

Great St Mary's FAQs for Teachers

Do I need to book?

Yes please! We ask all school and language school groups to book in advance, even if you are planning a self-guided visit.

To start the booking process, please [contact our heritage education officer](#).

What types of activity do you offer?

We have an inspiring selection of themed educational activities to choose from, with our main focus being History and Religious Studies topics.

Students can discover the fascinating history of this church at the centre of Cambridge through sessions on the Peasants' Revolt, the Reformation, Tudor kings and queens and the changing Victorian marketplace.

Religious Studies sessions introduce students to key Christian beliefs and practices, helping them to feel comfortable in a sacred space and understand how belief and scripture shaped these magnificent buildings and communities of worship. Through reflective activities, students can also experience a sense of wonder and a safe space for spiritual growth and questioning.

Browse our [primary](#) and [secondary](#) school pages for more details of the sessions we offer.

We can arrange self-led city trails and resources for visits to other local attractions, such as King's College Chapel or the Fitzwilliam Museum.

We also offer short tours and craft activities which are popular with [language school](#) groups.

How many students can I bring?

Most of our sessions are designed for individual classes but we often arrange a carousel of visits to nearby attractions or incorporate a city tour in order to accommodate larger groups.

For seated sessions such as lectures or debates, the church seats 400 downstairs.

We will discuss numbers and plan your visit with you when you make a booking enquiry.

How much does it cost?

Prices vary as we offer a wide range of options including self-guided tours, joint visits with other local attractions, taught sessions, bespoke resources, art activities and full day trips. Please get in touch to discuss your requirements.

We receive funding from the Church Schools Trust of Cambridge to offer many RE sessions free of charge for UK state schools and may be able to provide discounts for repeat bookings on other sessions.

Climbing the tower costs £2.50 per head for under-16s and £3.30 per head for groups aged over 16.

Do you have a risk assessment we can use?

You will need to complete your own risk assessment in response to the needs of your group, but we do offer [risk assessment guidance](#) to help you prepare your own.

We recommend that the member of staff leading your visit makes a preliminary visit (including a free tower climb, if you are planning to include this in your day) in order to compile their risk assessment so that they are familiar with the church and the journey to and from Great St Mary's.

How do we get there?

Great St Mary's is located on Senate House Hill, between the Senate House and Cambridge market square. Our postcode is CB2 3PQ. [Follow this link to view the church on Google Maps.](#)

The city centre immediately around Great St Mary's is pedestrianised during the day. Most school groups from Cambridge either walk in to us, or take public transport to the city centre.

If you are arriving by coach, there is coach parking on Trumpington Road by the Fitzwilliam Museum, on Chesterton Road, or on Queens Road. All of these are a short walk from Great St Mary's and we can provide resources to help you notice local landmarks on the way.

Download a [map for coach drivers](#) here.

What if we are late?

Please text or phone the session leader if you are likely to be delayed.

We will do our best to adapt and accommodate your visit to the time available if you arrive late, but this may not always be possible if leaders are not available or the tower or church has been booked by another group.

Are there any rules our students should know about?

Great St Mary's is a busy historical attraction as well as a sacred place of quiet prayer and worship.

In order to make sure that all visitors and worshippers can enjoy their visit to the church, we ask group leaders to remind pupils in advance that they are visiting a special place.

We ask students to respect everyone's needs and stay safe in the church by walking, rather than running, talking, rather than shouting, and listening to the session leaders and one another carefully.

Food and drink should not be consumed in the church (this includes chewing gum) and we ask visitors to keep mobiles on silent and avoid taking calls inside the church, although you are welcome to use phones to take photographs without flash.

Where can we eat lunch?

As a busy working church and tourist attraction, unfortunately we do not have a suitable space for schools to eat a packed lunch indoors.

In warm weather you can book part of our churchyard for packed lunches but we do recommend that you make a wet weather plan.

