



THE PARISH OF BRANKSOME, ST ALDHELM

IN THE DEANERY OF POOLE AND NORTH BOURNEMOUTH



PARISH PROFILE 2025

Charity Commission Number: 1130874

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WELCOME!

We hope you find the information within our profile helpful as you seek the Lord's guidance for your future place of ministry.

May you be blessed in the services of the Lord and His people.

Yours sincerely,
Branksome St Aldhelm's PCC



Introduction to the Vacancy by the Bishop of Sherborne

This post offers an excellent opportunity for the right candidate to bring their own skills and gifts to a welcoming parish with a committed ministry team.

The Parish of St Aldhelm, Branksome enjoys the variety of suburban ministry. The parish is both residential and commercial with many people living in flats, and retirement housing, with a mixture of long term residents and newcomers, and social housing with its own needs. The congregation is both local and eclectic, enjoying a variety of worship opportunities in the liberal Catholic tradition.

The parish has traditionally been involved in both social action and outreach, with its hall and church acting as a gathering place for a busy and diverse community. The parish centre is used by a variety of community groups.

In an incumbent we are seeking an experienced leader who can minister to a wide range of people's groups, including children and young families and a growing older congregation, who are either local or who enjoy the more traditional form of worship offered here and can build on the legacy of regular worship, warm welcome and prayerful community space.

There is a need for the next incumbent to build trust and take time to consolidate the work and direction of the church in collaboration with the PCC and wider congregation for the next phase of life together and to establish a confident base, from which parish life and the many opportunities for outreach can evolve.

The Poole and North Bournemouth deanery is a supportive one and encourages the sharing of good practice, is mutually supportive and is working together on a number of initiatives, which straddle parish boundaries. There have been some innovative missional work happening across the deanery, particularly in the sharing of resources, and ecumenical partnerships are strong, and there is an openness here for partnership working across diocesan boundaries in Westbourne, as well as down into Branksome and the coast.

The deanery plan emphasises the need for partnership, and there are many opportunities, particularly amongst the churches whose parishes border the coastal part of Branksome and Sandbanks, to reach out in new ways amongst the missing generations and tourists alike. Church buildings can sometimes be hidden within a busy conurbation, hence congregations having little involvement in community life, that is not so much the case for St Aldhelm's which already has a key part to play in the local community.

From Branksome there are good transport links into Poole and Bournemouth and wider afield, with a station nearby.

Ministry in Dorset is rewarding and enjoyable. This is a great post for the right candidate. Should you wish to know more about this please do not hesitate to pay a discrete visit to take a look around or contact either myself (01747 811960) or the Archdeacon of Sherborne, the Ven Penny Sayer on 01305 269074 or by email on adsherborne@salisbury.anglican.org. Alternatively, please contact the Rural Dean the Revd Simon Evans (07711 301878).

We look forward to hearing from you.

Bishop Karen



Deanery Introduction

The Deanery of Poole and North Bournemouth is the largest in the Diocese in terms of population with around 187,000 people and growing. It comprises 21 parishes with 27 churches offering a wide diversity of worshipping life and expressions of church.

Within the deanery ministry is expressed in a variety of forms including incumbents, chaplains, curates, assistant and associate ministers, Licensed Lay Ministers and Lay Pastoral Assistants alongside very many others who contribute in a myriad of ways to the life of the church.

We have a rich ministry of chaplaincies, in particular to the major NHS trust, the University, the RNLI HQ and the Police.

The social demographics show that this deanery contains some of the wealthiest areas in the Diocese alongside some of the most deprived. As with many seaside areas we are blessed with fantastic leisure opportunities and outstanding natural beauty, and yet many within our communities struggle with issues of deprivation and poverty.

We have a large commercial area, an international port, vibrant night-time economy, and significant numbers of homeless rough-sleepers; which each bring challenges and opportunities. A number of initiatives seek to reach out to, and serve in, these areas.

