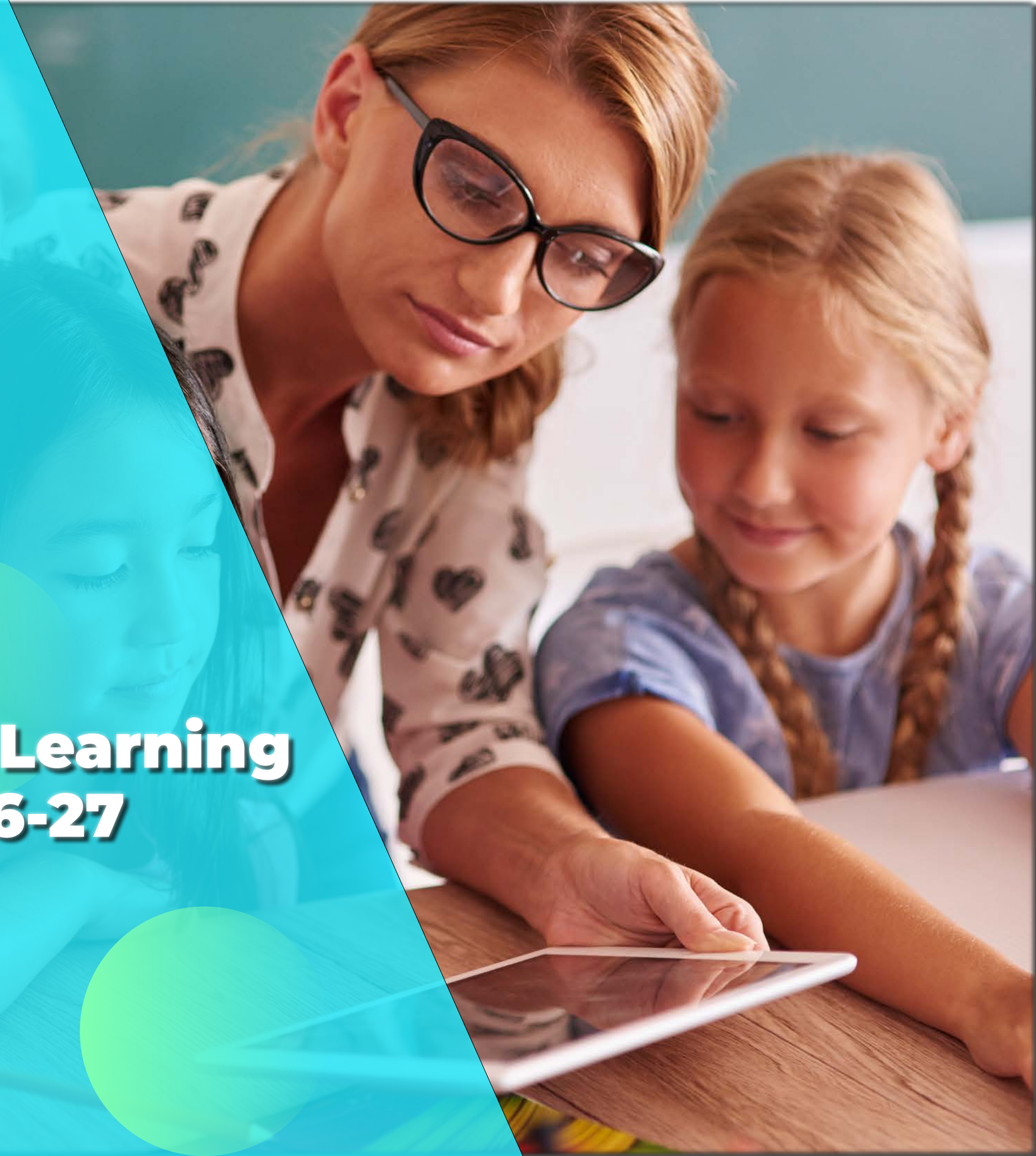
CLICK / SCAN TO VIEW SDS PORTAL

EA Professional Learning Programme 2026-27 Term 1

ea Education Authority

www.eani.org.uk



Contents

Foreword 3

Building Leadership Capacity 4

Empowering Educators 8

Supporting School Management & Governance 13

Maximising Digital Technology 17

Special Educational Needs 20

Safeguarding and Child Protection 28

Pupil Welfare and Wellbeing 30

Foreword

Richard Pengelly
Chief Executive of EA

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson of EA

In a rapidly evolving educational landscape, high-quality professional learning and development are essential to ensuring continuous improvement and achieving the best possible outcomes for all children and young people.

