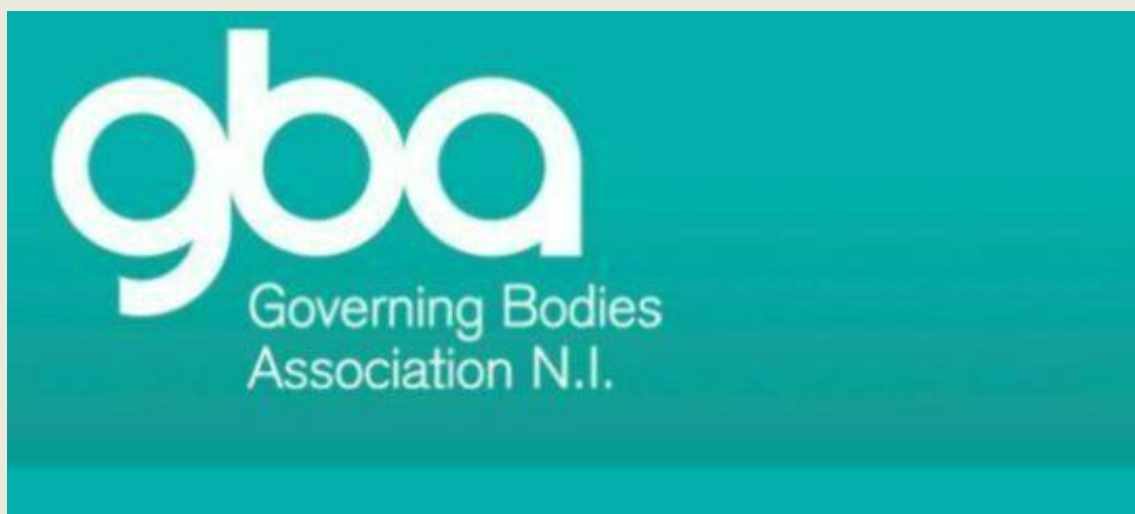


**GBA News - Tuesday 30th April**

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## **Voluntary Grammar Schools and Specialist Provision**

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The GBA has been engaging with the Department of Education and the

Education Authority regarding a model for Specialist Provision in voluntary grammar schools. We have recently been assured that the model, in terms of funding and process, is the same as for any other sector.

As you will be aware the Department recently issued a survey, seeking to find out whether schools are in a position to establish a Specialist Provision, and what support would be required.

Included below is information on the most common types of specialist class in post-primary schools, number of pupils in each class, staffing requirements and amount of funding available.

Provision/ Class Type:	Max no. of Pupils	Staffing:	Funding for:
Learning	14	1 Teacher 1 CA	1 Teacher with up to two additional SEN points.  1 CA (SEN) NJC pts 5-6
Social Communication /Autism	8	1 Teacher 1 CA	As above for class size 1-4 pupils  As above with additional CA for >5 pupils

Each newly set-up class receives a lump sum of £3,000 to purchase resources, paid to a school in the Autumn term of the year the new class becomes operational. The EA also provides an initial furniture and equipment budget associated with any set up works required.

In many cases, accommodation costs will run in excess of the funding outlined above however schools are encouraged to continue to express their interest (see funding announcement below)

If you wish to discuss Specialist Provisions please [contact us](#).  
More information is also available [here](#).

## Minister Announces SEN Capital Investment Programme

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The Education Minister has today announced a programme of capital investment for the development of school facilities to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The new SEN Capital Programme will deliver; up to eight new special schools over the next 10 years; new builds for a number of existing special schools; an extension and refurbishment programme for special schools; accommodation for specialist classes in mainstream schools as well as additional maintenance and equipment funding.

An annual £5million maintenance programme for special schools as well as £4million to provide equipment grants to both special schools and schools with specialist provisions, is also included.

1. The SEN capital programme will have four distinct strands as follows:

- an annual ring-fenced resource maintenance and equipment programme for special schools.
- creation of additional Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools classes (SPiMS).
- extension of existing special schools to provide additional places; and
- new special school provision

The programme will require approximately half a billion pounds of capital investment over the next decade.

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## GBA Meets with Education Minister

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GBA representatives (pictured below) met with Education Minister, Paul Givan MLA at Stormont Parliament Buildings this month to discuss a range of matters pertinent to voluntary grammar schools and ongoing issues affecting the wider education system.



*Left to right: Stephen Black, Principal of Ballymena Academy, Paul Givan MLA, Education Minister, Nuala O'Neill, GBA Chief Executive, Leo O'Reilly, GBA Chairperson, Ronnie Hassard, GBA Vice Chairperson*

Representatives emphasised the significant financial pressures facing schools and the increasing number of schools in Northern Ireland that are facing a deficit budgetary position.

Other key issues raised included:

- The Independent Review of Education
- Canteen costs
- Classification of a voluntary grammar school as a non-departmental public body.
- Area Planning matters such as post-16 provision and the normalisation pilot.



# Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

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## **Education Committee**

Included below is some of the activity from the Education Committee over the month of April 2024:

The committee met with Department of Education (DE) Officials to hear an update on SEN policy as follows:

- An end-to-end review of SEND to identify the required changes is in process.
- One such change is the implementation of “Local Integrated Teams” from September 2024, which aims to remove the “gatekeeper” role of Educational Psychologists in order to provide services more efficiently and effectively.

The committee heard from DE's Director of Transport and Food in Schools who indicated that around 90,000 pupils across Northern Ireland avail of transport at a cost of £110 million per annum. DE advised that applying the eligibility criteria consistently is one way of managing the significant cost. Members were also advised that a review of school meals and uniform grants is underway.

