



# **Victoria College Belfast**

## **Charging and Remissions Policy for the 2023/24 Academic Year**

**Dated 31 March 2023**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

- 1.1 Victoria College Belfast is a Group A Voluntary Grammar School and as a result it is permitted to levy fees and charges in respect of registered pupils in certain limited circumstances. This policy statement describes the circumstances in which the College can and cannot levy a fee or a charge in respect of a registered pupil and in particular, it sets out clearly for the benefit of parents and guardians:
- the circumstances in which the College is permitted to levy a fee or a charge;
  - the circumstances in which the College will remit or waive in whole or in part any fee or charge payable to it in accordance with this policy statement;
  - the circumstances in which the College will remit or waive in whole or in part any fee or charge payable to the Education Authority in accordance with its charging policy;
  - the actual amounts of any fees or charges that will be levied by the College and the payment methods or options that will be accepted by the College;
  - the sanctions that the College may seek to apply in the event of the late payment or non-payment of any fees and charges properly due; and
  - the circumstances in which a parent or guardian may withdraw a pupil from a service or an activity for which a fee or charge is payable and the financial consequences of such a withdrawal.
- 1.2 This policy statement has been prepared in conformity with the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 and also in accordance with the Grammar Schools (Charges) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008.

### Statutory Context

- 1.3 The ability of Victoria College Belfast and other grant-aided schools to levy fees and charges in respect of registered pupils is largely governed or regulated by the statutory provisions set out within the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 and the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993. With certain specific exceptions in relation to grammar schools, this legislation:
- maintains the right to a free education for registered pupils at grant-aided schools;
  - establishes the important principle that activities organised wholly or mainly during normal teaching time should be made available to all registered pupils, regardless of the ability or willingness of parents or guardians to meet the cost;
  - requires parents or guardians to pay charges for the board and lodging of pupils at school or on residential trips, subject to specific remission or waiver arrangements;
  - maintains the right of a Board of Governors to invite voluntary contributions for the benefit of a school from parents and guardians; and
  - makes it clear that there is no statutory obligation on a Board of Governors to levy a fee or charge for any form of education or education related activity provided by a grant-aided school.

- 1.4 In addition, this legislation specifically provides that no fees or charges can be levied by any grant-aided school in respect of:
- the admission of a pupil to school;
  - any education provided during school hours for registered pupils, excluding personal or individual tuition in the playing of a musical instrument (school hours exclude the lunch break);
  - any education provided wholly or mainly outside of school hours that is required as part of the syllabus for a public examination for which the pupil is being prepared by the school or that is provided in order to comply with the statutory requirements to deliver religious education or the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
  - the entry of a registered pupil for any public examination in any subject or syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared by the school;
  - any materials, books, instruments or other items of equipment used in connection with the provision of the education described above; and
  - incidental transport for pupils to or from any part of the school premises, transport to or from a place outside the school premises in which education is delivered by or on behalf of the Board of Governors, and transport provided to allow a pupil to meet any requirement of any public examination in any subject or syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared by the school.
- 1.5 A *non-residential educational activity* provided partly during and partly outside school hours is considered to be provided wholly or mainly during school hours if 50% or more of the time associated with the activity (including any necessary travel time) falls within school hours. A *residential educational activity or trip* provided partly during and partly outside school hours is considered to be provided wholly or mainly during school hours if 50% or more of the number of morning and afternoon sessions associated with the activity or trip (including any necessary travel) falls within school hours.

## 2. POLICY OVERVIEW

### Core Principles

- 2.1 Victoria College Belfast is bound by the provisions set out in legislation in relation to charging and remission and it is fully committed to the guiding principle upon which the legislation is founded, namely that a great education should be available to every child regardless of the ability of parents or guardians to meet the cost.
- 2.2 Great education is transformative and accordingly in line with statutory requirements, the College will not levy a fee or charge: for education delivered during school hours (other than in respect of an *Excepted Pupil* as defined in paragraph 3.2 below); for any books, materials, equipment, instruments or incidental transport relating to the curriculum or education given during school hours; and for entering any pupil (other than an *Excepted Pupil*) in any public examination in any subject or syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared by the College.
- 2.3 Victoria College Belfast will, however, levy fees and charges in respect of registered pupils in the following specific circumstances:
- a tuition fee will be charged in respect of *Excepted Pupils* registered in the Grammar School or the Preparatory School;
  - a tuition fee will be charged in respect of any registered pupil that receives individual music tuition, regardless of whether or not the tuition occurs outside school hours;
  - a school meals fee will be charged in respect of any registered pupil taking a meal in College (other than in respect of those pupils entitled to a *Free School Meal*);
  - a mandatory capital fee will be charged in respect of all pupils registered within the Grammar School; and
  - a remediation or replacement fee will be charged in respect of any damage or loss of College property caused wilfully or negligently by a registered pupil.
- 2.4 In addition, Victoria College Belfast may also levy fees or charges at its sole discretion for:
- activities wholly or mainly outside school hours that are not required as part of the syllabus for a public examination for which the pupil is being prepared by the College or that are not provided in order to comply with the statutory requirement to deliver religious education and the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
  - costs incurred in relation to residential trips or visits, except where registered pupils are entitled to statutory remission; and
  - any additional materials that are required by registered pupils for practical subjects or that are utilised by registered pupils to create a product that a parent or guardian wishes to purchase.
- 2.5 Finally, in order to provide a great education that exceeds statutory requirements and offer a wide range of activities that are of benefit to all pupils, Victoria College Belfast asks parents and guardians to make an additional voluntary contribution to help support the College and the many educational activities that it organises during and outside of school hours.

