



WJEC Qualifications Update

As you will be aware, GBA conducted a short survey of schools regarding the announcement on WJEC qualifications in Northern Ireland. In a [BBC news article](#), it stated that the Education Minister has recently responded, that, should he receive clarification that the Welsh examination boards will remain compatible with curriculum policy in NI, he would be willing to revisit the decision.

In answering an Assembly question from Education Committee member, Chris Lyttle, MLA, the Minister also stated that “My officials will... continue to engage with colleagues in Wales over the coming months to try to get some clarity on the direction of travel and timing of any potential changes. We will keep the situation under constant review.”

New Permanent Secretary for Department of Education

The Department recently announced that Mark Browne is to be the new Permanent Secretary. He will take up his post on 1 March 2021. The Education Minister said “I want to congratulate Mark on his success in the recent competition to appoint a new Permanent Secretary for my Department... I look forward to working with Mark in tackling the significant strategic challenges facing the education sector in the months and years ahead.” The Minister also paid tribute to former Permanent Secretary, Derek Baker and wished him all the best in his retirement.

Appointment of new members to Education Authority

The Department of Education has announced the appointment of four new members to the Education Authority (EA). The new members are Mrs Gillian McGrath, Mr Paul Kavanagh, Ms Angela Mervyn, and Mr Frank Maskey. You can find out more about the Education Authority Board and members [here](#).

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

Minster's Questions

The Minister recently answered questions at the Assembly on additional resources for Irish-medium education, vaccinations for special school staff, and provision for transfer tests in Autumn 2021.

Regarding tests the Minister said that, to date, the Association for Quality Education (AQE) has indicated its intention to initiate preparations for proceeding with tests in the next academic year and that he will be engaging with AQE on the arrangements.

Education Committee

At the most recent meeting of the committee (17th February), members received

briefings on the Blues Programme and emotional health and well-being framework from Action for Children and the Department of Education on Curriculum Sports Programme. A briefing on wellbeing from Healthy Kidz was also received.

Other committee business included a discussion on WJEC qualifications in Northern Ireland. Members agreed to seek clarity from the Minister on alternative courses to those that will become unavailable in accordance with the recent announcement to WJEC qualifications.

New Programme for Government Consultation



The NI Executive has launched a consultation to develop a new strategic, Outcomes-based Programme for Government. The consultation seeks views on the draft framework of nine Outcomes upon which the PfG will be built. This opened on 25 January and closes on 22 March 2021. For further information please click [here](#).

SEN Frameworks Consultations Extended

The Education Authority has further extended the consultation period on two draft Special Educational Needs Frameworks to **Monday 12th April 2021 at 5pm**. Further virtual consultation events have been arranged for:

1. Special Schools Area Planning Framework consultation:
 - Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 7.00pm - 9.00pm
2. Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools and

Pilot consultation:

- Friday 12 March 2021 at 10:00am - 12:00pm

For further details please click on this [link](#).

Area Planning

In the Post-Primary sector, Area Planning decisions were made regarding Bangor Grammar School to increase approved numbers (approved) and Strangford Integrated College to increase approved numbers (declined). Details are available on the [Department's website](#).

Members of the Area Planning Local Groups will meet next week with GBA representation. If you would like to discuss Area Planning, please contact [Nuala O'Neill](#).

Shared Education

GBA will be engaging with the Education Authority and Department Officials regarding Shared Education. If you would like any views taken forward or have any comments, [please get in touch](#).

Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies

GBA provides a free advertising service for our Member Schools. Job vacancies are posted on our website and Twitter page. There is also a link to our job listings on the Education Authority website in the job opportunities section.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, please [contact us](#), you can use this [template](#) to provide us with the necessary information about the post(s). Please allow **one working day** for posts to be uploaded.



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