Background Information for Applicants

17 JANUARY 2020
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Board of Governors of Victoria College Belfast is seeking to appoint a suitably experienced and qualified Classroom Assistant (SEN). The position will continue to 30 June 2020 or for as long as relevant pupil remains in the College and the Education Authority continues to finance the post. A reserve list may be established at the absolute discretion of the College for future Classroom Assistant (SEN) positions depending upon the number and quality of applications received.

1.2 The successful applicant will be employed by Victoria College Belfast on a temporary term-time basis, subject to satisfactory conduct and performance. The successful applicant will work 27.5 hours per week depending upon the needs of the pupil concerned. The annual full-time salary for the post is expected to fall in the band NJC Spinal Column Points 5 to 6 (£18,795 to £19,171, pro rata, term-time only or £10.04 to £10.24 per hour), subject to confirmation from the Education Authority.

1.3 Victoria College Belfast is committed to the overriding principle that appointments should be based on merit and reflect the outworking of an open and transparent appointment process. The College is also committed to equality of opportunity and will welcome applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants.

1.4 In order to promote the submission of high quality applications that meet the requirements of the position, the College has prepared and issued the following information to applicants:

- an overview of the College, its values, organisation and structure;
- a general description of the application procedure and the appointment process;
- a specification of the qualifications, experience and skills required of the post holder;
- an outline of the principal terms and conditions associated with the position;
- a detailed job description of the main duties and responsibilities of the position;
- a detailed application form and accompanying guidance notes;
- an equal opportunities monitoring form and accompanying guidance notes; and
- a copy of the privacy notice for non-teaching members of staff.

1.5 It is hoped that the information prepared and issued by the College will enable applicants to provide relevant responses within the application form and as a result, it is recommended that applicants read all of this information carefully before completing the application form.

1.6 Applicants shall note that any information prepared and issued by the College in connection with this appointment process is being prepared and issued for the sole purpose of enabling them to prepare and submit an application form in accordance with the requirements of the College. The only information that will have any legal effect or on which any person may rely will be the information specifically and expressly set out in any contract of employment.

1.7 Additional information about Victoria College Belfast, its history, organisation, activities and achievements can be found on the College website at www.victoriacollege.co.uk.

**Completed application forms and equal opportunities monitoring forms must be returned to Miss Nicola Mawhinney no later than 12.00 noon on Friday 31 January 2020.**
2. DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLEGE

OVERVIEW

2.1 Victoria College Belfast is a voluntary grammar school for girls, located between the Malone Road and the Lisburn Road in Belfast. The College was founded in 1859 by Margaret Byers to provide a first class education for young women and it is one of the longest established all girls’ schools anywhere in Britain and Ireland. In 1987, the College merged with Richmond Lodge, a neighbouring grammar school with a strong commitment to global citizenship and personal development, and since then the College has gone from strength to strength.

2.2 The College has a long tradition of academic success, and it achieves standards of academic performance in public examinations that consistently exceed both national and local levels of attainment. The College has a preparatory school and a boarding department, as well as a junior school and senior school, and it is the only all girls’ school in Northern Ireland that can educate girls from the age of two to the age of eighteen. At present, the College has a total enrolment of 1,080, with 186 girls enrolled in the preparatory school, 271 girls enrolled in the junior school, and 623 girls enrolled in the senior school.

2.3 Victoria College is situated on two separate but neighbouring sites in the south of the City of Belfast. The junior school is situated on the Richmond Campus adjacent to the Malone Road and the senior school, preparatory school and boarding department are situated within the Cranmore Campus adjacent to the Lisburn Road.

CORE VALUES

2.4 Victoria College Belfast is committed to ensuring that every girl reaches her full potential and enjoys the whole school experience by:

▪ providing the best education for girls;
▪ creating a safe and supportive learning environment;
▪ providing high quality learning for every pupil;
▪ setting challenging goals and celebrating success;
▪ ensuring that pupils develop skills for life and work;
▪ maximising opportunities for personal development;
▪ building positive relationships through mutual trust and respect;
▪ promoting loyalty and commitment to the school community; and
▪ encouraging pupils to be active and caring citizens.

ORGANISATION

2.5 As a voluntary grammar school, Victoria College Belfast is managed by a Board of Governors appointed under a scheme of management applicable to the College. The College is funded directly by the Department of Education through the Common Funding Scheme for the Local Management of Schools and ownership of the land and buildings occupied by the College is vested in the Board of Governors. In addition, the Board of Governors is also responsible for the employment of all teaching and non-teaching staff by the College.
2.6 The Board of Governors of the College consists of foundation governors and representatives of parents, teachers and the Department of Education. At present, the Board of Governors is made up of 27 individuals plus the Headmistress and it meets on at least seven occasions over the course of the year. The work of the Board of Governors is facilitated and supported by a number of committees, including the Finance Committee, the Estates Committee, the Education Committee, the Human Resources Committee, and the Audit and Risk Committee.