The Deanery itself is vibrant and there is a real sense of collegiality across different churchmanships and expressions of Church. The current Deanery plan has collaboration across different parishes at its heart, encouraging working together across parish boundaries and offering support for different groups of ministry. The Chapter meets regularly as a whole group and also in smaller informal cluster groups generally, for lunch, support and prayer. As a Deanery we share training for Lay Pastoral Assistants and Lay Worship Leaders, and our synod meetings regularly address wider issues of mission and ministry and explore new ways of working and being Church.

Whoever comes to be the incumbent of this parish will be welcomed and well supported by local clergy colleagues throughout the Deanery.

Revd Canon Simon Evans
Rural Dean, Poole & North Bournemouth

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR IN A VICAR?

Branksome St Aldhelm's Church is known for the warmth of its welcome, its relaxed catholic worship focused on the Eucharist, its large and impressive Victorian building and its intriguing link with *Dad's Army*!*

Many visitors find St Aldhelm's a place of peaceful calm and solace.

Our current strapline is *Open Doors...Open Minds...Open to God*.

St. Aldhelm's Church:
Open Doors...Open Minds...Open to God

We are looking for a warm, welcoming priest to lead our diverse church family and community into its next phase of life. **Is this you?**

We are praying earnestly for the Holy Spirit to inspire someone to come to be our new Vicar.

The person we think we are looking for will be:

- Approachable and humble with a prayerful confidence
- Confident to share the teaching of the Bible with us
- Have good pastoral awareness
- Happy to lead and develop the existing team of ministers and volunteers
- Comfortable with our 'open church' policy and keen to develop our commitment to inclusivity
- Willing to try new things
- Undaunted by the challenges of our Victorian building or the busy pace of parish life



PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

1. To develop ministry to missing generations through the life of the church, building closer links to the school and outreach to families.
2. To form local partnerships for joint ventures with other churches across the wider conurbation, celebrating our different traditions and working together for those who do not yet know God's love.
3. To build on the choral tradition of the church, for all ages.
4. To continue to be a beating heart in the community.
5. To help us address some of the more practical issues, including replacing the boiler, and looking at the installation of a toilet and servery within the building.

THE TEAM

To support you we offer friendship, fellowship, prayer and a commitment to working together towards facing our challenges. We have a friendly and supportive Parochial Church Council.

We have an effective team of ministers, both clergy and lay, who enjoy working collaboratively. We currently have a curate who has completed initial training. Six Lay Pastoral Assistants are due to be commissioned in September to make a total of seven. There is a Parish Administrator who provides excellent support in term-time.

The incumbent is ex-officio a Foundation Governor of Bishop Aldhelm's CE Primary School with whom we have a close partnership.

There are 71 people on the Electoral Roll of whom 39 live outside the parish. We have a small but long-established *Mothers' Union* that meets twice a month. The church has Guiding and Scouting groups that meet in their own den on site and attend church for Parade Services three times a year. The Parish Centre is used by a wide range of community groups.

Curate - Robyn

We currently have a Curate who has been with us since July 2022 and is licensed here until July 2026.

Licensed Lay Minister—Rona

Rona has been a LLM at St Aldhelm's for the past 7 years since she moved into the area. She was first licensed as a Reader in Exeter Diocese in 1991 and ministered in a team of six rural churches and five parishes until 2007. She served as the Children's Missioner for the Diocese of Peterborough 2007-2017. She is passionate about preaching (which she usually does once a month) and about discipleship. She has recently set up a WhatsApp Book Group to enable as many people as possible to discuss Scripture and discipleship informally. She is a member of the Diocesan Vocations team helping people explore their vocation to lay or ordained ministry and also runs Quiet Days for lay ministers on behalf of the Diocese. Nationally she is also on the editorial board for *Transforming Ministry* magazine. Early on summer mornings you will find her bathing down at Alum Chine and on Thursdays she volunteers at the café at the Russell-Cotes museum.



Rev. Belinda

Belinda left full time ministry in February 2022. After travelling around the UK with her husband they returned to their family home in Poole in August 2022. Belinda currently holds a permission to officiate licence which has been recently extended by the Bishop until July 2028. She is currently committed to taking three services a month at St Aldhelm's and she particularly enjoys presiding at the 8.00am BCP service and is very happy to continue with this arrangement! She is a member of the PCC, and will share with the Curate, pastoral oversight of the six new LPA's who are to be licenced in September. She is a keen advocate and supporter of lay ministry.