The Department of Education's TransformED Strategy NI and the SEN Reform Agenda clearly articulate the central role of professional learning in driving educational excellence, strengthening leadership, and improving outcomes across the system. As the Education Authority, we are committed to supporting all staff to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to meet these ambitions.

This Professional Learning Programme reflects a whole-organisation approach, bringing together a comprehensive range of development opportunities from across the Education Authority. It is designed to support staff in all roles - those working directly in schools and educational settings.

The programme aims to build capability at every level of the system, from those at the early stages of their careers to experienced leaders, and to foster a culture of professional learning that is collaborative, responsive and focused on impact. By engaging with these opportunities, staff will strengthen their professional practice and contribute to a shared commitment to improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

This brochure provides a guide to the current professional learning offer and has been designed as a dynamic resource, evolving in response to emerging priorities and identified needs across the organisation.

I would like to thank all staff for their continued commitment to professional learning and for the vital role they play in supporting children, young people, schools and communities across Northern Ireland.

Senior Leadership Team

Eve Bremner
Chief Education Officer

Gail Flavell
Chief Finance Officer

Tomas Adell
Chief Transformation Officer - SEN

Robbie McGreevy
Chief People Officer

Dale Hanna
Chief Operations Officer

BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Building Leadership Capacity

Developing leadership capacity at all levels iscentral to the TransformED Programme and to delivering on the Education Authority's strategic priorities and achieving improved outcomes for children and young people. Effective leadership drives continuous improvement, strengthens organisational culture and ensures the successful implementation of system-wide change.

This section outlines a coherent, organisation-wide leadership development offer, supported by TransformED funding, bringing together professional learning opportunities that support staff across a range of leadership roles and responsibilities. The programmes are designed to align with the Department's and the Education Authority's commitment to building leadership capability that is responsive, collaborative and focused on impact.

Through a structured and progressive approach, participants will be supported to develop the knowledge, behaviours and confidence required to lead within increasingly complex organisational and educational contexts. This includes strengthening the capacity of leaders to contribute to school improvement, service delivery and wider system leadership. Contact: schoolleadershiptpl@eani.org.uk.

School Leadership (Teacher Professional Learning)

The Professional Leadership Service provides a series of regional professional learning opportunities as part of the Education Directorate's continuum of teacher professional learning. The continuum ensures alignment between role, complexity and learning needs fostering continuous growth. The suite of programmes reflects a progressive, scaffolded model that supports school leaders as they move from classroom-based leadership roles to broader, system-wide leadership responsibilities.

School Leadership TPL

Steps into Leadership

This programme will provide **new and aspiring middle leaders** with the opportunity to engage in professional learning that will:

- Inspire, support and challenge through a research-informed programme;
- Challenge and develop thinking about key leadership issues;
- Provide opportunities for collaboration and engagement with other middle leaders across NI; and
- Build capacity to lead an aspect of school improvement by taking the lead role in a school improvement project which has a direct impact on improving learner outcomes.

Steps into Leadership

Senior Leadership Pathways

This programme will provide **new and aspiring senior leaders** with the opportunity to engage in professional learning that will:

- Inspire, support and challenge through a research-informed programme;
- Impact both the person of the leader and the practice of the leader;
- Provide opportunities for collaboration and engagement with other senior leaders; and
- Build capacity to lead an aspect of school improvement at whole school level, by taking the lead role in a school improvement project, which has a direct impact on improving learner outcomes.

Senior Leadership Pathways

Building Leadership Capacity

First-time Vice-Principal Programme

This leadership programme is designed to support a network of senior learning leaders as they explore their role in leading high-quality learning and teaching within their schools. The programme places an emphasis on leadership presence, effective communication, the principal and vice-principal as school leaders, and leading change that positively impacts on the school's learning culture.

The programme will provide opportunities for newly appointed or acting vice-principals to engage in professional learning that will:

- Develop leadership skills and dispositions;
- Inspire, support and challenge both the person of a leader and the practice of a leader;
- Encourage collaboration and connection.

This programme is complemented by the support of a coach-mentor.

First-time Vice Principal Programme

First-time Principal Induction Programme

This professional learning programme places an emphasis on the three domains of leadership practice: leading ethos, leading learning and leading improvement. In addition, the Principal Induction Programme provides support on the operational leadership elements of the role with cross-directorate inputs from Human Resources, Legal Services, SEND & Youth, Special Schools and Specialist Provisions, Operations and Estates, and Finance and Corporate Services.

