
GBA News - Thursday 29th February 2024



GBA Attends Evidence Session at Westminster

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) is currently conducting an inquiry into integrated education, to which the GBA submitted written evidence last month.

Following the submission of written evidence, the GBA was invited to give oral evidence in Westminster yesterday. GBA Chairperson, Leo O'Reilly represented the GBA on a shared panel with EA, CCMS and CSSC. At the session, Leo reiterated and expanded upon the points made via the written evidence which included:

- Societal or aspirational demand for integrated education does not reflect reality or what happens in practice.
- The definition of integrated education, as set out in the recent act, can be applied to many schools, not just integrated schools.
- Oversubscription exists in all sectors, especially the voluntary grammar sector, and demand for post-primary school places must be assessed within this context.
- The majority, if not all schools in Northern Ireland are welcoming to all faiths and none, and schools work hard to foster close relationships with

each other and instil values such as mutual respect and understanding within their ethos' and curriculum.

The full oral evidence session, as well as the preceding session with representatives from the integrated sector, is available to view [here](#).

GBA AGM and Executive Committee Nominations

The GBA's Annual General Meeting is taking place during the afternoon of Wednesday 13th March 2024 at the [Seamus Heaney HomePlace](#). School Principals and Governors can register for the AGM [here](#).

GBA Executive Committee Nominations

Members are formally elected to the Executive at the AGM and play a crucial role on behalf of voluntary grammar schools, including:

- Contributing to educational policy development
- Representing the sector on a variety of key stakeholder groups
- Raising emerging issues
- Contributing to the strategic direction of the Association

If you wish to submit a nomination, please complete a [nomination form](#) by 5pm on Friday 8th March 2024.

Area Planning

The planning year for Operational Plan 2: 2024-2026 (OP2) is well underway and the document is now being drafted to include the various workstreams discussed and agreed through the Area Planning Local Groups.

The plan will include a number of short and medium term workstreams to be progressed or developed within the lifespan of the plan, and is scheduled to be published in September 2024.

Operational Plan 1: 2022-2024 is nearing completion however some projects

will carry over to OP2.

Work also continues to identify pressure areas for Specialist Education which includes a significant increase in the need for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMs) over the next number of years.

Further information on [Operational Plans](#) and [SPiMs](#) is available by clicking on the respective links.

We are aware that a number of schools are waiting for an update regarding the Normalisation pilot. The GBA will raise this matter with the Department of Education as this may impact proposals for OP2.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of Area Planning please [contact us](#).

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

In his first Ministerial statement in the Assembly on the 12th February 2024, the Education Minister, Paul Givan, set out his plans for capital investment across the Education Sector.

The Minister said: *“Children across Northern Ireland have the right to be educated in schools which are comfortable and safe, are of good quality and are properly designed and resourced to support their learning.*

“I have therefore commissioned, as a matter of priority, a Capital Investment Strategy for Education which sets out a compelling vision for a responsive, agile and innovative programme of capital investment clearly aligned to wider education and Executive policy.”

“Consequently, I have submitted funding bids of £528 million to the Department of Finance to meet education capital needs next year. As an absolute minimum, I require an additional £100 million of capital above the draft budget allocation to meet pressures in regard to Special Educational Need placements.

The full statement is available [here](#).

Minister's Questions

The first question time session for the education minister following the restoration of the NI Assembly took place on Monday 26th February and included the following issues:

- Statutory assessments and parental referrals.
- The recommendations of the Independent Review of Education.
- Education budget
- Careers advice reform
- End to end review of Special Education Needs

The full session is available to view [here](#).

Education Committee

- On 6th February 2024, Nick Mathison (Alliance) was nominated as Chairperson of the Education Committee and Pat Sheehan (Sinn Fein) was nominated as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee. Please click [here](#) for the full membership of the Committee.
- The Committee met for the 1st time on 14th February 2024, discussing various matters including teachers' pension scheme and the circumstances in which a pupil may be excused from Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Education.
- The Committee has since met twice and has heard briefings from the NI Teaching Council, Employers for Childcare and Department of Education Officials.
- The recordings of committee meetings and forward work programme of the committee are available on the [NI Assembly website](#).

