



TransformED

TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

ISSUE 3 : SEPTEMBER 2025

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As we begin the new academic year, we look forward to an exciting term marked by the growing momentum of the TransformED Strategy.

This wide-reaching strategy represents a renewed and focused commitment to improving the educational experiences and outcomes for all learners across Northern Ireland. Central to TransformED is a sharper focus on the fundamentals of teaching and learning—particularly curriculum, assessment, qualifications, school improvement, and addressing the root causes of educational disadvantage.

The last school year saw the delivery of several important milestones that set the foundation for this term's work:

- The publication of the TransformED Delivery Plan.

- The release of Lucy Crehan's Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- The inaugural TransformED Leadership Conference.
- The launch of the Making Best Practice, Common Practice Programme, which will feature 50 research-informed conferences.
- The introduction of the Online Science of Learning Academy for post-primary schools.

This term, the Curriculum Taskforce will accelerate its work. An advisory committee has been appointed to lead the reform process, and recruitment will soon begin for subject advisory groups. The Independent Review of Assessment in Northern Ireland, led by Tim Oates, will also continue its critical work throughout the term.

Above all, we remain committed to supporting teacher development. This term will see further rollout of resources and funding for Teacher Professional Learning,

including an enhanced induction programme for early career teachers and the Teacher Professional Learning Fund for schools. In addition, we are pleased to announce the launch of the Online Science of Learning Programme for Primary Schools.

LOOK OUT FOR:

- Recruitment to the Curriculum Taskforce
- Curriculum Conferences
- Roll-out of the Teacher Professional Learning Fund
- Enhanced Induction Programme for Early Career Teachers
- Science of Learning – Teacher Professional Learning for primary schools
- Consultation on Qualifications Policy in Northern Ireland



I'm delighted to welcome you to the third edition of TransformED Magazine, as we return—rested and recharged—from the summer break and looking ahead to the new school year.

This new term marks an important moment in our shared mission to transform teaching and learning. With the TransformED Strategy gathering real momentum, we are sharpening our focus on curriculum, assessment, qualifications, and professional learning—building a system that delivers for every child, in every classroom.

Last year saw the publication of the TransformED Delivery Plan, Lucy Crehan's Strategic Review of the Curriculum, and the launch of major new initiatives, including our research-informed professional Learning programme and the online Science of Learning Academy.

This term, we accelerate curriculum reform. The newly established Curriculum Taskforce—led by Christine Counsell—will begin shaping the future of what and how we teach. At the same time, we continue to invest in teachers, with new funding streams and an enhanced induction programme for early career teachers.

Our ambition is clear: a world-class curriculum, delivered by empowered educators, for the benefit of every learner.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and leadership. I look forward to working with you throughout this exciting phase of reform—and to visiting schools across Northern Ireland to see this work in action.

Paul Givan

Paul Givan
Education Minister

CURRICULUM REFORM

WHAT'S CHANGING AND HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Curriculum reform in Northern Ireland is progressing at pace. On 9 July, the Education Minister formally responded to the Strategic Review of the Curriculum, which set out 21 key recommendations aimed at strengthening the structure and delivery of the curriculum.

The response outlines a clear commitment to taking these recommendations forward as part of the wider TransformED Strategy. You can read the Department's response to the Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum by clicking [HERE](#).

KEY UPDATES

The Education Minister has accepted many of the Review's recommendations, including:

- A new curriculum framework built around subject disciplines and strong, knowledge-rich content.
- Digital technology will become a separate subject at both primary and post-primary levels.
- The World Around Us will be replaced in primary schools with subject-specific strands.
- Language, literacy, maths and numeracy will be mandatory up to the end of Key Stage 4.
- A Curriculum Taskforce will lead the development and rollout of the new framework.



Christine Counsell OBE taught in state schools in England before holding roles as local authority adviser, leader of the history PGCE course at the University of Cambridge, Director of Education at a Multi-Academy Trust and, currently, founder and Director of Opening Worlds

Some recommendations are still under review and will be considered further by the Taskforce.

WHO IS LEADING THE WORK?

The Curriculum Taskforce chaired by Christine Counsell OBE, with Lucy Crehan as Deputy Chair will:

- Design the new curriculum.
- Plan how it will be introduced, including training and resources.
- Recommend how progress will be tracked.

