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## GBA News – Wednesday 29th April 2026

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### GBA Finance Survey - Final Call for Responses

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Our annual [Finance Survey](#) will close at 12pm on Friday 1st May.

We are aiming to get as full a response as possible from our 50 member schools.

This will enable an accurate representation of the financial health of the voluntary grammar sector and allow comparisons with previous years.

We will use the evidence to advocate for a fair funding base for our schools and raise the significant challenges being faced.

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## GBA AGM

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Thank you for registering for the GBA's Annual General Meeting. We look forward to welcoming our members and hope that you find the day engaging and informative.

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



# Governance Matters - Recent DE Publications and Training Opportunities

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## **Independent Review of Teacher Workload - Action Plan**

The action plan will take forward measures to address recommendations made by the Independent Review of Teacher Workload panel, which was commissioned by the Education Minister last year.

Key elements of the action plan include addressing working hours and flexible working for teachers and a commitment to develop measures in recognition of the increasingly complex role of school leaders.

A summary of key actions and next steps for governors is available [here](#) - this should be read in conjunction with DE's full [action plan](#).

## **New Assessment Arrangements**

The Minister has published two key documents that set a new direction for how we assess, understand and support pupil learning:

- [Response to the Independent Review of Statutory Assessment](#) and,
- [New Statutory Assessment Policy Framework](#)

Together, these publications establish a new system of statutory assessment in Northern Ireland which will replace all previous arrangements for Key Stage Assessment.



### **Education Authority - Governor Training Programme and Webinars**

The Education Authority's [Governor Training Programme](#) is an online resource which is designed to help governors focus on their strategic responsibilities and understand how accountability and transparency can improve the effectiveness of governance and raise educational standards.

The EA also hosts a number of live webinars for school governors throughout the academic year. Upcoming webinars include:

#### **Role of the Chair Training**

Thurs 7 May at 12 noon or Thurs 14 May at 6.30 pm: [Book here](#)\*

Please note these sessions are currently fully booked however the EA is operating a waiting list - click on the link above to add your name to the list\*



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## Erasmus+ Update

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The UK Government recently announced that the UK and EU have officially signed the legal agreement that finalises the UK's association with Erasmus+.

This paves the way for the UK to be part of Erasmus+ from 2027 onwards, which is a significant development for all organisations and groups involved in international education and collaboration.

The British Council has been appointed as the National Agency for delivering Erasmus+ in the UK. They will now begin work to manage the programme.

Erasmus+ can deliver transformative international experiences for learners, trainees and staff in **higher education (HE), further education (FE), vocational education and training (VET), schools, adult education, and youth and sport organisations.**

For example:

- School pupils can spend time studying abroad, either as part of a class or group, or individually.
- Students and apprentices in HE, FE and VET can study, train, volunteer or do a work placement abroad.

- Adult learners can spend time at an adult learning organisation abroad or study abroad as part of a group.
- Young people who work or volunteer for youth organisations can travel for training or a youth exchange and take part in workshops, debates and outdoor activities.
- Youth workers and staff working in schools, FE, HE or adult education can train or teach abroad and take part in professional development activities.
- Grassroots sports staff can spend time abroad job-shadowing or on a coaching assignment.

### **Start your Erasmus+ journey**

Applications for funding open in November 2026. [Sign up now](#) through the British Council to make sure you receive the information you need to prepare for Erasmus+



# Erasmus+

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## **HSENI Inspections - Focus for 2026/27**

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During 2026/27, the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) will be undertaking a series of inspections focused on:

- (i) The management of asbestos**
- (ii) The prevention of work-related violence and aggression.**

As you will be aware, employers have a legal duty to ensure that such risks are effectively managed.

Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) are commonly found in buildings built or refurbished before the year 2000. Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 places specific duties on duty holders to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises. This includes having an up-to-date and effective asbestos management plan.

Work-related violence is defined as ‘any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work’. Under the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, employers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. This includes taking appropriate steps to prevent and manage risks associated with violence and aggression.

The initial phase of the HSENI inspection initiatives will involve engagement with senior managers to understand the measures currently in place to manage these issues. A second phase will follow, consisting of inspections to assess the extent to which the described measures are being implemented in practice.

**The areas that inspectors will consider during an inspection are outlined in this [appendix](#).**

Detailed guidance on both topics can be accessed via the following links and on HSENI’s website:

[The duty to manage asbestos in buildings](#)

[How employers can protect workers from violence and aggression at work.](#)

If you have any questions regarding the inspection initiative please [contact us](#).



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## Live Consultations

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### **EA Consultation - Enhanced Support Model for SEN**

The Education Authority is currently consulting on an Enhanced SEN Support Model.

This entails fundamental reform of SEN provision in NI to address a system under strain and unable to meet the rights of the child to the fullest.

