
GBA News – Friday 30th May 2025



Overview of GBA AGM 2025

The GBA hosted its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 7th May at Malone House, Belfast.

We were pleased to welcome Education Minister, Paul Givan MLA as our guest speaker who provided delegates with an overview of his priorities for education in Northern Ireland.

Following the Minister's address, delegates heard from GBA Chairperson, Leo O'Reilly who provided an overview of the GBA's work programme since the last AGM in March 2024, and GBA CEO, Nuala O'Neill who provided key updates on Area Planning and Management Side.

Delegates also received an overview of the financial health of Voluntary Grammar schools from former VG school Principal, Joe McCann, who is currently seconded to the GBA. The overview was based on the results of the GBA's 2025 School Finance Survey which will shortly be issued to all of our member schools.

Other AGM business included nominations to the GBA Executive Committee as follows:

- Stephen Black, Ballymena Academy
- Ronnie Hassard, Campbell College
- Professor John Gillespie, Dalriada School
- Neal Lucas, The Wallace High School

Following the AGM, Ronnie Hassard was appointed as GBA Chair. Ronnie has a wealth of experience and knowledge of the voluntary grammar sector, and education system as a whole, having served as a school principal, GBA Executive Member and ViceChair, and Board member of the Education Authority.

The GBA would like to thank Leo O'Reilly for his Chairmanship of the GBA over the past two years, including the contributions and drafting of consultation responses and for his very impactful representational role on behalf of voluntary grammar schools.

Area Planning Update

Area Planning Local Groups

The Area Planning Local Groups will meet in June to discuss the outcomes of the post-primary admissions process. This will include an initial analysis of the pupil numbers across each school sector and Local Government District.

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. APLGs will look at key sustainability factors, including admission /enrolment numbers, alongside population statistics and projections.

If your school is planning a significant change in the coming years please [contact us](#) to request an initial discussion.

Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools

The EA has advised that their early planning assumptions for September 2025 showed a need for approximately 1300 additional places for pupils with special educational needs. Prior to Easter, Senior EA officials took forward an intensive round of engagements with those schools in areas with the greatest demand for capacity in September 2025.

The EA has now published a number of proposals for various Specialist Provision classes involving 33 mainstream schools across all phases and Key Stages. The proposals are not subject to the full Development Proposal process - Approval to establish, change and/or close a Specialist Provision is taken to the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee following consideration of responses received through the consultation process.

The consultation for the [current round of proposals](#) will close on 1st July 2025.

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

GBA School Governance Survey - Spring 2025

Our School Governance Survey was launched on 1 May 2025. To date we have received over 100 detailed and insightful responses. We would ask school leaders to make one final appeal to governors on our behalf to ensure that we maximise the number of responses that will inevitably strengthen our position in future engagement activities and planning our ongoing support for schools. The survey closes on Friday 30 May at 5pm.

The survey can be accessed using the following link: <https://forms.gle/GRSJ83roZ58HQ4in9>

GBA Responds to "Vision 2030 - A Strategy for Integrated Education" Consultation

Vision 2030 aims to outline clear targets and benchmarks for the development of Integrated Education during the five-year period (2025-2030) through the published strategy and associated action plan.

The Department of Education recently conducted a consultation exercise to gather the views and feedback of stakeholders 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 following documents provide background and context to the consultation.

[Vision 2030 \(A Strategy for IE\).pdf](#)

[Vision 2030 \(Action Plan\).pdf](#)

[Vision 2030 \(Benchmark Data\).pdf](#)

The following points were made in our response submitted on Wednesday 21 May 2025:

- It is essential to ensure that the right balance is struck between the aspirations of those interests promoting integrated education and all other schools delivering for our children and communities across Northern Ireland.
- It is the aim of all educational establishments to support, protect and advance diversity regardless of their designation as a particular type of school. This includes the voluntary grammar sector where a comparative objective analysis of school populations show that are at least as diverse as those in some schools that have been formally classified as integrated.
- The strategic objective must be to deliver on the principles and aspirators of diversity, respect and understanding between different cultures and religious beliefs in every school in Northern Ireland, rather than focusing on how one sector might do this.

- Children from different ethnic, cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds attend all schools and interact daily, both formally and informally across all school types.
- The strategy focuses on demand for integrated education on societal demand and behavioural demands. There are no references in the legislation to the concepts of “societal demand” or ‘behavioural demand’ and hence they cannot be considered legitimate in the context of the statutory requirement placed on the Department and the Education Authority to measure the demand for integrated education.
- We presented evidence in response to the argument of unmet demand for integrated education and highlighted greater unmet demand in the VG sector using both enrolment data, admissions data, first preference data and projections of future school populations.
- Unmet demand is not exclusive to the integrated sector. There is unmet demand in different sectors in different localities and an area-based approach must be taken that does not elevate the needs of integrated schools over others because of their title.
- We believe that schools’ parental choice data collated annually and published by the Department is the most accurate data available in measuring real demand for schools in the different sectors and in different areas.
- We highlighted the need for the future of integrated education to be understood and progressed within the context of area planning ([Planning for Provision 2024-26](#)) and the criteria for a sustainable school ([A Policy for Sustainable Schools](#)).

We will keep members updated on the progress of the strategy. If you have any further comments or feedback please [contact us](#).

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 Budget 2025-26 Equality Impact Assessment

The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of their Equality Impact Assessment document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by **3 July 2025**, which will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2025-26. Further information and details on how to respond can be found [here](#).

Consultation on Accounting for Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs: Changing the 'Supernumerary' Status

The consultation seeks views on the change to treat children with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) in a mainstream school as supernumerary for the year of admission only, and only if a change of placement is necessary.

The consultation will close on 26th June 2025. Further information and details on how to respond can be found [here](#).

Consultation on Strengthening Inspection Legislation

This consultation seeks views on proposals to strengthen existing legislation to protect the inspection process in schools and other education and training establishments in Northern Ireland. The proposed Bill would ensure full cooperation with the inspection process by making it an offence to intentionally obstruct the process bringing Northern Ireland legislation in line with that in Scotland, Wales, England and the Republic of Ireland.

The consultation will close on 10th July 2025. Further information and details on how to respond can be found [here](#).

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

Shared Education Update

The GBA is engaging with the Shared Education and Sectoral Support team within the EA to support our member schools with ongoing/ future Shared Education work.

Please [contact us](#) with any comments or questions in relation to Shared Education and we will raise these on your behalf.

For the latest Shared Education news, including partnership stories and funding updates, please visit the [EA's Shared Education Hub](#).

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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