

HAVE A  
**SAFE AND HAPPY**  
CHRISTMAS



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## Chairperson's Message

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Dear member school,

Welcome to the December edition of the GBA news. As we approach the Christmas break, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership and perseverance in what has been a very different and difficult year. We are well aware of the challenges that schools have faced and overcome during the course of the pandemic and know that 2021 will bring additional challenges as we strive to bring a level of normality to the school

year.

On behalf of the GBA Executive Committee and staff we hope that you enjoy the holidays and we look forward to engaging with you in 2021.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Jacqueline Weir  
GBA Chairperson

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## Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

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Yesterday the Minister of Education announced contingency arrangements for the 2021 examinations series. You can read the full statement [here](#).

Today, the Education Committee will meet in closed session to discuss an internal report on grade awards 2020 and the impact of COVID-19 on access to Special Educational Needs for vulnerable children. Following this, Department of Education Officials will brief the Committee on the Revised Children and Young People's Strategy.

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## Independent Review of Education

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Also announced yesterday was Minister Weir's plan to establish an Independent Review of Education.

Speaking in the Assembly the Minister said:

"The 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement sets out the requirement that the Executive will establish an external, independent review of education provision. The focus of this review will be on securing greater efficiency in delivery costs, raising standards, access to the curriculum for all pupils, and the prospects of moving towards a single education system...It is important that we approach the Review with open minds. It will be based on evidence; learn from best practice locally and elsewhere; and, be informed by the voice of stakeholders including children and young people."

The Review will begin later in 2021 once a five person Panel is appointed via an open appointment process. It is expected that members of the Panel will be appointed by early May 2021 and the review is projected to last for 18 months.

You can access the full Terms of Reference [here](#).

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## Teachers' Negotiating Committee

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*By Ronnie Hassard*

*GBA Representative on TNC Management Side*

In a world of acronyms and three letter abbreviations, TNC is not a combination that springs easily to mind. Nevertheless, this body has great significance for all governors and teaching staff - permanent, temporary and substitute - including Principals and Vice Principals, in every grant aided school, across all phases and sectors in Northern Ireland.

That significance derives from the fact that TNC is the agency through which Employers and Teacher Unions meet to negotiate on teachers' and principals' terms and conditions of employment and salary. It would be wrong to suggest that TNC makes the bottom-line decisions; democratic structures place that responsibility with elected representatives, in this case the key post is that of the Minister for Education. Despite the prominence of 'negotiation' in the title, TNC is about more than crunching numbers, shaving decimal points off salary demands or bartering on specific aspects of teachers' professional roles, important as those matters may be.

Unfortunately, established practice gives TNC two 'sides' making it seem like an institutionalised arena for conflict rather than a mechanism for effective communication, constructive collaboration and partnership working, finding solutions, rather than protracting problems.

- 'Teachers' Side' comprises representatives of five recognised Teacher Unions: Irish National Teachers Organisation, NASUWT, National Association of Head Teachers, National Education Union, Ulster Teachers' Union, referred to collectively as the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council.
- 'Management Side' comprises representatives as follows: Department of Education, as holders of the Education budget; Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Education Authority as Employing Authorities; Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Governing Bodies Association and Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education representing the Boards of Governors of Schools.

GBA is allocated 2 seats at the TNC table, as a voice for Voluntary Grammar Schools; upholding the standards integral to our schools; prioritising the wellbeing and learning of children and young people entrusted to us; discharging the employers' duty of care for all employees; going the extra mile for both constituencies and, as the track record confirms, delivering value for money on available resources. All this is accomplished in an increasingly complex legal and regulatory environment.

COVID-19 has added greatly to exiting pressures. While the strain is undoubtedly felt throughout the system, it is felt most keenly in schools and TNC has been involved in discussions about the measures taken. The work programme now focuses on implementing undertakings (areas for review and 'upfront asks') made in the agreement signed earlier this year and available on the GBA website. The bulk of the heavy lifting involved in that work will be taken forward by smaller joint groups bringing agreed recommendations on specific matters for consideration by the full TNC.

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## Shared Education Update

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The Department of Education recently established a Mainstreaming Shared Education Project Board (MSEPB). The purpose of the Project Board is to consider lessons learned from Shared Education funded programmes and develop a long term sustainable strategy for mainstreaming Shared Education.

The MSEPB will have access to a Stakeholder Reference Group which will provide an advisory and consultancy role.

We are pleased to advise that Mrs Hilary Woods, Principal of Belfast Royal Academy, will be representing the GBA on the reference group.

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## DE and EA Consultations Extended

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The Department of Education has extended the [Draft Sen Code of Practice](#) and [Draft SEN Regulations](#) consultations until 5pm on **19th January 2021**.

The Education Authority extended the online consultations on the [Draft Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools - Pilot](#) and the [Draft Special Schools Area Planning Framework](#) until 5pm on **11th February 2021**.

The EA is also undertaking a series of consultation events. The dates and contacts for the events are listed below:

- Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools - Pilot :
  - Friday 15th January 2021 - 10am-12pm
  - Monday 25th January 2021 - 7pm-9pm

email: [mainstreamconsultation@eani.org.uk](mailto:mainstreamconsultation@eani.org.uk)

- Special Schools Area Planning Framework:
  - Monday 11th January 2021 7pm-9pm
  - Thursday 21st January 2021 10am-12pm

email: [specialconsultation@eani.org.uk](mailto:specialconsultation@eani.org.uk)

If you wish to attend, please register using the email provided and include

details of any questions you would like answered during the event.

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## EA Launches Supporting Learning Website

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The Education Authority recently launched a website aimed to support learning during the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond. Teachers and school principals will be able to access short videos by fellow practitioners covering a range of aspects of school life. Find out more [here](#).

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## GBA Christmas Office Closure dates

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The GBA office will close from 12.30pm on Friday 18th December 2020 and reopens on Tuesday 5th January 2021.

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## Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies

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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.



## Newsletter Subscription

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Please feel free to forward our monthly updates to your school Governors. If any of your Governors would like to subscribe, please [send us](#) their email address

If you wish to unsubscribe to these emails, please [let us know](#).

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