
GBA News – Wednesday 30th September 2026



Consultation on the Northern Ireland Curriculum

The GBA recently hosted a discussion session with Department of Education (DE) Officials to provide school leaders and governors with an overview of the proposed new curriculum framework and an opportunity to raise questions and concerns as part of the curriculum consultation process. The session was attended by principals, vice principals, governors and other senior school staff, with representation from 20 voluntary grammar schools.



The main discussion points/ challenges are summarised below:

- Practical implications of implementing a new framework and whether schools have the capacity, staffing and support required to deliver it effectively.
- Staffing and subject-specialist capacity, including the availability of appropriately qualified and specialist teaching staff emerged as a significant concern, particularly in the context of the proposed knowledge-rich curriculum.
- Attendees emphasised the importance of an effective inspection and support system alongside the new framework. Questions were also raised about how schools would ultimately be held accountable for curriculum delivery.
- Associated assessment frameworks were raised, for example, how capabilities might be assessed across subject areas.

- Implications of Artificial Intelligence on teaching and learning, for example, the effects of "cognitive outsourcing" and pupils' ability to critically evaluate information provided by AI.
- Implementation in the context of wider system pressures, e.g. Area Planning, capital investment, reduced budgets.

DE reported that significant feedback has been received around the individual subject frameworks, particularly in relation to English, IT, History and Modern Languages, including questions and challenges regarding the proposed content.

Thank you to our member school representatives for your attendance and input which was greatly appreciated by the Department.

A copy of DE's presentation slides from the event is available [here](#).

A report of the meeting has been shared with the Department to help inform their consultation.

Leadership Development Programme - Register Your Interest

The Education Authority and the Department of Education, in partnership with internationally recognised leadership expert Andy Buck is offering a flagship leadership development programme designed to support experienced principals in leading meaningful and sustained educational improvement. There are 100 places on this programme which are fully funded through the Leadership Development Programme.

Through face to face and online learning the programme supports principals to develop greater leadership self-awareness, strengthen their influence and cultivate the habits and behaviours required to lead sustainable improvement in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

To register your interest in the programme, please use the link below:



Wednesday 18 November 2026



9.00am -3.00pm



Register: <https://ow.ly/bjHY50ZSZW1>

The programme offers:

- ☒ Facilitated face to face sessions with Andy Buck
- ☒ Deeper understanding of evidence informed leadership frameworks
- ☒ Access to the Basic Leadership 360 diagnostic tool and coaching
- ☒ Engagement with programme resources, including the BASIC Leadership texts and videos
- ☒ Time to critically reflect on practice, engage and network with other principals

Composite A Level Classes - Voluntary Grammar Sector

We are currently seeking information on the operation of composite A level classes in the Voluntary Grammar sector.

Please complete this [short survey](#) to provide us with this information.

Please do not provide your school's name in your responses. We are interested in sector-wide patterns rather than identifying individual schools. Results will be reported in aggregate and shared with member schools in due course.

PRSD Support

The Board of Governors has a legal responsibility to ensure that the professional development and performance of teachers employed within their school is reviewed annually in accordance with the PRSD Scheme and within the context of the School Development Plan. The Board has a

strategic role in adopting a PRSD policy for the school and in monitoring its implementation. It is also responsible for nominating at least two governor reviewers of the Principal.

To support our member schools in fulfilling these responsibilities, the GBA is training a cohort of experienced former school leaders to act as PRSD External Advisers. A call-off list of trained advisers is available from the GBA. Please contact administrator@gbani.org for further information.

Health & Safety Executive NI - Upcoming Webinar for Voluntary Grammar Schools

This academic year, the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) will be undertaking a series of inspections focused on the management of asbestos and 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.

The initial phase of these 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.

To help our member schools navigate these areas, the GBA is hosting a live webinar with HSENI Inspectors at **2pm on Wednesday 4th November**. An invitation will issue via email shortly.

