

3.14 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding proposed fee increases in percentage terms for Jersey College for Girls and Victoria College:

What are the proposed fee increases in percentage terms for Jersey College for Girls and for Victoria College?

The Deputy of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The percentage fee increases during the term from September 2014 to September 2015 for Jersey College for Girls is 4.9 per cent, and for the Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School, 5.01 per cent. For the Victoria College it is 5.5 per cent and for Victoria College Prep, 5.47 per cent. I should explain to the Senator that in the previous 3 years the increases have either been at or below inflation, and that the colleges, after considerable and very detailed investigation by my finance officers, made an extremely good case for these increases and that is why I approved them. And I can assure the Senator, because I feel sure that her question will follow on if I do not, that it was a very robust investigation by my finance officers.

3.14.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, because given that the current low inflation rates of around about 1.9 per cent and so on, you know, what is the actual justification for these because inflation has been very low over the last few years?

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, indeed, and those were our very questions. I think there are a number of them and some of them are quite detailed but I will try to just give a couple of the bigger ones. This year the colleges will have to cope with a 4 per cent staff increase, and that means 80 per cent of their costs will be subject to a 4 per cent increase. Perhaps the other large one, the Senator may recall, is that as part of the comprehensive spending review there were extra costs placed on the colleges by way of notional rents, and these have been going on now for 2 or 3 years, I cannot tell you exactly how long they have been going on - at least, I think 3 years - and therefore those costs each year are responsible for about 1 per cent of the fee increase. Thank you.

3.14.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Will the Minister make sure that a full explanation is given to parents, given the furore of a couple of years ago?

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, I understand that concern and I share it. I believe that the schools will be doing that. I have not seen, and do not necessarily have to approve the letter from the schools explaining to their parents about fee increases, but I would think that it would be absolutely right that the school would explain them very carefully. So, the answer is yes.