



St Andrews Cathedral was once the most important religious site in the whole of Scotland. Today the cathedral is in ruins but it is still an impressive and inspiring site.

INVESTIGATING ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL

Information for Teachers





Timeline

Early 8th century Arrival of relics associated with St Andrew; religious foundation established

c1120s Building of St Rule's church begins

1160s Construction of cathedral and Augustinian priory begins

1272 West end of nave blown down in gale

1318 Consecration of cathedral in presence of King Robert the Bruce

1378 Major fire

1409 Part of south transept blown down in gale

1547 Cathedral used by state authorities as site for bombardment of castle

1559 Cathedral furnishings destroyed by Protestant mob; cathedral abandoned

1561 Cathedral 'unroofed'

1586 Central bell tower collapses

1893 Repairs carried out by marquis of Bute on priory buildings

1946 Cathedral and site entrusted to state care

St Andrews Cathedral was once the most important religious site in the whole of Scotland. Today the cathedral is in ruins but it is still an impressive and inspiring site. Teachers will find it a vivid focal point for discussion of church life and the effects of the Reformation in Scotland.

Historical background

There was already an important religious community at St Andrews, known then as Kilrymont, in the 8th century. It grew in status with the arrival of relics associated with the martyred apostle St Andrew. Traditionally these relics consisted of an arm bone, three fingers, a tooth, and a knee cap. These relics were interred in a shrine which, by the 10th century, had become a major place of pilgrimage for travellers from all across Europe. The pilgrims in turn provided a valuable source of income for construction work.

In 1123 Robert became bishop and established the Augustinian priory St Rule's, whose church and tower is still standing today at the cathedral site.

In the 1160s Bishop Arnold initiated the building of a vast new cathedral. The building work suffered many setbacks.

Gales caused widespread destruction in the 1270s and during his occupation in the Wars of Independence, Edward I of England ordered the stripping of lead from the roof for ammunition. The cathedral was finally consecrated in 1318, attended by King Robert the Bruce, who, according to legend, rode up the aisle on a horse.

The scale and wealth of the building was dazzling. The longest church – and the biggest building of any kind – in Scotland, it was an impressive seat for the bishops of the Scottish Church. The cathedral also housed the priory, living quarters of the canons who maintained the cathedral. The town thrived around the cathedral and benefited from the visitors it beckoned.

The life of this awesome complex of buildings, however, came to an abrupt end in 1559 with the Reformation. Following a rousing sermon against idolatry by preacher John Knox, the interior of the cathedral was sacked by a Protestant mob. Worship at the cathedral ceased almost immediately and the site declined into a source of building material and latterly a favoured local burial ground.



Supporting learning and teaching

A visit to **St Andrews Cathedral** is particularly appropriate for teachers working on class study topics such as:

- The Middle Ages
- Castles
- The Reformation

Many teachers will visit the cathedral precinct in combination with a visit to nearby **St Andrews Castle**. The history of the two sites is closely intertwined, the castle being home of the cathedral bishops. At the castle pupils can find out more about how the bishops lived and can experience the unique mine and countermine. There is also an excellent exhibition in the Visitor Centre there with displays about the building of the cathedral and the Reformation.

The **Curriculum for Excellence** aspires to motivate and challenge pupils through a wide range of varied learning experiences. Site visits have a particular role to play in joining up learning outcomes across the curriculum. A visit, and use of the supporting materials, will help to:

- **develop successful learners** by challenging pupils to consider how life has changed for people. It will help them to think critically about evidence and arrive at their own conclusions.
- **develop confident individuals**. Pupils will learn about aspects of their community's past, develop an understanding of social changes, establish some of their own values and communicate their views on different historical and social issues.
- **develop responsible citizens**. It will help to increase pupils' social and historical knowledge and understanding and encourage greater respect for their own historic and built environment.
- **develop effective contributors** by broadening pupils' knowledge and understanding through investigative, creative and critical thinking.

Before the visit

- **Pilgrim Tour:** Our suggested tour encourages pupils to imagine they are pilgrims visiting the site. Pupils will gain most from this approach if they are well prepared.

