

GBA News - Wednesday 27th March 2024



GBA AGM 2024 - Overview

The GBA hosted its Annual General Meeting on 13th March 2024 at the Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Bellaghy, which was attended by member school Principals and Governors, GBA Executive members and consultants, and GBA staff.

Guest Speaker, Gerry Campbell, CEO of CCEA, thanked voluntary grammar school Principals for their close collaboration with CCEA and welcomed future partnership working to address ongoing and emerging challenges.

Drawing parallels with the recent Independent Review of Education report, Mr. Campbell emphasised the need for investment in education, industrial peace, and ministerial input into driving change and improvement. Also highlighted was the need for curriculum reform and scrutiny of the current examinations system to ensure parity and fitness of purpose for children and young people.

Guest speaker, Avril McColgan, Business Development Manager at [Vivup](#) joined the meeting remotely, and provided delegates with an overview of an employee benefits scheme which includes options such as a salary sacrifice car scheme and various discounts to help employees with the cost of living

through tax and National Insurance savings. Further information is available by [contacting us](#) or visiting the [Vivup website](#).

Delegates also heard from GBA Chairperson, Leo O'Reilly who provided an overview of the GBA's work programme since the last AGM, and GBA CEO, Nuala O'Neill who provided key updates on Area Planning and Management Side.

Other AGM business included nominations to the GBA Executive Committee as follows:

- Jacqui O'Neill, St. Louis Grammar School, Ballymena
- Archie Murray Thomson, St. Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt
- Jacqueline Weir, Belfast Royal Academy
- Leo O'Reilly, Our Lady and St. Patrick's College Knock

Thank you to all who attended.

Area Planning Update

Normalisation Pilot

On 22 March 2024, Education Minister Paul Givan announced the outcome of the Normalisation Pilot process. As a result of the Pilot, 21 schools - 13 primary schools and eight post-primary schools have been identified as being suitable for Normalising.

The list below details the schools who participated in the Pilot and the outcome for each individual school.

[Normalising - list of Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)

The Department has since written to each school involved in the Pilot process and to the Planning and Managing Authorities, Trustees and Sectoral Support Bodies to advise of the outcome.

The GBA will now engage with those schools that have not progressed under the normalisation pilot, and with the Area Planning governance structures, to

discuss the inclusion of the schools/ areas in future Operational Plans.

Operational Plan 2

A draft of Operational Plan 2 (OP2) has now been completed by the Education Authority in conjunction with sectoral bodies. The draft document will be further scrutinised by the Area Planning Working and Steering Groups for final approval, for publishing in September 2024.

Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMs)

Specialist Provision is a key area of focus in Area Planning given the rising number of children and young people with additional needs. A list of approved provisions to date is available [here](#).

The Education Authority has recently added to its [website](#) to include an expression of interest form and to provide further information/ resources as follows:

- Pupil Pathways
- General Information
- Accommodation
- Training and Support
- Universal Support
- Targeted Support
- Specialist Support
- Area Planning Approvals
- Register Interest
- Training Available Programme

If you would like to discuss any aspect of Area Planning please [contact us](#).

NIAC Inquiry into Integrated Education - Survey

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) has been conducting an inquiry into Integrated Education, to which the GBA submitted written evidence, and provided oral evidence at a session last month.

The Committee has now concluded the oral evidence sessions for its inquiry and has developed a survey to gather more views.

Survey Information

MPs on the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, are seeking a range of views from the public about integrated Education in Northern Ireland. How do you feel about Integrated Education? What do you believe is most important when choosing a school for yourselves or your children or young people?

The answers and examples entered will be used by the Committee to inform their report, helping to shape the conclusions and recommendations made to the UK Government and NI Assembly on Integrated Education in Northern Ireland.

The Committee does not, as a rule, pursue individual cases, but it wants to hear about your thoughts and experiences to gain a better understanding of people's attitudes towards Integrated Education.

This survey will be open until midnight on Sunday 31 March and will take around 8 minutes to complete. It can be found [here](#).



Photograph: (L to R) Mark Baker, CSSC; Eve Bremner, CCMS; Leo O'Reilly, GBA and Seamus Bradley, EA, who provided oral evidence to the NIAC inquiry into integrated education.

Evidence sessions are available to watch [here](#).

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates



Education Committee

- 20/03/24: Prior to the Easter recess (23rd March-7th April), the Education Committee met to hear from the Education Minister, the Mental Health Champion, and the following youth groups: SSUNI and Youth Forum; Diverse Youth NI; Youth Assembly; NICCY Panel.
- 13/03/24: Committee members spoke with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta about issues specific to the Irish Medium Sector such as recruitment of bilingual teachers in subject specialisms. They also spoke with Dale Heaney and Ashleigh Mitford (both from DE's Tackling Disadvantage team) about period product statutory regulations, and to Suzanne Kingon, and colleagues about the work of the sustainability and infrastructure group within the Department of Education. Suzanne explained that the Department currently has a static budget in a climate

of significant rising construction costs, describing the situation as a crisis and unsustainable without additional capital funding.

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

Minister's Questions

- 08/04/24: Minister's oral questions
- Written questions include the following topics: School Enhancement Programme (SEP), budget deficits, sign language in the curriculum, and what legislation the Minister intends on addressing during the current mandate. Questions are available [here](#).

In answering questions around SEP, the Minister stated:

"Budget constraints and pressures regarding Special Educational Needs placements and urgent health and safety works mean future investment will have to be prioritised in line with available budget. I will continue to make the case for increased investment in the education estate, to allow much-needed projects to be delivered."

Regarding legislation, Mr. Givan indicated that he is currently considering legislative priorities for inclusion in a Legislative Programme to be agreed by the Executive and notified to the Assembly in due course.

Education Minister and Chair of EA welcome secondment of new Chief Executive

The Board of the Education Authority (EA) has agreed to the Education Minister's proposal to second Richard Pengelly to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with effect from 15 April 2024.

Richard will replace Sara Long who is leaving the post after five years to take up another appointment.

In welcoming the Board's agreement, Education Minister Paul Givan said: **“The Education system is facing a period of unprecedented challenges and requires a senior leader to build on the positive work carried out to date and to continue to take forward critical transformation to meet the needs of all of our children and young people.**

...Richard is an experienced senior leader with a track record of delivering transformation in complex multi-disciplinary public sector organisations. The Education system is facing significant operational challenges, not least in terms of the delivery of Special Educational Needs provision, and while I recognise that it will take time to address such issues, Richard has the experience and skill, working with the EA Board, to deliver real change.”

Mr. Pengelly's profile is available [here](#).

Shared Education News

The GBA recently attended a Shared Education Stakeholder Forum Workshop which was led by DE and EA and attended by various educational bodies. EA provided an overview of the current landscape and an evaluation of the Peace IV project.

The evaluation indicated many positive outcomes including a positive impact on pupils' respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion. It also suggested that, sometimes, Shared Education is not fully understood or valued in the way intended.

Stakeholders discussed the various challenges with participation in Shared Education and identified factors to improve the experience, such as greater scope and flexibility for schools to tailor projects and more information on models of best practice.

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

GBA Governor Meetings

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.

GBA Easter Closure Dates 2024

Please note that the GBA office will be closed from Friday 29th March 2024 and will reopen as normal week beginning 8th April 2024.

Job post requests will be processed as usual when we reopen. Thank you for your cooperation with this.

Advertising of Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies 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.

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.