**Core Values**

- 2.6 In setting and levying fees and charges, the College will endeavour as far as is practicable to be guided by the principles of transparency, equity and fairness. It will endeavour to levy fees and charges that represent good value for money and that are affordable to parents and guardians, and it will seek to provide as much notice as possible of proposed changes to fees and charges in order to allow parents and guardians to budget and plan ahead.
- 2.7 Any parents or guardians who experience unforeseen financial difficulties in paying any fees or charges levied by the College should seek help at the earliest opportunity. The College will be sympathetic and will assist where it can. However, the quality of education provided by the College is also dependent on the funding it receives and so the College will have to act to recover all outstanding debts.

**Review and Evaluation**

- 2.8 The Board of Governors of Victoria College Belfast will review this policy statement annually and all of the fees and charges levied by the College pursuant to this policy statement will be subject to annual revision and update by the Board of Governors. This policy statement will also be kept under review by senior members of staff and the Board of Governors informed if and when any changes become necessary.
- 2.9 The Board of Governors delegates to the Principal the authority to determine the actions to be taken in individual cases arising from the implementation of this policy statement and in particular, to decide the proportion of the costs of an activity for which a charge may or may not be made.
- 2.10 This policy statement will not be repeated on each occasion that a fee or charge is levied, or a contribution requested, by the College but it will be referred to on each occasion.

### 3. SCOPE OF CHARGES AND REMISSIONS

#### Introduction

- 3.1 Victoria College Belfast is permitted to levy fees and charges in respect of registered pupils in certain limited circumstances. The circumstances in which the College can or cannot levy a fee or a charge are set out in the paragraphs that follow, together with a description of the circumstances in which the College can waive all or part of any fee or charge levied by it.

#### Tuition Fees

- 3.2 Victoria College Belfast will charge a tuition fee in respect of any Excepted Pupil registered or enrolled in the Grammar School or the Preparatory School. An *Excepted Pupil* is defined in the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 as:

- a grammar school pupil who is not resident in Northern Ireland; or
- a grammar school pupil whose parents are neither resident in Northern Ireland nor citizens of a European Union member state; or
- a grammar school pupil who is over the normal grammar school age; or
- a pupil enrolled within the Preparatory School of a grammar school.

For the avoidance of doubt, the term *Excepted Pupil* will also be deemed to include pupils enrolled in the Pre-School and pupils enrolled in the After School Service.

- 3.3 In determining the amount of the tuition fee charged in respect of Excepted Pupils enrolled in the Preparatory School, the College is required to ensure that the fee is set at a level that will enable the School to be self-financing and sustainable over the longer term.

#### Capital Fees

- 3.4 Victoria College Belfast is now eligible to receive 100% capital funding from the Department of Education for capital development schemes approved by the Department and as a result, the College is only permitted to charge an annual capital fee to meet its outstanding deficit on completed capital development schemes that were 85% funded by the Department.

- 3.5 The amount of the annual capital fee is determined by the Department of Education and the fee is levied in respect of all registered pupils within the Grammar School. The money raised by the capital fee may only be used for the purpose of financing outstanding expenditure on the provision or alteration of school premises or for equipment procured in connection with the provision or alteration of school premises.

- 3.6 In accordance with guidance issued by the Department of Education, a parent or guardian may apply to the College for the remission or waiver of part or all of the capital fee where:

- the parent or guardian is in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers' Allowance; or
- the parent or guardian receives the Child Tax Credit, is eligible for the Working Tax Credit because they work less than 16 hours per week, and have an annual taxable income less than the relevant amount specified for this purpose by the Department of Education from time to time; or

- the pupil is the child of a registered Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team.
- 3.7 Any application for the remission or waiver of the capital fee in whole or in part should be made in writing to the Chairman of the Board of Governors and must be accompanied by the relevant official documentation confirming that the criteria listed above have been met. The College reserves the right not to consider any such application if it is not submitted promptly or it is not accompanied by the relevant supporting documents. Where granted, remissions will apply from the date of application for remission and will not be applied retrospectively.
- 3.8 With the exception of those pupils who have made a successful application for the remission or waiver of the capital fee, no pupil will be allowed to take part in an optional extra activity or a school trip if the capital fees due for that pupil are unpaid and outstanding at the date of the relevant activity or trip.

### Voluntary Contributions

- 3.9 Victoria College Belfast has always provided educational materials and resources in excess of statutory requirements and delivered a broad range of extracurricular activities that seek to enrich the learning experience. The College wishes to continue this tradition and to enhance even further the quality of the educational experiences provided to its pupils, but this cannot be achieved without the active support and commitment of parents and guardians.
- 3.10 As the amount of delegated grant funding that the College receives from the Department of Education has fallen significantly in real terms over recent years, it has become increasingly necessary for the College to ask parents and guardians for a voluntary financial contribution to help meet recurring revenue costs and maintain the richness and diversity of the learning experiences provided by the College. A significant number of parents and guardians support the College in this manner and as a consequence, and in common with other local grammar schools, the voluntary contribution has become an important and indispensable element of the overall funding of the College.
- 3.11 The voluntary financial contribution helps the College to provide pupils with rich and diverse educational experiences, preparing them for future success, developing their intellectual and interpersonal skills, and enabling them to access information, share ideas and make rational decisions. The voluntary financial contribution helps to fund much needed improvements to the school estate and additional investment in information and communication technology. It also provides educational resources and materials beyond the statutory requirements and helps the College to maintain appropriate class sizes, enables pupils to participate in national and international events, and provides opportunities to stretch and develop pupils outside of the classroom. Without the voluntary financial contribution from parents and guardians, the College would have to curtail the teaching and learning experiences available to pupils.
- 3.12 The Board of Governors of Victoria College Belfast intends, therefore, to continue to request that parents and guardians make an annual voluntary financial contribution to the College in order to help ensure that there is no diminution in the quality or breadth of the educational experience provided to pupils. The amount of the voluntary financial contribution requested will be set annually by the Board of Governors, and parents and guardians are encouraged to make their contributions through the *Gift Aid Scheme*. Under the terms of this scheme, the College is able, as a registered charity, to claim back the basic rate tax paid on any voluntary contributions received from a parent or guardian resident in the United Kingdom.



