

2015.01.20

4.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding fees charged by Victoria College:

Can the Minister confirm whether a non-refundable £500 deposit must be submitted with applications for a place at Victoria College and whether this fee, previously made payable to the Treasurer of the States and deducted from the first term's fees, is now not deducted from the fees and made payable to the Victoria College Foundation and, if so, can the Minister advise when this decision was taken and by whom?

Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Thank you to the Deputy for raising this issue because I am sure other Members would have had concerns over the Christmas period. Parents of boys starting Victoria College in September 2015 have been asked to pay a non-refundable deposit to secure their son's place at the school. In previous years this money would have been deducted from the first term's fees however the school changed the system this year and intended to use this £500 for the Victoria College Foundation. I have asked the governors to reverse this decision and the school has confirmed it. It will be writing to parents to advise them that the deposit can either be returned or donated to the Victoria College Foundation this year. I will have further discussions with the school to discuss funding issues for the future.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I just thank the Minister for his swift action on this matter? I am sure the group of parents will be very pleased.

4.2.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

The Minister did not quite finish off the question, which was asked of him, which was when the decision was taken and by whom.

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

The decision was taken by the governing body. Unfortunately because of the election and various other things there was a timing delay in finding out. I was not aware of the actual letter having gone out to parents until some time in mid-December. I asked the finance director of Victoria College to come in and have a discussion. It was at that point in time I found that they had already sent the letter out to the parents. I then asked him at that point in time to rescind that decision, which they have now done. They had a meeting last Friday and informed me through email on Sunday that that is what had happened.

4.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

In the context of the requirement for all departments, all Ministers, to take 2 per cent off their budget what topics will the Minister be addressing when he talks to Victoria College? Will one of those be the possibility of reducing the subsidy from the States and taxpayers?

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy. Too far off the original topic.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister did mention he was going to have further talks with ...

The Bailiff:

Yes, he did, but it is supplementary to the original question.

4.2.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Given the fact that previously the deposit would have been paid to the Treasurer of the States, was the Treasurer of the States informed of this decision before the letters were sent out?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

No, he was not. The College at the time felt that the Foundation, because of the nature of the request, did not have to inform him. That was one of the problems that occurred and was highlighted at the meeting with the finance director.

4.2.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Following on from what the Minister told us about he is going to be having meetings with the College regarding funding, can he advise Members whether the reasons for the £500 non-refundable deposit was because they believe they are short of funds and are they making a request for additional funds from the Minister?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

No, that was not the background to this. The governing body felt that they wanted to provide extra activities to enrich its students' educational experience, which I think is a particularly good thing. But the way in which they went about it was not in accordance with the rules.