



Interim Report of Independent Review Published

The Panel for the Independent Review of Education has published their interim report, "[Excellent Education for all: Interim Report of Independent Review](#)", outlining the major issues to be addressed in the final report, the anticipated next steps, proposed principles for excellence in education and the approach to evidence gathering.

Panel Chairperson, Dr Keir Bloomer said: ***"The aim of the review is to offer a vision of what excellent education, at every level, might look like in the years leading up to the mid-century."***

The Panel has highlighted a number of priority issues in the interim report that will be considered in more depth in its final report.

"Our review will focus on curriculum and assessment, tackling disadvantage among all age-groups, providing improved services for very young children and learners with special educational needs, and making sure that education is properly resourced."

Regarding school governance, the Panel believes that increased delegation of decision-making to schools and other providers, along with appropriate support, will help to deliver the main objective: better outcomes for learners.

The importance of stakeholder support and the co-design of solutions with those who will be most impacted was also highlighted, therefore, the Panel has indicated that it will discuss key policy issues with stakeholders to consider options and test ideas.

The final report is expected during April 2023, with scope for an extension of up to 6 months. Over the coming months, the panel will be carrying out further assessment of information, filling the gaps where necessary and analysing options for reform.



Increasing Need for Support for Newcomer Pupils

Northern Ireland schools are striving to support the rising number of Ukrainian children and young people who are travelling here seeking refuge from conflict. The EA's Intercultural Education Service is working with other EA support services and agencies to assist schools to provide a place of sanctuary that makes Ukrainian children, young people and their families feel welcome as they come to settle in Northern Ireland.

Schools should apply their usual admissions procedures, while recognising that some of these children, as newcomer pupils, will require additional support. They may need support with their English language, and in helping to develop friendships. Other children may require more specific support if trauma is a significant barrier to learning - but it may be some time before this becomes apparent in school. Initially, what these children will benefit from most is the security and stability of a regular school day.

Further information regarding support for newcomer pupils is available [here](#). Please [contact us](#) if you would like to have a conversation about providing much needed support to newcomer and refugee learners.

Area Planning Updates

The Area Planning Steering Group, Working Group and Local Groups have now all reconvened.

The focus for the first few months of this academic year will be on Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS), paying particular attention to geographical, sectoral and linguistic sector inconsistencies.

The Department also recently issued a [Circular](#) regarding a Normalisation Process. The GBA has been engaging with schools on this matter and will continue to do so.

Please [contact us](#) if you wish to discuss any Area Planning matters. We are particularly keen to hear your thoughts about any gaps in specialist provision in your area.

Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Update

The UK Government recently announced details about an Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland.

The Scheme is available to schools that are:

- on existing fixed price contracts that were agreed on or after 1 December 2021
- signing new fixed price contracts
- on variable 'day ahead' tariffs
- on deemed/out of contract or standard variable tariffs
- on flexible purchase contracts

The government will provide a discount on gas and electricity unit prices. To calculate the discount, the estimated wholesale portion of the unit price you would be paying this winter will be compared to a baseline 'government supported price' which is lower than currently expected wholesale prices this winter.

For all non-domestic energy users in Northern Ireland this government supported price has been set at:

- £211 per megawatt hour (MWh) for electricity and
- £75 per MWh for gas

Further information about the scheme can be found [here](#).

Landscape Review of the Education Authority - Joint Action Plan Developed

A joint action plan has been developed between the Department of Education and the Education Authority (EA) to address the recommendations of a Landscape Review of the EA.

The [report](#), which was carried out by the consultancy firm Baker Tilly Mooney Moore, made 13 recommendations, which are focused on the themes of:

- the future form, function and financing of the EA;
- improvements required to support organisational effectiveness; and
- governance, accountability and relationships which will support future EA effectiveness.

Key issues highlighted in the report include the need for EA to improve communications and responsiveness; to better meet the expectations of their many stakeholders; and the importance of making education services more child centric.



