

Overview of redacted testimonies sent, unprompted, to Victoria College between Saturday 21 February and Friday 27 February, 2026 – in response to JEP article of Saturday 21 February.

“I am writing in response to the recent JEP article concerning the school’s support for neurodivergent pupils, and to your subsequent letter to parents. I can only imagine the impact this coverage will have had on you and, in particular, on the staff who work tirelessly to support the boys. Having experienced the school’s provision first-hand over a number of years, I felt it was important to acknowledge the dedication and care we have consistently encountered and I hope that you will relay this message to your team.

When we were first navigating [our son's] diagnosis, we genuinely believed we might need to look off-island to find the right environment for him, worried that no school would be accepting of him. In retrospect, Victoria College has proved to be the right place. The one-to-one support, the responsiveness of individual teachers, and the often invisible scaffolding around him have enabled him to achieve things that would not have been possible otherwise. We are deeply grateful for that and always will be. To that point I found the reporting in the JEP irresponsible, given the wider impact on families in the local community who may be considering their options. It would be unfortunate if prospective parents were discouraged from exploring what the school can offer based on these anonymous accounts alone and be left feeling that they may have to leave Jersey to find the right school.

I have also encouraged [my son] to speak with you directly should you feel that would be useful. As you will know, he would approach that conversation very honestly, reflecting both the strengths of his experience and any challenges he has encountered. From our perspective, the progress [he] has made has depended on open dialogue and shared responsibility between home and school. That partnership has been central. Supporting neurodivergent young people requires skill, investment, and balance, ensuring reasonable accommodations while also fostering independence and preparing them for the realities of adult life. We have felt that the school has approached that balance thoughtfully.

Please consider us at your disposal if there is any way we can be of support. The school has been a lifeline for our family, and we would be glad to contribute in whatever way is constructive.”

"After a significant family trauma, Victoria College offered extraordinary support to my son. Staff always showed compassion and understanding. Importantly, staff did not lower standards but offered careful and kind guidance, allowing him to rebuild his confidence. The opportunities and beliefs the school have provided enabled him to grow, lead and succeed. We will always be grateful for that."

“Speaking as a former OV I can say with absolute confidence that under the leadership of Dr Hughes and his dedicated team Victoria College has been transformed from the school I knew back in my time. In particular, the efforts made on inclusion and diversity as well as the emphasis on kindness are poles apart from how it used to be. I have also seen as a parent significant positive changes in the resources allocated to caring for those with different needs at the school”

“What truly made the difference to us as parents was the unwavering support from staff, the constant engagement, and the genuine care and commitment shown to him during those more difficult times — yourself included.

Our son simply would not be where he is today without that level of support in those early years. So many staff have always been incredibly supportive. Their guidance, patience, and belief in him have had a lasting impact.

Victoria College has been a place where our has been able to thrive, find his place, and grow in confidence. We truly believe he would not have achieved that in the same way anywhere else. The structure and environment have worked so well for him, providing both the consistency and encouragement he needed. A place to feel proud to be and part of. As parents, we have also felt heard and supported throughout — which has meant more to us than we can properly express.

We cannot thank you enough for the environment you are nurturing at the school. For us as a family, you have all been incredible. School for teenagers is never going to be entirely plain sailing for anyone regardless of needs, but we are deeply aware of — and thankful for — all that you do, often beyond what is seen.

Please know that you have our full support and appreciation and whilst often I am sure the boys do not express it, it doesn't go unnoticed that you support them in their endeavours or just knowing them by name when walking around campus. We hear the conversations, it means a lot!”

“It (the article) doesn't seem fair or reasonable, and I just wanted to let you know that you have my support and sympathy - both as a colleague and parent of a child at VC”

“As parents of a son with a diagnosis of ADHD, we wanted to reach out to share our experience, which has been overwhelmingly positive. Since joining the school from a parish primary setting, the difference in him has been clear to see. He has been, supported and encouraged.

We have received phone calls home to tell us he has done well in class. We are regularly told that he is a joy to teach. When support has been needed, it has been there. Communication has been open, constructive and kind. As parents, we have felt listened to and reassured at every stage.

From our family’s perspective, the commitment to pupils with additional needs is clear and greatly appreciated.”

“The article in the JEP really annoyed me. My experience is anything but. The team do an excellent job for my SEN boys. It feels very much like ‘people say’ and very one sided.

It maybe that Dr Hughes wants to leave it and let the paper become yesterday’s news, however it occurs to me that there are likely to be several parents who disagree with the article – as I did.

I am not a fan of this toxic unjustified culture of running local organisations down, particularly one that has quite frankly saved my boys. There are many SEN parents who support the school wholeheartedly and will make this week a little more bearable.”

“As a parent of a neurodiverse son at Victoria College (VC) I feel compelled to write and balance the views expressed in JEP article on the provision of SEND at the college.

Our experiences, both as a pupil and parents of a VC pupil, have been very different from those expressed and indeed has been extremely positive over the last number of years that he has attended college.