- 3.13 The College also reserves the right from time to time to seek specific voluntary financial contributions from parents or guardians in support of any College activity, whether during or outside school hours, residential or non-residential. If an activity cannot be funded without such contributions, then parents will be given adequate notice that this is the case.
- 3.14 It is important to note that all such financial contributions are voluntary and that they do not represent charges that parents and guardians are required to pay. There is no obligation on parents and guardians to make any voluntary financial contribution to the College and pupils will not be treated differently based on whether or not their parents or guardians have made such a contribution. Pupils, parents and guardians will also not be asked by the College to explain why they have not made a voluntary contribution.
- 3.15 Notwithstanding all of this, however, it must be recognised that the ability of the College to continue to provide a first class educational experience is dependent upon the availability of an adequate level of funding and accordingly parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to make the annual voluntary financial contribution requested by the Board of Governors.

### School Meal Charges

- 3.16 Victoria College Belfast will levy a fee or charge in respect of any registered pupil who elects to take a meal in College, other than in respect of those pupils entitled to *Free School Meals*. Charges for school meals are exempt from value added tax and financial assistance with the cost of meals may be given by application to the Education Authority.
- 3.17 In accordance with guidance issued by the Department of Education, a parent or guardian is eligible to apply to the Education Authority for *Free School Meals* where:
- the parent or guardian is in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers' Allowance; or
  - the parent or guardian is in receipt of the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit or the Income Related Employment and Support Allowance; or
  - the parent or guardian is in receipt of the Child Tax Credit or the Working Tax Credit and has an annual taxable income of less than the relevant amount specified for this purpose by the Northern Ireland Executive from time to time; or
  - the parent or guardian receives Universal Credit and has net household earnings of less than the relevant threshold specified for this purpose by the Northern Ireland Executive from time to time; or
  - the pupil is the child of a registered Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team.
- 3.18 Any parent or guardian wishing to apply for *Free School Meals* must complete an application form and submit it to the Education Authority for review and assessment. Application forms are available to download from the website of the Education Authority.

## Other Charges and Remissions

### Uniform and Clothing

- 3.19 Parents or guardians are responsible for the provision of the correct College uniform and the correct clothing and equipment required for Physical Education and Games. Any protective clothing and equipment required for practical subjects will be provided free of charge by the College. Financial assistance with the provision of the uniform and any clothing needed for physical education can be given to pupils of grammar school age whose parents or guardians receive Income Support by means of application to the Education Authority Regional Office responsible for the area in which the pupil lives (see our separate *Uniform Regulations*).

### Books and Stationery

- 3.20 All of the textbooks required by pupils, other than Excepted Pupils, will be provided free of charge by the College. The books will remain the property of the College and it is expected that they will be kept in good condition and returned on request. A charge will be made for any textbooks that have to be replaced as a result of loss or neglect, or where such items are not returned when required.
- 3.21 Each pupil, other than an Excepted Pupil, will be provided free of charge with a reasonable amount of stationery each academic year and where required, additional stationery may be purchased privately.

### Materials and Ingredients

- 3.22 The College reserves the right to charge pupils in Years 8, 9 or 10 for the cost of materials or ingredients provided by the Home Economics, Technology, or Art and Design Departments during the course of an academic term. Where the College decides to make such a charge, it will inform parents of the amount of the charge no later than the start of the relevant term. The costs associated with other practical subjects will be met by the College.
- 3.23 Pupils in Years 11 to 14 who elect to study a practical subject will be provided with the basic materials essential to the delivery of the course and a charge per term may be made. The College also reserves the right to place a limit on the amount of expenditure associated with the making of any individual item. Where pupils choose to produce an article which requires additional materials, then the College will require the pupil to pay an appropriate amount in advance to cover the additional costs, or alternatively the pupil may arrange to purchase the additional materials privately. Furthermore, where items are made in school that a parent or guardian wishes to take home, then the College reserves the right to charge in advance for any materials used.

### Fieldwork

- 3.24 No charge will normally be levied by the College for the supply of any specialist equipment or ancillary transport services required by fieldwork provided that such fieldwork takes place wholly or mainly during school hours. If necessary, pupils will be required to bring a packed lunch and will also be expected within reason to provide suitable outdoor clothing. Packed lunches will be provided for any pupil entitled to a free school meal.

**Music**

- 3.25 The College will levy a fee or charge in respect of individual tuition in the playing of a musical instrument that takes place during or outside school hours. The College will also levy a fee or charge for individual singing lessons or tuition in music theory that takes place during or outside school hours. All of the examination fees relating to individual music tuition will be paid by parents or guardians, including the cost of engaging any accompanists required. A charge will also be made for the hire of any musical instrument owned by the College.

**Public Examinations**

- 3.26 No charge will be made for entering a pupil, other than an Excepted Pupil, for an approved public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for that examination by the College in the academic year for which the entry is made.
- 3.27 However, a charge will be made by the College in respect of examination entries where:
- a pupil is sitting an examination for which she has not been prepared by the College in the academic year for which the entry is made; or
  - a pupil is re-sitting an examination for which she was not prepared previously by the College; or
  - a pupil is re-sitting an examination for which she had been prepared earlier by the College and which had previously been paid for by the College; or
  - a pupil has failed for no good reason to satisfy the requirements of an examination for which she has been prepared by the College or to attend for it; or
  - a pupil has failed for no good reason to submit coursework or assessments required by an examination for which she has been prepared by the College; or
  - a pupil has requested a late amendment to an examination entry for which she has been prepared by the College; or
  - a pupil has requested a late entry or late withdrawal from a public examination after the relevant closing date.
- 3.28 The College will also pass on to a parent or guardian any charge that may arise as a result of a request made by a parent or guardian to have a particular examination result scrutinised or examination paper remarked.