This programme will provide opportunities for first-time principals and acting principals

- Develop knowledge and understanding in relation to the systems and processes that lead to school improvement;
- Develop leadership behaviours and skills that empower them to lead impactful and positive change in their setting; and
- Engage in professional learning conversations with other colleagues about a range of leadership issues and how these can impact their school.

This programme is complemented by the support of a first-time principal mentor. School leaders may register following their appointment to the post at any point during the academic year.

First-time Principal Induction Programme

Making Self-evaluation and School Development planning Meaningful, Manageable and Impactful

These workshops are designed for Post Primary and Special Schools. Two face-to face workshops for principals and school leaders to support the process of school development planning.

Self-Evaluation and School Development Planning

Building Leadership Capacity

The Engine Room - Building the Capacity of Middle Leadership

These sessions are designed for Post Primary and Special Schools. A series of three face-to-face sessions of middle leaders to build their capacity to lead with impact.

The Engine Room

School Leader as Coach

School Leader as Coach is designed to equip school leaders with the skills and confidence to utilise coaching as a leadership tool that helps develop and improve performance of staff, to maximise the potential of all children and young people.

This key learning is explored through the lens of a school leader and makes specific reference to how coaching can be developed, expanded and embedded in a school setting. Therefore, it is recommended that **all members of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** participate in the programme in the same year.

School Leader as Coach is recognised and certified by the Association for Coaching. Registration closes Tuesday 29 September 2026.

School Leader as Coach

Coaching Service for School Principals

The Coaching Service for School Principals provides school leaders with up to seven hours of one-to-one coaching focused on building and sustaining their resilience and capacity to lead effectively in an increasingly demanding climate.

This service is provided by qualified coaches from Lena by Inspire.

Coaching Service for School Principals

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS

Empowering Educators

Empowering educators through high-quality professional learning is fundamental to the Education Authority's commitment to delivering excellence in learning and teaching and improving outcomes for all children and young people.

This section brings together a comprehensive range of professional learning opportunities designed to support practitioners across all phases, settings and roles. The offer reflects a whole-organisation approach, ensuring that learning is accessible, relevant and aligned to both local needs and wider strategic priorities.

The programme promotes a culture of continuous professional learning, collaboration and reflective practice, enabling educators to strengthen their expertise, share effective approaches and respond with confidence to an evolving educational landscape. In doing so, it supports the collective capacity of the workforce to deliver high-quality, inclusive and impactful educational provision across Northern Ireland.

Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)

Teacher Professional Learning refers to the learning and development of teachers and school leaders that will, through the acquirement of new knowledge, behaviours and practices, improve student achievement.

Teacher Professional Learning

The Supporting Learning Website

The website is available for all teachers to access, providing resources for professional learning such as:

- Registration for professional learning opportunities;
- Signposting to useful and supporting resources;
- Small bite-size case studies from a range of practitioners;
- Self-led learning modules;
- Featured modules with access to topical resources and support.

Supporting Learning

Supporting Teacher Tutors

The Teacher Tutor Professional Learning Programme is designed to build the capacity of new recently appointed teacher tutors. The teacher tutor professional learning opportunities provide information on the key principles and practices of the teacher tutor role as well as opportunities for collaboration and learning from experienced practitioners.

Supporting Teacher Tutors

Empowering Educators

Supporting Early Professional Development - Professional Learning for Early Career teachers completing Induction/EPD (Early Professional Development)

Induction is stage two of Career Long Progressional Learning after a teacher has completed Initial Teacher Education. The overall aim of Induction is to continue to address the Core Values and Teacher Competences and encourage early career teachers to develop their critical reflective practice to continue to improve their teaching and the quality of pupil learning.

EPD is the third stage of teacher education, designed to build upon Initial Teacher Education and Induction and is an essential part of professional learning in which all teachers are required to participate. All teachers who have completed Induction are required to register with the EA to access professional learning in

Early career teachers are asked to register their status with EA each academic year to access professional learning in support of Induction/EPD.

Early Career Teachers Induction and Early Professional Development

TPL Thursdays!

TPL Thursdays! is a programme of bitesize professional learning designed to support the busy teacher. Webinars take place on a Thursday afternoon between 3:45 pm and 4:30 pm. These short sessions are focused on ideas and practice that can be implemented immediately in the classroom with the intention of impacting on pupil outcomes.

TPL Thursdays!

Transforming Classroom Practice – using evidence to lead the development of learning and teaching

These sessions are designed for Post Primary and Special Schools. A series of four face-to-face sessions for leaders of Learning and Teaching which aims to build their capacity to foster a culture of inquiry, leading to improvement in classroom practice.

