GBA News – Friday 30th October 2026



Erasmus +
Funding Opportunities for Schools

Erasmus+ is a programme that provides grant funding for school pupils, teachers and other school staff to spend time abroad on learning, training or work activities. It also provides funding for schools to work with organisations in other countries on shared projects.

Following the UK's decision to rejoin the Erasmus+ scheme, schools in Northern Ireland will be able to apply for funding, with the next application round expected to open in November 2026.

The return of Erasmus+ offers schools an opportunity to develop partnerships that benefit both pupils and staff. Whether through a short period of job shadowing, a pupil learning exchange or a collaborative project with European schools, the programme can help schools strengthen professional practice, enrich the curriculum and develop international understanding.

Further information is available via the British Council, the National Agency for Erasmus+ for the UK, or by contacting us for guidance.

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

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Management of FOI Requests

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are an increasingly familiar feature of school leadership, but responding to them can place a significant demand on the time and resources of principals, governors and their staff. Identifying relevant records, reviewing information, considering exemptions and ensuring that statutory deadlines are met can be a time-consuming process, particularly when requests are complex or wide-ranging.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) dedicated Freedom of Information guidance and resources website is a valuable starting point for those involved in responding to FOI requests. It offers practical guidance on the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and how organisations should respond to requests.

The website can help schools to:

- Understand their legal obligations: Clarify the principles governing FOI requests and the responsibilities involved in responding appropriately.

- Manage requests effectively: Access guidance to help staff understand the steps involved in handling requests, from identifying the information sought to preparing a response.

- Consider exemptions and disclosure: Find information to help determine whether requested information should be disclosed or whether a relevant exemption may apply.

- Handle requests consistently: Use authoritative guidance to support a more structured approach, helping schools develop consistent procedures and reduce unnecessary uncertainty.

- Strengthen internal arrangements: Use the guidance to inform staff awareness, internal processes and the allocation of responsibility for dealing with requests.

FOI is an important part of public accountability and transparency. The challenge for schools is to meet these responsibilities proportionately and lawfully, while protecting the time and capacity needed to deliver the best possible educational experience for their pupils.

Visit the ICO's Freedom of Information guidance and resources here: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/

It is important to note that, where a request raises complex legal questions, specialist advice may be appropriate.

Artificial Intelligence and FOI Requests

In May 2026, the ICO published new guidance in response to concerns from FOI practitioners about the increasing use of AI tools to draft information requests and subsequent correspondence. The ICO reports that such requests can be longer, broader in scope and more repetitive, sometimes containing irrelevant material or making it difficult to establish precisely what information is being sought.

AI-generated correspondence may also contain inaccurate statements about FOI legislation or refer to legal cases and ICO decisions that do not exist. Further exchanges seeking clarification, challenging responses or

requesting internal reviews can add to the workload.

For schools already managing competing demands on staff time, this guidance is particularly relevant. It provides reassurance that existing FOI legislation is generally capable of dealing with these developments and offers practical advice on applying the rules appropriately.

Recent DE Publications

Security and Personal Safety in Schools: practical guidance to schools on creating a safe and secure environment for pupils, staff and visitors. It sets out a framework for identifying and assessing risks, preventing unauthorised access, theft and violence, and establishing appropriate security measures and emergency procedures. It also clarifies the responsibilities of education authorities, school governors and principals in managing school security and protecting the personal safety and wellbeing of the school community.

TransformED - Facts not Fiction: Factsheet that addresses common misconceptions about the reform programme.

Support Success: The TransformED School Improvement Programme: This framework sets out the purpose, principles, structures and operating arrangements for the Supporting Success Programme. Supporting Success is the Department of Education's new school improvement programme, which replaces the Formal Intervention Process (FIP) set out in Every School a Good School.
As a key component of TransformED, it provides a structured, collaborative and evidence informed approach to addressing identified challenges and strengthening schools' capacity to secure and sustain improvement.