Consumer Council - Upcoming Webinar for Voluntary Grammar Schools

Water is an essential resource. One of the biggest culprits for wasting water are toilet cisterns. A toilet which is constantly leaking clean water from the cistern into the pan can waste around 200 to 400 litres of water a day.

The Consumer Council wants to help support small adjustments which can save water and money. Being more water efficient not only means lower water bills for schools but is also good for our environment. Developing water efficient practices can extend beyond staff and include pupils which they can pass on to other family members and friends.

As part of the Water Efficiency for Schools Project, the Consumer Council will be providing a free recorded webinar for member schools of the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) on how schools can be more water efficient. The webinar will be available on the GBA's website from November onwards and will include the following:-

- Key lessons and insights from the water efficiency work that the Consumer Council has previously done in collaboration with the Education Authority.
- An explanation on what makes up your water bill and help on using the Consumer Council's free online water bill checker.
- How your school can improve its water efficiency level by calculating average daily consumption per pupil.
- Provide a template to allow you to manage water meter readings.

The webinar will be delivered by Joanne White, Head of Water at the Consumer Council. A link will be provided if schools have any follow up questions.

Governance Matters

Governor Training Webinars - 2026/27

The Education Authority has recently updated their webinar training series for the next academic year, including modules on addressing bullying behaviour, and community use of schools. The full programme and booking links are available [here](#).

Spotlight on: The Board of Governors Annual Report

Excerpt from "[The Governor Guide](#)":

The Annual Report of the Board of Governors must contain:

- a summary of the steps taken by the Board of Governors in the discharge of its functions during the period since its last Report
- such other information as the Scheme of Management of the school may require.

The Annual Report is required to:

- be as brief as is reasonably consistent with the requirements below
- give the name and membership category of each school governor
- give the date on which the term of office of each member (other than the Principal) comes to an end
- name the Chairperson and Secretary of the Board of Governors
- provide information about arrangements for the next election of parents to the Board of Governors
- contain a financial statement:
 - reproducing or summarising any financial statement furnished to the Board of Governors by the EA or DE
 - indicating how any grants or financial allocation to the Board of Governors in the period of the report were used
 - giving details of the application of any gifts or bequests made to the school in that period
- describe the arrangements made for the security of the pupils and staff

and the school premises and any changes since the last Report

- describe the steps taken to develop links with the community
- describe the arrangements & facilities for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), ensuring that they are treated no less favourably than other pupils
- describe the steps taken to secure the implementation of the SEN policies
- provide information as to the facilities provided to assist access to the school for pupils with a physical disability and the Accessibility Plan for the school
- give such information on the curriculum and educational provision and educational achievements as is required to be made available in the annual report in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (NI) 2003.

Further detail about the contents of the Annual Report is in the scheme of management approved by DE for the school and [DE Circular 2003/15](#).

Recent DE Publications

[Structural Reform Programme Brief | Department of Education](#)

The Education Minister's Five-Year Budget Strategy sets out a programme of structural reforms to deliver a stable, sustainable and high-quality education system. The Structural Reform Programme ('the Programme') will oversee overall progress against implementation of the Strategy.

Delivery of the Strategy, however, also relies on the broader transformation of the Education system through the TransformED Strategy and SEND Reform.

[Leadership Development Bursary Scheme Guidance 2026-27](#)

The Leadership Development Bursary Scheme has been established to support the professional growth and leadership development of leaders in grant-aided schools across Northern Ireland. In 2026/27, the scheme is open to both middle leaders and experienced principals and forms part of

the Enhanced Professional Learning Programme for both.

These programmes have been developed under the Department of Education's TransformED Strategy and subsequent Teacher Professional Learning Strategy, Leading Together for Excellence and aims to strengthen leadership capacity across the education system.