Transforming Classroom Practice

Empowering Educators

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Health and Safety - Technology and Design and Science

The STEM Technical Team within the Education Directorate is responsible for providing Health and Safety advice and training to schools.

The Education Authority (EA), under its legal responsibility as an employer provides Health and Safety advice, affords CLEAPSS (Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services) membership to Primary and Post Primary schools of all Management types.

STEM Health and Safety - Technology and Design

STEM Health and Safety -Science

Empowering Educators

AmmA Creative Learning Centre

AmmA Creative Learning is an integral part of the Education Authority, Northern Ireland. It is a centre where technology alongside traditional media can be used creatively by schools, organisations, the youth sector and the community. Since 2005, the AmmA Creative Learning team have successfully implemented various programs and initiatives, benefiting teachers, adult learners, children, and young people. AmmA specialise in supporting the integration of mobile technology into classroom practice, including iPad. AmmA have been an Apple Regional Training Centre for 15 years. EA AmmA Centre has been co-funded by DfC / NI Screen for 20 years.

Magilligan Field Centre

Magilligan Field Centre (MFC) is located in Binevenagh, area of outstanding natural beauty, one of the most varied and unspoilt parts of the coast of Northern Ireland. MFC staff facilitate and provide on and off site support for teachers and students in the delivery of day and residential outdoor education programmes with a primary focus on field study investigations.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Supporting School Management and Governance

School Governance

Robust school management and effective governance are essential to delivering high-quality educational provision and ensuring accountability, sustainability and continuous improvement across the system. The Education Authority plays a key role in supporting schools and governing bodies to operate effectively within an increasingly complex policy, regulatory and operational landscape.

This section outlines the support, guidance and professional learning available to strengthen management and governance capacity across schools and educational settings. It reflects a partnership approach, bringing together expertise from across EA services to support schools in identifying priorities, managing risk, and implementing improvement strategies aligned to organisational and system-wide objectives.

Through this integrated approach, the Education Authority works collaboratively with schools to build capacity, enhance leadership and governance practice, and support the delivery of high-quality outcomes for children and young people.

Controlled Schools' Unit

The EA Controlled Schools' Unit (CSU) has been established to support and improve the management of controlled schools. The CSU seeks to address the unique challenges faced by controlled schools, which include Nursery, Primary, Post Primary, Grammar, Special, Integrated, and Irish Medium schools. These schools serve a diverse student population, emphasising inclusivity and high-quality education open to all.

Key Functions:

- Strategic Support: The Controlled Schools' Unit has engaged with controlled schools to develop a Strategic Plan, build leadership capacity and improve outcomes across controlled schools;
- Performance Monitoring: It aims to capture and monitor the performance of controlled schools, ensuring that they receive the necessary support in EA's role as the Management Authority;
- Collaboration: The unit works closely with the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) to provide proactive and relational support to schools.

The Controlled Schools' Unit will be facilitating a series of targeted programmes in 2026-27 for new principals and vice-principals from the Controlled Sector. To register for the 2026-27 programmes please follow the QR Codes to the right:

Controlled Schools' Unit - New Vice Principal Aspiring Leaders Programme (Controlled Schools only)

Controlled Schools' Unit - New Principal Support Programme

Leadership Learning Walks

The Controlled Schools' Unit will also be facilitating a series of Leadership Learning Walks following the successful pilot in 2025-26. Leaders and educators will have the opportunity to visit schools across all phases. Details on the host schools in 2026-27 and registration details will follow in the new academic year.

Supporting School Management and Governance

Controlled Schools' Management Training Programme - Communications Workshop

Communications Workshop will be facilitated by EA Communications Team with a focus on:

- Accessing Communication support for controlled schools.
- Utilising media and social media channels to promote good news stories within Controlled Schools.
- Dealing with challenge – examples of effective communication practice.

Controlled Schools' Unit - School Management Training Programme - Communication

Controlled Schools' Management Training Programme - Procurement Workshop

Procurement Workshop will be facilitated by EA Procurement Team with a focus on:

- Procurement systems and processes.
- Procurement regulation.
- Managing procurement.

Controlled Schools' Unit - School Management Training Programme - Procurement Workshop

Controlled Schools' Management Training Programme - Health & Wellbeing Workshop

This Health and Wellbeing clinic, delivered by the EA Health and Wellbeing Team, with contributions from Lena by Inspire, Benenden and other wellbeing providers offers school leaders practical guidance and resources to support staff wellbeing and encourage staff to take time to look after themselves.

