

Independent Review of Education – Governing Bodies Association Summary Position Statement

<p>About the GBA</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ GBA established in 1948 is the representative body for the 50 voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland <p>Remit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ to further & advance the interests of voluntary grammar schools and enhance their contribution to the NI education system▪ provide policy advice, information and support▪ represents member schools to Department, educational stakeholders, politicians and the media <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ the GBA receives £98,000 from the Department of Education to support our work in Area Planning. In addition, we receive approx. £33,000 per year in subscription income from member schools <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Executive Board elected from member schools▪ Staff = one full and one part-time member of staff
<p>About voluntary grammar schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Member schools amongst some of the largest and most sustainable in Northern Ireland▪ Educate over 1/3 of post primary students with 49,887 pupils enrolled. There are approximately 3,000 teachers (FTE) employed in our schools in addition to support staff▪ Schools are denominational, inter-denominational and non-denominational. Diverse and inclusive▪ High quality educational outcomes for pupils

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our member schools are wholly managed by their Boards of Governors. The BoG is the Employing Authority for all staff within the school ▪ GBA member schools use varying admissions criteria. Some include an academic component in their admissions policy, whilst others offer bilateral entry arrangements or all ability entry ▪ The statutory responsibility for establishing admissions criteria rests with Boards of Governors and the GBA respects and supports the rights of governors to do so
<p>The purpose of education and vision for the future</p>	<p>Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A system that meets the needs and expectations of pupils, parents, onward education providers or employers ▪ Clear pathways for pupils ▪ Curriculum that is fit for the 21st century ▪ Pastoral care, mental health needs supported ▪ Workforce that has professional development opportunities, career progression and that is most of all <u>supported</u> ▪ System based on evidence – not ideology, assumptions and opinion ▪ A system where diversity is not viewed as a weakness ▪ Regardless of school we all need to support pupils and help them achieve their full potential regardless of background/needs or social class

<p>Strengths and weaknesses of the current system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tendency to pounce too quickly on perceived weaknesses ▪ Many unrecognised strengths within the current system ▪ A willingness to address challenges must be backed up with sufficient funding <p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High levels of parental satisfaction (system wide) ▪ Quality of teaching and learning in schools and the experiences of learners ▪ Oversubscribed schools ▪ Cooperation between various schools <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited resources ▪ Area Planning – too many unsustainable schools ▪ Sustainability issues ▪ There is a need for greater school level input into education policy. A recent example of good practice is the establishment of a Practitioner Group of school leaders to work on and proof COVID policies
<p>SEN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voluntary grammar schools have increasing numbers of pupils with a range of additional needs including statements of SEN, all requiring specific forms of support ▪ Need for thorough research into the disproportionately large percentage of NI pupils with SEN statements and for cost effective provision. Current growth of numbers and costs is unsustainable

Targeting Social Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need to address disadvantage from birth to give our children and young people the best start in life. Education should not be viewed in isolation. Need to further explore how agencies and departments can work together e.g. Health, Education, Economy, Communities ▪ Pre-school and early years interventions, in and out of educational settings, is significantly more beneficial and cost effective than later attempts to remediate ▪ Need to report on interventions to assess value for money and replicate best practice
Education Journey	<p><u>Curriculum</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and assessment model. <p><u>Pathways</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved collaboration between schools and Regional colleges at post 16 level to avoid duplication and maximise the number of pathways
Effective schools have effective governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing the knowledge and skill base of governors through support and training ▪ Key role for governors in determining the strategic direction and improvement journey of the school ▪ Greater autonomy for Governors of all schools in which BoG has demonstrated willingness and capability. ▪ Efficiencies can be realised by those who know the school best and are intimately involved in the day to day running of the school

Support to Schools and Settings/System Design, Delivery and Administration

- Challenge the notion of a single system. We have one system at the moment – made up of many parts.
- A monolithic educational system with centralised control, in which power is remote from the learning environment and authority is exercised top-down, disempowers schools, by-passes Governors, marginalises School Leaders and weakens the connections parents and communities can establish with the school

DE/EA/Dept for Economy/ALBs/sectoral bodies

- Significant and welcome change in recent years with planning and sectoral organisations providing meaningful stakeholder engagement
- Would like to see more engagement from the Department outside of EA and CCMS
- Need for improved engagement from the Department of Economy. Attend Area Planning meetings but no real engagement. No engagement in 14-19 strategy. Opportunity missed to avoid duplication and create new pathways for young people
- Need to go beyond economy. Tackle disadvantage through better engagement with Health and Communities Departments.

Duplication

- Need to challenge perception that only Integrated Schools deliver integrated education
- Duplication and inefficiencies that can be addressed – unsustainable schools, right sizing schools and avoiding duplication post 16
- Ensure that interventions are analysed for effectiveness and sharing of best practice

	<p><u>Funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned that post-pandemic funding and health pressures will cause difficulties for Education budget ▪ Ensure more money going to chalkface ▪ Voluntary grammar schools are excellent value for money – responsible for own budget and scrutiny of every element of spend <p><u>Support for School Leaders</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome EA’s new leadership programme ▪ Evaluate and improve how school leaders are identified, prepared and supported throughout their career <p><u>Technology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replacement for C2K ▪ Classroom – educational tool ▪ Important for governance and budgetary management, real-time auditing
System design, delivery and administration/System design delivery and administration	<p><u>Effective schools have effective governance (from above)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing the knowledge and skill base of governors through support and training ▪ Key role for governors in determining the strategic direction and improvement journey of the school

- Greater autonomy for Governors of all schools in which BoG has demonstrated willingness and capability.
- Efficiencies can be realised by those who know the school best and are intimately involved in the day to day running of the school

Voluntary Principle

- Model of governance which is closely tied to the operational aspects of the school = efficiencies realised by those who know the schools best
- The direct link as employer is key to preserving the ethos of our schools, and it is also raising standards
- Boards of governors make decisions in the overall context of managing the financial affairs of the school.
- The GBA would advocate for greater levels of responsibility been given to the Boards of Governors in all schools

Better use of resources

- Need to look at Ministerial priorities of small sixth forms and schools with many composite classes
- Allow schools to make minor adjustments to intake in order to facilitate better use of resources e.g. class sizes for practical subjects, PE etc

Larger schools

- Shouldn't always look at costs but larger schools can be more efficient. Costs less to educate a child in a larger school

Procurement in VGS

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Goods and services acquired quicker and more efficiently▪ Often cheaper cost▪ Can join procurement frameworks if needed |
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