
GBA News – Friday 12th December 2025



Building Stronger Governance Roadshows

The GBA will be delivering in-person training for Voluntary Grammar School Governors across Northern Ireland in Spring 2026:

The training will be delivered at the following venues and is open to governors and school leadership:

Governance Roadshow

Host School

Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt
Methodist College, Belfast
Foyle College, Derry/Londonderry
Loreto Grammar, Omagh
St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh

Date

Thursday 5 February 2026
Thursday 19 February 2026
Thursday 26 February 2026
Thursday 5 March 2026
Thursday 12 March 2026

Programme Outline:

6:00pm - Registration and networking supper

6:30pm - 3 x 20 minute presentations

- Good Governance in Voluntary Grammar Schools
- Finance

- Employment matters

7:30pm - Panel Q&A

8:30pm - Close

To reserve a place, please complete this [form](#)

We encourage you to register soon due to high demand and limited capacity.

Launch of Public Consultation on Draft "Attendance Matters" Strategy

The Education Minister has launched a public consultation on a new draft strategy to improve school attendance and understand the reasons behind pupil absence.

Although the majority of pupils attend school regularly, there are some who struggle with attendance and the factors behind poor school attendance are complex.

The proposed Attendance Matters Strategy sets out six priority areas to support children and young people to attend school every day:

- Promoting a nurturing environment to understand and reduce Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA);
- Ensuring inclusive strategies to promote positive behaviour;
- Using data to identify vulnerable children and young people and delivering early interventions;
- Understanding why children are missing from formal education and taking steps to address this;
- Piloting a whole community approach to improving attendance; and
- Transforming support for schools and settings.

All those with an interest in this issue, particularly families and schools, are encouraged to provide their views.

The consultation will run from **8th December to 6th March 2026** and can be found here - www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-pupil-attendance-strategy-attendance-matters

The GBA is currently developing a response to the consultation - if you have any comments or feedback in relation to this, please [contact us](#)

GBA Attends EA CSU "LEAD 10" Event

The GBA recently attended the EA's Controlled Schools Unit ([CSU](#)), "LEAD 10" event in the Antrim Board Centre. At the event, ten controlled school leaders from various education phases and settings, presented examples of best practice from their schools, and spoke about the challenges and opportunities they have experienced during their time as school leaders.

Some of the challenges school leaders spoke about included:

- Recruitment and training of new staff.
- Increase in the number of learners with additional needs and the increasing complexity/ diversity of needs.
- Issues around attendance.
- Improving literacy outcomes.
- Parental engagement
- Mental health and wellbeing of staff and pupils.
- Shared Education.

Leaders also spoke about various approaches taken within their school to improve the educational experience and outcomes for pupils, such as restorative practice, collaborative working with professionals and external agencies, development of student leadership teams and mental health teams, staff mentoring programmes, and upskilling of classroom assistants.

We will share links to the presentations with you once available.

Area Planning Updates

Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools

As you will be aware, the Northern Ireland education system is facing significant pressure in securing appropriate placements for children with statements of Special Educational Needs for September 2026/27 and beyond. The EA SEN team recently hosted a series of virtual engagement sessions for primary and post-primary schools, which included information on the support available to voluntary grammar schools in delivering specialist provision.

The EA is hosting a further virtual engagement session for grammar schools on **Thursday 18th December from 10:00am to 11:30am** via Microsoft Teams. If you would like to attend the session, please contact SpecialistProvisions@eani.org.uk.

Operational Plan 3

The Area Planning Local Teams will meet in January 2026 to continue discussions around Operational Plan 3. This will be a one-year plan spanning September 2026 to August 2027. Any workstreams brought forward for this plan must be completed within the timeframe. The plan will also include any medium-term projects carried over from Operational Plan 2.

Further information on the Operational Plans is available [here](#).

Institute of Fiscal Studies - Demographic Change and Schools Across the UK

The Institute of Fiscal Studies recently published a [paper](#) analysing the choices facing policymakers regarding past declines in pupil numbers.

The paper highlights that the number of children across the UK is expected to decline by about 7% or 800,000 between 2025 and 2035 and discusses the challenges that this will bring for the UK education sectors over the next decade and beyond.

SEND Transformation - End of Term Update

An overview of SEND Transformation and SEND Local IMPACT Teams progress to date, as well as an update on the Graduated Response Framework and training, and information regarding Educational Psychology Services is available in video format via this [link](#).

NI Teacher's Pension Scheme – Webinar 29th January 2025

In this webinar, experts from the government-backed MoneyHelper service, in collaboration with the Teachers' Pay & Pensions Team, will provide information on Northern Ireland teacher pensions.

The session will cover:

- an overview of the teacher pension and its benefits
- how much money you might need in retirement
- how much you can expect from the state pension
- tracing old pensions and spotting scams.

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

Shared Education

T:BUC Camps Programme

Applications are invited now for the 2026-2027 programme period for camps being delivered from the 1 April 2026 until 28 February 2027. All applications are subject to funding being made available by The Executive Office for the 2026-2027 financial period.

Schools engaged in Shared Education or interested in developing good relations opportunities for children and young people are encouraged to apply.

The closing date for receipt of applications is **16 January 2026 @ 4pm.**

Further information is available [here](#).

GTCNI Legislation

The Minister of Education has introduced the [General Teaching Council Bill](#). The purpose of the Bill is to make provision in relation to the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland. The Bill has now completed the Second Stage - the Official Report of the Second Stage is available [here](#).

The Bill is now referred to the NI Assembly Education Committee for the Committee Stage (date to be confirmed).

GBA Christmas Closure Dates

Please note that the GBA office will be closed from 5pm on Friday 19th December 2025 until 4th January 2026, inclusive.

We will reopen on Monday 5th January 2026.

Please note the cut-off date of 12noon on Wednesday 17th December 2025 for job vacancy advertising requests.

(As usual, please allow 2 working days for jobs to be processed.)

Any requests received after this time will be processed when we reopen on 5th January 2026.

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 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.**

THE DEADLINE FOR REQUESTS TO ADVERTISE JOBS BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS IS **12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2025**. REQUESTS RECEIVED AFTER THIS DEADLINE WILL NOT BE PROCESSED UNTIL MONDAY 5 JANUARY 2026.