**Transport**

- 3.29 The College will not levy a fee or charge for transport where such transport is required to enable pupils to meet the requirements of an approved examination syllabus for which they are being prepared by the College or where such transport is required to meet the College's obligations in respect of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

**Educational Trips During School Hours**

- 3.30 No charge will be made for educational trips or visits that take place wholly or mainly during school hours (other than in respect of Excepted Pupils). In some circumstances, a parental contribution may be sought by the College to assist with transport or other costs.

### **Educational Trips Outside School Hours**

- 3.31 Where an educational trip or visit takes place wholly or mainly outside school hours and the educational trip or visit is part of the syllabus for an approved public examination for which a pupil is being prepared by the College, then no fee or charge will be levied by the College for the educational activity itself. Nor will the College levy a fee or charge where any such trips or visits are necessary to meet statutory educational requirements.
- 3.32 However, if any such educational trip or visit involves a pupil spending one or more nights away from home, then a charge will be made by the College to cover the cost of any board and lodging provided. This charge will be remitted or waived in full upon application to the Board of Governors in the case of pupils whose parents or guardians satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3.8 above.
- 3.33 Where an educational trip or visit takes place wholly or mainly outside school hours and the educational trip or visit is an optional extra undertaken with the prior agreement of a parent or guardian, the College will levy a charge in respect of each pupil attending the trip or visit.
- 3.34 The charge levied by the College will not exceed the cost of providing the educational trip or visit, but it will be set at the level required to cover all of the actual costs associated with the trip or visit including transport and travel costs, entrance and admission fees, equipment and material costs, visa fees, insurance costs, non-teaching staff costs, and where relevant board and lodging costs. The charge may also include the cost of engaging teaching staff under a separate contract specifically to deliver the educational trip or visit and may include the cost of providing staff with travel, board and lodging.
- 3.35 The amount charged by the College for each pupil participating in such an educational trip or visit will be determined by dividing the total cost of the trip or visit by the number of pupils participating in the trip or visit. The charge will be payable by the parents or guardians of the pupils concerned and on occasion parents or guardians may be charged directly for such trips or visits by a third party such as a travel agent. Parents and guardians should also note that any charges or fees paid in respect of an educational trip or visit outside school hours may be non-refundable, even in the event of the occurrence of exceptional circumstances.

### **Tours and Holidays**

- 3.36 The College will continue to charge the full cost (including travel) of sports tours and holiday trips to the parents or guardians of pupils who attend. The charge levied by the College will not exceed the cost of providing the sports tour or holiday trip and it will be set at the level required to cover all of the actual costs associated with the tour or trip. In addition, parents and guardians should note that any charges or fees paid in respect of a sports tour or holiday may not be refundable, even in the event of the occurrence of exceptional circumstances.
- 3.37 No pupil will be permitted by the College to participate in any such sports tour or holiday trip unless all of the tuition fees and capital fees due in respect of the pupil have been paid.

### **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme**

- 3.38 The College may levy a charge on the parents or guardians of any pupil who signs up for the *Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme* and the charge will be used to help fund the running costs of the Scheme. Parents and guardians should again note that any charges or fees paid to the College in respect of the Scheme may not be refundable, even in exceptional circumstances.

**English as a Second Language**

- 3.39 Where an Excepted Pupil does not meet the criteria to be designated as a newcomer pupil for funding purposes and where such a pupil does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and engage with the wider environment, then the College is allowed to levy an hourly charge for the delivery of additional tuition and support in the English Language.
- 3.40 The College will carry out an assessment of the proficiency of Excepted Pupils in the English Language at the start of each academic year utilising the Common European Framework of Reference. This assessment will cover proficiency in speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Pupils who achieve an outcome of C2 in the initial assessment will be considered proficient and will not require additional English Language support. Pupils who achieve an outcome of C1 or B2 will be encouraged to avail of additional English Language support and will be liable to pay the hourly charge set by the College. Pupils who achieve an outcome of B1 or less in the initial assessment or test will be required to avail of additional English Language support and pay the hourly charge determined by the College.

**Loss or Damage to College Property**

- 3.41 The College will charge parents or guardians for the full cost of replacing items of College property lost by a pupil where such loss is the result of carelessness or negligence.
- 3.42 The College will charge parents or guardians for the full cost of replacing or repairing items of College property where such items are damaged as a result of carelessness, negligence or misbehaviour by a pupil.

**Administration**

- 3.43 The College may levy a fee or charge in respect of references sought by former pupils for the Universities and Colleges Admission Service.

## 4. CHARGE AND DISCOUNT AMOUNTS

### Introduction

- 4.1 The principal fees or charges to be levied by Victoria College Belfast in the 2023/24 academic year are set out in the paragraphs that follow, together with details of the discount schemes and arrangements that are available to parents and guardians. Information is also provided on the amount of voluntary contribution requested from parents and guardians by the Board of Governors of the College.

### Tuition Fees

- 4.2 The tuition fees to be levied or charged by Victoria College Belfast in the 2023/24 academic year in respect of Excepted Pupils are set out in the table below, together with details of the tuition fees levied by the College in the previous academic year. The tuition fees represent excellent value for money and are competitively priced.

School	Year Group or Class	Actual Tuition Fee 2022/23	Actual Tuition Fee 2023/24
<i>Preparatory</i>	Pre-School	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 1	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 2	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 3	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 4	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 5	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 6	£5,500	£5,900
	Preparatory 7	£5,500	£5,900
	After School (Rate Per Hour)	£6.00	£6.50

School	Year Group or Class	Actual Tuition Fee 2022/23	Actual Tuition Fee 2023/24
<i>Preparatory</i>	Tuition Fee	£5,500	£5,900
	After School (Rate Per Hour)	£6.00	£6.50

4.3 The Board of Governors will not fix the annual tuition fees for the 2024/25 academic year until term 2 of the academic year 2023/24.

4.4 Tuition fees are exempt from value added tax and there are no statutory provisions for the remission or waiver of such fees. Tuition fees are invoiced annually in advance.