The Taskforce will include:

- An Advisory Committee of education experts including Baroness Amanda Spielman, Tim Oates CBE, Clare Sealy OBE, Professor Daniel Muijs, Alistair Hamill, Nathalie Kellens, Tracey Maloney, Esther Martin, Sharon Mulligan, Mark Roberts, Noeleen Tiffney, and Simon Toyne.
- Education leads to be seconded into the Department.
- Subject Working Groups to be made up of teachers and specialists.



Teachers in Northern Ireland will play a key role in shaping the new curriculum through the subject working groups.

In coming weeks, teachers across Northern Ireland will be invited to join drafting groups that will run for about 20 working days between November and January.

These groups will help develop subject content and capabilities. Schools will be reimbursed for substitute cover and school leaders are encouraged to support staff participation.

This is a unique opportunity to help build a curriculum that supports all learners. **Please watch out for more details in the coming weeks.**

CURRICULUM CONFERENCES

29 and 30 September 2025



The Department is hosting two curriculum conferences for school leaders and senior teachers:

POST-PRIMARY: 29 SEPTEMBER

PRIMARY: 30 SEPTEMBER

Both conferences will be held at the La Mon Hotel and Country Club, Belfast and will explore the concept of knowledge-rich curricula and the impact such approaches can have on pupil outcomes, inclusion and tackling disadvantage.

Workshops will cover knowledge-rich approaches to literacy, numeracy, sciences and humanities, as well as system-level and school-level curriculum design. Registration details have issued to all school principals.

Confirmed contributors include:

- **DR CHRISTINE COUNSELL OBE**
Chair of the Curriculum Taskforce
- **LUCY CREHAN**
Author of the Strategic Review
- **DAME RUTH MISKIN**
Read Write Inc.

- **TIM OATES CBE**
Curriculum and assessment expert
- **ALISTAIR HAMILL**
Geography educator, Lurgan College
- **PROFESSOR DANIEL MUIJS**
Queen's University Belfast
- **GERALDINE MAGENNIS-CLARKE**
St Mary's University College
- **DAVID DIDAU**
Author of Making Meaning in English and The Secret Literacy
- **BRADLEY BUSCH**
Inner Drive
- **DAVID THOMAS**
Axiom Maths
- **RACHEL FOSTER**
History PGCE Lead, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Please ensure your school is represented at these important events.

STARTING STRONG 2025–2026 Induction Programme for Early Career Teachers

Stepping into the classroom for the first time is exhilarating—and a little daunting. That's why the Department of Education and the Education Authority have teamed up to launch a dynamic, supportive and forward-thinking Enhanced Teacher Induction Programme for 2025–2026.

WHO'S IT FOR?

The programme is specifically designed to support early career teachers in their first year of teaching and for the teacher tutors who are guiding them.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a chance to:

- Deepen your pedagogical toolkit
- Build confidence and classroom impact

- Connect with a vibrant community of educators

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

The programme offers a rich blend of:

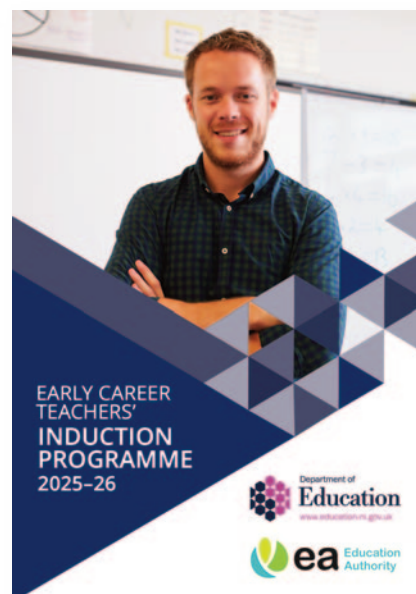
- Regional face-to-face sessions for real connection
- Live webinars for flexible learning
- Self-led modules to suit your pace
- School cluster support for local collaboration

WHAT YOU'LL EXPLORE

From literacy and numeracy to SEN awareness, positive relationships, and the science of learning, the programme covers the essentials—and more. There will also be empowering sessions from ETI, insights into working with parents and a deep dive into your vision and values as a teacher.

REGISTRATION

Registration is open now via the Education Authority. Whether you're starting your



journey or supporting someone who is, this programme is designed to support you.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register for Induction/Early Professional Development.

Once you have registered, you will receive a link and a password to access full details of webinars/events, including dates, times and objectives.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register as a Teacher Tutor.

RAISING THE BAR...

