

Tuition increases 9.7%, school surpasses financial aid goal amid UK inflation

Clara Martinez /
Lead Culture Editor

High School tuition will increase by 9.7% for the 2023-2024 school year following a 6% increase for the 2022-2023 school year.

Head of School Coreen Hester said the increase year-to-year is typically around four to five percent, but after two years of stagnation during COVID-19, the increases amount to what would have been four years of normal annual increases.

"The wisdom is, you always have to pay for it in the end," Hester said.

Tuition increase

The cost of enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year now stands at £38,000, up from £34,700. John Robinson has been the Director of Finance at the school for the last five years, and said one component of the tuition increase is "the cost of everything has gone up."

This is a result of the increasing Retail Price Index,

which is a measurement of inflation by recording the rate of price fluctuation. The Office for National Statistics reported the highest RPI since 1980 at 14.2% in October, 2022. The RPI between 2018 and 2021 was under 4% according to Robinson, rising to 10% in the last year.

The school offered an evening presented by Robinson and Hester called "By the Numbers" Feb. 16 to break down the school's budget and costs. Chair of the Board of Trustees Erin Roth said the impact of inflation on all of the families created more understanding around reasons for the increase.

"It wasn't a fun decision to make, it wasn't something that we wanted to do," Roth said. "People didn't like hearing the news, but I think, by and large, people understood the, sort of, economic situation we're all facing."

However, in the question period following the "By the Numbers" presentation, Roth said parents were curious about how the school was choosing to spend tuition money.

"People want to know, 'Well, are you really thinking

hard about what your operating costs are, are you really taking a close look at making sure those are under control?'" Roth said. "I would say that was sort of the theme of the feedback we heard that night, and that's completely fair, a very fair question."

Decision

Roth said the process for determining tuition begins in the fall of the previous academic year. It is discussed by the Board's Administrative Finance Committee, the Faculty Association and Staff Association. She said the Faculty Association and Staff Association "get feedback from employees to learn what's important to them," whether there be a prioritization for a salary increase, benefits, professional development, or other areas. The groups then make a proposal to the Administrative Finance Committee that she said considers both the requests from employees and "what makes sense for our families, because families are footing the bill."

She said the Board considers other schools and how they have reacted to the cost of living crisis, as well as the tuition's

impact on financial aid and both parents and faculty.

"At the same time, we're thinking about current families, we're thinking about our employees and how they can sustain what they need to sustain given their current income," Roth said.

Hester said 75% of revenue from tuition goes toward faculty salaries, thus causing the previously consistent tuition increase of four to five percent per year.

"We wanted to make sure we gave a good raise to faculty to keep them in place," Hester said. "Then we had of course other expenses, and we tried to minimize the other expenses and always prioritize faculty salaries."

Financial aid

Robinson said the Board of Trustees set a "strategic priority" to increase financial aid to 12% of tuition revenues, which was 10.1% in the 2018-2019

school year. The school surpassed the goal this year with 12.9% of tuition revenue directed toward financial aid, according to Robinson.

As Head of Admissions, Jodi Warren said students are accepted to the school blind of financial need, and then families apply and determine whether it is possible to accept the offer of admission. Although she said about 10 to 15 new students enter the school receiving financial aid,

"priority is given to enrolled students" first. Robinson said the school then budgets the amount available for financial aid

based on the assumption that the child will graduate from the school when considering students with incoming need.

"We give the child a place and then the money goes to match the place," Robinson said.

Overall, the percentage of revenue directed toward financial aid has risen greatly in the

last decade; Warren said the amount was 4% in 2010 and now stands at nearly 13%.

Hester said the school is committed to goals of increasing the percentage of tuition that is directed toward financial aid to bring socioeconomic diversity to the student body.

"You really want a diversity of people on financial aid, and financial aid is about having one aspect of diversity in the school, which is socioeconomic," Hester said. "You don't want all people for whom the tuition is, you know, I'll just write the check. You actually want to include students who might not be able to attend and pay those fees families can't but who will offer something special to the student body."