### Capital Fees

4.5 Victoria College Belfast is permitted to charge a capital fee to cover expenditure incurred on capital development schemes and accordingly, the College will levy or charge a compulsory fee of **£140** in respect of pupils registered in the Grammar School in the 2023/24 academic year. This is the maximum amount currently permitted by the Department of Education and a similar amount is charged by other local voluntary grammar schools.

4.6 Capital fees are charged in respect of all pupils registered in the Grammar School. Capital fees are exempt from value added tax and are only subject to statutory remission or waiver in the limited circumstances set out within paragraph 3.8 above. Capital fees are invoiced annually in advance by the College.

### Voluntary Contributions

4.7 Victoria College Belfast is allowed to ask parents and guardians to make an annual voluntary financial contribution to the College to help maintain the quality and breadth of the teaching and learning experiences delivered to pupils. As a result, the Board of Governors invites and encourages all parents and guardians to make an annual voluntary financial contribution of **£380** in respect of all pupils registered in the Grammar School in the 2023/24 academic year. Voluntary financial contributions are also requested by many other local grammar schools.


4.8 Voluntary financial contributions are requested from the parents and guardians of all pupils in the Grammar School. Voluntary contributions are exempt from value added tax and are not a legal charge that parents and guardians are required to pay. Voluntary contributions are requested annually in advance.

### School Meal Charges

4.9 Victoria College Belfast operates a cashless biometric catering system for pupils registered in the Grammar School and this system allows pupils to make purchases in the Canteen using a fingerprint scan. The catering system maintains an individual school meals account for every pupil in the Grammar School and parents and guardians can credit monies to these accounts through the *ParentPay* online payment portal.

4.10 Any pupils entitled to Free School Meals will automatically receive a daily allowance through the *ParentPay* portal equal to the current value of set meal of the day.

4.11 Pupils registered in the Preparatory School will continue to be invoiced annually in advance by the College for the total cost of school meals over the whole academic year and the price of an individual meal.

**Charges for school meals are exempt from value added tax and financial assistance with the cost of meals may be granted through application to the Education Authority.**  **Other Charges and Remissions**

- 4.12 Details of any other amounts that may be charged by Victoria College Belfast in relation to any other activities or optional extras to be provided by the College in the 2023/24 academic year will be communicated to parents and guardians as soon as possible, and in any event in advance of the relevant activity or optional extra taking place, together with full details of any remission or waiver arrangements that are applicable.

**Victoria College Belfast is permitted to levy a charge for the provision of additional support and tuition in the English Language (ESL) in certain prescribed circumstances.**

## **Discount Arrangements**

### **Preparatory School Tuition Fees**

- 4.13 A tuition fee discount is available to parents or guardians with more than one child enrolled in the Preparatory School or Pre-School. Under the terms of the *Family Discount Scheme*:

- the second child or sibling registered in the Preparatory School or the Pre-School will qualify for a total discount of 5% on the tuition fees applicable to that second child or sibling;
- the third child or sibling registered in the Preparatory School or the Pre-School will qualify for a total discount of 10% on the tuition fees applicable to that third child or sibling;
- the fourth child or sibling registered in the Preparatory School or the Pre-School will qualify for a total discount of 25% on the tuition fees applicable to that fourth child or sibling; and
- any subsequent child or sibling registered in the Preparatory School or Pre-School will also qualify for a total discount of 25% on the tuition fees applicable to that subsequent child or sibling,

provided that all of the children concerned attend the Preparatory School or the Pre-School in the same academic year.

- 4.14 In addition, a tuition fee discount of 5% is available to parents and guardians with a younger daughter registered in the Preparatory School of Victoria College Belfast and an older son registered in the Preparatory School of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution (*Inchmarlo*). Under the terms of the *Inchmarlo Discount Scheme*, a discount of 5% will apply to the tuition fee charged by the College in respect of the younger daughter.

- 4.15 However, it is important to note that no additional discount will be given by the College for any further brothers registered in Inchmarlo, and for the avoidance of doubt, the number of brothers registered in Inchmarlo will not be taken into account when determining the level of family discount to apply pursuant to paragraph 4.16 above. The Inchmarlo discount will apply to daughters in the Preparatory School and the Pre-School.



- 4.16 All of the discount arrangements set out in paragraphs 4.15 to 4.17 above will be applied to tuition fees prior to the beginning of the relevant academic year and the total amount of fee invoiced by the College in respect of any registered pupil will be stated net of any applicable discounts. For this reason, it is important that all parents and guardians promptly notify the College of any intention to avail of the discount arrangements set out above and provide any supporting information requested by the College in order to confirm their entitlement to any discounts claimed.
- 4.17 Any discounts arising under the *Family Discount Scheme* will only be available to parents and guardians if all tuition fees payable in respect of prior academic years have been paid in full. If tuition fees remain outstanding from prior academic years, then parents and guardians will not be able to avail of the *Family Discount Scheme*.
- 4.18 Equally, any discounts arising under the *Inchmarlo Discount Scheme* will only be available to parents and guardians if all tuition fees payable in respect of prior academic years have been paid in full. If tuition fees remain outstanding from prior academic years, then parents and guardians will not be able to avail of the *Inchmarlo Discount Scheme*.
- 4.19 Staff from the Grammar School and the Preparatory School are entitled to a 25% discount on preparatory tuition fees. No additional discounts from the Family Discount Scheme can apply. Only staff employed on contracts with a minimum of an academic year are eligible. Discount is based on a Full-Time contract, for part time staff or any alternative working patterns the discount will be prorated. This will be effective for all new pupils from the start of the 2023/24 Academic year.

#### **Grammar School Voluntary Contributions**

- 4.20 An abatement or reduction of £50 will be applied by Victoria College Belfast to the amount of voluntary contribution requested by the Board of Governors in respect of any second and subsequent sibling registered in the Grammar School of the College.