Preparations could include:

- Deciding why they are coming on pilgrimage; many came to do penance for a crime or sin.
- Discussion of clothing worn by pilgrims; dressing up. Costumes may be available on site – ask about this when booking.
- Planning a route and discussing transport.
- Making and wearing pilgrim badges based on the one shown below.
- It would be helpful if pupils had an idea of some of the key terms relating to the Cathedral and priory life, e.g. **nave, tower, aisle, altar, relic, bishop, canon, prior, priory, cloister, spire, chapel, Reformation, John Knox**.
- The cathedral has changed dramatically over the years. Discuss with pupils how and why buildings change. Discuss how wind and weather can affect a building as well as the deliberate destruction of the Protestant Reformation.
- The role of the church in everyday life in medieval times is hard for today's children to grasp. Research into everyday life at this time will help show its influence. It would also help if pupils had some idea of what a priory is and what canons did.
- Pupils could research the life of St Andrew. How do they think his bones ended up here? Do they believe that they did?

- Help pupils gain a clearer grasp of the time scale by making a timeline with them, counting back the centuries and then marking on key events. This could be added to after the visit.

Working on-site

Pupils should be encouraged to look for physical evidence. Useful starting points are:

- What materials were used to construct the cathedral?
- What evidence is there for everyday life in the priory?
- How was the cathedral protected against intruders?
- Can you see any ways in which the cathedral has changed?

On the Historic Scotland website: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/education_unit teachers can find additional resources to help with work on site. These include compiling an *Evidence Record* and a *My Impressions Record*.

Suggestions for follow-up work

Following the visit pupils can pool their findings in groups to create a fuller record of the cathedral and the lives of the people who visited, lived, and worked there. This could form the basis for a range of presentation activities, for example:

- A guide book for future visitors.
- A slide show with commentary of their visit.
- Imaginative writing based on the journey of the pilgrim or on the lives of the canons in the priory.



On the Pilgrim Trail

To bring the ruined cathedral to life, our suggested tour invites pupils to imagine that they are medieval pilgrims journeying to the shrine of St Andrew. **Text in purple is meant to be the view of a visiting 15th century pilgrim.**

We encourage pupils also to 'read the stones' and look for examples of where and how the cathedral building has been altered and what it might have been like when complete.

This tour takes in eight locations, marked on the plan to the right:

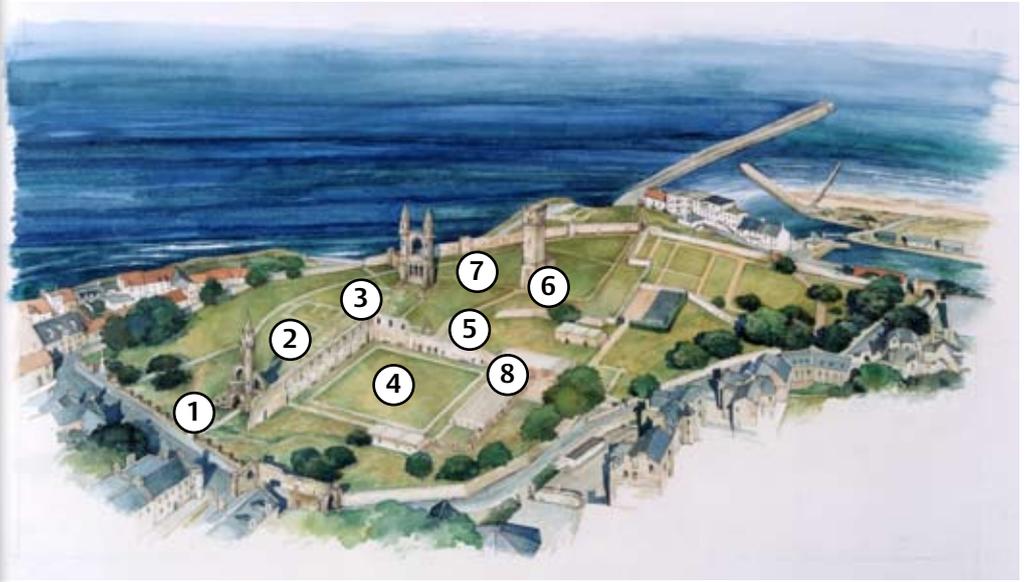
1. West Front
2. Nave
3. East End
4. Cloister
5. Chapter House
6. St Rule's Tower
7. Precinct Wall
8. Museum and Visitor Centre

Background information is given in the pack for each location. It is written in fairly simple language so that it can be read aloud to pupils if desired.

