The word “monastery” comes from the Greek word “monas”, meaning “alone”. The monks in Rochester followed the Rule of Benedict and were an enclosed community.

The monastery in Rochester was founded by Bishop Gundulf around 1080. There were between 20 and 60 monks here at any one time during its lifetime.

The Rule, written by St. Benedict in the first half of the 6th Century, was intended for his monastery in Monte Cassino. The Order was founded about 529 A.D. and during following years many houses or communities were set up under the direction of Abbots. Originally fairly simple communities, by the Middle Ages monasteries had become complex organisations, with each monk being assigned his particular role in the community.

Everything the monks did was “to the glory of God”. St. Benedict thought it was important to keep all aspects of the person in balance, and so the monks prayed (to keep the spirit healthy), studied (to keep the mind healthy) and did manual labour (to keep the body healthy).

The monk, after a period as a novice, would take his final vows of stability, conversatio morum and obedience. St. Benedict discouraged unnecessary conversation, so the novice would follow a life of virtual silence apart from the use of his voice to praise God.

In the psalms we are told “At midnight I rose to give praise to thee.” and “Seven times a day have I given praise to thee.” and the monks’ round of daily prayer, the “opus Dei”, or “Work of God”, was based on this.

The monastery of St. Andrew, in Rochester, existed from Norman times until its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1540. Remains of the monastic buildings may still be seen today in the Garth, now the cathedral garden and a place of peace and tranquillity.
Preparing for your visit

Your visit will incorporate a number of curriculum areas

Religious Education

History

Citizenship

Literacy

Art and Design Technology

Careful preparation before you come to the cathedral greatly enhances the educational benefits obtained from your visit.

Preparing for the Religious Education element

- Research orders of monks, other than Benedictine orders
- Find out about early bibles and religious writings
- Look at some religious paintings and discuss symbolism in the pictures
- Study a typical day in the life of a monk
- What does it mean to belong to an enclosed community?
Preparing for the History element

- Look at life in a medieval town
- Find out how the English Church was organised in the Middle Ages
- Study aspects of monastic life
- Research conflict between the Monarchy and the Church

Preparing for the Citizenship element

- Discuss the need for rules in life
- Think about the need for mutual respect and understanding
- What does “responsibility” mean to you
- Learn about hierarchy, in the Middle Ages, in civil life today and in Church life

Preparing for the Art and DT element

- Research writing materials through the ages
- Study different scripts and fonts and their applications
- Look at religious art in different media (glass, tiles, tapestries, sculpture, murals, frescos, vestments)

Preparing for the Literacy element

- Look at a medieval text (try British Library online)
- Compare medieval language with modern language
- Find out the meaning of unknown words using contextual clues
- Look at the way in which meanings of words have sometimes changed over time, e.g. awful (was “full of a feeling of wonder”, now “terrible”), wicked (was “very bad”, now slang for “great”)
- Find more words that have changed their meaning over time
Background Research

Useful internet sites:

Daily life of Monks  www.buckfast.org.uk/
                    www.osb.org

Textus Roffensis  www.bl.uk/ttp2/hiddenresources.html

Lindisfarne Gospels  www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html

(Please note – to view the British library digitised texts you will need to download their Turning the Page software).

Medieval writing  www.medievalwriting.50megs.com/writing.htm

Booklist:

The Rule of St Benedict  St Benedict
                        The Liturgical Press
                        ISBN 978-0814612729

Benedict Rules – Ok!  Vena Eastwood
                      Gracewing
                      ISBN 978-0852446805

Medieval Cathedral  Fiona Macdonald & John James
                    Peter Bendrick Books
                    ISBN 978-0872262669

A Medieval Monastery  Fiona Macdonald
                     Hodder Wayland
                     ISBN 978-0750020459

Life in a Medieval Abbey  Tony McAleavy
                        English Heritage
                        ISBN 978-1850745921

Cathedral, Forge and Waterwheel  Francis and Joseph Gies
                                 Harper Perennial
                                 ISBN 978-0060925819

Life in a Medieval City  Francis and Joseph Gies
                        Harper Perennial
                        ISBN 978-006660908805

Life in a Medieval Village  Francis and Joseph Gies
                         Harper Perennial
                         ISBN 978-0060920463

Cathedral  David Macaulay
           Houghton Mifflin
           ISBN 978-0395175132

The Christian Faith and its Symbols  Jan Thompson
                                   Hodder Arnold
                                   ISBN 978-0340663970
**Vocabulary List**

- MONASTERY
- PILGRIMAGE
- CHRISTENDOM
- RELIC
- CATHEDRAL
- CHASTITY
- CHAPTER HOUSE
- HOSPITALLER
- ROMAN CATHOLIC
- HERETIC
- BENEDICT
- TUNIC
- VOW
- OBEDIENCE
- PURGATORY
- CHAPEL
- MATTINS
- HOSPITALLER
- PROTESTANT
- PRIOR
- SCRIPTORIUM
- LAVATORIUM
- PARCHMENT
- STABILITY
- GUNDULF
- NOVICE
- ORDER
- MATTINS
- DORMITORY
- PROTESTANT
- PRIME
- CONVERSATIO MORUM
- HABIT
- TONSURE
- QUILL
- PRIOR
- LAITY
- MASS
- FRIAR

**RE Writing Frames**

**Religious Beliefs**

- In the religion of ... they believe that ...
- One important belief is ...
- They also believe that ...
- These beliefs lead them to ...
- To me the most interesting belief is ...
- because ...

