

GBA News – Friday 28th March 2025



GBA AGM and Executive Committee Nominations

The GBA's Annual General Meeting is taking place on the morning of **Wednesday 7th May 2025** at the Malone House, Belfast. We are pleased to welcome Education Minister Paul Givan MLA as the guest speaker.

GBA Executive Committee Nominations

We will shortly be writing out to schools to seek nominations for the GBA Executive Committee. The Association relies on the advice, insights and work of the members of its Executive Committee. We are keen to ensure representation from as many geographical areas as possible. To help this all our Executive Committee meetings are held in hybrid mode for those whose other commitments would make it difficult to travel.

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 would like further information regarding the work of the Executive please contact nuala@gbani.org

GBA Chairperson Appointed to EA Board

We are pleased to announce that Leo O'Reilly, currently Chairperson of the GBA Executive Committee, has been appointed as the GBA's representative on the Education Authority (EA) Board.

Leo has become a much-valued member of the GBA Executive in recent years and is also Chair of the Board of Governors of Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock. He is also a member of the Senate & Planning, Finance and Resources Committee, Queen's University Belfast.

Leo joins three other new members of the EA Board, along with eight previously serving members.

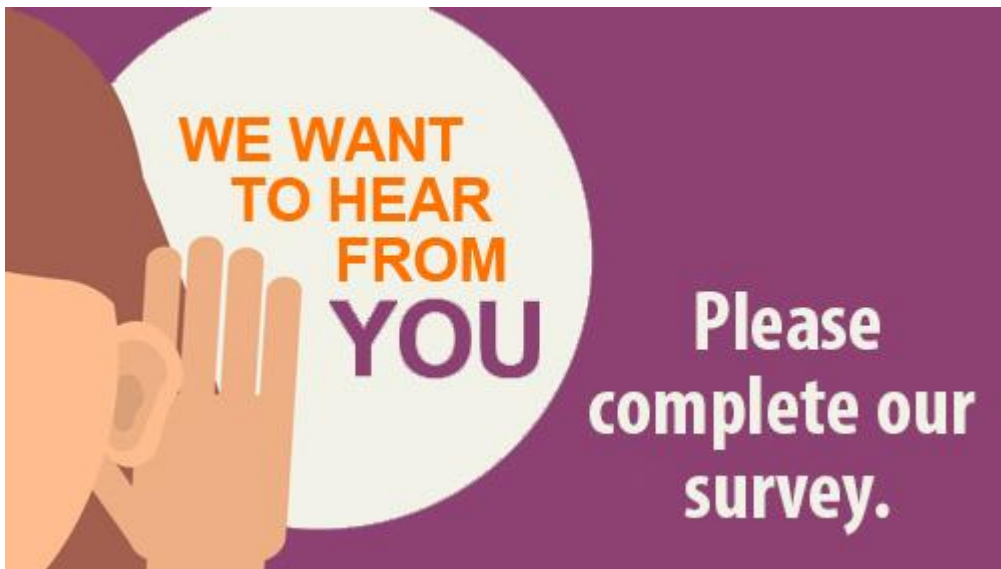
Speaking about the new appointments, the Education Minister said:

"I am pleased to appoint these members to the Education Authority Board. The breadth of experience and knowledge they will bring will prove invaluable and play a significant role in underpinning the work of the Board as we continue to reform and improve critical services to meet the needs of all of our children and young people."

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the GBA's former EA Board representative, Ronnie Hassard, for his dedication and contribution in representing the GBA and the voluntary grammar sector.

Details of the full Board membership are available [here](#).

GBA School Finance Survey - Spring 2025



Our 2025 School Finance Survey which will open on **1st April and close on 10th April 2025** will ask relevant questions in order to understand the financial health of the Voluntary Grammar sector at the close of the 2024/25 financial year.

In particular we are keen to get information on current issues including the impact of the teaching staff pay award in 2024 and the impact of the pay and grading review for support staff.

A link to the Spring 2025 survey will be sent to Principals and Bursars next week. We really appreciate your time and support with this to enable us to gather this information.

The information provided will not be attributed to any individual school but will help develop an overall picture of the financial position of the sector. We will use the information gathered in future engagement with the Minister and relevant officials in the Department and EA.

Minister Launches New Education Strategy

The Education Minister recently announced the launch of a new strategy - "TransformED", which is designed to reform and improve education delivery in Northern Ireland.

There will be a renewed focus by the Minister within the current assembly mandate (2022-2027) on:

- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Qualifications
- Tackling Educational Disadvantage
- School Improvement
- Investment in Teacher Professional Learning

Reform in each of these areas will be underpinned by significant investment in high-quality teacher professional development.

There is also a focus on longer term reform, as set out within the recommendations of the Independent Review of Education, including the following areas:

- Invest in Early Years
- Transform SEN support
- Raise compulsory education and training age to 18
- Improve education support services

A detailed implementation plan to support the strategy will be published in Spring 2025, identifying lead organisations and delivery mechanisms, as well as funding requirements.

Following publication of the implementation plan, the Department will report at key milestones through an annual progress report.

Further information on the strategy, including an Executive Summary and a Ten Point Plan for educational excellence is available [here](#).

The Wolfson Foundation - Funding Opportunities for Post-Primary Schools

The Wolfson Foundation support high-achieving state-funded secondary schools and sixth form colleges to improve the teaching at GCSE and A-Level of subjects that need specialist spaces and equipment.