GBA Governor Meetings

Please be advised that the GBA can provide presentations to Boards Of Governors regarding the remit and work of the GBA should you find this helpful.

Please contact Nuala O'Neill if you wish to avail of this. Thank you.

DE Emotional Health & Wellbeing Survey

Background Information

The joint Department of Education (DE) and Department of Health [Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework](#) was published in February 2021 along with an [implementation plan](#).

The Framework sets out overarching guidelines to support those working in DE-funded educational settings (pre-school through to post-primary) to help them promote emotional wellbeing and strengthen self-esteem and resilience in children and young people.

Survey Information

In order to inform future policy development on emotional health and wellbeing in education and next steps in terms of the Framework and how we target funding, the Department of Education wants to find out what schools are doing, and the organisations / services that schools may be using to facilitate the delivery of positive emotional health and wellbeing.

A report summarising the analysis of responses will be prepared and made available on the DE website within 6 months of the end of the survey; no individual and/or school/setting will be identified in this report.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, you may wish to have relevant information on any external providers you use at hand, before commencing.

The survey is open from 22/02/2024 to 21/03/2024.

Only one survey should be completed for each school/setting.

Click [here](#) to access the survey.

Shared Education News

The next meeting of the Shared Education Stakeholder Forum will take place on Monday 11th March 2024 to discuss various matters such as funding and enhancing new and existing partnerships. If you are interested in a Shared

Education partnership or have any general comments or queries please [contact us](#).

For general updates, TPL training modules and further information, you can also access the EA's Shared education hub, using this [link](#).

Edis Updates

Finance and Payroll - Education Support

Work is underway to replace the financial management solutions for schools currently provided by C2k, FMS and Pegasus Opera. The new solution will provide financial management and payroll processing services for the Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools.

In November 2023, a survey was issued to all 50 Voluntary Grammar schools and 38 Grant Maintained IS, achieving a 95.5% response rate.

An option analysis of recommendations on future provision was produced by the working group and will be used alongside the user feedback from the survey to inform the project planning.

Further updates and information is available [here](#).

Free Mental Health Resources and School Workshops Available via Mindwise

Free Wellbeing Workshops for 14-18 year olds

MindWise

Mental Health Awareness Calendar 2024

January 2024	Blues week 15th January - 19th
February 2024	Time to talk Week 1st - 5th February Children Mental Health Awareness Week
March 2024	Self-harm awareness week 1st - 5th March
April 2024	Stress Awareness Month
May 2024	ME awareness week 13th-16th Mental health awareness week 20th-25th
June 2024	International men's mental health awareness month

How can I help young people with their wellbeing?

MindWise will come to your school, club or community group to deliver FREE 1hour workshops that develop understanding and build resilience, to support the wellbeing of our young people now and into the future.



September 2024	World Suicide prevention week 9th - 13th
October 2024	World Mental Health week 7th - 10th
November 2024	Stress awareness week 4th - 9th Anti Bullying week 13th - 17th
December 2024	Talk about money week 6th - 10th

Our workshops

-  What is Resilience?
-  Friendships
-  Managing Studies
-  Juggling Time
-  Exam Stress
-  Social Pressures
-  Making Decisions
-  Low Mood and Depression
-  Anxiety
-  Me & Money

If you are interested in a MindWise wellbeing workshop, Please contact cypprogrammes@mindwisenv.org



Advertising of Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies on the GBA Website

The GBA provides a free advertising service for our member schools. Job vacancies are posted on our website and Twitter page. The Education Authority website also links to the GBA jobs section.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, **please contact us,**

using our [job template](#) and allow at least **TWO WORKING DAYS** for posts to be uploaded. Thank you for your cooperation with this

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