

GBA News - Wednesday 26th June



Chairperson's Message

Dear member school,

I trust you are well.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone in your schools for your commitment in providing quality education in such challenging budgetary circumstances and to inform you of the forward work programme of the GBA.

The GBA recognises the difficulties of the current landscape and will continue to advocate for additional funding for the Northern Ireland Education System, as well as bringing forward key issues on behalf of our schools.

The key strategic aim of the GBA is to protect and advance the interests and well-being of voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland. To help achieve this, our plans for the upcoming academic year include:

- One to one meetings with school Principals to identify challenges and opportunities.
- Policy day for member schools

- Media training
- Model policy resources tailored to voluntary grammar schools.
- Representing schools on various forums such as Management Side, Integrated Education Act Steering Group, Area Planning Governance Groups, SEND Transformation Project Reference and Advisory Groups, and various other cross-organisational groups.
- Engagement with the Department of Education, politicians, media, community groups and other education stakeholders.
- Responding to key consultations and contributing to policy development.

Our work in these areas is guided by the members of our Executive Committee drawn from schools across Northern Ireland.

We look forward to continuing to engage with you this academic year and wish you and your students a restful summer break.

With best wishes,

Leo O'Reilly, GBA Chairperson.

*****GBA Survey - Reminder*****



The GBA recently issued a survey to member school Bursars regarding teaching costs following the recent pay award. The results will be used to help support our political engagement in the coming months.

Please note that the survey has been issued to Bursars. If you could encourage a response, it would be greatly appreciated.

[GBA School Survey - June 2024](#)

Thank you for your assistance with this.

Area Planning

Operational Plan 2

The planning year for Operational Plan 2: 2024-26 is has now concluded and will be announced publicly in September 2024. The plan contains a number of short-term workstreams which typically complete within the lifespan of the plan, and a number of other longer-term projects, a small number of which have carried over from Operational Plan 1: 2022-2024.

Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools

The Area Planning Local Groups will reconvene in September 2024 for a workshop to identify pressure areas for SEN placements across Northern Ireland and consider options for specialist provision classes for the various key stages and pathways.

If you wish to bring forward an expression of interest or have a general discussion about the specialist provision, please [contact us](#).

Minister Announces School Uniform Policy Consultation

Education Minister, Paul Givan MLA has launched a public consultation seeking views on school uniform policy.

The consultation focuses on two key areas:

- a. introducing statutory guidance; and,
- b. introducing a cap on uniform costs.

The Department of Education currently has guidance in place which provides advice to schools on what they should consider when developing their uniform policies. While the existing guidance is detailed and advises on many elements of uniform policy, schools are not currently legally obliged to comply with it.

The Minister of Education plans to introduce statutory guidance so that all school governing bodies will be required to review their school uniform policy and ensure costs are manageable for parents/carers.

The consultation seeks views on what should be contained within any statutory guidance particularly around the cost and affordability of school uniforms, the use of branded items and single supplier arrangements. Views are also sought on the proposal to introduce cost control measures, such as a price cap.

The consultation will run from 20 June 2024 until 27 September 2024. Further detail and information on how to respond is available [here](#).

Marie Curie - Schools Bereavement Programme



The GBA recently met with Joan McEwan, Associate Director of Policy and Public Affairs at Marie Curie, and Christine Irvine, Senior Policy Manager at Marie Curie, to discuss a new programme in Northern Ireland addressing the need for bereavement information and support for children and young people in educational settings.

Marie Curie's Programme has included piloting a full day interactive training with classroom teaching staff (including whole school training) and piloting of a Lesson Plan on Loss & Bereavement (targeted at post-primary students), including training with 23 voluntary grammar schools.

The teacher training was done in partnership with CRUSE and an independent child bereavement counsellor. Marie Curie has also commissioned a set of questions on attitudes to grief education and experience of bereavement support in schools in two surveys- Public Attitudes to Death and Dying and ARK Young Life and Times Survey. Some further info is available here: [Schools Bereavement Programme \(mariecurie.org.uk\)](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/schools-bereavement-programme)

The range of findings from the programme and recommendation will be published in a report being launched in November 2024.

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

NI Assembly Education Committee

The Education Committee met again with [Panel members](#) for the [Independent Review of Education](#) on two occasions this month with the 1st briefing focusing on a number of areas such as educational disadvantage, early years, and the qualifications system.

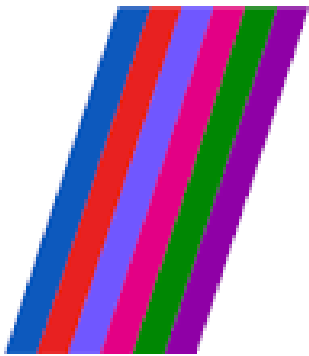
A second briefing was held this week in which MLAs scrutinised aspects of the review report in greater depth, including:

- Early intervention
- SEND transformation
- Education budget gap and pressures
- Capital budget
- Curriculum offering
- Innovative area planning solutions

Overall, Panel members stressed the significant overarching concerns regarding the budget situation and the clear need for reform and investment in NI's education system. The Education Committee plans to continue their engagement with the Panel and is urging the Minister to bring forward the Department's priority areas.

The GBA issues a weekly political update to schools. If you would like to receive this, please [contact us](#).

Shared Education News



PEACEPLUS

Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government

A cross border consortium led by the Education Authority has been awarded €34.5m (£29m) of PEACEPLUS funding to support shared learning in formal education settings across Northern Ireland and the border counties.

The Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education (ASPIRE) project will bring students from different cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds together to learn, while also providing joint training schemes to upskill educators to better equip them to facilitate shared learning.

The project aims to engage 111,000 pupils and 1,761 educators over the next four and a half years. The programmes will be delivered at every level including pre-school, primary and post primary schools, primarily targeted at those with no or limited prior engagement in shared education.

Further updates and information on PEACEPLUS is available on the Shared EU Programmes Body [website](#).

SEND Transformation Update

As part of the wider [End to End review of SEND](#), the EA is reforming its services for children and young people who are at Stage 2 of the SEND Code of Practice (before a statutory assessment may be required). This will be through the establishment of new local integrated SEND support teams which are designed to wrap services and support around the needs of the child or

young person and their school.

The EA is adopting a staged approach to the implementation of Local Integrated Teams from September 2024, with the Autumn term being used to improve readiness, and January 2025 for full implementation of the new model. The EA has produced a [short video](#) which provides more detail on the process.

Equality Commission NI - Employer Training Programme

The Equality Commission is now providing a number of free online employer training sessions, focusing on a number of important equality issues and will expand to cover additional topics over the coming months.

The webinars are based on Northern Ireland equality law and are therefore of relevance, primarily, to employers and service-providers who employ staff in Northern Ireland.

Further details on the training sessions and how to register is available [here](#).

GBA Summer 2024 Closure Dates

In order to facilitate bank holidays and staff leave, please note that the GBA office will be closed from **Thursday 11th July - Tuesday 16th July inclusive**.

Please note the cut off date of **Monday 8th July at 5pm** for receipt of job requests to be uploaded before the summer closure period. Thank you.

Advertising of Teaching and Support roles on the GBA Website

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.

****PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR JOB TEMPLATE HAS BEEN UPDATED AND IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD [HERE](#)****

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, **please contact us, with the completed job template for each post, and allow at least TWO WORKING DAYS for posts to be uploaded, noting the summer closure dates above.**

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