



GBA AGM 2022

The GBA hosted its Annual General Meeting on the 30th March. The online event had representation from Governors and Principals from a large number of GBA schools. This year the GBA invited guest speakers from the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Education Authority (EA)

Margaret Farragher, CEO of CCEA, gave a presentation themed "Looking Ahead" which discussed a number of areas including:

- Lessons learned from Covid-19, for example, the digital divide, new priorities in health and wellbeing and a rethinking around assessment.
- Challenges for CCEA from the Fresh Start Report such as ensuring the relevance and appropriateness of curriculum and assessment and driving forward teacher professional learning.
- Key areas for CCEA including supporting the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy with general and vocational qualification reviews resulting from strategies such as: 10X; 14-19 Transition into Careers;

Fair Start and the Independent Review of Education.

- Reflections from other jurisdictions regarding, for example, curriculum, qualifications and assessment.

Members of the EA's Area Planning team, Sinead McCartan, Nigel Freeburn, Michael Watterson, and Carol Hall presented on the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 and the draft SEN Strategic Area plan 2022-27, which focus on improving the quality of educational provision for all pupils through the provision of a network of viable and sustainable schools.

The EA representatives highlighted four key themes within the plans which are:

- Increasing parity of access for all to appropriate pathways.
- Promoting cooperation and collaboration.
- Maximising resources and sustainability.
- Informing strategic infrastructure planning and investment.

Regarding the SEN Strategic Plan, there was a focus on SEN provision in Mainstream schools. Given the increasing number of children and young people with additional needs, equality of opportunity and pathways that meet individual needs are essential elements of the Strategy.

The EA's consultation on the Strategic Plans closes on 12th April (see below for more details).

The following members were elected to the GBA Executive:

- Stephen Black, Ballymena Academy
- Professor John Gillespie, Dalriada School
- Ronnie Hassard, Campbell College
- Terry McDaid, Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School

Decisions on Development Proposals for Four Voluntary Grammar Schools

The Education Minister, Michelle McIlveen, recently approved increases in admissions number for four voluntary grammar schools in the greater Belfast area. The Development Proposals are part of a suite of proposals for the Belfast area to meet growing demand for post-primary places. The schools had been in receipt of Temporary Variations over the last few years to address this demand and the increase in pupil numbers transferring.

The GBA supports these decisions as this is as an area-based approach to the demographic challenges in Belfast.

Development Proposal decisions are published on the Department of Education's website and are available [here](#). A list of Development Proposals currently awaiting a decision is available [here](#).

Draft Strategic Area Plans 2022-27: Final Call for Views

After an intensive few months of engagement involving online and face-to-face events, along with an ongoing survey, the Education Authority's consultation on Northern Ireland's draft Strategic Area Plans 2022-2027 is due to close on **12th April 2022**.

Information on how to respond can be accessed [here](#).



Reflections from the Policy Forum Conference

The GBA recently attended a conference hosted by the Policy Forum for Northern Ireland, chaired by Diane Dodds, MLA, former Minister for the Economy and Member of the Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Delegates heard from a number of speakers including Dr Keir Bloomer, Chair of the Independent Review of Education who spoke about the initial thinking from the review. A number of areas of interest have emerged including:

- School sustainability
- Correlation of attainment with socioeconomic status
- School governance and the complex institutional landscape
- Special Educational Needs
- Mental health
- Economic needs

While there are many challenges and opportunities to explore and tackle, the panel currently has no definitive views or recommendations and will continue to engage with stakeholders and examine the evidence. An interim report is due in October 2022 and the final report is due by May 2023.

GBA Executive Member and Methodist College Belfast Principal, Scott Naismith, also presented and spoke about education recovery in the context of the pandemic, providing a valuable and thought provoking contribution regarding the supporting of students with lost learning, addressing mental health concerns, ensuring support for vulnerable children, and learning from best practice.

Click on the graphic below for more information about the Forum and upcoming events.



NI Assembly Adjourns

The Northern Ireland Assembly was dissolved on 28th March 2022 to make way for the Elections, scheduled to take place on 5th May 2022. Six bills passed the Final Stage on the last day of Assembly business, including the Period Products Free Provision Bill and the Fair Employment School Teachers Bill. For more information on the progress of bills passing through the Northern Ireland Assembly before the end of the 2017-2022 Mandate, please click [here](#).

The pre-election period, 'purdah', describes the period of time immediately before the elections when specific restrictions on communications activity are in place. Guidance from the Executive Office on conduct that should be adhered to during the pre-election period is available [here](#).

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). The next Local Group meetings are scheduled to take place on the 4th and 5th May 2022 to discuss short and longer term area solutions.

The GBA is interested in hearing from schools regarding challenges and opportunities in their area and the need for increased SEN provision including specialist units in mainstream post-primary schools. Please [contact us](#) for an initial conversation.

Shared Education

The EA has received a number of expressions of interest from schools who wish to become engaged in Shared Education and is now collating the list of schools to begin the process of forming partnerships.

Over the coming 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

If you require any further information regarding Shared Education projects, [please get in touch](#).



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.

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

GBA Easter Closure Dates

Please be aware that the GBA office will be closing at 5pm on Thursday 14th April and will reopen on Tuesday 26th April. Staff will also be unavailable on Friday 29th April. Thank you.

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