## 5. PAYMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

### Introduction

- 5.1 The fees and charges levied by Victoria College Belfast in respect of registered pupils may be paid in a number of different ways and the payment methods and frequencies accepted by the College are set out in the paragraphs that follow, together with details of the sanctions that the College will seek to apply in the event of the late payment or non-payment of any fees and charges properly due. Information is also provided on the circumstances in which a deposit will be required from a parent or guardian and on the financial consequences of any decision to withdraw a pupil from a service for which a fee has been paid or is payable.

### Payment Methods

#### Grammar School Fees and Charges

- 5.2 *Capital fees* for the Grammar School are invoiced annually in advance at or around the start of the month of August, immediately prior to the beginning of the relevant academic year, and such fees are due for payment in full within 30 days of the invoice date, unless parents or guardians have entered into a concessionary agreement with the College to pay the fees by direct debit on a monthly basis.
- 5.3 As a result, parents and guardians can only pay *capital fees* by means of:
- a single annual payment made by cheque, credit card, debit card, credit transfer, or direct debit within 30 days of the relevant invoice date; or
  - ten equal consecutive monthly payments made by direct debit starting at the end of the month of August and finishing at the end of the month of May (each direct debit to be collected on the last or second last business day of the relevant month).
- 5.4 *Voluntary contributions* are also invoiced annually in advance by the College at or around the beginning of the month of August, immediately prior to the commencement of the relevant academic year, and voluntary contributions may be paid in either of the ways set out above.

#### Preparatory School Fees and Charges

- 5.5 *Tuition fees and charges for school meals* for the Preparatory School are invoiced annually in advance at or around the start of the month of August, immediately prior to the beginning of the relevant academic year. All such amounts are due for payment in full within 30 days of the invoice date, unless parents or guardians have entered into a concessionary agreement with the College to pay such amounts by direct debit on either a termly or a monthly basis.
- 5.6 As a result, *tuition fees and charges for school meals* can only be paid by means of:
- a single annual payment made by cheque, credit card, debit card, credit transfer, or direct debit within 30 days of the relevant invoice date; or
  - three equal termly payments made by direct debit on the last or second last business day of the months of August, December and March; or
  - ten equal consecutive monthly payments made by direct debit starting at the end of the month of August and finishing at the end of the month of May (each direct debit to be collected on the last or second last business day of the relevant month).

It is important to note, however, that the College will continue to accept childcare vouchers as payment for tuition fees levied in respect of the Pre-School.

- 5.7 Fees and charges for the provision of *After School Care* are invoiced monthly in arrears from the beginning of the relevant academic year and such fees and charges are due for payment in full within 30 days of the invoice date. Parents or guardians can pay such fees and charges by means of:
- a single payment made by cheque, credit card, debit card, credit transfer, or direct debit within 30 days of the relevant invoice date; or
  - a single payment made by childcare vouchers within 30 days of the relevant invoice date.

### **General Payment Provisions**

- 5.8 The method of payment preferred by Victoria College Belfast is direct debit and parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to make as much use of this payment method as possible. It is important to note, however, that only parents and guardians with an eligible UK bank or building society account can make payments by direct debit and that direct debits are not permitted from savings accounts.
- 5.9 Any parent or guardian who wishes to set up a direct debit arrangement to pay any fees and charges levied by Victoria College Belfast should request a direct debit mandate form from the College. Direct debit arrangements can only be put in place prior to the beginning of the relevant academic year, and accordingly the cut-off date for the receipt of completed direct debit mandates by the College will be 30 June in any calendar year.
- 5.10 For the avoidance of doubt, Victoria College Belfast no longer accepts cash payments for any tuition fees, capital fees, voluntary contributions, after school fees, or charges for school meals levied by the College. Cash payments are only accepted by the College for optional extras such as music lessons, school trips and incidental purchases.
- 5.11 It is important to note that the College will allocate payments received to the oldest items on any pupil fee account, unless parents or guardians have made an express statement to the contrary.

## **Non Payment of Fees and Charges**

### **Non Payment of Annual Amounts**

- 5.12 Where a parent or a guardian decides to pay any fees or charges levied by Victoria College Belfast by means of a single annual payment prior to the beginning of the academic year, or where a parent or a guardian fails to enter into a concessionary agreement to pay such fees or charges by direct debit, then the due date for receipt of payment in full is the date falling 30 days from the invoice date. Thereafter:
- if payment is not received in full by the due date, then the College will be entitled to charge interest on any overdue amount at the rate of 3% a year above the base rate set by the Ulster Bank from time to time. Unless agreed otherwise by the College in writing, any such interest will accrue on a daily basis from the due date until the date of actual payment of the overdue amount;

- if payment is not received in full by the College within 45 days of the due date, then the offer of any applicable fee discounts will lapse and the gross fee amount prior to any discounts will become payable upon demand;
- if payment is not received in full within 60 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to prohibit the relevant pupil from participating in any residential school trips from that date up until the date of actual payment of the overdue amount;
- if payment is not received in full within 90 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to seek to recover the overdue amount by referring the amount to an external debt collection service and/or through recourse to a formal legal process. Any additional costs incurred in recovering, or attempting to recover, the overdue amount will accrue to the account of the relevant parent or guardian, including any reasonable legal costs that would be allowable by the courts if such a judgment was secured in favour of the College; and
- if a court judgment is made in favour of the College and the payment of the overdue amount remains outstanding beyond the date specified in the court judgment, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit upon the parents of the relevant pupil, after due consideration by the Board of Governors.

5.13 Notwithstanding any of the provisions set out in paragraph 5.14 above:

- where any *tuition fees* for an academic year still remain outstanding either in full or in part at the end of the month of May in the relevant academic year, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit on the parents of the pupil concerned, after due consideration by the Board of Governors; and
- where a *charge for school meals*, or any charge for any other supplementary service provided by the College, is not received in full within 30 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to immediately cease to provide the service to the pupil.