The Enhanced Support Model envisages:

- Needs-focused statements outlining functional needs and specialist actions.
- School-led delivery, with leaders empowered to design support packages within EA minimum standards.
- Capability-building, emphasising skills and independence for pupils.
- A professionalised and multi-disciplinary SEN workforce with recognised specialist skills and a new grading/reward framework.
- Flexible local models, recognising rural challenges and supporting locally tailored solutions.
- A graduated approach, enabling early intervention and easier access to support at the point of need.

- Phased rollout to allow time for recruitment, training, and workforce growth.

Further information on the consultation is available [here](#). This includes papers on the enhanced model and details of in-person consultation events.

The consultation will close on Friday 22nd May 2026.

### **DE Consultation - Restrictive Interventions: Guidance for educational settings**

The Department has launched a consultation seeking views on 'Restrictive Interventions: Guidance for educational settings'.

The purpose of the guidance is to provide clarity to educational staff on the use of restrictive interventions, particularly regarding the requirement to record and report serious incidents of physical restraint and all incidents of seclusion. The overall objective is to reduce and minimise the use of restrictive interventions wherever possible, ensuring they are used only, in a proportionate, lawful, trauma-informed and child-centred manner.

The consultation is an opportunity for interested parties to provide views on the guidance. An Equality Impact Assessment consultation has also been published.

The consultation period will run from Thursday 12 March 2026 until Thursday 4 June 2026 for both consultations. Further information is available [here](#).

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## **UK Feminista - Tackling Sexism in Schools**

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UK Feminista works to end sexism in schools – including sexual harassment, sexist language and gender stereotyping. The organisation recently launched a report, "[System Change](#): **Why a whole school**

***approach to preventing sexism and sexual harassment is needed – and how to make it work’***

The report provides an evidence base for policymakers following the recent publication of the UK Government’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which identified “prevention and early intervention” as one of the strategy’s three objectives.

[Download the full report.](#)

UK Feminista also provides a free [resource hub](#) for schools.

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## **Area Planning Updates**

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Operational Plan 3 (OP3) is due to commence in September 2026 and will span one year to accommodate the completion of outstanding projects from previous plans, as well as the inclusion of some new short-term workstreams/ proposals.

Further information on the current strategic and operational plans is available [here](#).

Information on current development proposals is available here:

- [Development Proposals - Pre-publication consultations](#)
- [Published Development Proposals \(awaiting ministerial decision\)](#)

If you are considering a significant change to the size or character of your school please [contact us](#) so that we can engage with the relevant Area Planning Local Group.

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## **Model Complaints Handling Procedures - NIPSO**

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The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) is working to standardise complaints handling by public bodies. This is being rolled out across five main sectors - health and social care, local government, central government, housing and education.

NIPSO plans to have all public bodies dealing with complaints in broadly the same way by the middle of 2027, and is working to create sectoral Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP).

The complaints procedure consists of two stages. Stage One is an opportunity to respond and resolve complaints early, close to the point where the service was delivered. Stage Two is for when the service user remains dissatisfied after Stage One. When the two stages are complete public services must signpost to the NI Public Services Ombudsman. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be addressed at Stage One. If the service user remains dissatisfied after Stage One, they can request that the organisation looks at their complaint at Stage Two.

The procedures state that Stage One complaints should be dealt with by public bodies within 5 working days and Stage Two within 20 working days.

Work on a MCHP for the education sector is underway - we will provide updates via our monthly newsletter in due course. Further information on NIPSO and their work on MCHP is available [here](#).

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## Shared Education News

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GCSE History students from eight Shared Education partnerships recently took part in an inspiring and interactive learning programme at the Ulster Museum.



The event, *“Exploring Sources: The Troubles and Beyond,”* was organised by the Museum’s Education Service in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University and hosted by Professor Chris Reynolds, Professor of Social Sciences at Nottingham Trent University.

The session focused on the importance of oral history in addressing the challenges of legacy in Northern Ireland. Students engaged with a distinguished panel who shared personal testimonies from the period between 1968 and 1974. Panellists included:

- Paul Arthur – People’s Democracy / Civil Rights activist
- Anne Devlin – Northern Ireland Labour Party, Young Socialist, and member of the People’s Democracy
- Eileen Weir – Former factory worker and women’s peace process activist

Each speaker offered powerful recollections and reflections from the civil rights era, providing young people with unique insights into lived experience, activism, conflict, and community resilience. Students also had the opportunity to question the panellists directly, deepening their

understanding of the complexities surrounding shared history and the legacy of conflict.

A total of 160 pupils from the following eight schools attended:

- Belfast Royal Academy
- St Malachy's College
- Assumption Grammar School
- High School Ballynahinch
- St Colman's High School
- St Colmcille's High School
- Wellington College
- St Joseph's College, Belfast

This Shared Education experience contributed to the fostering of collaboration between schools, strengthening of cross-community relationships, and supported young people in developing nuanced understandings of Northern Ireland's past and its ongoing legacy.

Click on the graphic below for more information on Ulster Museum's "The Troubles and Beyond" exhibition and Key Stage 3/4 workshop, now available for booking for the 2026-27 academic year (September 26 - June 27) .



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## Advertising of Teaching and Support roles on the GBA Website

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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](#).

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