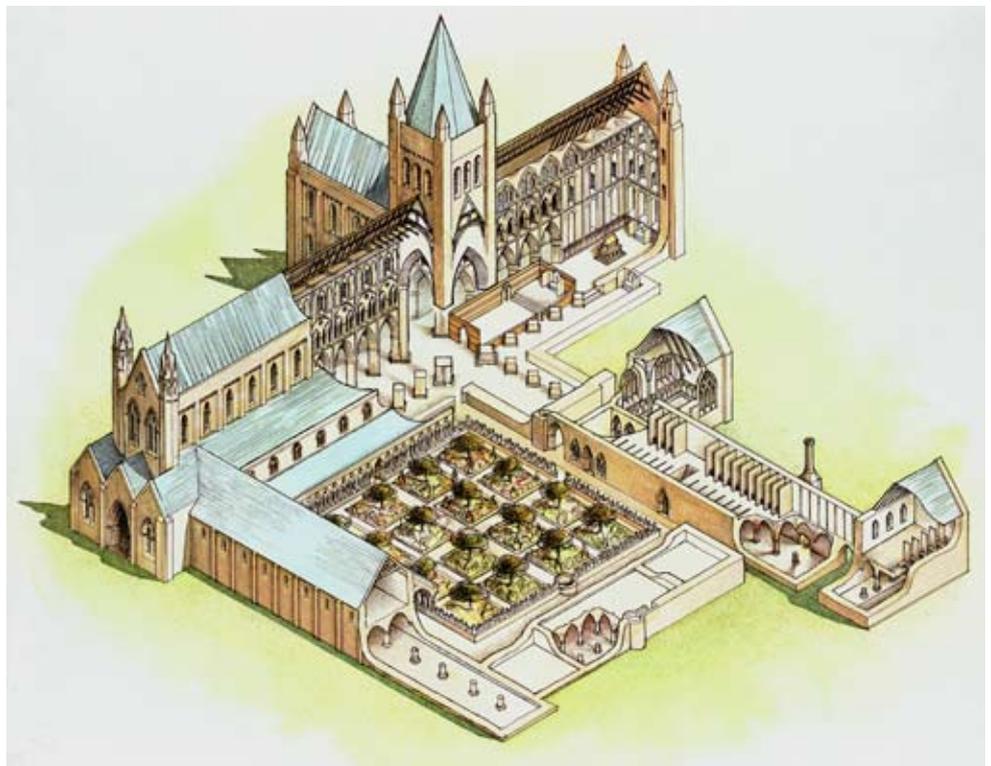
Also included are suggested **questions for discussion**.

Allow about an hour for this suggested tour.

Plan of St Andrews Cathedral



Plan of St Andrews Cathedral



A cut-away reconstruction of the cathedral and priory from the southwest



Did you know...

Pilgrims wore a special uniform of a cloak with a wide-brimmed hat decorated with badges from shrines? They always carried a wooden stick with a water container and a special satchel called a scrip. Everyone who saw them would know they were pilgrims.



The west gate



Pilgrims approaching St Andrew's from the south

Tour notes: On the pilgrim trail

Outside St Andrew's Cathedral: The West Front

Stand in front of the west entrance, beside the information panel.

Setting the scene. This can be read aloud to pupils.

Let's go back in time about 600 years to the year 1400. Let's imagine we are a group of travellers from far away...