The article states...

“The report identified “positive intentions” and “pockets of good practice” but added that “strategic planning, leadership, system cohesion and the implementation of inclusive education remain underdeveloped and inconsistent.”

Our experience is that Victoria College does operate very good practice.

Even before the formal diagnosis was received, which is where our challenges lay that being with CAMHS, the SENCO at Victoria College was communicating with us and helping to put provisions in place, as it was clear to all that his diagnosis was simply the paperwork catch up with the situation in the classroom and at home.

I therefore did not experience the apparent resistance expressed in the article which I set out below.

“We had to fight to obtain recognition of my son’s neurodivergent diagnosis, and even after this, the support provided was minimal and ineffective, and even lead to harsher sanctions.”

My son has been supported by numerous teachers and when things were not going as planned in various subjects during his time at college, or when I have raised the flag as a parent and asked for help, it had always been met with support, consideration and an array of potential solutions. This has been both by individual subject teachers, as well as at the leadership level.

Whether a request for meeting to discuss solutions or interventions these have, without fail, been promptly accommodated, including responses during holidays, evenings and weekends so I do not recognise the views expressed.

I therefore strongly disagree that the leadership or wider staff are not sufficiently focused on SEND pupils at the college.

The article further quotes...

“It stressed that “pupils with SEND typically reported that they feel comfortable with their school and most parents reported having a positive relationship with their individual school.”

When he read the article my son asked to include his own comment... “any time there has been an issue related to my neurodiversity, the school has worked very hard to find a solution, and do find effective solutions lightning fast”

The quote continues...

However, review also found that “a significant minority of parents reported feeling that the mainstream education system is outdated and often unwelcoming for children with SEND.”

I think what needs to be realised here is that this is a minority and that where there are needs which are unable to be accommodated in a setting or due to other factors, whilst this needs to be addressed there is no one size fits all and it is not possible to accommodate every single individual preference and there this needs to be address at a more systemic level.

This is something that is often an issue in governmental systems which are notoriously inflexible- but they don't have to be if the government was to allow for change and to take a more flexible approach to the new reality of the level of neurodivergence in the general population, something that was little understood when the current systems were designed and implemented.

There are a number of accusations in the article which my son did not see as accurate as he had not experienced discriminatory or inappropriate treatment. He also did not recognise the assertions and we therefore comment on these more fully, for balance.

Segregation.

My son has never been segregated, except for exams, which he personally requested and sees as a way of achieving the best outcomes and results rather than as a means of highlighting difference or discrimination.

Unchecked bullying

My son experienced bullying in his early days at college, however this was dealt with quickly, appropriately, sustainably and with his differences in mind.

Managing out pupils

There are so many ways in which a neurodiversity may manifest and how it affects the individual and their needs therefore the current system has not been able to keep pace with these, but as with so many things it will never be possible to accommodate everything for everyone.

Victoria College is a fee paying, selective school and as such has many differing challenges to manage. Enabling students to achieve their best has always been, in my experience, a high priority. The college has in my son's view been fair and appropriate when dealing with pupils. If behaviour is disruptive and prevents others from learning this does need to be addressed. My son's learning has been impacted by the disruptive behaviour of others and was addressed.

In a world of tailored expectations, safeguarding and modern practices, finding the balance between addressing behavioural challenges in the classroom, allowing students to thrive and learn, needs to be balanced. This sometimes means that where behaviour is not appropriate it needs to be addressed, including with alternative venues for learning or behaviour management being more appropriate.

In my son's view **"any exclusion performed by the college is done not on the grounds of neurodiversity but on actions which the students can and should be held accountable for"**.

"Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities in all government-run schools, which concluded that "the current leadership, organisation, systems, strategies, oversight and accountability arrangements in relation of inclusive education in Jersey are not sufficiently effective".

This from our experience is a governmental level issue not one that should be levelled at the college.

The Jersey education system, which is so heavily dependent on UK exam boards and educational thought leadership, as currently designed was not set up for the understanding of difference or the demands and desired outcomes of an education that existing today.

Sometimes the interventions that might have supported my son more appropriately were not allowed by the exam boards and other external factors and not as a result of rigid application of rules designed by the college.

My son has, at times, struggled with the "system". Whether the timing and structure of the school day, the demands of homework or the pressure of exams, but has come to understand that for now if he is to thrive as a neurodivergent person he needs to find ways to work within a system that does not always meet his needs and we as a family and the college have collaborated on this as much as the system allows.

As we are all aware, from the published figures, many schools in Jersey, have overspent and much of that has been to meet pupil needs. The system not broken at grassroots level, it is in desperate need of a complete generational rethink at a much more fundamental level.

This is not a Victoria College issue at its core but one that has a much wider political, economic and systemic impact.

"Victoria College told the JEP in a joint statement that they took all matters relating to the wellbeing, safety and inclusion of children extremely seriously, and they were committed to listening to families, learning from lived experience, and working together to strengthen support for children and young people. Victoria College told the JEP in a joint statement that they took all matters relating to the wellbeing, safety and inclusion of children extremely seriously, and they were committed to listening to families, learning from lived experience, and working together to strengthen support for children and young people."