Professional Learning Programme for Principals - October 2026 Newsletter | Department of Education:

Making Best Practice, Common Practice - October 2026 Newsletter | Department of Education

DE Statistical work programme | Department of Education: The annual statistical work programme outlines official statistics published by the Department for Education in academic year 2026/27.

Department of Education: Strengthening our School Improvement System

The GBA recently attended a conference hosted by the Department of Education (DE) on 6 October 2026, bringing together representatives from across Northern Ireland's education system to explore how we can collectively strengthen school improvement and enhance outcomes for children and young people.

The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the current education landscape, consider future developments, including the implementation of TransformED, and discuss the potential role of a proposed Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement.

Discussions highlighted the importance of working collaboratively across the education system, building on existing strengths and ensuring that schools and educational partners are well placed to support continuous improvement. The conference also provided a valuable opportunity to share perspectives, strengthen relationships and contribute to the wider conversation about the future direction of school improvement in Northern Ireland.

For the GBA, participation in the event was an important opportunity to represent the interests and perspectives of our member schools and to engage with other educational stakeholders on issues that will shape the future of education. We welcome the continued focus on partnership working and look forward to contributing to ongoing discussions as the Department considers the next steps arising from the conference.

NIPSO - Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Education

The GBA recently hosted a roundtable discussion with Julie Healy, Head of Improvement, Engagement and Impact at the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO), to discuss the proposed Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for the education sector.

The event was attended by principals and governors from GBA member schools and provided an opportunity to learn more about the proposed procedure, explore its implications for voluntary grammar schools and discuss its practical application in a school environment.

The MCHP is expected to be published by June 2027, with a six-month preparation period commencing in September 2027. The procedure is scheduled to become statutory in March 2028.

Please contact us to request a copy of the presentation shared by NIPSO at the event.

Minister Issues Statement on Planned Curriculum Reforms

Following recent public discussion about the proposed Curriculum 2028 reforms, the Education Minister, Paul Givan, has issued a written statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly setting out his response to a critique of the proposals by Dr Carmel Gallagher, former Director of Curriculum and Assessment at CCEA.

In his statement, the Minister challenges a number of the points raised, arguing that the critique contains factual inaccuracies, omits relevant context and draws conclusions that are not adequately supported by the evidence.

The statement sets out the Minister's position in the ongoing debate about Curriculum 2028 and can be accessed here.

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.

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

If you wish to attend, please contact us for the joining link.

Professional Learning Event for Teachers of GCSE and A Level Government & Politics

The Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service is hosting a free Professional Learning Event for teachers of GCSE and A Level Government & Politics on Friday 13 November 2026 in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The event will feature a range of expert speakers, including representatives from the UK Parliament, leading academics, and CCEA subject specialists. Topics will include the performance of Northern Ireland's institutions in 2026, the outlook for the 2027 Assembly Election, curriculum and assessment updates, and insights from Westminster.

Tea, coffee and lunch will be provided. To reserve a place, email

education.service@niassembly.gov.uk by 6 November 2026. Please note that substitute cover is not available.

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 "workstreams" within the Operational Plan are progressed through the Development Proposal process which involves a "pre-publication consultation" by the EA with affected schools - proposals at this stage can be accessed here.

Following consultation, a proposal is then published on the Department's website and is subject to a two month "objection period" prior to a ministerial decision on the outcome - proposals at this stage can be accessed here.

Shared Education News

Good relations Week

Working with the Connected Minds Project, Key Stage 3 students from St. Mary's Grammar School, Sperrin Integrated College and Kilronan School pupils explored the roots of identity, the branches of allyship, and engaged in mindful poetry activities, reflecting on what connects us and how we can support one another. These creative and thought-provoking sessions marked the beginning of a collaborative journey to create a Shared Peace Tree.

As part of Good Relations Week, this initiative highlights the importance of fostering positive relationships and creating shared spaces.



Magherafelt Post Primary Shared Education Partnership GRW Event 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.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, please contact us.

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