Key Stage Outcomes 2024–25 and what's next for assessment in Northern Ireland

The 2024–25 academic year saw a return of End of Key Stage assessments for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. Assessments were based on teacher judgement against the Levels of Progression in Communication and Using Mathematics.

The outcomes reveal the following:

KEY STAGE 1 (YEAR 4):

- ★ 82.1% of pupils achieved Level 2 or above in Communication.
- ★ 83.8% achieved Level 2 or above in Using Mathematics.

KEY STAGE 2 (YEAR 7):

- ★ 72% reached Level 4 or above in both Communication and Using Mathematics.

KEY STAGE 3 (YEAR 10):

- ★ 73.9% achieved Level 5 or above in Communication.
- ★ 75.4% reached Level 5 or above in Using Mathematics.

Teachers have provided valuable insight into the current state of our education system, following the challenges of recent years. The data, published by CCEA, offers the first system-wide picture of literacy and

numeracy outcomes in several years, shedding light on both progress and areas requiring renewed attention.

Of particular note is the finding that 28% of pupils completing primary school are not achieving the expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

This highlights the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2024–25 P7 cohort were in P2 when schools first closed in 2020, and many of these children experienced significant disruption to their learning during critical early years. International research has revealed that this disruption to education has had long-term effects, especially for younger pupils and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

At a system level, these findings reinforce the urgent need for a renewed focus on supporting the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In response, the Department will shortly be publishing new literacy guidance for schools supported by a targeted programme of teacher professional learning.

These initial steps form part of a wider strategy to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and to review the Northern Ireland curriculum more broadly. The forthcoming literacy and numeracy strategies will outline a range of evidence-based actions designed to support teachers in the classroom.

LOOKING AHEAD: SYSTEM-LEVEL SAMPLE ASSESSMENTS IN 2025–2026

In 2025–2026, the Department and CCEA are introducing a system-level sample assessment, which will be held in March 2026. These assessments will:

- Be designed and administered by CCEA and taken by a representative sample of pupils at the end of Key Stages 1, 2, and 3.
- Focus on literacy and numeracy, with written assessments designed to evaluate reading, writing, and mathematics skills.
- Not report results at school or pupil level, but instead provide national-level insights to inform policy, curriculum development and teacher professional learning.

This move aligns Northern Ireland with international best practice, mirroring approaches used in countries like Finland, Canada and Singapore. The aim is to close the data gap and base educational strategies on robust, system-wide evidence.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TEACHERS

The new Key Stage assessments have been specifically designed to reduce workload for teachers, with CCEA providing all assessments. They will offer educators a clear picture of how their pupils' progress fits within the broader national context. CCEA will provide detailed guidance for schools in the coming months.

MAKING BEST PRACTICE, COMMON PRACTICE

In March, the Education Minister launched the Making Best Practice, Common Practice initiative to improve teachers' access to the latest educational research and support evidence-based teaching across Northern Ireland.

A key element of the initiative is funding for 50 school-led conferences, focused on the practical application of research in areas such as pedagogy, curriculum design, and pupil achievement. One of the conferences that has already taken place was held in **Wallace High School** and you can read more about it below.



Wallace High School was proud to welcome approximately 120 Mathematics teachers and educators from across Northern Ireland for the first-ever Northern Ireland Maths Teachers' Association (NIMTA) conference.

With delegates travelling from as far afield as Cookstown and Portstewart, the event brought together professionals from a wide range of schools and educational contexts for a morning of networking, professional learning, and sharing of best practice.

The atmosphere throughout the morning was one of collaboration and enthusiasm, as teachers reconnected after the summer and gathered new ideas and strategies.

The event also provided an opportunity to highlight the role and future ambitions of the newly formed Northern Ireland Maths Teachers' Association, which aims to foster professional dialogue, subject-specific CPD, and a supportive community for Mathematics educators across the region.

The keynote address was delivered by Amarbeer Singh Gill, Assistant Director at Greenshaw Research School. Singh brought a wealth of expertise in educational psychology and cognitive science. His presentation focused on strategies to reduce cognitive load and improve memory

retention when teaching mathematics.

By placing teachers in the position of learners, he effectively illustrated the mental effort required to process unfamiliar concepts, and the importance of instructional clarity. His keynote explored research-based approaches such as example-problem pairs, partially completed examples, and techniques to minimise split attention, all tools that can significantly improve student understanding and long-term retention.

After the keynote, delegates joined three interactive workshops, each offering practical, classroom-ready strategies while also engaging with the latest educational research.