2.7 Day to day responsibility for the management and operation of the College rests with the Principal. In discharging her duties, the Principal is supported by a Senior Leadership Team consisting of the Vice Principal, the Assistant Principal, three Senior Teachers, the Head of the Preparatory School, the Head of the Boarding Department, and the Head of Corporate Services.

SENIOR SCHOOL

2.8 The College is committed to ensuring that every pupil has full access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and to providing the care and support necessary to address Special Educational Needs.

2.9 As a Classroom Assistant (SEN) you will ultimately be accountable to the Board of Governors of the College through the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and the Assistant SENCO. You will be required to work within a highly-motivated team to support the work of classroom teachers and will have the ability to support and encourage pupils of all levels to achieve their full potential. Further relevant guidance and support will be provided following appointment.
3. **APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE AND PROCESS**

**APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

3.1 Completed application forms should be returned to Miss Nicola Mawhinney at the address below no later than **12.00 noon on Friday 31 January 2019**. Completed application forms can be returned by post, hand delivered, or sent electronically (nmawhinney170@c2kni.net).

Nicola Mawhinney  
Executive Secretary  
Victoria College  
2A Cranmore Park  
Belfast BT9 6JA

3.2 Completed application forms will remain unopened until **12.00 noon on Friday 31 January 2020**, and under no circumstances will consideration be given to applications received after that. For the avoidance of doubt, only applicants who complete and submit an application form in accordance with the requirements of the College will be considered for these posts.

3.3 Receipt of application forms submitted electronically will be acknowledged by the College by return email. Should any applicant not receive confirmation of their application having been received, then the onus is on them to contact the College to ensure the application has been received by the closing time and date. Applicants who submit their forms electronically will be asked to sign them if invited for interview.

3.4 In order to ensure equality of opportunity for all, applicants should note that:

- the application form must be completed either in Calibri typescript (font size 10) or in legible handwriting using black ink;
- the amount of space available in the application form for responses is the same for all applicants and the size of text boxes must not be altered in any way;
- the application form must not be altered, amended or reformatted in any way;
- additional pages, curriculum vitae, letters or other supplementary materials will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, a completed application form (unless such documentation is specifically requested within the application form);
- all sections and parts of the application form must be completed in full; and
- any failure to comply with the precise requirements of the College as outlined above will result in the rejection of an application.

3.5 The College has developed an **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** to allow it to monitor the effectiveness of its Equal Opportunities Policy and to help it to comply with its statutory duties under legislation pertaining to Fair Employment. Accordingly, applicants are encouraged to answer the questions set out in the **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** and to return the completed form to the College. Applicants should note, however, that they are not obliged to answer the questions set out in the **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** and that they will not suffer any penalty or detriment if they decide not to do so.
3.6 In seeking to complete the application form, applicants should note that they are required to demonstrate by way of examples how they meet the essential eligibility criteria and where relevant, the desirable criteria. Failure to do so may result in an applicant not being shortlisted as the Selection Panel cannot make assumptions in the absence of this important information.

3.7 Any applicant who is unable to complete the application form in its current format because of a disability should contact Miss Nicola Mawhinney at the address above. The application form will be made available on request in large print or in different formats.

SHORTLISTING PROCESS

3.8 Following the closing date for the submission of completed application forms, the Selection Panel will meet to review the information provided by each applicant and to identify those applicants to invite to interview. In order to be invited to interview, an applicant must meet the essential eligibility criteria set out below.

Relevant Experience

By the closing date for applications, applicants must have:

- A professional or educational qualification approved by the Education Authority and relevant to the position of Classroom Assistant (SEN); and
- Experience of working effectively with children with literacy or numeracy difficulties and social, emotional or behavioural needs.

Knowledge

By the closing date for applications, applicants must demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the specific requirements of the role of Classroom Assistant (SEN) in a Post Primary School;
- Knowledge of child development issues and the main challenges faced by pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Skills and Attributes

Applicants must demonstrate:

- An ability to work as part of a team and build strong relationships;
- An ability to plan, organise and communicate effectively at all levels; and
- A clear commitment to meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs.