Parish Administrator—Sam

Sam has been in the role for just under 25 years! Working part-time during school term times. She works alongside the clergy and churchwardens and in the office answers phone calls, emails, taking bookings for the parish centre, typing church related items such as service sheets and the weekly newssheet and edits and puts together the monthly community church magazine called 'Pottery Junction'. She meets with visitors both at the centre and in the church. She is also currently the PCC Secretary and will become an LPA shortly.

FINANCES

This Parish's Diocese Share for the current year is £72,661. The Parish has paid the full amount of the Diocese Share, each year and is on target to pay the full amount in 2025.

THE LOCAL AREA



Branksome St Aldhelm's is located between Poole and Bournemouth and has a population of approximately 7,000+

The area in between is mainly mixed housing but with a number of businesses, shops and a care home.

To the southern edge of the parish, about a half-hour walk away is the sea with blue flag beaches of Branksome Chine and Bournemouth. From the beaches you can see the start of the UNESCO Jurassic Coast and the Purbeck Hills.



To the north of the parish is the SSI Talbot Heath Nature Reserve. Near to this nature reserve is where our church primary school is located.

The area is both residential and commercial, there are nearby supermarkets—Lidl, Tesco, Sainsbury's, a public house, Branksome railway station a retail park with a variety of businesses including John Lewis, Pets At Home, HomeSense and a fitness centre.

The Lindsay Care Home and Melton Court (a retirement development for independent living) both welcome visits and worship led by St Aldhelm's.