Controlled Schools' Unit - School Management Training Programme - Health & Wellbeing Workshop

Supporting School Management and Governance

School Governance Service

Education Partners

Over the next 12 months, EA will develop a new Education Partner Service, replacing the current School Improvement Service model. Working alongside the Department of Education's new Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement and other stakeholders, Education Partners will provide support, professional challenge, and targeted assistance to schools where required.

The service will empower school leaders to drive improvement by building capacity, strengthening leadership, supporting effective school planning and performance management, facilitating professional development, and promoting collaboration. Education Partners will work alongside schools as trusted partners, enabling leaders to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Human Resources Clinics for School Leaders

Following the evaluation of the 2025-26 clinics, this programme is being further developed to enhance engagement, collaboration, and practical learning opportunities for participants. The approach will place a strong emphasis on face-to-face engagement, creating meaningful opportunities for discussion, shared experiences, and professional growth.

Sessions will be delivered through thematic discussion groups led by HR staff, encouraging both professional input and peer-to-peer learning. To maximise participation and relevance, groups will be smaller in size and organised by locality and school stage, with a preference for hosting sessions within school settings.

The programme content will focus on key areas of support and development, including training on EA One and Taleo systems, managing attendance and wellbeing, and a comprehensive overview of classroom assistant employment matters - from employment rights through to redeployment processes. Additional sessions will also address disciplinary procedures, mediation, and dignity at work, ensuring participants are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to manage a range of workplace situations effectively.

Organisational Development, Culture and Learning:

Please note within the People Directorate, our Organisational Development, Culture and Learning Division offers a range of training, learning and development programmes for all staff:

https://eani.pagetiger.com/eani-learning-and-development-portfolio

Equality and Human Rights:

Disability Employment Support Service EA Staff Hub

Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) Information Sessions; Introduction to Equality.

School Governor Training

EA offers a comprehensive programme of training opportunities for school governors. These courses cover a wide variety of areas from Induction for new governors, to key topics like Safeguarding, Inclusion, Finance, and Effective Governance. Whether governors are seeking to develop core skills or increase expertise in specific areas, this programme provides practical learning to help governors make a meaningful impact on young people's education.

School Governor Training

MAXIMISING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Maximising Digital Technology

EdIS/C2k

The C2k service provides connectivity, infrastructure, end-user devices, curriculum software, and a School Management System to all schools. Dedicated locality teams provide training and guidance to enhance learning and teaching and support critical school processes.

Professional learning opportunities are available for teachers, administrators and school leaders to support use of C2k services to encourage and develop continuous school improvement in the following key areas:

- Digital technologies and eLearning applications/tools.
- Data Management including:
  - Pupil core data including Attendance, FSM, SEN, PLP, Interventions, Behaviour;
  - Assessment tracking/baseline data recording, reporting and target setting;
  - Exams administration in compliance with JCQ and AO requirements;
  - Timetable & Curriculum Planning;
  - Statutory return obligations;
  - Personnel & Cover Management;
  - Performance Analysis & inspection support;
  - Payroll & Fees management (VGs/GMI only);
  - Financial verification and statutory obligations;
  - Resource management & financial reporting (VG/GMI only).

EdIS
Delivering Solutions for Education
ea Education Authority

For further details on the training and professional development opportunities available, please click the link below:

EdIS/C2K CPD

Maximising Digital Technology

EA Connect

EA Connect is an integrated, user-friendly platform which is home to several key services delivered by the organisation to support schools, pupils and their families. The platform simplifies processes and reduces the administration burden on schools, EA services and parents. It also provides a single source of truth for each child's records and enables close collaboration with all those involved in a child's education journey.

eaconnect
Public Sector Digital Transformation Awards 2024
DOUBLE WINNER
Belfast Telegraph IT AWARDS 2024
WINNER

Special Educational Needs Annual Review Videos

The video guidance provides step-by-step support for schools using EA Connect to complete and submit Annual Reviews. The resources cover key tasks including logging in and managing reviews, scheduling Annual Review meetings, requesting Educational Psychology involvement, uploading supporting documents, selecting the appropriate decision outcome, completing parental responsibility details, and submitting reviews. Additional guidance is also available on adding representatives, changing review types, and cancelling or reactivating reviews, helping schools to manage the Annual Review process accurately and efficiently through the digital system.

Special Educational Needs Annual Review (schools) SEND Plan

Admissions Videos

The training webinar videos provide schools and pre-school settings with an overview of the EA Connect admissions system, covering both the parent application portal and the school portal used to process applications for the 2026-27 admissions cycle. The recordings guide principals and school leaders through key admissions processes, system functionality and application management, helping new users become familiar with EA Connect.