“Since speaking about what happened, I have become aware of other families whose neurodivergent children experienced very similar treatment. This strongly suggests a systemic issue rather than a series of individual errors.”

I would strongly disagree with this view; I do not recognise the treatment described and it is clearly from what I have expressed, which are the facts as my family has experienced them, that this is not the approach that family's who work with the college, its staff and collaborate experience.

In summary, I agree that the “educational system” needs modernisation and is not geared towards as much flexibility as some may need, especially with the level of diagnoses and recognition in recent years but that would require a complete overhaul at governmental level and maybe should be the area of focus especially with the upcoming election and not to single out one educational establishment which has, at least for my family delivered beyond expectation. “

“I felt the support for my son with his ADHD and Autism from the SENDCo and the team when he was at Victoria College was outstanding. Everyone was so supportive of him, the environment in Student Support was such a great resource for him and I truly believe he would never have done as well in his GCSEs if he had been at another school”

“I think the school is in an impossible situation, trying to support kids with additional needs whilst also trying to help those who do not have needs reach their full potential whilst trying to minimize the disruptions and distractions caused by other students.

There's no way that any school could offer a perfect environment to suit every different child's needs and I personally am grateful for the time and efforts you have invested in my son”

“My experience with College is that under your leadership the SEN support has hugely benefitted my son.

Despite his challenges he mostly feels very supported at school and even though he struggles academically the quality of care from the school is excellent.

I am forever grateful that your headship came at a time when my son started and I have seen first hand the change. My son has reaped constant benefit from everything you implemented and the ethos of kindness and support that you brought in.

Recently you personally gave [my son] individual support when he got his GCSE result in English.

You really are an awesome Headmaster”

“Just wanted to say that neither the article, nor the anonymised quotes, could be further from our own family experience, with more than one son with SEN-related needs, who has been, or is currently being supported in, their education at Victoria College.

We are, and continue to be, extremely grateful for all the support and dedication of the whole staffing and support team at school, for everything you all do for the whole community of boys learning at college, including our own!”

“The school, SENDCo and her team (and others) do an excellent job of looking after my SEN boys. There are many SEN parents who support the school wholeheartedly and will make this week a little more bearable.”

“You were really in my thoughts this weekend with the reports in the press. I’m really sorry that this has happened at a time when you are fighting so hard for the students who need support. I just wanted to you to know that I will always be grateful for you and all you have done and continue to do for my son”

“I just wanted to personally reach out to you and the rest of your team to offer you our support. Although we obviously have no insight into the case in question, from our perspective we have always been provided with reassurance that our son is part of a school community that is not only inclusive and welcoming, but truly supportive of every child as an individual.

We have complete confidence that, should our son ever need guidance, understanding, or simply someone in his corner, he would be met with compassion and encouragement. That means a great deal to us as parents, and we’re very grateful for the environment you’ve created. Thank you for everything you do”

“Since my son was diagnosed with ADHD and even before then whilst he was going through the testing, we have had nothing but support from the school. I know his extra needs are fairly low level compared to some but I don't think that matters. He has a few different provisions put in place for him and I really feel that the school has done everything they can to support him and because of that, he is doing excellently. Thank you for continuing to improve SEN provisions. They have come a long way over the years.”

“I know the advances that you and your colleagues have made to enhance and protect every student. Keep up the good work!”

“One student who regularly accesses SEN support felt so strongly about the article he went to the student support centre first thing on Monday morning to reassure them that they do an amazing job. He went on to say that he wished that the journalist would speak to the students, and their parents, who currently attend Victoria College.”

“We are very grateful to Dr Hughes and the school for the great support provided to our boys. It’s clear that wellbeing is a priority and exemplified with restrictions on mobile phone usage. If there have been any points that we had to raise with the school, then these are responded to expediently. Our youngest was going through a difficult patch, however VC were fully supportive and provided reassurance throughout. He is now settled and enjoying the school. This is testament to excellent leadership.”

“I’d like to let you know that during these times your school and staff have always given their best, listened, reflected, actioned various things that have allowed my son to grow into a very independent, successful young man. He talks highly of the SEND provision and values your school very highly and has in the past said it is the right place for him.

He’s accomplished so much more than I thought was possible (and I know that’s sounds like I felt he had limitations but that’s not what I mean!) and this is largely down to his experiences at school and the accommodations that have been made for him to achieve even when it’s been hard. He’s found his voice there. And more importantly he wants to share that through your internal prefect system- that speaks volumes to me.”

“Perhaps I could take this opportunity to share our thoughts on your letter yesterday. For our part, the strides made by the College in recent years are plain to see, particularly in the strong and consistent emphasis placed on kindness and respect. This comes through in so many ways. I hope the recent JEP article does not dishearten you from continuing to lead this important work with such visibility and conviction.”