

6 July 2012

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0673-12

Thank you for your request dated 11 June 2012 under the Freedom of Information Act.

You requested that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) should provide:

- 1. A list of those countries that do offer free places to DS staff, rather than a list of those countries where free places are not available, or not deemed suitable.*
- 2. A numerical value of all the children currently in fee-paying schools in the UK, of whose parents are posted overseas.*
- 3. A definition of Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA)*

I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to your request.

Children may attend public (i.e. state run) English-language based schools free of charge in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Falkland Islands, although the curriculum offered in some countries is markedly different from that in the UK.

Staff and family movements between the UK and overseas postings are frequent in either direction. At any given time Continuity of Education Allowance is being paid for 500-550 children in UK boarding schools. The parents of more than half of these children have been based overseas for all or part of the current school year.

Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) is intended to help eligible Diplomatic Service staff to provide their children with stability and education at school in the UK, while they continue to take up a succession of postings overseas. A child for whom CEA is paid will board at school in the UK during their parents' postings overseas, and remain at the same school, as a day pupil or boarder, in order to continue their education, during any periods when their parents are required to serve in the UK, provided that the parent officer continues to meet the eligibility criteria. CEA is paid up to a maximum ceiling, per term, towards the cost of tuition and boarding. Where school fees exceed the ceiling, parents must pay the difference themselves.

A small number of children, often with a foreign national parent, attend French or American/International schools while overseas. As the systems are so different, we will also pay for these children to attend a French or American/International day school while their parents are in the UK, so that they can continue to be educated in the same language and system when they go overseas again.