



Schools Feeling Impact of Rising Costs

Sharp increases in power and energy costs have caused additional pressure on already hard-pressed school budgets. The GBA has been engaging with member schools on the issue and the matter was discussed by the GBA Executive Board at their meeting yesterday.

The GBA would like to hear from you about the impact of rising costs to your school. We will be issuing a survey to schools in the coming weeks to assess the extent and impact of these additional costs and challenges. The feedback will be provided to the Department of Education and it will also be used to help inform our response to the Northern Ireland Draft Budget consultation which will be launched following agreement from the Northern Ireland Executive.

Employment Conditions of Teaching Staff - Information & Guidance

The Department of Education's website contains up to date information and procedural guidance on employment conditions for teaching staff. These are DE and TNC documents, covering areas such as:

- Procedures for dealing with grievances;
- Procedures for dealing with misconduct;
- Advice on the use of exceptional closure days; and,
- Policy statement on Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time.

To access the material, please use this [link](#).

Consultations Update

Consultation on the Deferral of School Starting Age (Closes 4th January 2022)

The Department of Education is consulting on Deferring School Starting Age. This relates to the age a child should start statutory education in Year One of primary school. It seeks views on proposals to introduce flexibility in school starting age for the youngest children in the year group born between 1 April and 1 July. It also seeks views on how the proposal will impact the pre-school provision for deferred children. The consultation closes on **4th January 2022**. More information is available [here](#).

Consultation on Draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Closes 10th December 2021)

A consultation on the draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 opened on 8th October 2021. This consultation seeks views on changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland (LGPS (NI)). It outlines proposed changes to the LGPS (NI) to cover both the changes required by an Employment Tribunal ruling in relation to survivor benefits, and a number

of technical amendments and minor policy updates. More information is available [here](#).



Review Planned for Free School Meal Criteria and Uniform Guidance

The GBA recently attended a Joint Consultative Forum meeting which included the following presentations:

- The Review of FSM and Uniform Grants
- Reducing Educational Disadvantage Red Programme
- Development of EA Equality Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Disability Action Plan 2022 – 2027.

The Department's Red programme and the EA's Action Plans are in development stages. The Department will be conducting a wide-ranging review of Free School Meal criteria and uniform guidance. A pre-consultation exercise will be carried out with Key Stakeholders in December 2021. If you are interested in taking part in the pre-consultation exercise [please let us know](#). Regarding the review, it is expected that costed options will be presented to the Minister in May 2022 prior to a public consultation.

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

Minister's Questions 15/11/21

At this Month's Education Question Time session, Education Minister, Michelle McIlveen, answered questions on a number of topics, including:

- Teacher pay awards
- Active School Travel Programme
- Flexible school starting age
- Major Capital works.

Regarding teacher pay awards, the Minister said:

"Teachers in Northern Ireland received a 2% cost-of-living increase in 2018, 2019 and 2020. In addition, staff who were eligible for incremental progression will have progressed up the teachers' pay scale at an estimated cost of 0.8% per year... The NJC agreement for 2020 was 2.75%. Non-teaching staff eligible for incremental progression will also have progressed on their pay scale at an estimated cost of 0.5% per year. Both the teaching and non-teaching pay awards for 2021 have yet to be agreed..."

In response to questions regarding Major Capital works, it was highlighted that whatever amount the Finance Minister announces for capital, it will never be enough to address the current issues in the school estate. It is the intention of the Minister to announce a further round of capital works towards the end of this financial year. The full report of the session is available [here](#).

Education Committee

The Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill was formally introduced to the Assembly on Monday 4th October 2021 and undertook its Second Stage on Tuesday 8th November 2021 with the Committee Stage commencing immediately thereafter.

In order to inform the Committee Stage of the Bill, the Committee for Education is asking for views on the content of the Bill. For more information and to respond please click [here](#). The survey closes on 20th December 2021.

Shared Education

Shared Education activity has been largely paused due to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic however preparatory work has been on-going to re-commence activity, including engagement with schools **not previously involved**.

The Education Authority is now in a position to re-engage with all schools who are yet to be involved in Shared Education. At this stage the EA is seeking expressions of interest from schools who wish to become involved in Shared Education. Over the next 18 months there will be a focus on three key areas for the new schools:

- **Building Leadership Capacity** – this will focus on developing principals and middle leaders to support Shared Education Partnership working
- **Teacher Professional Learning** – This will help develop the skills required, by teachers, to plan, implement and evaluate high quality Shared Education
- **Planning for Pupil Engagement** – This will explore the collaborative planning process involved in the development of Shared Education Programmes

The next steps will be establish the next cohort of schools who wish to become engaged Shared Education.

If you would like your school to become involved in Shared Education please complete and submit the EA's short expression of interest form by Friday 26th November:

[Link to Expression of Interest Form](#)

Once completed the EA will collate the list of schools and begin the process of forming partnerships. The focus for 2021/22 will be on building leadership capacity and more detail on this programme and available funding will follow in December 2021.



Area Planning

As you will be aware, the GBA represents voluntary grammar schools on the various Area Planning Groups (Area Planning Steering Group, Area Planning Working Group and the Area Planning Local Groups). Discussions regarding the next Strategic Area Plan are underway. If you have any ideas for area solutions in your location (including longer term solutions) please [contact us](#).

Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies

The 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.

As we are currently receiving a high volume of job requests, please

use our [job template](#) and allow one working day for posts to be uploaded. This does not include bank holidays and weekends.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, please [contact us](#).

Newsletter Subscription

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.

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