[Behaviour in Schools Review - Call for Evidence](#)

The Call for Evidence seeks to:

- Identify the key behaviour challenges impacting pupils, teachers, and school leaders;
- Understand the frequency, severity and nature of these issues across different settings;
- Gather evidence on underlying causes and contributing factors, including societal and digital influences;
- Highlight effective strategies, interventions, and supports currently used in schools;
- Identify where current practice may be inappropriate, inefficient, or lacking an evidence base; and
- Identify gaps in provision and opportunities for improvement at school, system, and policy levels.



Review of Temporary Variation Policy Consultation

The Department of Education is seeking views on a significant change in policy direction to reform the operation of the Temporary Variation (TV) policy. These proposals reflect a broader shift towards placing children and families at the centre of decision making, strengthening parental choice, and ensuring the education system is more responsive to demand.

A review of the 2026 admissions cycle identified that, in some cases, outcomes did not align with parental expectations. This included situations where capacity existed in a preferred school but could not be utilised.

The consultation focuses on how a revised, more responsive approach might operate in practice, against a background of falling pupil numbers and increasing surplus places in many areas.

In summary, the Department is proposing to make it considerably easier for schools with spare capacity—particularly primary and non-selective post-primary schools—to admit additional pupils at their parents' request, while retaining more restrictive case-by-case rules for academically selective schools and introducing safeguards to protect SEN provision.

Further information on the consultation and details on how to respond are available [here](#).

Area Planning Updates

The Education Authority launched 'Operational Plan 3: 2026-27' on September 10, 2026, to set out key area planning activities for sustainable schools.

The plan runs from September 2026 until August 2027, after which, a new, overarching, 5-year strategic plan is scheduled to replace the current strategy.

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](#).

Shared Education News



Good Relations Week the theme is

INCLUDE

EVERYONE. EVERYWHERE. EVERYDAY.

Monday 12th - Sunday 18th October 2026

We encourage our Shared Education Partnerships to plan and deliver Shared Education events during GR week.

The goal is always Peace!

Central Events on Shared Education Day (Thurs 15th Oct).

We have some ideas below! Or develop your own idea!

1 Daily Mile/Fun Run/ Colour Run

Organise a partnership event and finish with tea / coffee. Use part of your £250 budget to support tea / coffee for family / community.

2 Sports Day

Bring pupils together to engage in a few different sports. Could your partnership run a Game of 3 Halves (GAA, Rugby and Soccer) or a Game of 2 Halves (Hockey / Hurling). Maybe the local sports clubs would support this event! Use part of your £250 budget to support tea / coffee for family / community if they come to watch!

3 Coffee Morning / Grandparents Day / Community Day

Bring the community together for a coffee morning in one of the schools. Use part of your £250 budget to support tea / coffee for family / community.

You could use this as a fundraiser for a local charity.

4 Capture Pupil Voice

Record 3/4 x 20sec clips from Pupils talking about their Shared Education experience. (NB - Record in Landscape mode). You can upload to your socials, or or send to your SE Development Officer for uploading on the Shared Ed Hub.

5 Litter Pick

Engage with your local council to organise a Community Litter Pick. They will give you Hi-Viz vests, Litter Pickers, Bin bags. Just pick a safe, local spot to clean up!

6 Walking Bus

Encouraging sustainable transport to school! Teachers/ CA's / Parents can go out early and collect kids from the local community and walk to school in a line. Make sure the pathway is safe with no busy roads to cross!

7 Shared Education Lessons

Photograph or video some normal planned SE activity and upload to your social media platforms.

8 Shared Education Assembly

Does everyone in your school know what Shared Ed is and how important it is? Tell your story at your school assembly.

9 Public Speaking Competition

Organise a joint Public Speaking Competition with the final during Good Relations week. Topics could include "Similar but Different - My Shared Education Experience".



What next?

1. Plan your event and communicate with your community.
2. Register your event by scanning this QR code -->
3. Post on social media and use the hashtags #grw26 #sharededucation #workingtogether



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](#).

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