



GBA AGM - Registration Now Open

The GBA's Annual General Meeting is taking place on **Wednesday 13th May 2026 from 9.30am - 3pm**, at [Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn](#)

We are pleased to confirm that our guest speakers will be:

- Margaret Kelly, Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
- Frances McCandless, Chief Executive Charities Commission Northern Ireland
- Marie Gleeson, Leadership Consultant and former Irish Navy Ship Captain.

To book your place, please complete the [registration form](#).
Capacity is limited so book early to secure your place.



Nominations for GBA Executive Board Now Open

We recently contacted our member school Principals to seek nominations for the GBA Executive Committee. This year, we have four vacancies.

GBA Executive members undertake a wide range of activities on behalf of our member schools. To that end we need volunteers who also have available time to attend meetings (hybrid format), which are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of each month during term time.

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

Please check your inbox for nomination forms or [contact us](#) if you would like further information regarding the work of the Executive.

Governance Matters - Voluntary Contributions

As you will be aware, school budgets in Northern Ireland are under severe pressure and increasingly, this is impacting on areas such as capital development and extra-curricular activity organised by schools.

Many schools have been forced to stall projects and cut back on school activities. Parents/ guardians are increasingly being asked to contribute more than they may have done in previous years, particularly in relation to extra-curricular activity.

Regarding parental contributions, the role of the Board of Governors is to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements relating to school fees, charges and

remissions and requests for voluntary contributions.

The following information is taken from Chapter 18 of the [Governor Guide](#) - "School Fees, Charges and Remissions". Please refer to this chapter for further information.

Voluntary Contributions to Support School Activities

There is no prohibition on any request by or on behalf of a school Board of Governors for voluntary contributions in support of activities organised by the school whether inside or outside school hours. However, the law requires that any such request must make it clear that:

- there is no obligation to make any contribution
- registered pupils at the school will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made any contribution

Voluntary Contributions to Support the School

The Board of Governors of a voluntary grammar school that is eligible for 85% capital grants on an approved capital development scheme, may make a charge in respect of any registered post-primary pupil to meet the 15% balance of expenditure incurred or to be incurred in relation to:

- the provision or alteration to school premises
- the provision of equipment provided in connection with the provision or alteration of school premises other than premises used wholly or mainly for boarding purposes.

The amount of the charge may not exceed £140.

The Board of Governors of a voluntary grammar school which is eligible for 100% capital grants on an approved capital development scheme, may make a charge in respect of a registered post-primary pupil only to meet any outstanding deficit on a completed capital development scheme, which was 85% grant-aided by DE. The amount of this charge is set by DE.

Advice for Schools in Current Financial Climate

As with school budgets, family budgets are increasingly stretched and there may be affordability issues regarding contributions. There may also be a reluctance to contribute due to a lack of understanding regarding the rationale behind contributions to support the school or school activities.

While it is permissible to *request* parental contributions, it may be helpful for schools to clearly outline both the need for this and the benefits that it brings for their child's educational journey.

Feedback from our member schools suggests that clear communication and transparency around the matter has helped to sustain parental contributions.

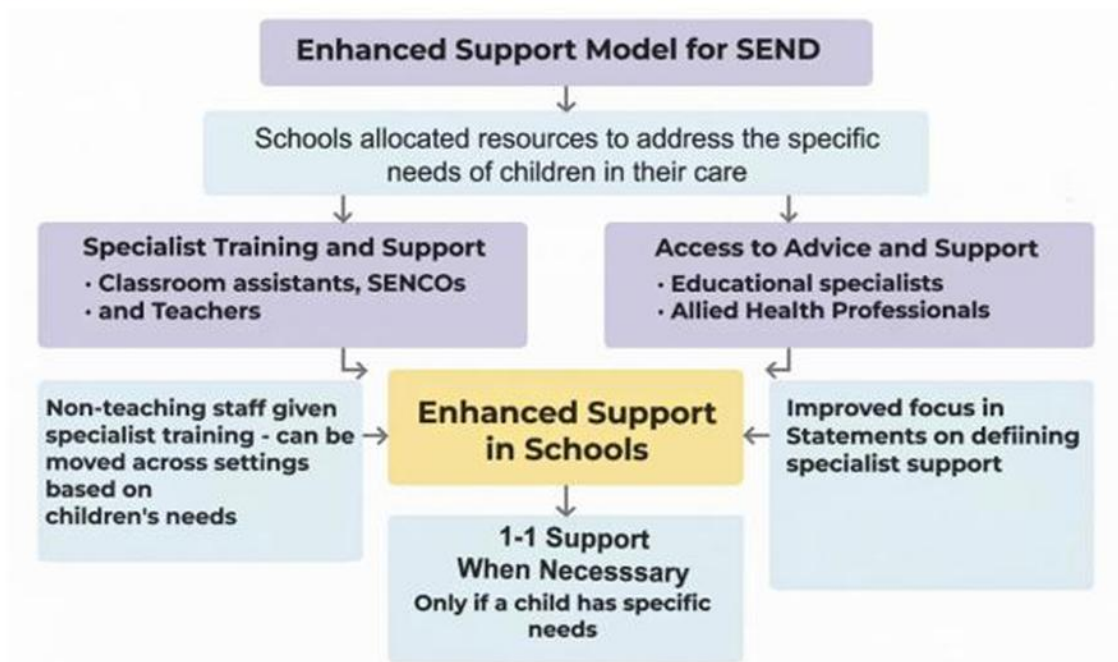
EA Consultation - Enhanced Support Model for SEN

