
GBA News – Friday 13th December



GBA Attends Workforce Planning Conference

The GBA recently attended a workforce planning conference, the aim of which was to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing schools in Northern Ireland in relation to recruiting and retaining staff.

Having engaged with our member schools on this matter for the past number of years, we are acutely aware of the pressures around staffing, particularly in STEM subjects, in rural and border areas, and increasingly across all subject areas and demographics. We are also aware of the longstanding issues around recruitment and retention of support staff, including classroom assistants, technicians and canteen staff.

The GBA has been campaigning for work in this area and the conference was a welcome opportunity to collectively raise the issues outlined above and discuss the impact on the education sector, as well as

solutions for moving forward, providing much needed impetus for the delivery of strategic workforce planning across education in Northern Ireland.

The conference findings will be used to develop a business case to establish a dedicated workforce planning team which will be core to moving forward with plans to shape how we attract and retain workforce in education in NI.

Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum

The Minister of Education recently announced that he was commissioning a strategic review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The review will make a series of policy recommendations regarding the purpose, design, specification and implementation of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It is also expected to provide a strategic assessment of the current curriculum within the international context.

The review will:

- identify emerging curricular themes and key issues of public/political/media interest;
- consider the role of curriculum design in tackling educational disadvantage and reducing educational inequalities;
- produce coherent proposals and recommendations to support the future development/reform of the curriculum; and
- make recommendations on how the curriculum should be monitored, reviewed and developed with relevant experts in the field, key education organisations, schools and other key stakeholders.

The terms of reference for the review are below:-

- [Strategic Review of NI Curriculum - Terms of Reference](#)

The review is being carried out by Lucy Crehan, an educational consultant and former teacher with experience in working in high performing education systems. The work will complete in April 2025.

Invitation for written submissions to the Curriculum Review of Northern Ireland:

As part of the initial evidence gathering phase, written submissions are being sought. These submissions should consider the following 5 questions.

1. In what capacity are you responding? Please briefly explain the nature of your organisation, or your role (parent, teacher, business leader, etc.).
2. What are your views on the strengths of the Northern Ireland Curriculum?
3. What are your views on the weaknesses of the Northern Ireland Curriculum?
4. To what extent do you think the Northern Ireland Curriculum has been successfully implemented in schools, and what do you perceive to be the barriers (if any) to its implementation?
5. Bearing in mind this is a review of the curriculum, and not of qualifications or assessment, is there anything else you would like to draw attention to that you think should be a focus of the review?

Written submissions should be sent to curriculumreview@education-ni.gov.uk by Thursday 30 January 2025.

Other ways to contribute

Lucy will be hosting focus groups in the new year. If you would wish to be involved in such groups, please express your interest by contacting curriculumreview@education-ni.gov.uk

A questionnaire will also be sent to schools, including more specific questions for teachers about curriculum implementation.

Should you have any questions regarding the review or wish to contribute please contact the email address above.

Research Project: Sustainable School Leadership

The Sustainable School Leadership project is a piece of research comparing approaches to the training, supply and retention of senior school leaders for primary and secondary schools – in particular headteachers – in the countries of the UK, and will offer a vision for where and how these approaches can be enhanced.

Initial insights from a [Northern Ireland case study](#) include:

"We were left in no doubt that headteachers felt under considerable and in some cases potentially unsustainable pressure. Factors that contributed to the pressure and mentioned consistently were i) a long running industrial dispute, 'action short of strike' (ASOS), by teachers; ii) what was variously referred to as 'our broken system' or 'our crumbling system'; iii) lack of funding and over-supply of school places; iv) issues with a minority of parents; and v) the long-run impact of the pandemic."

The research team recently published a survey seeking school leaders' views on a number of areas, informed by their interviews with school leaders across the UK, and are keen to hear the views of as many senior and middle leaders as possible.

The survey can be accessed [here](#) and is available until the end of December 2024. Analysis of the survey findings will be published during 2025.

UK Sustainable School Leadership Survey 2024



WAI
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Follow Up Inquiry: Funding of Public Services in NI



The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee has launched a follow-up inquiry into the funding of public services in Northern Ireland.