Richard Pengelly, recently seconded Chief Executive of the Education Authority, met with the committee and pledged a commitment to working collaboratively with schools. Members also heard about the work being undertaken to support the set up of Specialist Provisions.

Further information on the work of the committee, future work programme and recordings of committee meetings are available [here](#)

## **Minister's Questions**

Today at the Assembly, the Education Minister answered questions from MLAs on a range of matters, with a particular focus on Special Education Needs placements.

The Minister discussed the work being undertaken by the EA to create placements for pupils in 2024/25 and in the longer term, with members raising issues such as overcrowded sites and reliance on modular accommodation.

Referencing the recently announced capital programme, the Minister stressed that the investment will ensure more strategic planning, with an education estate equipped to support the needs of pupils.

The session is available to watch on the [NI Assembly website](#).

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## NIAC Inquiry into Funding of Public Services

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The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) recently published a third report on the funding of public services in Northern Ireland. This has been informed by evidence gathered since March 2023, which included evidence submitted by the GBA.

The report serves as an overview of the situation facing Northern Ireland's public services. In turn, it aims to inform upcoming decisions, to be taken by the Government and the restored Executive and Assembly, on future public service funding and delivery in Northern Ireland.

Regarding education funding, the report states: "*After years of under-investment, the education sector has been struggling to fulfil its statutory duties. Spending per pupil has been consistently lower in Northern Ireland than in England....*

The report recommends that: "*A review of the exact calculation and assessment of the needs-based factor should be included as part of the terms of reference for the upcoming Fiscal Framework negotiations between the Government and Northern Ireland Executive.*"

The Committee noted calls, however, for this change to apply to NI's overall block grant as of 2022, not just periodic increases in it from April this year. MPs added that under the Government's plans, NI funding will only slowly rise to a point below which it should never have been permitted to fall in the first place.

The full report is available [here](#).

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## The Wolfson Foundation - Funding Opportunities for Post-Primary Schools

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The Wolfson Foundation supports high-achieving state-funded secondary schools and sixth form colleges to improve the teaching at GCSE and A-Level of subjects that need specialist spaces and equipment. Grants are awarded towards capital projects that help schools to create and improve these facilities.

The key dates for the next round of applications are:

Open to Stage 1 applications: 1 May, 00.01  
Stage 1 application deadline: 10 June, 23.59  
Stage 2 application deadline: 15 July, 23.59  
Funding decision: December

For more information such as eligibility criteria and previously funded projects, please visit the [Wolfson Foundation website](#)

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## Study Published on Leadership Wellbeing

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[The well-being and work-related stress of senior school leaders in Wales and Northern Ireland during COVID-19 “educational leadership crisis”: A cross-sectional descriptive study](#)” was undertaken in the UK by Professor Gill Rowlands (Newcastle University), Dr Emily Marchant (Swansea University), Professor Lucy Bray (Edge Hill University) and Dr Joanna Dowd (Freelance Researcher (Health), Northern Ireland).

It looked at the burden and stress that UK school headteachers and senior leadership staff experienced in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study received 151 responses from senior school leaders in Northern Ireland during January-May 2022.

The study made the following recommendations:

1. A more strategic approach to supporting the well-being of educational leaders in Wales and Northern Ireland is essential, including joint working between the health/social care and education sectors to provide mental health support to senior leaders.
2. In the short term, the mental health and well-being supports currently available from both the education and health/social care sectors should be more explicitly highlighted to senior school leaders.
3. Further research into what mental health support and resources are needed at individual, organisational and systems level to better support senior leaders in their role.
4. Greater clarity on the extent and quality of leadership development provision to specifically support leaders' well-being is needed. This is particularly important during periods of major education system level reforms; leadership is critical to support school and system improvement and ensuring ownership by practitioners.

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## Shared Education News

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The Education Authority in collaboration with BBC Northern Ireland welcomed 180 pupils to Queen's Film Theatre Belfast on Tuesday 16th April for a special screening of the multi-award-winning documentary 'Once Upon A Time in Northern Ireland'.

The screening of episode two from the series was part of a new education pilot aimed at supporting students as they seek to understand the legacy of the troubles. Following the screening one of the creators of the BBC drama *Blue Lights*, Declan Lawn, hosted a Q&A discussion panel with award-winning director James Bluemel and cast members answering pupil questions.

For general updates, TPL training modules and further information, you can also access the EA's Shared education hub, using this [link](#).

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## JCQ Updates

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The links below are from the April edition of the JCQ's newsletter which can be subscribed to [here](#).

New and Updated Information:

- [Instructions for conducting examinations \(updated 6 March\)](#)
- [Webinar for exams officers to support with summer 2024](#)
- [JCQ suspected malpractice: policies and procedures \(updated 6 March\)](#)
- [Post-results services: information and guidance to centres on general and vocational qualifications \(published 17 April\)](#)
- [Ofqual's letter to all schools and colleges \(18 April\)](#)

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## GBA Governor Meetings

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Please be advised that the GBA can provide presentations to Boards Of Governors regarding the remit and work of the GBA should you find this helpful.

Please contact [Nuala O'Neill](#) if you wish to avail of this. Thank you.

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## Advertising of Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies on the GBA Website

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The GBA provides a free advertising service for our member schools. Job vacancies are posted on our website and Twitter page. The Education Authority website also links to the GBA jobs section.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, **please [contact us](#), using our [job template](#) and allow at least **TWO WORKING DAYS** for posts to be uploaded.** Thank you for your cooperation with this.