
GBA News - Friday 30th August



Chairperson's Message

Dear Member School,

I hope you are well and feeling refreshed as we embark upon the 2024/25 academic year.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our schools and pupils on their excellent examination results. This year we have seen a return to pre-pandemic arrangements and standards, and Northern Ireland pupils continue to outperform their counterparts in England and Wales.

Please look out for our monthly newsletters throughout the year in which

we will continue to keep schools regularly updated on the work of the GBA.

We look forward to engaging with you this 2024/25 academic year and wish you and your students every success.

With best wishes,

Leo O'Reilly, GBA Chairperson.

GBA Political Engagement

The GBA recently met with the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee, Nick Mathison MLA, to discuss matters pertinent to voluntary grammar schools and the wider education system. Areas discussed included:

- Education funding concerns
- Classification of Voluntary Grammar schools as Non-Departmental Public Bodies.
- Capital Build Programme
- Recruitment/ staffing issues
- Area Planning
- Sixth form provision

We also raised the potential implications for NI voluntary grammar schools of the UK Government proposals to introduce VAT on private school fees from 1st January 2025 (See article below for further information).

Live Consultations

[Technical consultation on the VAT and business rates changes affecting private schools \(closes: 15th September 2024\)](#)

The UK government has published a [technical note](#) outlining the design, scope, and expected impact of applying 20% VAT to private school fees across the UK.

[Draft legislation on the VAT policy change, accompanied by an explanatory note](#), has also been published alongside this technical note. The UK government welcomes comments from interested stakeholders on the questions contained within the technical note, and on the draft VAT legislation to ensure it achieves the government's policy objectives.

The GBA is engaging with stakeholders regarding the proposals and potential impacts on NI voluntary grammar schools. We will keep you updated on the matter.

Review of School Uniform Policy (closes: 27th September 2024)

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

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

The GBA's response to the school uniform consultation is focused on key principles which could be applied by governors when developing their respective school uniform policy with a view to increasing affordability and accessibility for parents/caregivers. We will share this with you in due course.

GBA member schools, as independent entities, will have their own individual and specific views regarding the Department's proposals and questions within the consultation document, therefore, we would also encourage individual responses from schools (for further information and

to respond, click [here](#)).

Domestic Abuse Safe Leave (closes: 27th September 2024)

This consultation seeks to inform the public about intentions to introduce regulations, under and in accordance with provisions of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) 2022, to entitle employees and workers, who are victims of domestic abuse up to 10 days paid safe leave in each leave year for the purpose of dealing with issues related to that abuse.

Responses to this consultation will help the Department for the Economy to determine:

- how to develop a legislative framework which enables employers to provide support to employees who are dealing with the challenges of domestic abuse
- the process for taking safe leave
- the regulatory, equality and other impacts of the policy.

Further information is available [here](#).

Area Planning Updates

Operational Plan 2: 2024-2026

Operational Plan 2 (OP2) outlines the area planning activity to be taken forward over the next two years in both mainstream and specialist settings, across the Local Government Districts (LGDs) of Northern Ireland.

The Plan is due to be published in the coming weeks.

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 specialist provision in mainstream schools, please [contact us](#).

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

The NI Assembly summer recess period, which included a recall to discuss opposition to racism, comes to a close on 1st September 2024.

The 1st plenary session will be held on Monday 9th September. The Education Committee will meet on Wednesday 11th September to discuss Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) with representatives from DE, EA, CCEA and ETI, as part of their inquiry into RSE.

We will provide more detail on assembly business in our weekly political updates, due to resume after the summer recess period.

If you would like to receive our weekly political updates, please [contact us](#).

Shared Education News

The Department of Education has awarded the construction contract for the Strule Shared Education Campus to Woodvale Lowry Joint Venture Limited.

The local company will deliver the £375million shared education facility on the site of the former Lisanelly Army Barracks in Omagh. Construction will

start later this year and the new campus is due to open in September 2028.

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 FOR 2024/25 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.

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