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## GBA News – Friday 31st January 2025

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### Supporting Voluntary Grammar Schools: GBA Hosts Media Training Workshop

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The GBA recently partnered with Morrow Communications, alongside their media partners Donna Traynor and Ronan Kelly, to deliver a bespoke crisis communications training workshop for our member schools.

The workshop covered key areas in crisis management including policy and planning, communications, engagement with the media, writing press statements, and post crisis evaluations. There was also the opportunity to work through practice crisis scenarios.

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the day, with participants particularly valuing the school-focused and interactive nature of the training.

We plan to run the session again in the next term in the Cookstown area. Details of the workshop will be sent by email, and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.



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## Supporting Voluntary Grammar Schools: Health and Safety Information Session

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The GBA has partnered with the Health and Safety Executive NI (HSENI) to host an information session for our member schools.

This will be held at:

**Stranmillis University College, Belfast on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 from 10am-12pm**

The session will cover key health and safety areas such as:

- Slips and trips
- Radon levels
- Traffic Management
- Legionella
- Asbestos
- Reporting of accidents and incidents

If you or a representative from your school would like to attend, please [contact us](#) or check your inbox for the invitation (23rd January).

Please book your place by Wednesday 5th February. Thank you.

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## Area Planning Update

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### Publication of Operational Plan 2

[Operational Plan 2: 2024-26](#) was published on 16 January 2025. It is the second operational plan to date and will span from 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2026.

Operational Plans outline the Area Planning activity to be taken forward over the lifecycle of the [Strategic Area Plans](#), 2022-27.

Operational Plans translate the vision of the strategies into practical Area Planning actions which are listed as either short-term or medium-term workstreams.

Short-term workstreams are intended to be completed within the lifespan of an operational plan, whereas medium term projects tend to be more complex and may span a number of operational plans.

Please [contact us](#) if you would like to have a discussion about any aspect of the Area Planning process.

### Specialist Provision

The Education Authority continues to work in conjunction with education and sectoral partners, including the GBA, to identify primary and post-primary pathways for specialist provision.

As you will be aware, the pressure for places for pupils with SEN is ongoing, and many primary provisions do not have a nearby pathway for post-primary provision.

The GBA is currently engaging with EA, ETI and our member schools to discuss SEN provision in voluntary grammar school settings. Please [contact us](#) if you have any comments or feedback you would like to share.

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## **Live Consultations**

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### Department of Finance: Draft Budget 2025/26 Consultation

The NI Executive agreed the Draft Budget on 19th December 2024 and is encouraging people to get involved in the consultation and have their say on how to prioritise the finite funding available.

After the consultation concludes and responses are collated and analysed, the Executive will consider and agree a final Budget for 2025-26.

The public consultation will close on 13th March 2025. For further information and to respond, please click [here](#).

The GBA is currently developing a response to the consultation and will share this with you in due course. Please [contact us](#) if you wish to feed in any comments.

Department of Education: NI Teachers' Pension Scheme Member  
Contribution Yield Consultation

The Department of Education is currently consulting on proposals to introduce a revised member contribution structure in order to meet the required scheme yield for the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme.

This consultation will run until 14th February 2025.

The Department welcomes any comments or views on the proposals set out in the [consultation document](#).

Comments on the proposals can be submitted via email to:

[Pensionspolicy@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Pensionspolicy@education-ni.gov.uk)

Department of Education: Review of Free School Meals and Uniform  
Grant Eligibility Criteria

The Department of Education has launched a consultation on the options considered as part of the review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals and uniform grants.

The Department has explored a number of options and has modelled the potential impact of each option in terms of the number of extra pupils that could benefit and the associated additional costs. These options are detailed in the consultation documents.

The consultation will close on 14th February 2025. For further information and to respond please click [here](#).

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## NI Education Funding: GBA Responds to NIAC follow-up Inquiry & DE EQIA

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### Follow-up Inquiry: Funding & Delivery of Public Services in NI

The GBA has submitted a response to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) follow up inquiry into the funding of public services in NI, raising a number of ongoing and emerging issues, including:

- The continued austerity within the education sector.
- The need for multi-year budgets.
- Discrepancy in spend between pupils in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK.
- Capacity of the NI budget to meet the announced increases to public sector pay and Employer National Insurance contributions from April

2025.

- Historical underinvestment in the school estate and the urgent need for capital works.

A copy of the response is available [here](#).

### Education Budget: Equality Impact Assessment 2024-25

We also submitted a response to the Department of Education in relation to the Education Budget Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), highlighting the impact of budget cuts, increasing costs, staffing pressures, and possible mitigations to ease pressures on schools.

A copy of the response is available [here](#).

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## **Nominations to EA Board**

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The GBA has been invited by the Department of Education to nominate one person to represent the interests of voluntary grammar schools on the [Board of the Education Authority](#). The term of office for the appointed member will be four years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2029.

A nominations booklet and further information regarding the role has been sent via email to member school Principals. If you do not have this email please [contact us](#).

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## **Shared Education News**

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### Shared Education in Action - Intergenerational Collaboration in Coleraine

As part of their Shared Education programme, senior pupils in Coleraine Grammar School and Loreto College, Coleraine have spent a number of

Thursday afternoons in Killowen House, socialising and engaging with the residents. The students chat with residents, play music and games, and sing. Further information about the project, and other Shared education stories is available on the [Shared Education Hub](#).

Please also see [CCEA - Supporting Shared Education](#) for post-primary guidance on approaches delivering Shared Education across the curriculum.

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## Advertising of Teaching and Support roles 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.

**\*\*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.







