
GBA News – Wednesday 30th April 2025



GBA AGM - Final Call for Registration

The GBA Annual General Meeting is taking place next Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 9.30am at Malone House Belfast. Our guest speaker will be Paul Givan MLA, Minister of Education.

If you or your Governors would like to attend the AGM please register (if you have not already done so) by emailing administrator@gbani.org by noon on Friday 2nd May 2025.

Area Planning Update

Area Planning Local Groups

The Area Planning Local Groups (APLGs) recently met to discuss the admissions process outcomes for primary schools and will meet again in June to discuss post-primary outcomes.

As you will be aware, Northern Ireland is experiencing a downturn in the pupil-age population, and this is becoming increasingly evident in school admissions data.

At Primary level, many schools are seeing a drop in applications and an increase in the number of children with Special Educational Needs. With Specialist Schools under extreme pressure, many primary schools are further developing their SEN support through specialist provision classrooms.

The primary and post-primary admissions data will be further scrutinised by the APLGs in the coming months in preparation for the development of workstreams for Operational Plan 3.

Specialist Provision in Voluntary Grammar Schools

SEN provision is multifaceted and varies significantly from one school setting to the next depending on the needs of their pupils however there are common barriers across all schools regarding meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, for example access to experienced and trained staff, adequate and suitable accommodation, and operating within extremely limited budgets. There are also wider issues around placements, review processes, and information shared with schools regarding the needs of pupils.

Having engaged with our member schools and a number of key stakeholders, the GBA is currently developing a paper to outline the barriers and wider issues for voluntary grammar schools, and raise these as matters to address through programmes such as the SEN Reform Agenda. We will share this with you in due course.

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

GBA Political Engagement - Updates

The GBA met yesterday with the Education Minister to raise issues on behalf of our member schools. The GBA discussed canteen operations and the impact of the recent Pay and Grading Review. We also spoke to the Minister about broader education funding issues.

Voluntary Grammar School Governance Survey 2025

In our continuous efforts to enhance the effectiveness of governance in our schools, we are conducting a survey across all 50 voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland.

The survey will open on **Thursday 1 May 2025** and close at **5pm on 30 May 2025**. While the contribution of principals, bursars and other school staff is recognised, the target audience for this survey is those governors nominated or co-opted to their position.

This survey aims to gather information from governors in our sector about their experiences, their induction and training, the challenges they face, their perceptions of governance and the support they receive in their role.

Furthermore, we hope to identify future governor training needs and work to address these with particular focus on new VGs governors appointed in the next reconstitution.

We ask the Secretary to the Board to forward the survey to their Governors and encourage them to respond. This will enable us to gain insight that will inform future engagement activity.

GBA School Finance Survey - Spring 2025

Our 2025 School Finance Survey closed before the Easter holidays - thank you for taking the time to complete this.

Information gathered from the 41 schools that submitted responses has provided invaluable insights into the issues and concerns shared by schools in the Voluntary Grammar sector.

The pressures and challenges faced by schools in terms of finance and recruitment are consistent across the sector and we look forward to sharing an overview of the main findings at the AGM next week.

The data collected will be extremely useful in our future engagement activity with the Minister, the Department of Education, the Education Authority and other key stakeholders.

Minister Launches Funding Applications for Research-Informed Conferences

The Education Minister has launched a new programme, "Making Best Practice, Common Practice", to increase access for teachers to the latest education research.

The programme aims to help bridge the gap between academic research and classroom practice, ensuring that educators are equipped with the latest evidence-based strategies to enhance learning for all pupils.

The Making Best Practice, Common Practice programme will include three key elements:

1. Funding for schools to support Research Informed Conferences
2. Monthly Newsletter for teachers on the Science of Learning
3. Quarterly Northern Ireland publication for teachers on wider education research

The programme will begin with the first monthly newsletter being issued in April 2025, supplemented by the quarterly publication on education research in June 2025.

Schools will be invited to submit proposals for Research Informed Conferences through an Expression of Interest process, to be issued in

the Summer Term.

Live Consultations

Department of Education: Changing School Numbers Consultation

The Department is responsible for setting and varying schools' approved admissions and enrolment numbers. The Department is seeking to bring more agility to the process of setting approved numbers and, to that end, is publishing proposals on a new method of amending approved numbers at primary and post-primary schools.

The consultation seeks views on a new approach to amending approved numbers at primary and post-primary schools. The consultation will run for an eight week period from **29 April 2025 until 23 June 2025**.

For further information and to respond please click [here](#).

Department of Education: Consultation on 16-18 Legislation

This consultation proposes legislation for all learners to participate in education, apprenticeship or training until age 18. It also explores how it will impact schools, Further Education colleges, employers, training providers and the voluntary and community sector.

The consultation will close on **4th July 2025** - further information and details on how to respond can be found [here](#).

Department of Education: 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](#).

The GBA is currently developing a response to the consultation, in particular, to highlight the importance of equality of treatment across all schools in what is likely to be a period of reducing enrolments generally across all sectors. We will share this with you in due course - if you would like to provide any comments in relation to our response, please [contact us](#).

All Ireland Scholarship Scheme - Applications Open

Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald is encouraging A Level and Level 3 Extended Diploma students to consider applying for the 2025 All Ireland Scholarship Scheme.

The annual scholarships, first offered in Northern Ireland in 2009, are funded by businessman JP McManus and provide financial assistance to top-performing students from low-income households who intend to take up full-time undergraduate courses in the coming autumn. The value of each scholarship is £5,500 per annum for the duration of their undergraduate degree programme.

The 25 Northern Ireland scholarships will be awarded to the top 19 performing 'A' level students in grant aided post primary schools and the top six performing Level 3 Extended Diploma students in the further education colleges.

Applicants must have been in receipt of the Educational Maintenance Allowance at the time of examination and due to commence an undergraduate degree at a university or further education college in September / October 2025.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 4pm on Thursday 28 August 2025.

Further information and details on how to apply are available from NIdirect at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/all-ireland-scholarships and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment at ccea.org.uk/news/2025/march/all-ireland-scholarship-scheme-2025

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

ASPIRE project to create Shared Education legacy

The ASPIRE PEACEPLUS project, which aims to build positive connections between children and young people from different socio-economic, cultural, and political backgrounds, was launched at Monaghan Peace Campus, in County Monaghan, on Tuesday 8th April.

ASPIRE (Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education) is led by the Education Authority (EA), alongside Léargas, Early Years- the organisation for young children, National Childhood Network and the Fermanagh Trust. The project is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Through collaboration between and within pre-schools and schools ASPIRE will promote good relations and empower children and young people to contribute to a more cohesive, peaceful and prosperous society.

The project, which will receive €34.5m (£29m) in PEACEPLUS funding from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), aims to engage with up to 110,000 pupils and 1,761 educators in long term cross-sectoral and cross-border partnerships over the next four years. Project partners will also work with stakeholders to harness digital technology to develop and deliver innovative and creative programmes and resources for pupils, educators, and wider communities.

A series of symposiums and festivals of learning will be facilitated during the four-year programme. This will enable a range of educational partners to share learning and explore new approaches to embedding collaboration across the programme area.

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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