The previous Committee in the last Parliament published a [report](#) in March 2024 on funding and delivery of public services and the recently

announced inquiry will be an opportunity to test the new UK Government's approach to the issues.

Tonia Antoniazzi MP, Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, said: *"Essential public services such as health and education have a huge impact on everyone's day to day lives, so it's vitally important that they are funded in a way that reflects the true level of need in Northern Ireland. With the new Government in Westminster set to carry out a spending review in the spring, our inquiry is looking to hear views on the adequacy of the current assessment of need, what the package of funding agreed by the Treasury and Stormont should look like, and how the UK Government can best support the NI Executive to deliver quality public services for all."*

Following the announcement in February of a £3.3billion spending settlement, in May the Treasury and NI Executive announced the agreement of an Interim Fiscal Framework.

Further discussions are taking place on issues including needs based funding, with Department of Finance officials confirming that they are currently compiling evidence that Northern Ireland's relative need is higher than the proposed 124% of any equivalent increase in funding for England for the policy areas run out of Stormont.

Further information on the inquiry and how to respond is available [here](#). The Committee is accepting evidence until Wednesday 15th January 2025.

Minister appoints Chairperson to the Board of EA

Education Minister Paul Givan MLA has announced the appointment of Mr Mervyn Storey to the post of Chairperson of the Board of the Education Authority (EA) with effect from 1 January 2025.

Welcoming the appointment, Mr Givan said:

“I am pleased to make this appointment today as Mervyn Storey brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this role at a critical moment as we seek to transform our education system for the next generation...

Delivering this transformation will require exceptional leadership. There could be no-one better placed to drive forward our agenda than Mervyn, and I look forward to working with him as we make real and impactful change to the lives of children, young people and their families in Northern Ireland.”

The Minister concluded:

“I would also like to thank the outgoing Chairperson, Barry Mulholland, for his dedication and service. I am grateful to him for providing leadership, dedicated service and commitment since 1 January 2021, during a significantly challenging period for the organisation and the education system as a whole.

“In particular, I appreciate his efforts in leading the EA Board in taking the difficult decisions needed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and more recently the constrained budgetary environment.”

The EA Board is comprised of the Chairperson and 20 members who are nominated by a range of interests i.e. there are 12 members representing the trustees of maintained schools, transferors of controlled schools, Irish-Medium schools, integrated schools, voluntary grammar schools & controlled grammar schools, and 8 political members who are nominated by the relevant political parties.

Voluntary grammar schools are represented on the EA Board by GBA Executive Member, Ronnie Hassard, who was appointed in 2021. Further details on the Board and its membership is available [here](#).

GBA Events - Spring Term 2025

Crisis Communications - Thursday 16th January 2025, 9.30 am – 1.00 pm, Stranmillis University College, Belfast.

The GBA is working with Morrow Communications and their media partners Donna Traynor and Ronan Kelly to offer a bespoke crisis communications workshop for our member schools. Further details will be issued to schools via email.

Health and Safety in Schools - Half day in-person workshop, Thursday 20th February (morning session - date & venue TBC)

This session is being planned in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) to provide an overview of key health and safety matters in schools and in the context of a voluntary grammar school. Further details will be issued to schools in the new year.

Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools - Online information session (Date TBC)

We are currently engaging with colleagues from across the education sector to organise an information session for schools in relation to the implementation and embedding of Specialist Provision in mainstream settings. Further details will be issued to schools in due course.

GBA Christmas Closure Dates

Please note that the GBA office will be closed from **12.30pm on Friday 20th December 2024, until Friday 3rd January 2025, inclusive.**

We will reopen as normal on Monday 6th January 2025.

Please note the cut off date of **5pm on Tuesday 17th December 2024** for

any job vacancy advertising requests. Any requests received after this time will be processed when we reopen in January. Thank you for your understanding.

We would like to wish all of our member schools a very happy and restful Christmas break.

Advertising of Teaching and Support roles on the GBA Website

*****Please note the cut off date of 5pm on Tuesday 17th December 2024 for any job vacancy advertising requests. Any requests received after this time will be processed when we reopen in January*****

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 THE 2024/25 ACADEMIC YEAR 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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