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## Chairperson's Message

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Dear member school,

I trust and hope that you are keeping well in these extremely challenging times. Unfortunately, the start of 2021 appears to be just as turbulent as 2020 as our schools continue to provide remote learning and much needed support for vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

The challenges brought about by the pandemic continue to arise. As we have witnessed in the past, and particularly in the last year, our schools do adapt and deliver, even in the most challenging of circumstances.

The GBA staff continue to work remotely on your behalf. If you have any issues that you wish to raise please contact Nuala or Helen.

I place on record my thanks for your continued leadership and dedication to the education of our young people.

With best wishes for the New Year,

Jacqueline Weir  
GBA Chairperson

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## Admissions Criteria

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Recent days have seen animated discussion and varied suggestions about admissions criteria. It is unsurprising that the GBA, as the representative body for 50 Voluntary Grammar Schools, should seek to uphold the Voluntary Principle which is central to each school's identity and individual ethos. A defining feature of the Voluntary Principle is the duty of each Board of Governors to determine its Year 8 admissions criteria.

The GBA represents a range of schools. Some have an academic component in their admissions criteria; some apply academic criteria to determine a proportion of their intake and others make no use of such criteria. In each school, regardless of any specific criterion, it is Governors' responsibility to ensure the criteria are kept under review and are legally compliant. They should give due consideration to guidance issued by the Department of Education and provide their criteria by the specified date for publication by the Education Authority. It is mandatory that criteria are included in a school's prospectus.

This year, the revised date for submitting criteria to the EA for Y8 admissions in September 2021 is this Friday 22nd January.

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## Extension of Furlough Scheme

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The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended to 30th April 2021. This means that you continue to have the option of applying to furlough staff whose salaries are normally funded through private income

streams. This may be particularly relevant during the current remote learning period.

Schools that have already applied for and received Departmental approval to access the furlough scheme do not require further approval from the Department to re-access the funding.

Read the full correspondence that was sent to schools [here](#).

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## Accessibility for Disadvantaged Pupils

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The Education Authority has provided over 11,400 devices to schools to lend to disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. Wifi and mifi provision has also been provided to support those with limited internet access at home.

Further devices have been ordered to arrive in February to continue this support and widen out the year groups accessing the devices. Schools can find further information on C2kExchange including a simple form to request devices for prioritised pupil groups.

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## Teachers' Negotiating Committee

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*By Ronnie Hassard*

*GBA Representative on TNC Management Side*

In 2021 TNC continues its focus on commitments made in the agreement reached with the 5 recognised unions of NITC in April 2020.

Taken forward by a 'Transition Group ' in the context of a global pandemic, time

scales for development and implementation of the outcomes are unlikely to be as seamless or as speedy as any of the parties would wish. Flexibility and patience are certainly required from everybody engaged in this work.

At a time when discussions are focusing on the workloads of teachers and school leaders, it would be strange if the effect of TNC initiatives was to add further to the unavoidable and often unpredictable extra workload that COVID19 is bringing throughout our education system.

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## **Board of Governor Training - New Resources**

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Yesterday, the GBA attended a briefing session by the Education Authority on Board of Governor training. So far, there are 881 registered users and feedback has been very positive. Please be aware that a record of attendance is only noted once the training evaluation is completed. New and updated training topics include:

- Managing and supporting staff attendance
- Effective governance
- Area Planning

Term 1 materials are also still fully accessible.

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## **Northern Ireland Assembly Updates**

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The Education Committee of the NI Assembly met last week and received a briefing from the Education Minister on the covid-19 response including the impact of public examinations, school closures, and post-primary transfer.

The Committee will meet again this morning (20th January) to hear from the NITC and ASCL teaching unions on the impact of covid-19 in relation to schools closure and examinations. You can view coverage of the meeting [here](#).

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## **SEN 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 **Tuesday 2nd March 2021**.

The GBA is working on a response to these consultations - If you wish to provide any feedback please [get in touch](#).

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## Area Planning

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Recently the Royal School, Dungannon, and St Joseph's, Donaghmore, have had their development proposals approved (with modification).

As you will be aware Area Planning activity resumed in October and meetings of the Steering Group, Working Group and Local Groups are continuing.

If you would like to discuss Area Planning please contact [nuala@gbani.org](mailto:nuala@gbani.org)

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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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