COVID-19 impacts

One academic year of three years that were affected by COVID, Roth said employees were not given a raise. She said the tuition increase had already been announced for the 2020-21 school year before lockdown, and the school decided to negate the increase but increase faculty salaries as anticipated.

We wanted to make sure we gave a good raise to faculty.

- Head of School
Coreen Hester

Europe - Annual Private School Tuition

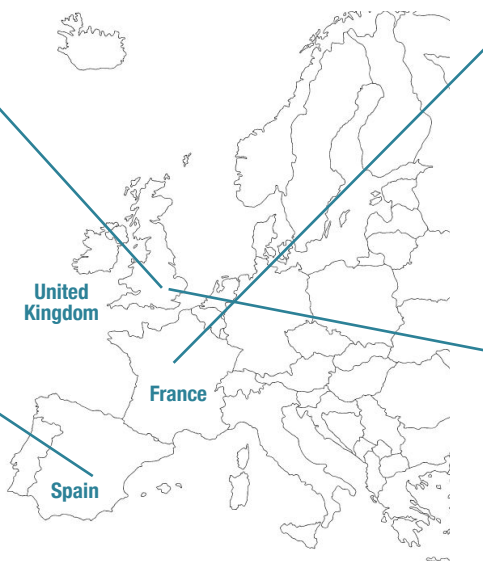
Southbank International School

Grade 9 & 10
£11,800

Grade 11 & 12
£12,380

American School in Madrid

Grades 9-12
€21,279



American School in Paris

Grades 9-12
€ 36,550

ACS International School Cobham

Grade 9 & 10
£31,780

Grade 11
£31,850

Grade 12
£32,030

United States - Annual Private School Tuition

Harvard-Westlake School

Grades 9-12
\$46,900

St. Mark's School of Texas

Grade 9
\$36,224

Grades 10 & 11
\$38,601

Grade 12
\$37,792



Trinity School

Grades 9-12
\$58,495

Commonwealth School

Grades 9-12
\$52,502

Sidwell Friends School

Grades 9-12
\$51,650

“A year ago, nobody would have predicted that we’d be in this inflationary environment right now.”

- Chair of the Board of Trustees Erin Roth

This was due in part, Robinson said, to “saving on trips and other active extracurricular activities” in the 2020-21 school year, despite “extra cleaning and other additional costs.”

For the 2021-22 school year, Roth said there was a 0% tuition increase and faculty raise. Then, for the current academic year, both the tuition and faculty salaries increased.

Because of prevailing uncertainty throughout the years of COVID, Roth said the Board was not inclined to change tuition, although they knew it would inevitably increase again.

“We’re concerned about raising tuition at a time of such uncertainty, you know, so we’re trying to be sensitive to that,” Roth said. “At the same time, we knew we would be raising tuition in the future.”

While Roth said one con-

cern during the COVID years was the impact of the pandemic on enrollment, Hester said this is no longer a concern. Last year, Hester said the school had its “second highest re-enrollment in history.”

Inflation

The school’s income functions as a charity as a non-profit, which Robinson said means that no profit is generated “more or less” from one year to the next. Thus, he said the school must adjust to the state of the economy to amend operating expenses.

“The aim is for school to break even,” Robinson said. “So really, if the costs increase, the tuition fees have to increase.”

In addition, Roth said the widespread use of the term

“ASL bubble” should not be extended to how the community views the school’s finances because inflation within the U.K. has a direct impact on spending.

“What happens in the larger economy impacts our own budgeting,” Roth said. “I mean, a year ago, nobody would have predicted that we’d be in this inflationary environment right now.”