Videos and Presentations - EA Connect Admissions System

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Special Educational Needs

SEND Implementation and Development

Professional development opportunities are available to a range of teaching and non-teaching staff on the evolving legal and statutory landscape underpinning SEND provision in schools and educational settings. This enables practitioners to keep pace with changes in SEND provision and understand the day-to-day practicalities.

The current professional development offering focuses on the new SEND Framework including the Graduated Response Framework underpinned by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, and includes information on Personal Learning Plans, the new draft SEND Regulations and associated draft SEND Code of Practice.

Further detailed information on this new SEND Framework, including each of the three elements is available on the Department of Education website by clicking the tile below:

Department of Education

The main aims of training and development provided by SEND Implementation and Development are listed below;

- Share updates on changes to legislation, regulations and the draft Code of Practice and support an understanding of SEND changes under the new Framework.
- Explain the resources and materials available to support staff working with children/young people with SEN, including the Graduated Response Framework.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders within the new SEND framework, such as the school SENCo/Learning Support Coordinator, and how to plan and manage these in various school settings.
- Provide an overview of the key operational duties and the management of these in various settings, including the recording of children/young people on the school SEND and medical registers.
- Provide an understanding of the process schools should employ when assessing the needs of children/young people and providing appropriate provision, including measuring impact/outcomes.
- Provide a clear understanding of the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) and how it serves as a 'key source' document for supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). This process should follow the IPAMER cycle to ensure support is effectively implemented and continually improved.

Select the tile below for a full list of professional development opportunities on SEND Implementation and Development throughout 2026-27:

SEND Implementation and Development

Special Educational Needs

The professionals within our SEND Teams share a clear, collective vision: to work in partnership with schools, families and the wider system to provide timely, needs led support that builds capacity and strengthens inclusive practice. Through a collaborative, multi-specialist approach, Local Impact Teams (LITs) aim to ensure the right support is in place at the right time, empowering those around the child or young person and enabling them to participate, progress and achieve their full potential.

The EA's Graduated Response Framework underpins this approach, setting out a continuum of support and identifying evidence informed interventions aligned to differing levels of need. Central to the LIT model is a focus on early intervention, prevention and capacity building, supporting school staff through targeted, evidence based guidance and professional learning to improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs.

In addition, The EA's Education Psychology Service (EPS) offers a targeted programme of professional learning designed to support school staff in responding to key challenges affecting pupils' learning, wellbeing and engagement.

Five overarching SEND categories are used to help identify the support a child/young person may need:

1. **Cognition and Learning**
2. **Social, Behavioural, Emotional and Wellbeing**
3. **Speech, Language and Communication**
4. **Sensory (Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Vision Impairment)**
5. **Physical Needs**

Select the relevant tile to view the SEND professional development opportunities for that phase.

Early Years

School Age
(Primary/Post-primary)

Special Educational Needs

SEND - Early Years

Select a tile below to see the Early Years professional development opportunities available to statutory nurseries and non-statutory Pre-School Education Programme settings, relating to the five over-arching categories of SEND need alongside Autism, Medical Needs and those development opportunities which are Universal across a range of SEND categories.

A link is also provided to development opportunities specific to staff in Specialist Provisions and opportunities available through the Regional Integrated Support for Education in Northern Ireland (RISE NI).

Cognition and Learning

Social, Behavioural, Emotional and Wellbeing

High Five STAFF HUB

Speech, Language and Communication

Sensory
Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Vision Impairment

Physical Needs

Universal

Autism

Medical

Specialist Provisions

RISE NI

Special Educational Needs

SEND - School Age (Primary/Post-primary)

Select a tile below to see the School Age professional development opportunities relating to the five over-arching categories of SEND need alongside Autism, Medical Needs and those development opportunities which are Universal across a range of SEND categories.

A link is also provided to development opportunities specific to staff in Specialist Provisions and opportunities available through the Regional Integrated Support for Education in Northern Ireland (RISE NI).

See also a link to professional development opportunities to support the embedding of Nurturing Approaches:

Cognition and Learning

Social, Behavioural, Emotional and Wellbeing

High Five STAFF HUB

Speech, Language and Communication

Sensory
Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Vision Impairment

Physical Needs

Universal

Autism

Medical

Nurturing Approaches

Specialist Provisions

RISE NI

Special Educational Needs

Specialist Provisions

The Specialist Provision Service (SPS), is a multi-service team, providing integrated support for Specialist Provisions in Mainstream Schools. Specialist Provisions Service work to ensure that staff in specialist provisions are effectively supported in meeting the challenge of delivering high-quality provision and educational experiences for our children and young people.

