing guidance in organ playing, accompanying, rehearsal technique and the practical demands of cathedral music. The intention is that the Scholar should finish the year with substantially greater confidence, experience and a stronger foundation for further study, organ scholarships, church-music appointments or conservatoire/university training.

Who Should Apply?

Applications are welcomed from developing organists who can demonstrate musical potential and a serious interest in church and choral music.

- Applicants should have a secure general keyboard technique and some experience of organ playing.
- Previous experience accompanying choirs or playing for services is desirable but not essential.
- A good level of sight-reading and general musicianship is desirable.
- Applicants should be reliable, organised, willing to learn and comfortable working as part of a team.
- The scholarship may particularly suit a sixth-form, university, gap-year or early-career musician seeking practical cathedral experience.
- The successful candidate must be able to meet the safeguarding and access requirements applicable to their duties.

Commitment

The Scholar will be expected to participate regularly in the musical life of St Columb's Cathedral. The precise pattern of attendance and duties will be agreed with the successful candidate, taking account of their existing study or work commitments, their level of experience, and the needs of the Cathedral Music Department.

The Cathedral's normal weekly choral pattern is:

- **Wednesday, 4.30–6.00pm** – Girl Choristers rehearsal
- **Thursday, 4.30–6.00pm** – Boy Choristers rehearsal
- **Friday, 5.30–6.30pm** – Lay Clerks rehearsal
- **Sunday, 11.30am** – Choral Eucharist/Choral Matins/Family Service
- **Sunday, 4.00pm** – Choral Evensong/Compline

There are also additional services, rehearsals, concerts and special events throughout the year, particularly around major festivals in the Cathedral calendar. **The Organ Scholar would not normally be expected to attend every rehearsal and service listed above.** A regular programme of attendance will be agreed in advance, providing the Scholar with meaningful experience of Cathedral music while remaining realistic alongside school, university, work or other commitments. Applicants should indicate on the application form any regular commitments which may affect their availability.

Scholarship Award

The Bishop Mehaffey Organ Scholarship is designed to provide the successful candidate with a comprehensive programme of organ tuition, training and practical experience throughout the academic year.

The Scholar will receive:

- A full year of individual organ tuition at St Columb's School of Music, valued at £614;
- All music, books and learning materials required as part of their organ studies;
- All relevant examination fees paid by the Cathedral;
- Regular practical training and mentoring from the Cathedral's Organist and Director of Music and Assistant Organist;
- Opportunities to develop skills in service playing, choral accompaniment, hymn playing, psalm accompaniment, improvisation, conducting and choir training;
- Regular access to the Cathedral organ for agreed practice and tuition;

- Opportunities to play and assist at Cathedral services, rehearsals, concerts and other musical events as their experience develops.

There is no tuition fee or other charge to the Scholar for participation in the programme.

The scholarship is intended as a significant investment in the musical development of a promising young organist, combining formal tuition with the kind of practical experience that is difficult to gain through lessons alone.

Key Dates

Applications open	8 September 2026
Closing date	Friday 18 September 2026
Auditions / interviews	25 September - 1 October 2026
Appointment announced	Sunday 4 October 2026
Scholarship begins	Sunday 4 October 2026

Audition and Interview

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to St Columb's Cathedral for an audition and informal interview. Candidates should expect the audition to include:

- An organ piece of the candidate's own choice.
- A short sight-reading test.
- Practical keyboard tests appropriate to the candidate's level, which may include hymn playing, transposition, harmonisation or improvisation.
- A short interview about the candidate's musical experience, ambitions and interest in the scholarship.

Candidates will be given full details of the audition in advance. The panel is interested not only in current attainment, but also in musical potential, responsiveness and capacity to develop.

How to Apply

Please complete the application form contained in this pack and return it by Friday 18 September 2026 to:

Attention of Nicky Morton

Email: music@stcolumbsschoolofmusic

Safeguarding: The successful applicant will be required to comply with the Cathedral's safeguarding procedures and any appropriate AccessNI requirements for the duties undertaken.

Application Form

Bishop Mehaffey Organ Scholarship 2026/27

1. Personal Details

Full name	
Address	
Email address	
Telephone / mobile	
Date of birth (if under 18)	

2. Education / Current Study or Employment

School / college / university / employer	
Course / year of study / position	
Relevant qualifications or examinations	

3. Musical Training

Current organ teacher (if applicable)	
Length of organ study	
Current / most recent organ grade or level	
Piano / keyboard qualifications or level	
Other musical qualifications / instruments	

4. Organ and Choral Experience

Please give details of any churches, choirs, schools or other organisations with which you have been involved, including any experience of playing for services; accompanying choirs; choral singing; conducting or taking rehearsals; solo organ performance.

Details	
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5. Supporting Statement

Please tell us why you are applying for the Bishop Mehaffey Organ Scholarship, what you hope to gain from it, and how it fits with your future musical ambitions. You may also include any other information that you feel supports your application.

Supporting statement	
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6. Availability

Please give details of your regular weekly commitments and identify any times when you would normally be unable to attend Cathedral rehearsals, services or other agreed duties.

Regular commitments / restrictions	
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7. References

Please provide two referees. At least one should be able to comment on your musical ability and suitability for the scholarship. Referees should not normally be relatives.

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Name		
Position / relationship		
Organisation		
Email		
Telephone		

8. Declaration

I confirm that the information given in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that appointment is subject to satisfactory references and compliance with any safeguarding and AccessNI requirements applicable to the role.

Signature	
Date	

If the applicant is under 18, a parent or guardian will be asked to confirm consent and safeguarding arrangements before appointment.