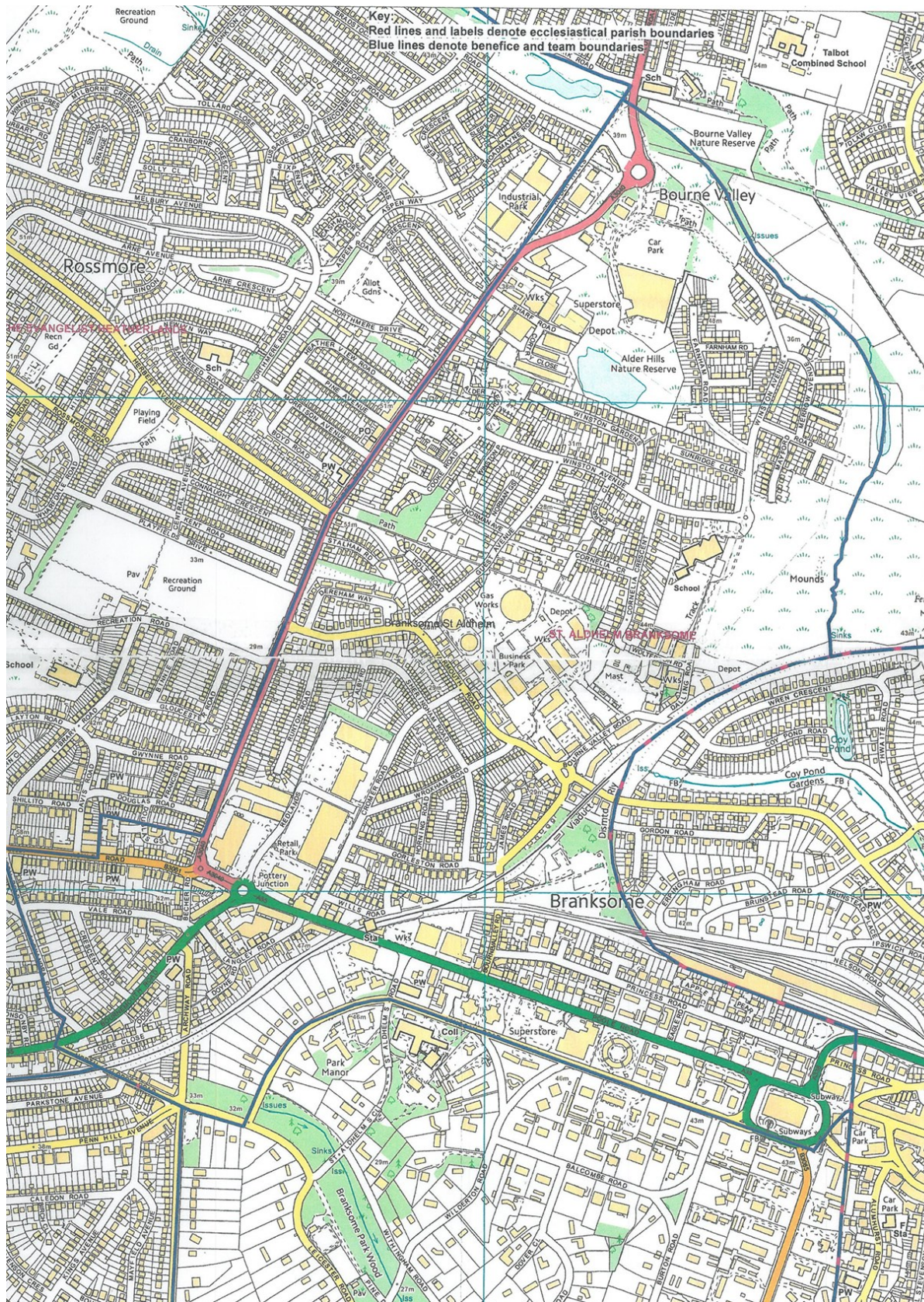


The church is on the A35. It has exceptional bus links to Poole and Bournemouth town centres. Branksome railway station, with its trains to London Waterloo or Weymouth, is a 5-minute walk.

There are several secondary schools in the area including St Edward's, a joint Roman Catholic-Anglican school; grammar and comprehensive schools; and independent colleges.



PARISH BOUNDARY MAP



WORSHIP

Our worship is broadly catholic with our main services being Eucharistic. The small and friendly 8am congregation on Sundays uses the *Book of Common Prayer*. Our main 10am service (average attendance c60) uses *Common Worship*. Our *First Sunday Mass* uses a simplified form of our usual service to focus on the needs of families with younger children. The service on the third Sunday in the month is designated *Solemn Mass* when we use the pulpit for the sermon and the high altar for the celebration of the Eucharist. The other Sundays we use a nave altar. Refreshments are served after the service.

We have a small team of servers who help set the altar, ring the sanctus bell and look after the incense when it is used. Members of the congregation write and lead the intercessions and our Licensed Lay Minister preaches once a month.

Our open baptism policy encourages many to come for this sacrament. In 2024, 24 candidates of all ages were baptised. We offer a *Stepping Stones* course for children normally aged 8-12 and their families and many choose to be baptised and/or confirmed at the end of this. Many of these families prefer to come to the Thursday 7pm Communion (average attendance c20) where they are developing a strong identity and sense of community. A 'ministry of hot chocolate' offered by one of our Lay Pastoral Assistants helps to foster this.



Morning Prayer is said most days at 7.45am and Evening Prayer at 5.15pm. There is *Benediction* on the first Sunday of the month and a communion service for the *Mothers' Union* on the first Wednesday morning of the month. There is a *WhatsApp* group of selected people who undertake to pray confidentially for the prayer requests submitted via the votive prayer stand as well as for the work of the ministry team etc.



