

Mrs Jackson, MBE, Headteacher of Maryland School, invited to attend State Funeral of Her Majesty the Queen, Westminster Abbey



It all began on Saturday 10th September, sitting in the hairdresser's chair under the dryer. . A call from a private number came through. I never pick up phone calls from private numbers, but on this occasion it was lucky that I did.

To my surprise, I was told it was the Cabinet Office inviting me to Her Majesty's state funeral and asking if I would accept the invitation. I had to put the phone on loudspeaker and everyone around me was aghast! I was told that I had been invited as I had been recognised in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Honours List.

The invitation was hand-delivered to my house by 'David, from the Royal Household on behalf of Buckingham Palace', in a rather nondescript envelope, which would be hard to guess what was inside. The invitation was from the Earl of Norfolk.

There were instructions on the very strict dress code, plain, dark colours only (with only medals or similar decoration), women should wear hats, but men should not wear hats inside.

Funnily enough, the dress code advised not to bring a sword!

A week later, I received an email at 10pm from the Cabinet Office the night before the funeral requesting my attendance at 7.45am the next morning.

Getting into London was quite a challenge. All taxis had been instructed by TFL that Central London was prohibited to cabs. I received lots of curious stares on the Underground at 6am.

On arrival at the meeting point, airport style security was in force, with bags and bodies scanned, then escorted by police to the back of the Abbey,

Words cannot describe the actual ceremony and seeing the spectacular traditions processing right in front of me (I was in the second row).

Memorable moments:

- The feeling of solemnity with personal moments such as seeing dignitaries, including the Royal Family moved to tears, were unforgettable.
- Watching royalty from around the world and world leaders in the procession honouring our Queen of England, some in National Dress, feathers, plumes and amazing robes
- The absolute precision of every part of the event, the Abbey choir's uplifting singing, the trumpet fanfare and haunting sound of the bagpipes..
- The beating of the military drums that accompanied the marching outside shook the walls, felt like a heartbeat.
- My lasting memory is of being so close (and chatting!) to celebrities and dignitaries who were very interested in the role of a Headteacher and the world of education and, of course, being so near to the coffin of Her Majesty on her final journey.
- On the train going home, I was offered money for my Order of Service programmes by members of the public, many photographing the front covers 'for their grandchildren'.



Additional notes if needed:

I had to be seated at 8am, 3 hours before the funeral, with no food or drink allowed and mobile phones turned off. Dignitaries started to arrive at 9am. There were heads of states from all over the world, Commonwealth leaders, presidents, prime ministers (past and present), foreign royals, religious leaders, military personnel, lord lieutenants and of course the extended Royal Family..

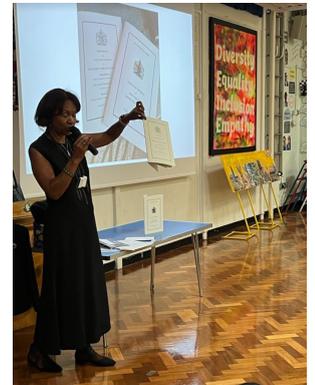
I have received video clips from friends and family all around the world expressing how proud they are that they could recognise me in the international broadcasts.

The next day in school, I was greeted at the gate by our school community who had spotted me on TV, one of 183 civilians out of 2000 guests, as the coffin was leaving the Abbey. The children were fascinated by the insider information I gave them, such as meeting important dignitaries in the loo, the glitter of the crown, orb and sceptre as it passed within feet of my seat and of course the exciting police escort I received to get me back to the station!!

I was proud to meet Reverend Tosin, the Archbishop's Chaplain and of Nigerian heritage, was chosen to carry the very heavy Primatial cross during the lying-in-state and again at the funeral procession. He will be visiting Maryland School to tell us all about his unique role

A very memorable year so far...and a moment in history.

Lorna Jackson,
Maryland School,



surmounted by
The Imperial State Crown, The Orb and the Sceptre
borne by the
Bearer Party

The Queen Consort	THE KING
Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence	The Princess Royal
The Duke of York	
The Countess of Wessex and Forfar	The Earl of Wessex and Forfar
The Princess of Wales	The Prince of Wales
The Duchess of Sussex	The Duke of Sussex
The Earl of Snowdon	Mr. Peter Phillips
The Duke of Gloucester	
Prince Michael of Kent	The Duke of Kent
Gentleman Usher	Gentleman Usher

The Archbishop of York and the Archbishop of Canterbury take their places immediately inside the Great West Door, on the South side.

The Receiver General, High Bailiff and Chapter take their places immediately inside the Great West Door, on the North side.

The Dean of Westminster, with the Ivory Cross, conducts the Coffin to the West Gate.

The Bearer Party places the Coffin on the State Gun Carriage and takes up position alongside the Royal Navy Gun Crew.

The King, with those in the subsequent outdoor Procession will follow the Coffin from the Great West Door and guided by Service Marshals, move to their positions in the Procession.

Members of the Royal Family are guided to their cars to join the outdoor Procession.