We have been travelling for many days – long miles on foot and even worse miles on the ferry boat from North Berwick. Some of us are even travelling barefoot. We all want to visit this cathedral because inside it are some of the holy bones of St Andrew. We are known as pilgrims. God will be pleased with us because we have made the difficult journey. At last our sins will be forgiven. Maybe He will make miracles happen for us. Maybe He will heal my bad knees. This is the biggest and most important cathedral in the whole of Scotland. At last we are here!

Location 1: West Front Entrance

Background information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of the pilgrims:

- This is a really impressive doorway. It is so special and grand that it is only used by important people on very special days. We'll have to go in by one of the side entrances.
- The two turrets reach high into the sky.
- The windows above the door have beautiful stained glass inside them. They must have cost a lot of money. I have never seen anything like this before. This shows what an amazing place the cathedral is!

Now:

- Lots of bad things happened to this part of the cathedral. Some of it was blown down by gales in 1270, another part was burnt down by fire in 1378. The roofs of the turrets were added then, but later on they fell down again.

Teacher prompts	Desired pupil responses
Why do you think the doorway was built in such a grand style?	To impress ordinary people and honour important visitors.
There used to be a porch here. Can you see the marks on the wall that show where it was?	Signs of roof markings to the right of the doorway.
There would have been a wooden door. What do you think happened to it?	Probably rotted or was stolen.

Go around to the left of the west gate. Walk towards the other – east-end of the cathedral. You should be able to make out the site of the north door on the ground. This was the entrance used by ordinary people. Go through this and walk down the aisle. Stop just past the well.



Did you know...

About 10,000 pilgrims came to the shrine at St Andrews every year. Some travelled all the way from the shrine of St James in Spain. Some people still make this pilgrimage today.



View down nave, showing well and stumps of pillars



South wall showing change in window style

Location 2: The Nave

Background information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of the pilgrims:

- *We are now inside this great cathedral. What a sight! There are candles everywhere. All around we can see carved statues of saints, brightly painted. The stained glass windows make everything glow with beautiful coloured light. We can smell incense. I can hear the sound of chanting. This is where we worship.*
- *High up above us is the tower where we can hear the bells ringing. And look! There's the well for holy water.*
- *There is a stone screen ahead of us. We can hear the choir singing but we can't see them. Behind the screen is the special place for canons to worship – the people who work here. And beyond that is the chapel with the holy relics of St Andrew! I cannot believe we are now so close to our journey's end. My knees are starting to feel better already!*

Now:

- The cathedral took a very long time to build. Building fashions changed. If you look at the high wall to the right you can see that the style of windows changed. **How many of each type can you see?** (4 rounded, 6 pointed windows.)
- If you look inside the wooden cases on the ground you can see the remains of the tiles that used to cover the floor.
- In 1559 some people called Protestants thought it was wrong that the cathedral was full of rich things and statues of saints. They destroyed the statues and ripped down the expensive cloths and decorations. In 1560, after Parliament passed the Reformation Act, which said that Scotland was officially a Protestant country, the bishop who worked here left the cathedral and went to preach in a smaller church, so the cathedral was abandoned.

Teacher prompts	Desired pupil responses
The roof used to be held up by huge pillars. Can you see where the pillars used to be? How many do you think there were?	20 pillars in this area, a further 8 towards the east end.
Look at the outline of where the walls of the cathedral used to be. What shape was the cathedral? Why do you think this was?	Cross shaped, to symbolise the cross that Jesus was crucified on.
When it stopped being used, the cathedral gradually fell down. The big bell tower collapsed in 1586. What do you think happened to all the stones?	Used to build other buildings.

Continue down the aisle until you are standing facing the great east end wall.



Did you know...

When this part of the cathedral was rebuilt after the fire, they built special safes to keep treasures in. One of the treasures was a crystal cross that had been carried at the Battle of Bannockburn.