A comprehensive, professional learning and development programme is available, delivered both online and in person for senior leadership, teachers and classroom assistants. Professional Learning & Development opportunities focus on the capacity building of all staff. We have a range of programmes across all phases (Early Years, Primary and Post Primary) designed to support settings with learning, assessment, quality of provision, staff development and leadership across the themes of:

- **Specialist Classroom Setup and Environmental Design**

  To support establishing or preparing a specialist provision with classroom layout, physical structure, positive routines and environmental design.

- **Teaching and Learning**

  To support learning (Curriculum) delivery within the classroom.

- **Baselining and Assessment**

  To support expected outcomes through assessment frameworks and screening tools.

- **Supporting Social, Behavioural, Emotional and Wellbeing needs**

  To support a tiered approach from Inclusion & Wellbeing to accredited Team Teach courses as well as an enhanced whole school framework programme: Connecting & Caring across the Whole School Community.

- **Communication and Interaction**

  To support and promote pupil engagement and social interaction within the classroom.

- **Professional Roles and Leadership**

  To support the professional development of classroom assistant staff and leadership within non-statutory early years provisions.

Select the tile opposite to see the full list of professional development opportunities relating to Specialist Provisions throughout 2026-27.

Specialist Provisions

Special Educational Needs

Special Schools

The Special Schools Service facilitates a cross-directorate, multi-disciplinary approach to supporting Special Schools, promoting and facilitating collaboration across Education and Health to help meet the complex needs of children and young people. A Designated Support Officer is assigned to each Special School, to assist leadership teams in resolving operational challenges, such as those linked to the expansion of the special school estate, to staffing pressures or to the expertise and resourcing required in meeting complex pupil needs.

The Special Schools Service also has full responsibility for the allocation and review of core staffing (teaching and non-teaching) across each of the 40 Special Schools, and for the financial management of the associated budget. A Designated Budgetary Officer is assigned to each Special School, offering support, training and guidance to senior leadership, to improve and enhance financial management.

The Service offers the following professional development opportunities for Special Schools on request, in the following areas:

Early Career Teacher (ECT) Training

To meet the specific professional development needs of ECT working in Special Schools, specifically tailored to the special school environment. This includes a programme delivered across Terms 1 and 2 designed to help teachers understand and meet the needs of their pupils, facilitate regional cluster groups and encourage and develop peer support.

This training can be requested by contacting info.ss@eani.org.uk.

Manual Handling Training

This training is designed for handling children and young people, who require assistance due to their physical needs and can be requested by contacting info.ss@eani.org.uk.

Restorative Practice

Restorative Practices are evidenced to help develop individual's resilience so that they can navigate difficulties in a positive way. Restorative approaches address and repair relationships that have been broken through conflict and harm, focusing on relationships, communication and connections.

Professional development opportunities in this area are available by selecting the links below:

- Step 1 - A Peek at restorative Practice for Whole School Staff,
- Step 2 - Building Foundation: An Introduction to Restorative Practice in Education;
- Step 3 - Connecting Through Circles;
- Step 4 - Facilitating Restorative Conversations in Education.

For further information on this training please contact: RestorativePractice@eani.org.uk.

Special Educational Needs

Special Schools

Summer Scheme Staff Training

Professional development opportunities are available to staff in special schools, specifically tailored to the special school environment in preparation for Summer Scheme.

This training can be requested by contacting info.ss@eani.org.uk.

Financial Management

Professional development options available in this area are as follows:

- Use of Finance Reports - Designed for Principals, focusing on Financial reporting, such as Expenditure, Earmarked, Encumbrance, Requisitions;
- Use of iProcurement - Designed for Principals, focusing on the use of the I-Procurement system, including coding.

This training can be requested by contacting info.ss@eani.org.uk.

Select the tile below to see further professional learning and development opportunities for special school staff throughout 2026-27:

Special Schools

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Safeguarding and Child Protection in Education refers to the policies, practices and measures that schools and settings implement to protect children from harm, abuse and neglect.

Ensuring the welfare of our children must be our highest priority. All staff working in education share a responsibility to ensure children are safe while at school and that our schools and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) settings play a full role in the wider child protection and safeguarding system.

The EA's Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) provides a range of courses to help support good practice and build capacity in this area. Some of these courses are only open to staff who have been appointed to their schools' safeguarding team. However, there are a range of wider pre-recorded webinars that are available to all school staff. These are being added to on an ongoing basis.

