

28 June 2012

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0636-12

Thank you for your request dated 31 May 2012 under the Freedom of Information Act.

You asked that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) should provide the following information about the continuity of education allowance:

1. How many staff in the department were in receipt of the continuity of education allowance over the past three years? Please could you break this down by calendar year. Please could you also provide a figure for how many children benefit from the continuity of education allowance, and break this down by calendar year.

2. What was the cost, in pounds sterling, to the department in respect of staff based in the UK, and posted overseas? Please could you break this down by staff based in the UK, and staff posted overseas and by calendar year.

3. How much, in pounds sterling, has the department spent on continuity of education allowance for children attending (a) Charterhouse School, (b) Dulwich College, (c) Eton College, (d) Harrow School, (e) Marlborough College, (f) Rugby School, (g) Westminster School, (h) Winchester College, (i) Cheltenham Ladies College, (j) Roedean School, (k) St Paul's School, (l) Fettes College and (m) Gordonstoun School over the past three years? Please could you break this down by calendar year.

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

It is a condition of their employment that members of the diplomatic service must be prepared to serve anywhere in the world at any time during their career, sometimes at very short notice. Most parents prefer to take their children with them abroad, but in some countries we do not permit staff to take their children either for health or security reasons. In others, free local English language schools comparable to those in the UK are not available, or teaching is not geared towards the final school leaving

qualifications normally required for entry to British university or employment in the UK (i.e. GCSE and A-level or the International Baccalaureate Diploma).

The financial support for UK schooling is limited to standard term fees up to a ceiling which is reviewed annually. The ceiling is determined by an independent survey conducted by ECA International, which is used by public and private sector employers whose staff work across the world. Staff choosing a more expensive school must pay the difference in cost themselves. Various factors, including availability of places (sometimes at short notice) and proximity of other family members, influence which schools staff choose for their children.

In reply to your specific questions:

1. Management information is not available in a form that allows identification of numbers of staff claiming Continuity of Education Allowance according to calendar year. In the last three financial years the number of staff claiming CEA for children has been in excess of 330 staff claiming for 500-550 children.

2. Financial Information is not held in the form you have requested. In the last 3 financial years, Continuity of Education Allowance has been paid to staff as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>in the UK</u>	<u>overseas</u>
2009/2010	£7,487,435	£5,834,639
2010/2011	£7,219,993	£5,847,405
2011/2012	£5,183,153	£7,656,492

3. We do not provide details of fees paid for individual schools attended by children of staff in the UK and overseas, in order to avoid disclosures that, taken with other information, could identify individual members of staff and their families.