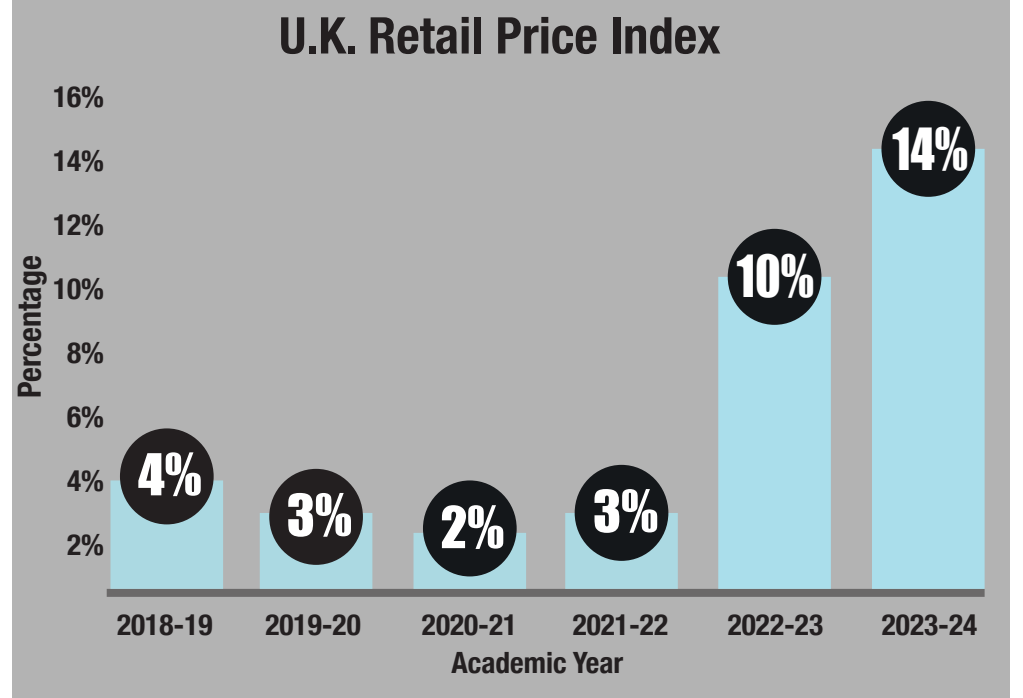
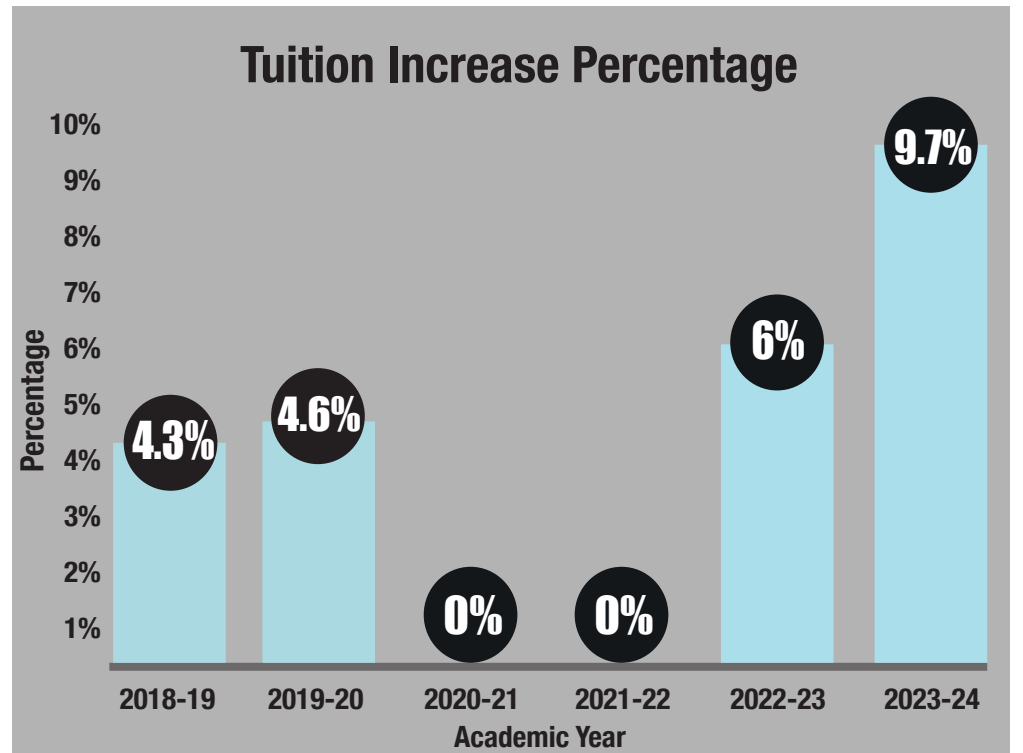
As a result, Robinson said he would expect that with declining inflation rates, he would expect tuition to “drop to those levels to match it.”