East end wall showing large replacement window



Coffins at site of altar

Location 3: The East End

Background information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of the pilgrims:

- *This is the most special place of all. I can't believe I am really here! Now it's our turn to walk past the high altar. This is where the sacred bones of St Andrew are kept, in the beautiful jewelled box. We are fortunate to arrive on a feast day; usually we are not allowed so close. I will have to pay for a candle to be lit to thank the Lord...I hope I still have enough money with me..*
- *We can also see the throne for the bishop. All around are beautiful tapestries and golden statues. My family will never believe that I have been here on such Holy ground! I must go and make a donation of some money, and then I can receive my certificate to show that I have really been here.*
- *Later this week we can join the procession around town. The sacred relics and statues will be carried high and paraded around the streets. We will again have the chance to make donations.*

Now:

- Important holy people like bishops and priors were buried in this part.
- This was the first part of the cathedral to be built. But in 1378 a terrible fire destroyed a lot of the cathedral. If you look up to where the big window is you can see that when they rebuilt this wall, they made some changes.

Can you see where there used to be three smaller windows?

Teacher prompts

When they rebuilt this wall, why do you think they put in one big window rather than three smaller ones again?

Desired pupil responses

To make an even more impressive stained glass window which would shine on the relic chapel.

Come out of the east end area and walk back to the area near the well where you stopped before. Turn to the left now and go through a gap in the wall and you will find yourself in the cloister area.



Did you know...

It must have been very cold at times in the priory. A special warming room was built, where the canons could warm up before and after church services. It's now the museum.



Model of an Augustinian canon



Cloister wall, clearly showing greater weathering at top half

Location 4: The Cloister

Background information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of the pilgrims:

- *What a beautiful garden is in front of me! This must be the cloister garth. I can see the canons as they go about their business in the cathedral. This is where they live, work, and pray. They use the herbs in the garden to make medicine to heal the sick.*
- *Oh! Two of the canons have just passed me. They are not allowed to talk and must be thinking very deeply.*

Now:

- This is where the canons lived. They carried out services in the cathedral every day and this would be one place where they would study and think about God.
- Opposite is a building that has been restored. It used to be the cellars below the dining room, where the canons would eat together. To the left of that was the dormitory where they would sleep. There is even a room called a warming room, for cold winter days. They could chat to each other there.

Teacher prompts

Look up. Can you see some stones sticking out? What do you think they were for?

Look carefully at the wall. You can see that it is a bit darker above the stones. Why do you think this is?

Just to the left, you can see two cupboards in the wall. What do you think the canons kept in these cupboards?

You can see a well near the dining room. Why do you think that was a good place for a well?

Desired pupil responses

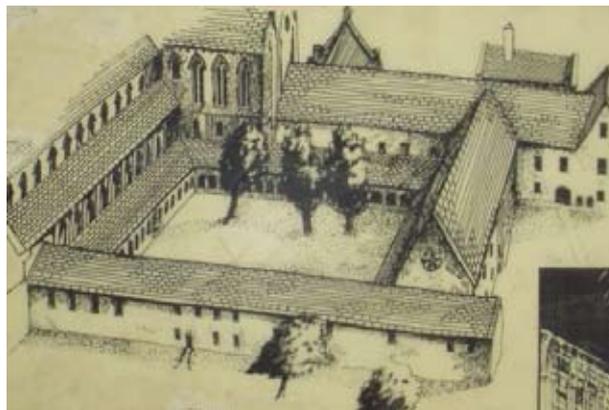
They were the supports for a roof. This was a covered walkway – handy in wet weather!

Wall is darker above the stones because it was out in the weather.

Books for studying; the things they would need for the cathedral services.

The canons could wash before eating – also handy for cooking.

Walk through the cloister and take the first left turn through a passageway known as the slype. Stop beside some stone coffins.



Drawing showing cloister lay out



Chapter house from the cloister



Stone coffins in the chapter house



Alcoves in chapter house

Location 5: The Chapter House

Background information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of the pilgrims:

- *This is the chapter house, where the canons meet and discuss their business. What a place it must be! But I am not allowed inside...*

Now:

- The canons were in charge of running the cathedral. They had a lot to do: holding services, organising the pilgrims, going out to local villages to hold services, and managing the land that the cathedral owned.
- You can see the stone coffins where priors, the people in charge of the canons, would be buried. This would have been under the floor.