In the first round of workshops, attendees explored a diverse range of topics, including Metacognition in the Maths classroom, Mathematical Modelling, teaching A-Level Statistics, and Immersive Strategies to enhance student engagement.

These sessions were led by respected practitioners and researchers including Dr Shauna McGill (Ulster University) and Nathan Burns, both of whom drew on their extensive experience to demonstrate how thoughtful lesson design and reflective teaching can improve outcomes for learners.

The second workshop session invited teachers to consider more philosophical and pedagogical questions. Sessions included discussions on Pattern Breaking, fostering a love of Mathematics in pupils, and how the

very nature of Mathematics as a subject can shape the way it is taught.

Speakers for this session included keynote speaker Amarbeer Singh Gill, Dr Andrew Brown (Queen's University Belfast), and Dr William Kitchen (Stranmillis University College), each of whom provided a unique lens through which to consider their topics.

The final session of the morning focused on tools and techniques to enhance classroom practice. Topics included Retrieval Practice to strengthen memory recall, the application of the Grid Method in teaching Algebra, and innovative uses of online platforms to support assessment and feedback.

Experienced educators Brian Stevenson, Esther Stevens and Natalie Butler led these sessions, offering practical guidance drawn from their own teaching experience, as well as tips for implementation in a range of classroom contexts.

As the conference ended, attendees reflected on the morning's sessions. One remark summed up the day. One comment in particular captured the spirit of the day: **"I've been reminded why I love Maths and can't wait to share that passion with my classes this year."**

This sense of renewed inspiration and shared purpose was a common theme in the feedback, as teachers left with fresh ideas, strengthened professional connections, and a deeper sense of community within the subject.

The conference was a key moment for Maths education in Northern Ireland—practical, subject-specific, and focused on teachers' real needs. The ideas explored will undoubtedly be carried into classrooms across the country in the coming term and beyond. The Northern Ireland Maths Teachers' Association remains committed to supporting the professional development of Mathematics educators throughout the academic year.



TransformED

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FUND

Supporting High-Quality Professional Learning in Every School

In June, the Department launched the TransformED Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) Fund, a major initiative to support high-quality, evidence-based professional development for teachers across Northern Ireland.

The TPL Fund is designed to provide schools with dedicated funding to support professional development over three academic years between 2025-2026 and 2027-2028. The Fund allocates annual earmarked funding to each school, calculated on a per teacher basis.

With a total investment of £31 million over three years, the fund is a key component of the wider TransformED NI strategy to raise educational standards and improve pupil outcomes.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The TPL Fund is designed to empower schools to plan and deliver professional

learning that is tailored to their specific needs. All schools are eligible to access the funding.

ACCESSING THE FUND

The fund opened for applications this week. To receive funding, schools are required to submit an Annual TPL Strategy Statement by Monday 22 September 2025. This statement should outline the school's professional learning priorities and how the funding will be used to support them. Schools will also be expected to report annually on the impact of funded activities.

Allocations and submission tools are available via the TPL Tab in the Targeting Social Need Planner on the C2k network.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out system-level evaluations each year to assess the effectiveness of the fund and ensure that it is contributing to improved teaching and learning. These evaluations will help inform future policy and support continuous improvement across the system.

Online Science of Learning Programme for Primary Schools

Last term, we issued expressions of interest for our online Science of Learning Programme for primary schools.

This online professional learning will be available free of charge to all interested

primary schools. It is currently out for procurement from interested suppliers.

We will announce details of the successful provider later this term and it will be available to primary schools from the beginning of the Spring Term in January 2026.

Quarterly Research Publication for teachers

On Friday 29th August, we published the first edition of the Northern Ireland Quarterly Research Publication for teachers.

Each issue of this publication centres around a specific theme and provides an overview of relevant research related to that theme.

This first edition is entitled, 'Insights into Curriculum, Cognition and Policy' which is a timely given the recent publication of Lucy Crehan's Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Subsequent editions will focus on Special Educational Needs, managing behaviour and place-based education. The publications aim to provide access to the research on each theme in an accessible format that supports teachers.

LOOK OUT FOR:

FIRST EDITION OF THE TRANSFORMED
LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER ON
10TH SEPTEMBER 2025

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

As part of the Making Best Practice, Common Practice programme, we are inviting schools and school clusters to share details of the research-informed conferences they are hosting. To share your event, please send details and photos to transformED@education-ni.gov.uk



Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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QUESTIONS | COMMENTS | FEEDBACK
Email: transformED@education-ni.gov.uk