Beyond tuition, Robinson said 6% of the school’s revenue comes from the Endowment Fund and donations from families. He said he attributes the school’s “margin for excellence” to the additional money that comes through donations.

“If you think, you’ve got, you know, that the electricity has to get paid for, the cleaning has to be done,” Robinson said. “But having that extra 6% of money really makes the difference to the programs and what the school can offer.”

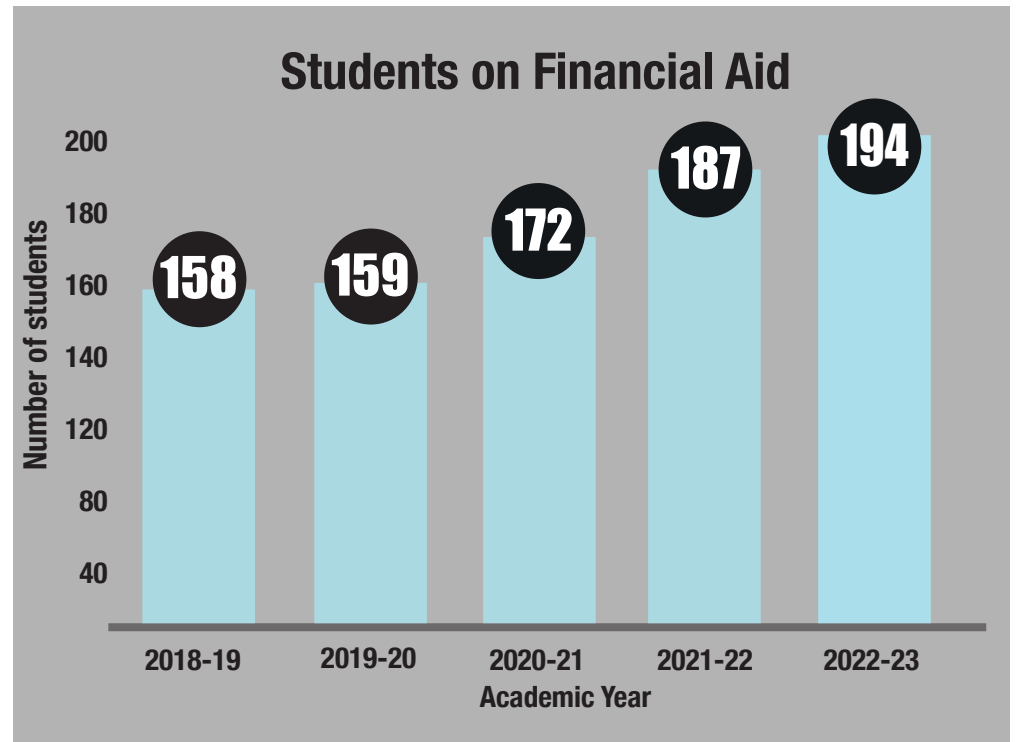
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- Director of Finance John Robinson



Timeline

Winter Quarter	
Faculty Association and Staff Association discuss	Email announcement detailing 2023-24 tuition
Fall Quarter	
Administrative Finance Board on the Board of Trustees discuss	Spring Quarter
	Feb. 16 "By the Numbers" presentation to parents



Source: Chair of the Board of Trustees Erin Roth

Source: Director of Finance John Robinson