Teacher prompts

Where do you think the canons would sit during the meetings?

When bodies rot, a lot of stuff oozes out. Can you see where this liquid would drain out of the coffins?

Desired pupil responses

You can see the arched spaces where they would sit.

Big drainage holes are clearly visible.

Make your way through the chapter house and past some gravestones till you come to the tower of St Rule's. Go around to the east (back) of it and stand in the roofless area.



Did you know...

That special ferry routes were set up for pilgrims? One route ran all the way from North Berwick to Elie in Fife. Queen Margaret set up a free ferry service for pilgrims that ran between North and South Queensferry.



St Rule's tower, showing marks of previous roofs



Carving on gravestone

Location 6: St Rule's Tower

Background Information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of the pilgrims:

- *All around me are stalls, places where I can buy candles and a pilgrim badge to show that I have made this journey. There are also some refreshment stalls...hmmm. That's better! Now I am feeling refreshed again and can go and give thanks in the church of St Rule's.*
- *We could see this high tower from far off on our journey. It was a sign to us that we were getting close.*
- *St Rule was the blessed saint who brought the precious relics of St Andrew from Greece to this place of safety. Shipwrecked and washed up on these shores, the Lord took care of him as he does me.*

Now:

- This church was built before the cathedral – about 900 years ago. It's changed quite a lot since then.
- After the cathedral was abandoned, these grounds became a popular place to be buried. You can see an amazing carved gravestone inside the tower.

Teacher prompts

Look up at the tower. Can you see the marks where the roof used to be?
Why do you think they changed the position of the roof?

Look at the gravestone with the carving of the skeleton at the bottom. To the right you can see a carving of a sand timer. What do you think this is meant to show?

Desired pupil responses

Very clear triangular marks against the tower.
Maybe the roof burnt down or collapsed.

That your time is running out.

Continued on next page



Climbing the tower:

It is possible to climb the 156 steps to the top of the tower. The steps are very steep and narrow and children must be closely supervised, ideally with an adult at the top and bottom of the stair. Tokens for this must be collected from the Visitor Centre. From the top are fantastic views across St Andrews. You can clearly see the cross shape of the cathedral and the fact that all the roads in St Andrews converge on the cathedral site.

While groups are climbing the tower, other pupils might enjoy exploring the graveyard. They can try and find:

- The oldest gravestone.
- Signs of death, such as a skull and crossbones, a gravedigger, a sand timer.
- Information about the jobs people did then.

Make your way to one of the towers on the huge wall surrounding the cathedral and graveyard.



View over St Andrews from tower



Did you know...

One of the gates is called the Teinds gate. In medieval times, everyone in Scotland had to give a tenth of their money or produce to the Church every year. This was called a teind. Local churches would come to this gate to give their teind to the canons. It was a kind of income tax.



Steps leading to a watchtower in the precinct wall



John Hepburn's coat of arms on outside of wall

Location 7: The Precinct Wall

Background information for teachers. This can be read to pupils.

At the time of pilgrims:

- *Now I must make my way back to my hostel. I will pass by the great wall, the greatest in all of Scotland, and leave through one of these gates. All around me are shops and houses for the builders. Just past the mill I can see some of the cathedral fishermen bringing in their haul. I wonder what we'll be eating tonight?*

Now:

- The huge wall once ran all around the cathedral area. There used to be 16 watchtowers in the wall. Some of them were added by a prior named John Hepburn.
- There are four gateways. All the local churches would have to give money regularly to the cathedral. They would come to the gates to give their money.

Teacher prompts

Why do you think there was a wall around the cathedral?

What can you see that shows us that the wall was used to protect the cathedral?

Desired pupil responses

To protect the cathedral and all the valuable things there.

To show where the world of the town stopped and the world of the cathedral started.

Watchtowers and gun loops for defence.

If you walk around the outside of the wall, you can count the towers (13 of the 16 remain), look out for prior John Hepburn's coat of arms (with his initials in Latin: IH), and look at the four remaining gateways.