3.9 The Selection Panel will assess and sift each application form against the essential eligibility criteria set out above and only those applicants that meet the essential eligibility criteria will be invited to attend an interview. It is therefore important that all applicants demonstrate on the application form how and to what extent their experience and abilities are relevant to the position and the extent to which they satisfy the essential eligibility criteria. Failure to do so will lead to an applicant not being shortlisted as the Selection Panel cannot make assumptions about experience or ability in the absence of such information. In this context, applicants should note that the Selection Panel will not make assumptions from the title of an existing position or the nature of an organisation as to the experience and abilities an applicant. The Selection Panel also reserves the right to enhance the essential criteria if required.
3.10 In the event that a large number of applicants satisfy the essential eligibility criteria, then the desirable criteria set out below may be used to identify a shortlist of applicants to interview. The desirable criteria that may be applied are as follows:

- A minimum of one years of experience in the last five years working as a Classroom Assistant (SEN) in a paid capacity in a formal educational setting;
- Experience of working closely with relevant external agencies and other health and social care professionals to better meet the needs of a pupil; and
- Knowledge of using information and communications technology to enrich learning.

INTERVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

3.11 It is currently anticipated that the interviews for this position will be held during the week commencing Monday 10 February 2020. The College will provide shortlisted applicants with as much notice of the interviews as possible.

3.12 If an applicant is unable to attend the interview at the date and time subsequently specified, or if an applicant wishes to withdraw from the selection process, then the applicant must contact Miss Mawhinney as soon as possible either by email or by telephone. Applicants should note that any request for an alternative interview date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be at the absolute discretion of the Selection Panel.

3.13 Disabled applicants are asked on the application form to provide information on any specific requirements that they may have so that the College can make any reasonable adjustments necessary if they meet the shortlisting criteria and are invited to interview. Applicants cannot assume that reasonable adjustments will be made on the basis of information provided within the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form as this information is not shared with the Selection Panel. If an applicant indicates on their application form that reasonable adjustments will be necessary, then Miss Mawhinney will make contact with the applicant concerned to discuss the adjustments required in more detail.

3.14 It is expected that the interviews for this position will last for twenty minutes and consist of a uniform set of lead or core questions designed to test the knowledge and experience of each applicant in the areas or competencies set out within the Person Specification. Lead or core questions will be determined in advance by the Selection Panel and will be devised to enable applicants to demonstrate by way of examples the knowledge, experience and competencies required for the position. The same lead or core questions will be asked of every applicant. Subsidiary or follow up questions will not be determined in advance as they will follow from the initial responses given by applicants and generally they will attempt to clarify the context of the examples given, the level of difficulty encountered and the actual outcomes achieved.

3.15 The Selection Panel will assess the detailed responses given to each lead or core question by each applicant and award a score out of ten for each individual response. A total score for the interview will then be calculated for each applicant by aggregating the scores awarded for each lead or core question and by applying (where relevant) any predetermined criteria weightings. A minimum pass mark for appointment will also be applied.

3.16 Those applicants that meet the required standard will be deemed suitable for appointment. The Selection Panel will then list those applicants suitable for appointment in order of merit and the position will be offered to the applicant with the highest score.
NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME

3.17 Applicants should note that the Selection Panel recommends individuals for appointment only. A recommendation is not an offer of appointment and should not be regarded as such. The successful applicant should not take any action to give notice in respect of their current employment until receipt of formal written confirmation of appointment from the College.

3.18 Formal written confirmation of appointment will only be issued by the College following the satisfactory completion of a number of procedural and pre-employment checks, including:

- the submission of original documentary evidence as to the identity of the successful applicant, such evidence to be checked in the presence of the applicant and copied;
- the receipt of suitable references from the two persons nominated by the successful applicant in their application form;
- the receipt of a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure Check and Barred List Certificate from AccessNI;
- the submission of original documentary evidence of the right of the applicant to work in the United Kingdom, such evidence to be drawn from List A or List B of the Schedule to the Immigration (Restrictions on Employment) Order 2007;
- the submission of an original birth certificate by the successful applicant; and
- the submission of original documentary evidence of academic qualifications, driving licence status and memberships of professional bodies (where applicable).

3.19 The recommendation from the Selection Panel may also include a list of reserve applicants, in order of suitability, from whom an appointment may be made by the College in the event that the successful applicant fails to take up the position or a similar vacancy arises within the term of the reserve list. Reserve lists will be held for a period of no more than twelve months.

3.20 The College will notify all unsuccessful applicants of the result of this process in writing.

GENERAL APPOINTMENT PROCESS CONDITIONS

3.21 Any information provided by applicants during the appointment process may be stored and processed by Victoria College Belfast for a period of twelve months for recruitment purposes. In the case of the successful applicant, any information provided will be stored on a personal file and processed for the employment relationship. Any monitoring information collected in accordance with Fair Employment legislation will be retained by the College for a period of three years after the job application is received or the member of staff leaves the College.