TPL "Bitesize" Programme - Shared Education

The Education Authority's Shared Education and Sectoral Support teams recently launched a Teacher Professional Learning "Bitesize" Programme, designed to enable teachers and school leaders to engage in a range of Shared Education webinars and other topics such as Community Relations Equality & Diversity (CRED).

Upcoming webinars include a session (15th November 3.30pm-4.30pm) that will look at INTO film which is a free resource for schools which can help support the teaching of CRED in the classroom. The INTO film team will share resources and support teachers to integrate this into everyday teaching and learning. CCEA will also share resources and give examples of how to use the many useful examples of CRED activities from their existing library.

For more information on the programme and to register for a webinar(s), please see the [TPL Bitesize booklet](#).

CCEA Announces Approach to Awarding Grades for 2022/23 Academic Year

Regulators across the UK are agreed that a return to pre-pandemic arrangements as soon as possible is important, while continuing to take account of the disruption experienced by students in recent years. To that end, CCEA will continue the journey back to pre-pandemic standards in awarding its qualifications in 2023 and expects to achieve this by 2024.

To provide additional support for students this year, Advance Information will be provided for the majority of qualifications.

CCEA's Interim Chief Executive, Leah Scott welcomed the approach: "This announcement is another positive step forward for students taking CCEA qualifications in 2022/23...I would like to thank Heads of Centre, teachers, and parents who supported students in the return to examinations."

DE Corporate Plan Consultation - Online Information Session

The Department of Education is currently consulting on their draft 2023-2028 Corporate Plan. The consultation seeks views on the proposed vision, strategic priorities and enabling priorities and gives you the opportunity to comment on them. These views will help DE focus on what matters most in delivering outcomes for children and young people in Northern Ireland. Consultation documents and an online survey (closes 15th November 2022) are available [here](#).

An additional element of the consultation is an information session about the draft Corporate Plan to be held online on Wednesday 2nd November @ 12pm, lasting approximately one hour.

If you are interested in attending please email DEcorporateplan@education-ni.gov.uk.



NI Assembly Updates

[Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris](#) is to hold talks with Stormont party leaders as the deadline to restore an executive draws closer. On Tuesday, Mr Heaton-Harris was re-appointed to the role in Rishi Sunak's new cabinet. He has repeatedly urged for the Northern Ireland Executive to be formed before 28th October or an assembly election would be called. Friday is the legal deadline for restoring the power-sharing executive.

The Assembly has been summoned to meet on Thursday 27 October 2022 at 12pm to elect a Speaker and Deputy Speakers, to appoint a First Minister and deputy First Minister and all other Executive Ministers and to debate the following motion:

That this Assembly expresses deep concern at the deepening cost of living crisis; is further concerned that the ongoing instability at Westminster has compounded these financial pressures; and supports the urgent convening of an Executive to support our public services and provide urgent help for those struggling with the cost of living crisis.

If the Assembly is unable to elect a Speaker and Deputy Speakers, it cannot proceed to do any of the other business including the appointment of Ministers and the debate on the motion.

International study visits | British Council - Applications Open

Each year, on behalf of the Department of Education, the British Council organises and delivers three international study visits for teachers from Northern Ireland.

Those chosen to make the visit will be expected to share the learning within and beyond their own school following the visit.

This year, the visits will take place during February half term break (Monday, 13 February – Friday, 17 February 2023).

To take part in the British Council's International Study Visits:

- You must be a teacher at a Northern Ireland school
- You have support from your Principal/Board of Governors to participate in this study visit,
- You will remain at your current school for at least the 2023/24 academic year
- You have not been on a British Council study visit in the past 5 years

More information is available [here](#).

Applications for the British Council's International Study Visits 2022-23 will close this Friday, 28th October.

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.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, please [contact us](#), using our [job template](#) and allow one working day for posts to be uploaded. This does not include bank holidays and weekends.