Finally, make your way back to the Visitor Centre.



High cross

The Cathedral Museum and Visitor Centre

The tour of the cathedral precinct is now over. If time allows, the Cathedral Museum is well worth a visit. It is situated on the site of the priory warming house and refectory, rebuilt in 1893 by the marquis of Bute, who was intending to re-establish a school for priests there before he unexpectedly died. The museum houses a collection of objects found in and around the cathedral over the last 200 years. Most of the items are carved stonework. Of particular interest are:

- High crosses: tall stones elaborately carved with abstract art and Biblical scenes. Designed to stand outside, these were a kind of visual aid for outdoor preaching.
- A carving of a stone mason built into the precinct wall. Possibly it had once been inside the cathedral and the stone was simply being used many years later.
- The St Andrews sarcophagus: a fantastically carved and decorated Pictish stone chest that may have been an 8th century royal burial shrine. A mounted Pictish king attacks a lion while in the background are scenes from the Bible, including King David.
- Post-Reformation gravestones. Mostly dating from the 17th century, these contain a wealth of information about the better-off citizens of St Andrews. Pupils can look for symbols of death and mortality (skulls and crossbones, skeletons, hour glasses, grave diggers' tools), and they can try to identify professions and look for family relations.



The St Andrews sarcophagus



FAQ

Q What is the minimum number of adults required for supervision?

A 1 adult to 10 pupils.

Q Is there disabled access?

A Wheelchair users can gain access to the cathedral complex, but there is limited access to the Visitor Centre, museum and area around the priory.

Q Are there lunch facilities?

A Yes. In poor weather pupils can have their lunch in the renovated priors house, where there are also coat hooks.

Q Where are the toilets?

A Toilets are available near the Visitor Centre and access is with a free token from the Centre.

Q Do you carry out risk assessments on behalf of schools?

A Risk assessment of the site is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the group. Hazard information sheets available on the Historic Scotland website provide information that can help teachers prepare their risk assessments.

Q Is there a shop?

A There is a shop that sells postcards, guidebooks, and souvenirs.

Visiting St Andrews Cathedral

Pre visits: We strongly recommend that teachers make a free visit to the cathedral to familiarise themselves with the site and to make a risk assessment before bringing school parties.

Booking a visit: Phone 01334 472563 to book a visit, discuss your needs, and confirm opening times with the steward. If staff are available, it may be possible to arrange a guided tour.

Cost: Admission is free to a range of educational groups including school parties. More information about who qualifies for free visits can be found on the Historic Scotland Education Unit website.

Location: At the convergence of North and South Street, in the east end of St Andrews, on the A91.

Parking: A good drop off/collection point is the War Memorial, close to the cathedral precinct. Coaches can then park at the coach park at West Sands.

Health and safety: Please note the following:

- Beware of heights if you decide to take your pupils up St Rule's Tower.
- Pupils should not run around unsupervised and should not climb on the walls.
- As part of our commitment to Green Tourism, we ask that any rubbish be disposed of back at school.

Historic Scotland Education Unit:

For further information about school visits, activities and resources for teachers visit: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/education_unit

Additional resources

For teachers

Fawcett *St Andrews Cathedral* Historic Scotland 2003. The official guidebook to the site, which includes detailed information, maps, and photographs.

Yeoman *Pilgrimage in Mediaeval Scotland* Batsford 1999. This includes a useful chapter on pilgrimages to St Andrews.

www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/standrews/cathedral/ A good overview of the history of the cathedral, with some good photographs.

www.saint-andrews.co.uk/History/dates.htm This includes a useful interactive timeline.

www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/index.shtml A clear overview of the periods.

For pupils

Deary *Horrible Histories: Bloody Scotland* Scholastic 1998.

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/sym/scots/index_choice.shtml This excellent website looks at the life of monks in pre-Reformation Scotland.

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/as/burghlife/ This website explores Burgh life in 1566.

www.ltscotland.org.uk/scottishhistory

An excellent library of resources with some good pages on the Reformation.

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