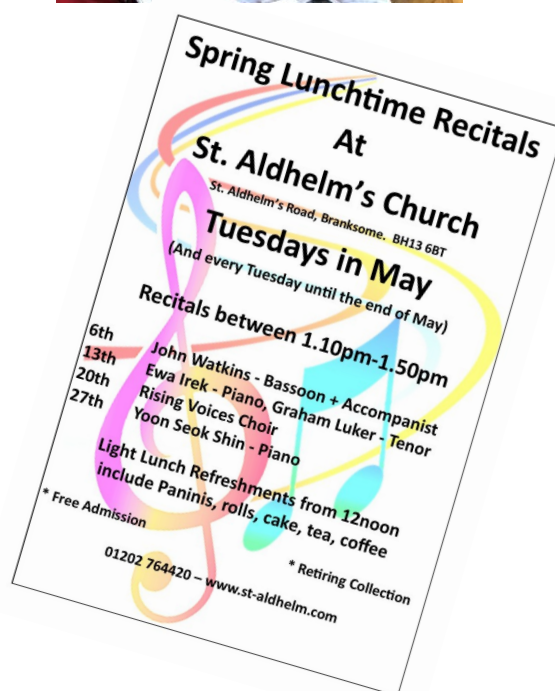
THE CHURCH BUILDING

St Aldhelm's is a Grade II* listed building completed in 1894 and seats up to 500 people. It is fully accessible for wheelchair users. The church has excellent acoustics which makes it a superb space for concerts.



The Friends of St Aldhelm's is an established group of supporters who raise funds towards the upkeep of the building and its embellishment. They organise a range of fundraising events that also encourage people to come into the building. For example the *Tuesday Lunchtime Recitals* bring a wide range of performers to share their musical talents and attract audiences to listen and to enjoy the light lunches that we serve.

Our annual Christmas Tree Festival draws hundreds of visitors each December with over 60 'real' decorated trees, each decorated by members of the church and various groups and companies from the local area. Evening concerts are also held during the festival, together with the Parish Carol Service where we are joined by St Aldhelm's Orchestra.





In recent years we have kept the church unlocked during the day. This has significantly increased the number of people visiting the church to pray or to enjoy our building.

We also provide facilities for people who live on the street to make themselves a hot drink and we endeavour to foster relationships with them. We are developing a link with the local charity *Routes to Roots* as part of this.

The graceful and spacious interior of our church building is well suited for weddings.

Our Church building offers a dignified setting for funerals and services of thanksgiving; there is a Garden of Remembrance where cremated remains are interred.

We offer late morning baptisms, replacing incorporation within the main Sunday service which works well.



JUBILEE GARDEN

To commemorate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee the Vicarage Side Garden was re-named the Jubilee Garden. For the last few years volunteers have brought the garden up to Chelsea Flower standards and have won 'Gold' from 'Poole in Bloom' in 2022, 2023 and 2024 and have high hopes for 2025. The garden is used for church fairs, Cubs & Guides, Parkstone Gardeners' Plant Stall and for the last 25 years, the CAMRA Poole Beer Festival.



THE PARISH CENTRE

The Parish Centre was redeveloped in the 1990s from the original church hall built as a memorial for the fallen of the First World War and is located behind the church and hosts a wealth of activities for the community throughout the week.

There is a large hall with a kitchen and a stage.



Separate committee room. There is a small car park.



THE PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office is located upstairs within the Parish Centre. Our Parish Administrator takes bookings for the centre and church, and oversees the administrative side of parish life in a well appointed office with laptop, photocopier, risograph.

MUSIC

Until recent times, there has been a robed choir to lead singing at the 10am service. This is currently in abeyance. We have the services of three organists who take it in turn to provide music for this service and, when required, for occasional services and offices.

We are in the process of providing a new set of hymnbooks, (the new *Ancient & Modern*) to refresh our musical worship. The congregation also enjoys occasional more informal hymns sung to guitar accompaniment.

The St Aldhelm's Orchestra rehearses in the church weekly in term-time and offers a termly classical concert of high standard. These concerts are well-attended.



BISHOP ALDHELM'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



As a school community, we deeply value the integral role the vicar plays in nurturing the spiritual, moral, and emotional development of our pupils. The vicar is not only a spiritual leader but also a visible, approachable presence who supports the wellbeing of staff, children, and families alike. In recruiting a new vicar, we are seeking someone who will continue to strengthen the close and supportive relationship between the church and the school.

We hope for a vicar who is passionate about engaging with children and young people, someone who can bring faith to life in a way that is inclusive, inspiring, and relevant. The ideal candidate will be a confident communicator, able to lead collective worship that is both reflective and joyful, and who can contribute meaningfully to the Christian ethos that underpins our school values.