3.22 Victoria College Belfast will keep confidential all the application forms submitted and any other information or material supplied by applicants during the appointment process. The College will also use reasonable endeavours to prevent any disclosure of such information and material by its governors, officers, employees and agents.

3.23 However, in the case of an applicant taking a legal case against the College, it may be necessary to disclose certain application related information to the parties involved. In addition, such information may be disclosed as part of any investigations of discrimination carried out by the Equality Commission.
3.24 Any applicant that is found to have knowingly approached a member of the Selection Panel with the aim of securing preferential treatment will be disqualified from the appointment process for canvassing. In this context, canvassing means any contact or communication at any time in any manner with a member of the Selection Panel involved in the appointment process that could be deemed or perceived to be for advancing an application. Applicants are reminded that the submission of testimonials with an application form is strictly prohibited and that any such activity will also be deemed to be canvassing.

3.25 Positions that involve working with children and young people in educational establishments are subject to the provisions set out in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Therefore, each applicant is required to provide information in their application form about their suitability to work with children and young people and any gaps in their employment history. The College reserves the right to ask an applicant at interview for clarification and further explanation of any such information disclosed.

3.26 Applicants should note that any person whose name is recorded on the Barred List maintained by the Disclosure and Barring Service is prohibited from working with children or young people in an educational setting. Furthermore, applicants should also note that the College will carry out pre-employment vetting checks on all non-teaching positions considered to be regulated positions.

3.27 Most non-teaching positions within Victoria College Belfast are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978. As a result, applicants are not entitled to withhold information about any convictions, including road traffic and motoring offences. The disclosure of criminal convictions will not necessarily debar an applicant from employment and the College will consider each individual case on its merits taking into account all relevant factors. However, in the event of an applicant being appointed, failure to disclose any convictions may result in disciplinary action by the College which may include dismissal. All appointments to such positions will be subject to the completion by the successful applicant of an AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure and Barred List Check prior to appointment and the cost of this check will be funded by the College. Further information on the checks carried out by AccessNI is available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/accessni-criminal-record-checks.

3.28 The information requested on the application form is required by the College for the purposes of processing and assessing job applications. The information provided will be processed in compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. The College has developed a Privacy Notice for Non-Teaching Staff and a copy of this notice has been made available to applicants on the College website. The notice provides information on the use of personal data and the rights and protections available to applicants in relation to the processing of personal information. Applicants are required to read the Privacy Notice for Non-Teaching Staff prior to completing and signing the declaration on the application form.

3.29 Finally, applicants are required to note that no payment for travelling expenses will be made by the College to applicants where the position concerned has been advertised in the local press and not in the national press.

3.30 Victoria College Belfast is an Equal Opportunities employer.
4. PERSON SPECIFICATION

4.1 The College will expect the successful applicant for the position to demonstrate through the application process and the interview that they possess the qualifications, experience, skills and attributes set out below.

Experience

- A professional or educational qualification approved by the Education Authority and relevant to the position of Classroom Assistant SEN (Essential);
- Experience of working effectively with children with literacy or numeracy difficulties and social, emotional or behavioural needs (Essential);
- A minimum of one years of experience in the last five years working as a Classroom Assistant SEN in a paid capacity in a formal educational setting (Desirable); and
- Experience of working closely with relevant external agencies and other health and social care professionals to better meet the needs of a pupil (Desirable).

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the specific requirements of the role of Classroom Assistant SEN within a Post Primary School (Essential);
- Knowledge of child development issues and the main challenges faced by pupils with Special Educational Needs (Essential); and
- Knowledge of using information and communications technology to enrich learning (Desirable).

Skills and Attributes

- An ability to work as part of a team and build strong relationships (Essential);
- An ability to plan, organise and communicate effectively at all levels (Essential); and
- A clear commitment to meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs (Essential).
5. SUMMARY EMPLOYMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

5.1 The successful applicant for the position of Classroom Assistant (SEN) will be employed on a temporary term-time basis, subject to satisfactory conduct and performance. The position will start as soon as practicable and will continue to 30 June 2020 or for as long as relevant pupil remains in College and the Education Authority continues to finance the post.

5.2 The successful applicants will be required to work 27.5 hours per week depending upon the needs of the pupil concerned. The annual full-time salary for each post is expected to fall in the band NJC Spinal Column Points 5 to 6 (£18,795 to £19,171 per annum, pro rata, term-time only or £10.04 to £10.24 per hour), subject to confirmation from the Education Authority. The successful applicant will also have the option of contributing to the pension scheme run by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers’ Superannuation Committee and will be entitled initially to 30 days paid leave in the academic year.

5.3 The positions are temporary and subject to the successful completion of a probationary period of three months.