Select the tiles below for a full list of professional learning opportunities relating to Child Protection and Safeguarding throughout 2026-27.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Training for Principals, Designated Teachers and Deputy Designated Teachers

Professional Learning Opportunities

PUPIL WELFARE AND WELLBEING

Pupil Welfare and Wellbeing

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

The Department of Education and Department of Health jointly published the Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework on 26 February 2021.

The main emphasis of the Framework is to support educational settings to promote emotional health and wellbeing at a universal level, through a holistic, multidisciplinary approach, building resilience to enable our children and young people to cope with challenges they may face in life and providing early and enhanced support for those who may be at risk or showing signs of needing further help.

The Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework can be accessed by scanning the QR code below:

Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework

Educational settings play a vital and unique role in fostering the emotional health and wellbeing of their entire school community. Emotional Health and Wellbeing professional development and learning is tailored to meet the needs of school staff in various roles (see individual course details) who will be provided with knowledge, skills and practical strategies to support children and young people.

Professional development opportunities include:

- Promoting Positive Emotional Health and Wellbeing.
- Nurturing resilience.
- Emotionally Based school Non-Attendance.
- Suicide Awareness Training – Connections link Life.
- Bereavement and Loss.
- Developing a Whole School Response to Bereavement and Critical Incidents (2 day).

Scan the QR code below to find out more:

Emotional, Health and Wellbeing

Pupil Welfare and Wellbeing

Being Well, Doing Well

In addition, the Being Well, Doing Well (BWDW) Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme provides a comprehensive framework of support and guidance to help schools to baseline audit and improve their emotional health and wellbeing policies and practice. Participating schools also have access to professional development and learning opportunities for all staff.

Scan the QR code below to find out more:

Being Well, Doing Well

Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service (PCLAAS)

The creation of an informed and responsive environment for Children Looked After in Education is vital to ensure children can feel emotionally safe, settled to learn and achieve to their full learning potential. The Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service (PCLAAS) is an early intervention, prevention, and advocacy provision that seeks to implement and sustain best evidence-based practice in Schools and Education Settings.

Whole School and specific professional development opportunities are available in the following areas:

- The Attach Programme (TAP) Trauma and Attachment Whole School Approach.
- Understanding the Social Care System and Children Looked After.
- It Begins with You: Take Care and a Culture of Caring.

Select the tile below to review the full PCLAAS professional learning and development offer for 2026-27:

Primary Children looked After Advisory Service (PCLAAS)

Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour

Part of the role of the Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Team (ABSIT) outlined by Department of Education is to:

- Support schools with the implementation of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016;
- Deliver a tiered training model;
- Provide guidance and advice to schools, signposting statutory guidance and resources for families and supporting multi-service/agency response as appropriate;
- Share with schools evidence informed examples of best practice in addressing bullying type behaviour.

To support schools, ABSIT provide a tiered model of professional development:

Tier 3

Targeted advice for schools in response to significant/ complex case referrals through ABSITeam@eani.org.uk

Tier 2

Blended, modular training on a schoolwide, comprehensive approach to Addressing Bullying in Schools for school and EA leads

Tier 1

Introductory online training for all staff working in schools, Governors, Trainee Teachers and EA Staff, Research and resource development and sharing for use by all schools

Select a tile below to see the full Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour in Schools professional learning and development offering for 2026-27:

Professional Development Offering

School Leadership Training Programme

School Governor Training

Pupil Welfare and Wellbeing

Nurturing Approaches

The Nurture Advisory & Support Service (NASS) delivers the Nurture in Education Programme (NEP) that helps schools build a culture of wellbeing, inclusion, and early intervention. The programme supports schools to meet pupils' social, behavioural, emotional, and wellbeing needs while promoting attachment, resilience, consistency, and positive outcomes across the whole school community.

Whole school and bespoke professional development opportunities are available in areas such as early intervention and preventative practice. Select the tile below to see the full Nurturing Approaches professional learning and development offering for 2026-27.

Nurturing Approaches

Restorative Practices

A structured and graduated professional learning programme is available covering introductory awareness, restorative principles, relationship-building through circles, and restorative conversations, with an additional workshop on restorative language.

For further information, please contact: RestorativePractice@eani.org.uk

Step 1 - A Peek at Restorative Practice for Whole-School Staff

Step 2 - Building Foundations: An Introduction to Restorative Practice in Education

Step 3 - Connecting through Circles

Step 4 - Facilitating Restorative Conversations in Education