Grants are awarded towards capital projects that help schools to create and improve these facilities.

Your school should:

- be state funded
- have at least two years of exam results available
- have been inspected by ETI and have an overall outcome of 'Good' or above
- be able to demonstrate an achieved level of excellence OR significant progress towards excellence through, for example, inspection reports and progress made by students
- if a predominantly denominational or faith-based school, it should have a non-discriminatory entry policy in respect of religious allegiance with at least 10% of pupils of other denominations, faiths or none.

In assessing the excellence of a school or college, the Wolfson Foundation also considers the local context, including deprivation measures and previous Wolfson support in the same region within the last five years.

Your project must:

- cost at least £25,000
- be for new build, refurbishment work or technical equipment
- be focussed on the teaching of one or more of the following subjects at GCSE and A-Level: science, computer science, design & technology, art, languages, music and performing arts

and have **one or more** of the following aims:

- improved quality of teaching and learning spaces for subjects which require specialist facilities and technical equipment
- increased numbers of students taking these subjects
- improved learning outcomes for students taking these subjects.

When to apply:

20 March – 1 May 2025

Decision dates:

Autumn 2025. Projects must not be completed before a funding decision is made.

For further information, including previously funded projects in NI Post-Primary Schools, click on the Wolfson Institute logo below.



Area Planning

Specialist Provision in Voluntary Grammar Schools

The GBA recently attended a "SEN First Approach" to Area Planning meeting, Chaired by EA Assistant Director of Sustainable Schools and Community Planning, which provided an overview of the pressures in the coming years regarding SEN placements.

There is an increasing number of pupils in NI who require additional, specialist support in both Special and Mainstream settings and this is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

The GBA is currently engaging with EA Area Planning, EA SEN Colleagues, ETI and our member school Principals to discuss SEN provision in voluntary grammar school settings.

If you would like to have a conversation with us regarding Specialist Provision, or have any comments, please [contact us](#).

Further information on Specialist Provision in Mainstream schools is available [here](#).

School Uniform Bill - Call for Evidence

As part of the Assembly's legislative processes, [The School Uniforms \(Guidelines and Allowances\) Bill](#) has been referred to the Assembly's Committee for Education so that the Committee can consider and take evidence on the Bill and report its opinion to the Assembly.

A [Committee Motion](#) has been tabled to extend this evidence-gathering stage until December 2025 however Committee Members have indicated that they expect it to compete around November 2025 and the implementation of the Bill to commence in September 2026.

In order to inform the Committee Stage of the Bill, the Committee for Education is seeking views from stakeholders on the objectives, proposals and potential consequences of the Bill and is welcoming views/comments on the contents of the Bill.

The closing date for comments is Tuesday 13 May 2025.

Further information on the Call for Evidence, including how to respond, is available [here](#).

The GBA is also developing a response to the Committee highlighting the impact of the Bill on schools and the potential implications for Principals, teachers and Boards of Governors. We will share this with you in due course.

GBA Responds to Budget Consultation

The GBA recently responded to the Draft (2025/26) Budget Consultation to raise issues pertinent to our member schools and the education sector.

Some of the concerns raised included the impact of a rise in employer National Insurance Contributions on school budgets, the funding of public sector pay, the need for capital investment and the addressing of a backlog of maintenance work.

A full copy of the response is available [here](#).

Live Consultations

Department of Education Consultation: Vision 2030 - A Strategy for Integrated Education

The Department of Education has launched a consultation to hear views and feedback on proposed actions to inform, shape and improve final policy proposals to reflect changes to the law on Integrated Education made within the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

The Department is keen to hear the views of all stakeholders, particularly children and young people and parents.

The consultation will run until 11.59 pm on Friday 23 May 2025.

For further information and access to the online survey, please click [here](#).

UK Parliament School Visits - Autumn Term 2025



Bookings open on Wednesday 7th May 2025 for free school visits to UK Parliament during the 2025 Autumn Term.

If interested, we would encourage you to save the date as places typically fill up within a few days of applications opening.

UK Parliament visits are free for schools and offer a unique learning experience to pupils. A subsidy scheme helps education groups from Northern Ireland with their travel costs. If your group is eligible you could receive up to 85% of your receipted travel costs to the value of £2,400.

Further information is available [here](#).

Shared Education News

Currently, there are 145 Shared Education Partnerships across Northern Ireland, incorporating 346 schools involved in Mainstreamed Shared Education projects.

EA has compiled a number partnership interviews and case studies to showcase some of the project work. Read more about projects within the post-

primary sector [here](#).

GBA Easter Closure Dates

Please note that the GBA office will be closed from **5pm on Thursday 17th April until 22nd April 2025, inclusive**.

We will reopen as normal on 23rd April 2025.

Please note the cut-off date of 4.00pm on Tuesday 15th April 2025 for job vacancy advertising requests.

Any requests received after this time will be processed when we reopen.

Advertising of Teaching and Support roles 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.

****PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR JOB TEMPLATE HAS BEEN UPDATED FOR THE 2024/25 ACADEMIC YEAR AND IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD [HERE](#)****

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, **please contact us, with the completed job template for each post, and allow at least TWO WORKING DAYS for posts to be uploaded.**



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