**The Rule of Benedict**

- Benedictine Monks follow the Rule of ...
- He said that monks should ...
- He also said that they should ...
- I think that his most important rule was ...
- I agree that ...
- I disagree with ...

**Regular Worship**

- ... worship in ...
- Regular worship involves ...
- During the worship they ...
- At the end they ...
- This ritual is important to believers because ...

**Visit to a place of worship**

- We visited a ...
- First we looked at ...
- Then we looked at ...
- Next we looked at ...
- The most interesting thing to me was ...
- Because ...
- I learnt that ...
- If I visited again I would like to find out ...

**General**

- I was puzzled about ...
- I also wondered why ...
- A question I would like answered is ...
- I really enjoyed ...
Your Visit

The Monks Experience

The Monks Experience takes place in the garden and the crypt. A brief overview of the origins of Rochester Cathedral is given to help put the session into historical context. Pupils will learn about all aspects of life as a medieval Benedictine monk, from vows and rules, to daily activity and worship.

Pupils will then be asked to use their imaginations to travel back to medieval England and become a brother of the Benedictine Monastery of St Andrew. Once all pupils are dressed in monks robes we will process to the chapel where we will learn a little more about rules, punishment and the dissolution of the monasteries in Tudor times.

The session will give pupils the opportunity to contrast aspects of medieval life with the modern world, making links with life in a Benedictine community and life in school. It will also help them to begin to understand the importance of the church in the Middle Ages.

Work Booklets

Your visit can be enhanced by the use of one of the following workbooks:

- The Rochester Cathedral Trail (RE / History, KS2)
- Time Travellers (History, KS3)
- Art & Architecture at Rochester Cathedral (Art / DT, KS2/3)
- Signs & Symbols (RE KS3)
- A wide variety of shorter paper trail sheets are also available (see our website for details)

Please supply your own pencils for use with the above

Additional Activities

The Monks Experience may also be enhanced by booking the Pilgrim Trail which will guide your class around the cathedral whilst exploring medieval pilgrimage, visiting the site of the monastery as part of the journey. Stories in Glass is a session which explores Easter as told through the stained glass windows of the Lady Chapel. A separate book of teachers’ notes is available for these sessions. The Poor Man’s Bible explores the messages hidden in the various forms of artwork found in the cathedral.
Classroom Extension Work

RE
- Discuss further the beliefs and lifestyle of Benedictine monks
- Look at a non-Christian religious community e.g. Buddhist monks
- Compare your own beliefs and attitudes to:
  - medieval monks
  - a modern religious community
- Imagine you are part of a new community. What are your key beliefs?

History
- Compare Benedictine Communities with other religious communities in medieval Britain
- Look at how obedience to the rule evolved and dissolved
- Research the impact of the dissolution of the monasteries

Citizenship
- Devise a set of rules for an imaginary community
- What are the sanctions for breaking these rules?

Art and DT
- Collate the information gathered in sketches taken of your visit
- Use this to design a poster to reflect aspects of your imaginary community
- Design a stained glass window to communicate messages on how we should live as a community

Literacy
- Make a prayer card for your imaginary community
- Write a diary entry for the day in the life of Brother Edmund of St. Andrews Priory, Rochester
- Write a letter from Abbot Walter of Rochester to Abbot Hugh of Canterbury, discussing your monks and their discipline (or lack of it!)

Daily life of a Benedictine Monk at the Priory of St. Andrew Rochester

02.00  Matins and Lauds in church
       Back to bed
06.00  Prime in church
       Breakfast
       Reading
09.00  Tierce in church followed by Mass
10.00  Chapter Meeting
       Work
11.00  Sext and High Mass in church
       Dinner
       Siesta
14.00  Nones in church
       Work
16.00  Vespers in church
       Work
       Supper
Dusk  Compline in church
      Bed

Times would change according to the season

Special Responsibilities

The Abbot  Elected by his fellow monks to rule the monastery
The Prior  The Abbot’s deputy
The Novice Master  In charge of training the Novice monks
The Precentor  In charge of the music and liturgy
The Sacristan  Cared for the church and vestments etc.
The Cellarer  Looked after the stores and made sure there was enough food and drink for the monks
The Refectorian  Responsible for serving meals in the refectory
The Kitchener  Ran the kitchens, responsible for overseeing the preparation of food
The Hospitalier  Provided lodgings for pilgrims and guests
The Infirmarian  Cared for sick and old monks
Curriculum Areas Covered

**RE**
- Visit to a place of worship
- Understand the variety of symbolic meaning in paintings
- Beliefs and values of Benedictine monks
- Discover the role monks played in promoting the bible

**History**
- Use of a primary source
- The impact of the dissolution of the monasteries on Britain
- The Importance of church life in the Middle Ages
- Aspects of medieval monastic life
- The conflict between the church and the monarchy in Tudor England

**Literacy**
- Drawing on knowledge to decipher new words
- Listening
- Group discussion
- Understanding of rules
- Contrasting medieval and modern English

**Art and DT**
- Understanding Characteristics of materials
- How these are used
- First-hand observations of artwork
- Collect visual information about buildings in the form of sketches
- Looking at a variety of religious art in the cathedral

**Citizenship**
- Compare the rules of Benedictine society to modern society
- What impact did the dissolution of the monasteries have on society
- Exploring responsibility

**ICT**
- Use of ICT to research background information