We also seek a vicar who is committed to being a regular and active presence in school life—whether through leading assemblies, supporting RE curriculum delivery, attending school events, or simply being a familiar and friendly face in the playground. A collaborative spirit and a willingness to work closely with school leadership and staff are essential.

Ultimately, we are looking for someone who will walk alongside our school community with compassion, wisdom, and a deep sense of vocation—someone who will help our children grow not only in knowledge but in kindness, courage, and faith.



ECUMENICAL AND OTHER LINKS

We welcome the congregation of *St Thomas Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church* to lead their own worship on two Saturday mornings each month.

The church community that traces its roots back to St. Thomas the Apostle's arrival in India in 52 AD. The church in the UK is organized under the Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa, which includes parishes and congregations across both continents. Worship services, often conducted in Malayalam, are a vibrant part of the community's life, with regular Holy Qurbana (Eucharist), Sunday School, and various fellowship groups.

The Lighthouse Church hires the Parish Centre for worship on Sunday mornings and also uses the church on occasions. Lighthouse Chapel International is a Christian denomination with our foundation and doctrines purely based on the Bible. We preach salvation and the love of God to the world. We are into training believers who will have a mind to impact positively to the society and country. We help the needy, sick and orphans.

The three churches shared a Carol Service in December 2024.



St Aldhelm's is a member of *Churches Together in Poole*.

In recent years we have become a member of *Inclusive Church*. This reflects our determination to welcome as wide a range of people to our church as possible.



We are delighted to welcome pupils with special educational needs occasionally from the Victoria School which is situated just across the road from the church. The school is run by the Shaftesbury Society.



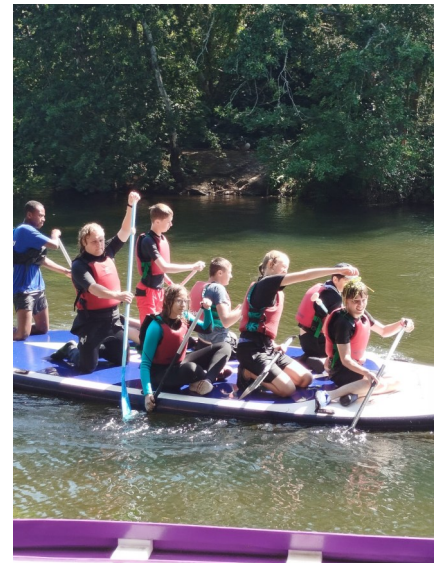
Well-behaved dogs are also welcome at worship.

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

Branksome St Aldhelm's Scout Group brings Skills for Life to 105 young people across our parish.

Across five vibrant sections, meeting at The Den and Burden Hall and supported by 27 dedicated volunteers, we make the most of the great outdoors and our local activity centres whenever we can. From recent camps at Buddens and Butcher's Coppice to upcoming adventures in Lulworth, our dynamic programme challenges and inspires Scouts of all ages.

We're committed to developing resilience, teamwork and leadership, and we're always welcoming more adult volunteers, whether you'd like to support behind the scenes or lead our weekly meetings. Come and join us in empowering the next generation of Scouts!



Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers thrive at St Aldhelm's with all 4 groups meeting weekly with girls aged 5-17 years enjoying a varied and active programme both indoors and out.

The Guides and Rangers have had an amazing 7-night camp at Foxlease at the end of July and the Brownies will stay at Dudsbury during October half-term. We are lucky to have an amazing group of adult volunteers that make this possible and help empower the next generation of young women in Branksome and beyond!



THE VICARAGE



Built in the 1930s, the spacious Vicarage is next to the church.

Downstairs the entrance hall opens on to a study and sitting room, both with a view of the front garden, a dining room, utility room and ground-floor lavatory, and on to a fitted kitchen/breakfast room.

The stairs lead to a bathroom on the half-landing (bath, lavatory, basin) and then upwards to 5 bedrooms. There is also a family bathroom with bath, lavatory and basin. There is gas-fired central heating and open fireplaces.

There is a secluded rear garden with mature shrubs and a vegetable patch. There is a single detached garage and plenty of off-road parking.