#### **Non Payment of Termly Amounts**

5.14 Where a parent or a guardian has entered into a concessionary agreement to pay any fees or charges levied by Victoria College Belfast by means of three instalments on a termly basis, then the due dates for the receipt of such payments are the last business days of the months of August, December and March in the relevant academic year. Thereafter:

- if payment is not received in full by the relevant due date, then the College will be entitled to charge interest on any overdue amount at the rate of 3% a year above the base rate set by the Ulster Bank from time to time. Unless agreed otherwise by the College in writing, any such interest will accrue on a daily basis from the relevant due date until the date of actual payment of the overdue amount;
- if payment is not received in full by the College within 45 days of the relevant due date, then the concessionary agreement permitting the relevant parent or guardian to pay fees or charges in three termly instalments will automatically terminate and the offer of any applicable fee discounts will also lapse. As a result, the outstanding fee balance for the academic year as a whole will become payable upon demand;
- if payment is not received in full within 60 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to prohibit the relevant pupil from participating in any residential school trips from that date up until the date of actual payment of the overdue amount;

- if payment is not received in full within 90 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to seek to recover the overdue amount by referring the amount to an external debt collection service and/or through recourse to a formal legal process. Any additional costs incurred in recovering, or attempting to recover, the overdue amount will accrue to the account of the relevant parent or guardian, including any reasonable legal costs that would be allowable by the courts if such a judgment was secured in favour of the College; and
- if a court judgment is made in favour of the College and the payment of the overdue amount remains outstanding beyond the date specified in the court judgment, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit upon the parents of the relevant pupil, after due consideration by the Board of Governors.

5.15 Notwithstanding any of the provisions set out in paragraph 5.14 above:

- where any *tuition fees* for an academic year still remain outstanding either in full or in part at the end of the month of May in the relevant academic year, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit on the parents of the pupil concerned, after due consideration by the Board of Governors; and
- where a *charge for school meals*, or any charge for any other supplementary service provided by the College, is not received in full within 30 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to immediately cease to provide the service to the pupil.

#### **Non Payment of Monthly Direct Debits**

5.16 Where a parent or a guardian has entered into a concessionary agreement to pay any fees or charges levied by Victoria College Belfast in ten equal consecutive monthly instalments, then the due date for the receipt of the direct debit will be the last business day of the relevant month. If the College is unable to collect a payment on the due date, it will seek to recollect the payment as soon as possible thereafter and a fee of £10 may be levied. Thereafter:

- if payment is not received in full by the College within 45 days of the relevant due date, then the concessionary agreement permitting the relevant parent or guardian to pay fees or charges in ten equal consecutive monthly instalments will come to an end automatically and the offer of any applicable fee discounts will also lapse. As a result, the outstanding fee balance for all of the academic year may become payable immediately at the discretion of the College;
- if payment is not received in full within 60 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to prohibit the relevant pupil from participating in any residential school trips from that date up until the date of actual payment of the overdue amount;
- if payment is not received in full within 90 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to seek to recover the overdue amount by referring the amount to an external debt collection service and/or through recourse to a formal legal process. Any additional costs incurred in recovering, or attempting to recover, the overdue amount will accrue to the account of the relevant parent or guardian, including any reasonable legal costs that would be allowable by the courts if such a judgment was secured in favour of the College; and

- if a court judgment is made in favour of the College and the payment of the overdue amount remains outstanding beyond the date specified in the court judgment, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit upon the parents of the relevant pupil, after due consideration by the Board of Governors.

5.17 Notwithstanding any of the provisions set out in paragraph 5.16 above:

- where any *tuition fees* for an academic year still remain outstanding either in full or in part at the end of the month of May in the relevant academic year, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit on the parents of the pupil concerned, after due consideration by the Board of Governors; and
- where a *charge for school meals*, or any charge for any other supplementary service provided by the College, is not received in full within 30 days of the due date, then the College will be entitled to immediately cease to provide the service to the pupil.

#### **General Credit Control Procedures**

- 5.18 Where any fees or charges levied by Victoria College Belfast are not paid by the appropriate due date, then the College will contact the relevant parent or guardian within 15 days of the due date by email or telephone to secure payment of the outstanding amount. If any fees or charges remain outstanding for more than 30 days from the due date, then the College will write formally to the relevant parent or guardian to detail the amounts outstanding and to explain the potential consequences of any further delay in payment.
- 5.19 Where any fees or charges are still outstanding more than 45 days after the due date, and in addition to the implementation of the measures set out above, a meeting will be organised with the relevant parent or guardian to discuss the unpaid amount and to agree a payment plan. If any fees or charges remain outstanding more than 90 days after the due date, then the College will refer the unpaid balance to an external debt collection service or commence an action through either the Civil Courts or the Small Claims Court (if the relevant monetary threshold is satisfied).
- 5.20 If a court judgment is made in favour of the College and the payment of the overdue amount remains outstanding beyond the date specified in the court judgment, then the College will be entitled to serve a written Notice to Quit upon the parents of the relevant pupil, after due consideration by the Board of Governors. The Notice to Quit will provide parents with seven days' notice of the withdrawal of the school place by the College. The Notice to Quit is not a disciplinary matter and as a consequence, a right of appeal will not be afforded to parents or guardians in circumstances where such a notice relates exclusively to a failure to pay school fees.
- 5.21 In addition, Victoria College Belfast will reserve the right to:
- levy an administrative charge of £10 per transaction in the event that any payment is rejected by the bank or card issuer of a parent or guardian;
  - prohibit a pupil from participating in a residential school trip where fees or charges are outstanding and overdue;
  - notify the credit reference agencies of the existence of any unpaid sums; and

- recover any unpaid sums due through a debt collection agency or recourse to a legal process, and any additional costs incurred as a result of such action will be charged to the account of the relevant parent or guardian.
- 5.22 Each parent or guardian is responsible for notifying the College immediately of any changes in banking details and the College will not be liable for any charges incurred as a result of any failure to notify the College of such changes. Each parent or guardian is jointly and severally liable for the fees and charges levied by the College and this means that either parent may be liable for the full amount of the default, no matter who was responsible for non-payment.
- 5.23 Finally, it is important to note that the procedures set out in the paragraphs above do not apply to *voluntary contributions* requested by Victoria College Belfast. There is no obligation on parents or guardians to make a voluntary contribution, and parents or guardians will not be asked by the College to explain why they have not made a voluntary contribution.