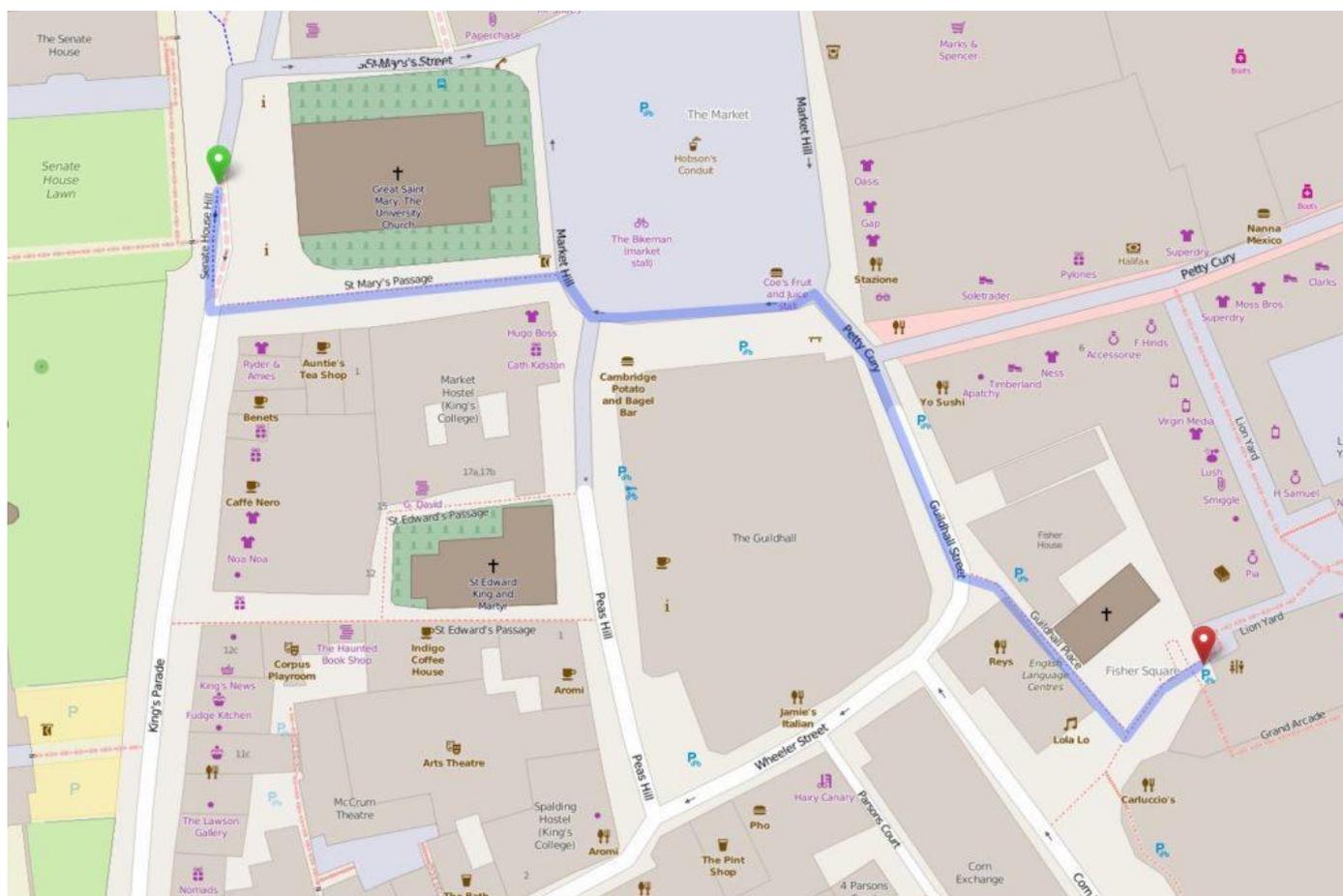
We have compiled a [list of potential indoor lunch venues](#) within walking distance which you might like to investigate.

What are your toilet facilities like?

Our toilet facilities are very limited (3 toilets) and our plumbing rather medieval and prone to blockages!

While school groups are of course welcome to use our toilets, we strongly recommend that groups of 10 or more visit the public toilets at Lion Yard before arriving at Great St Mary's –these are just 2 minutes' walk from us.

This will allow larger groups to use the facilities efficiently and avoids your students spending most of their visit with us queuing for the loo!



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Is the church accessible?

There is level access to the ground floor of the church and an accessible toilet is available. A hearing loop is installed in the nave.

Unfortunately there is no lift available to access the galleries or tower, which are reached up long flights of stairs. The raised area around the altar is reached up two steps, and the door of the St Andrew's Chapel is narrow, so these areas are not accessible for wheelchair users.

Great St Mary's is open to the general public and we do not have any private or purpose-built spaces for educational use. This means that sessions take place in the main body of the church, where there usually a certain level of background noise.

Quiet spaces may be available in our offices by prior arrangement for students who might become overwhelmed and need to take a break.

Please make us aware well in advance of any students or group leaders with additional needs so that we can help your visit run as smoothly as possible.

Can we visit the shop?

If your students would like to visit the shop, please let us know. We can also offer pre-paid goody bags with small souvenirs of the church by prior arrangement.

Can we take photos?

You are welcome to take photographs without flash.

It is very helpful for us to have photographs of school visits so, if you have the necessary permissions from families, we would be grateful if you could share some photos of your visit with us for use in funding reports and promotional material.

What do we do if there is an accident?

School staff and accompanying adults remain responsible for the welfare and behaviour of students throughout their visit. It is particularly important that you carefully assess the risks of a tower climb and provide a sufficient staff-student ratio to ensure adequate supervision on tower climbs.

Should there be an accident or health incident, please tell your session leader or staff at the shop.

We advise you to bring a trained First Aider with you and a portable First Aid kit, as we cannot guarantee that there will be a trained staff First Aider at Great St Mary's. A small First Aid kit is available in the church kitchen.

If an accident or injury should take place, however trivial, please ask us for the accident record book. It is important to record this as soon as possible and we can make a copy for you to take back to school with you.

What do teachers say?

'Trips always involve a lot of organising but as we were able to meet with Rosie and visit Great St Mary's prior to our trip, the organisation was much easier.'

Additionally, as Rosie kindly created some beautiful resources, this helped hugely.

The best part was having the resource sheets to give structure to the children's experience, and the hands-on activities with visuals and objects.

The link to our R.E topic was perfect but mostly the children were overwhelmed by being able to visit such amazing buildings in Cambridge. '

- Year 3 teachers, Shirley Community Primary School

'Thank you so much for all you did to set things up for the trip. We had a terrific day.'

There was a warm welcome at Great St Mary's and the children were fascinated by the ten bridesmaids window and story.

King's entry was very smooth and the Tudor trail which we did in the afternoon was a perfect balance of information, route planning and storytelling—the children were obviously really pleased to become experts on their home town.

We would really like to repeat the trip next year so will be in touch again in 2016!

- Headteacher, Milton Road Primary School