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.

Graphical representation of the Enhanced Support Model



The GBA welcomes the consultation and strongly encourages our member schools to respond with their views. The GBA is of the view that schools are in a position to best understand and meet the needs of their pupils. Stakeholder experiences and views are essential in the development of a flexible support model for pupils with SEN.

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

The GBA will also be formulating a response to the consultation based on our engagement with schools and education partners.

SEN Provision in Voluntary Grammar Schools

Following extensive consultation with our member schools, education partners/ stakeholders, and in consideration of recent developments, the GBA has developed a paper on SEN provision in Voluntary Grammar Schools.

The paper outlines:

1. The GBA's engagement regarding specialist provision ("SPiMs") in the voluntary grammar sector.
2. Barriers faced by voluntary grammar schools regarding the implementation and development of formalised specialist provision classes.
3. Recent Developments in the SEN Landscape and future considerations.

The paper is available to download [here](#).

Area Planning Updates

Operational Plans

Operational Plan 2: 2024-2026 will conclude in August 2026. Any final requests from Voluntary Grammar schools to submit a Development Proposal should be submitted to the Education Authority as soon as possible (please [contact us](#) for details). This will allow for the necessary consultation processes within the timeframe of OP2.

Operational Plan 3 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.

If you have any new proposals please [contact us](#) so that we can take these forward through the relevant Area Planning Local Group.

Coming Soon - GBA Annual Finance Survey

We will shortly be issuing our 2026 School Finance Survey. The survey will ask various questions in order to understand the financial health of the Voluntary Grammar sector at the close of the 2025/26 financial year.

Please look out for the survey link which will be issued to Principals and Bursars via email. We hope to get full set of responses from our 50 member schools in order to gain a true picture of the current financial climate of our schools and how this compares to previous years.

We really appreciate your time and support with this to enable us to gather this information.

Shared Education News

Nineteen Belfast post-primary schools came together on Thursday, 5th March, 2026, at St Louise's Comprehensive College to mark a powerful moment of reflection and renewal as they reopened a unique inter-schools Peace Capsule that had been sealed in the year 2000.



The event, titled '25 Years Later: Opening Hope, Renewing Peace', brought pupils, teachers, youth leaders, and community representatives together to rediscover messages, artefacts, and commitments placed in the capsule at the beginning of the new millennium—symbols of young people's hopes for a peaceful future in Northern Ireland.

A central feature of the event was the Procession of Renewed Peace, during which each of the 19 participating post-primary schools placed a symbolic item representing their school community, values, and hopes for continued peace into a newly prepared capsule. These modern artefacts—ranging from student artwork and written pledges to emblems and objects of significance—capture this generation’s vision for a peaceful, shared future.

The new capsule was then formally sealed, to be reopened by a future generation of young people.

The PEACEPLUS ASPIRE project is led by the Education Authority in partnership with Léargas, Early Years – the organisation for young children, the National Childhood Network, and the Fermanagh Trust. The project is funded by PEACEPLUS, a programme administered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

GBA Easter Closure Dates

Please note that the GBA office will close at 5pm on Thursday 2nd April 2026 for the Easter holidays. We will reopen as normal on Wednesday 8th April 2026.

The last date for receipt of jobs to be advertised on the GBA website before the Easter holidays is 5.00pm on Tuesday 31 March 2026.

Any jobs received after this date will not be processed until after 10 April 2026.

Wishing you a happy and restful Easter break,

GBA Staff

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.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, please [contact us](#).

Please note the cut off dates above for the Easter Holidays