### Financial Hardship

- 5.24 Where any parent or guardian is concerned about their ability to continue to pay school fees and charges as a result of experiencing financial difficulties or hardship, they should contact the College to discuss the situation prior to the due date for any subsequent payments. The College will treat any such discussions in the strictest confidence and will endeavour to work with parents and guardians to arrive at a satisfactory outcome. Where possible, the College will seek to negotiate and agree with parents and guardians a revised or rephased plan for the payment of any outstanding fees and charges.

### Application Deposits

- 5.25 Any parent or guardian wishing to secure a place for a new pupil in the Preparatory School of Victoria College Belfast must complete an application form and submit it to the College along with an application deposit payment. Payment of the relevant application deposit is required as confirmation of interest and failure to pay the deposit will result in an application not being considered by the College.
- 5.26 The application deposit must be paid in a single lump sum by cheque, banker's draft, debit card, credit card or credit transfer and the amount of each deposit required by the College is set out in the table below.

Item	Deposit 2022/23	Deposit 2023/24	Deposit 2024/25
Preparatory School	£500	£500	£500
Pre-School	£300	£500	£500

- 5.27 In the event that the College is unable to offer a school place to a prospective pupil, then the application deposit will be refundable in full. In the event that the College is able to offer a school place to a prospective pupil and the pupil does not subsequently enrol in the College, then the application deposit will not be refundable.
- 5.28 However, in the event that the College is able to offer a place to a prospective pupil and the pupil accepts the place and enrolls in the College, then the application deposit will form part of the general funds of the College until it is subsequently refunded by the College at the time of the departure of the relevant pupil from the Preparatory School.

- 5.29 For the avoidance of doubt, interest income will not accrue on any application deposits held by the College and the College will be permitted to offset an application deposit against any amounts properly due and outstanding from the relevant pupil.

### Notice Requirements

- 5.30 Any parent or guardian who wishes to withdraw a pupil from the Preparatory School or the (other than at one of the normal departure date at the end of Year 7) must either give the College a term's written notice to that effect or pay fees for one term in lieu of notice. As a result, the calculation of any fee refund due in such circumstances will be based upon the assumption that proper notice has been provided and the College will therefore credit any deposit held by it to the payment of any such fees in lieu of notice.
- 5.31 In this context, it is important to note that a *term's notice* means written notice submitted to the College no later than the first day of the term immediately prior to the term to which the notice relates.
- 5.32 Any parent or guardian who wishes to withdraw a pupil from the Grammar School of Victoria College Belfast must give the College written notice of their intention to withdraw at least one full term prior to the proposed date of withdrawal. In these circumstances, the parent or guardian will remain liable for the full capital fee and no refunds will be given in respect of any capital fees already paid or voluntary contributions already made.
- 5.33 Any parent or guardian who wishes to withdraw a pupil from the School Meals Service must give the College written notice of their intention to withdraw at least one full month prior to the proposed date of withdrawal. If such notice is not given, then school meals charges for one month in lieu of notice will be levied by the College.
- 5.34 It is important to note that in common with other local schools the affairs of the College are structured and organised on a termly basis and accordingly, it is not possible for parents and guardians to seek to reduce the amount of fees or charges due, or to obtain a refund of fees or charges, by withdrawing a pupil part way through a school term.

### Fee Reductions

- 5.35 Fees and charges levied by the College will not normally be reduced or refunded as a result of absence from school due to illness or otherwise. In addition, if a pupil takes study leave at home before or during public examinations, or stays at home following such examinations, no reduction in fees and charges will be made in respect of any periods spent at home.
- 5.36 However, if a pupil is absent from school for eleven or more consecutive school days due to illness, then the parent or guardian may apply for a pro rata reduction in the school meals charge (as applicable) for each school day of absence after the tenth school day of absence.



## Force Majeure

- 5.37 If a *force majeure event* occurs that falls outside the control of the College and if this event prevents, delays or hinders the College from performing any of its service obligations, then the College will write to parents and guardians giving notice of the nature and extent of the circumstances giving rise to the force majeure event. Provided that the College has acted reasonably and prudently to prevent or minimise the effect of the force majeure event, then the College will not be liable for any failure to perform any of its service obligations during the continuance of the event.
- 5.38 To the extent reasonably practicable in the circumstances, the College will strive during the continuance of the relevant force majeure event to continue to provide educational services (including by providing appropriate educational services and resources remotely or online) and as a consequence, parents and guardians will remain liable for any outstanding fees and charges due to the College.
- 5.39 However, if the College is prevented from performing all of its service obligations as a result of a force majeure event for a continuous period of more than six months, then the College will notify parents and guardians of the steps that it plans to take to ensure the performance of its service obligations after this period. Following the receipt of such notice, parents and guardians will be entitled to withdraw a pupil from the College without giving a term's notice or paying fees in lieu of notice.
- 5.40 For the purposes of paragraphs 5.37 to 5.40 above, a force majeure event means any event beyond the reasonable control of the College, including *inter alia*:
- war, civil war, armed conflict or terrorism;
  - nuclear, chemical or biological contamination;
  - accident, fire, flood, storm;
  - an epidemic or pandemic of any communicable disease, localised disease outbreaks, public health emergencies, lockdowns, and quarantines; and
  - compliance with any new law or governmental order, rule, regulation or direction.