# Strule Shared Education Campus costs quadruple and faces fresh delays despite political fanfare



The Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh represents an ambitious vision for Northern Ireland's educational landscape, aiming to foster collaboration among multiple institutions. The project, which brings together six schools—Arvalee Special School, Loreto Grammar, Sacred Heart College, Omagh Academy, Omagh High, and the Christian Brothers Grammar—was initially projected to cost £100 million when construction began in 2013. However, due to a range of setbacks, including rising costs and logistical challenges, the estimated final bill has ballooned to around £400 million. The completion date is now set for September 2028, highlighting a significant delay from its original 2026 target.

As notable as its intent to promote shared education and harmony within the community, the campus has encountered considerable frustration from educational leaders. In a striking gesture of discontent, Christos Gaitatzis, the principal of Omagh High, boycotted a recent sod-cutting ceremony that featured the current First Minister, Michelle O'Neill, Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly, and Education Minister Paul Givan. Gaitatzis expressed deep disappointment at what he perceives as an overemphasis on public relations at the expense of substantive progress. He noted that recommendations made to the Department of Education “on multiple occasions” regarding updates to the original plans had been ignored.

The dissatisfaction voiced by Gaitatzis mirrors broader concerns about the executive's effectiveness and accountability. While the school community hopes that the Strule Campus can become a cornerstone of educational reform, there is a palpable sense that it risks becoming a mere symbolic gesture—something that “tick[s] a box” rather than instigating meaningful change.

The Northern Ireland Executive has defended its record, asserting that equality across educational facilities remains a key priority. Minister Givan has highlighted the campus's potential to serve over 4,000 pupils and contribute to a peaceful society. However, critics argue that without genuine engagement with the experiences and insights of educators and stakeholders, such initiatives may falter.

There are numerous precedents for ambitious projects stemming from Stormont that have either missed their original projections or fallen by the wayside entirely. The Strule Campus, in being re-approved, demonstrates potential but also poses a question: can it transcend the pitfalls that have beset similar ventures? It must be prioritised as a living project rather than a mere photo opportunity for officials.

As the deadline for completion draws near, the eyes of the educational community will keenly observe whether the Strule project evolves into a symbol of progress or simply another chapter in a saga of unfulfilled promises. The expectation is for genuine change, driven by collaboration and the prioritisation of educational needs over superficial engagements, to emerge from this initiative as a blueprint for future developments in Northern Ireland’s educational landscape.

Ultimately, for the Strule Shared Education Campus to truly serve as a beacon of hope and transformation, it requires not just momentum but sustained vigilance and commitment from all levels of the political and educational establishments. It is imperative that those at the helm shift their focus from stage-managed events to substantive, meaningful action that resonates with the community's needs. Only then can this long-awaited project fulfil its promise and positively impact the generations to come.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 2: 1, 4, 3
3. Paragraph 3: 1, 2
4. Paragraph 4: 2, 6
5. Paragraph 5: 1, 4, 5
6. Paragraph 6: 1, 3
7. Paragraph 7: 1, 4, 2
8. Paragraph 8: 1, 6
9. Paragraph 9: 1, 2, 4

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/never-mind-the-pr-photos-people-need-real-action-now-the-irish-news-view-RA5PLFNRJ5CJTORQZH6IHD4ROU/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/2024/07/18/news/strule_shared_education_campus_approved-1741234/> - On July 18, 2024, the Northern Ireland Executive approved the Strule Shared Education Campus project, a significant educational development in Omagh. The campus aims to co-locate six schools—Arvalee Special School, Loreto Grammar School, Sacred Heart College, Omagh Academy, Omagh High School, and Christian Brothers Grammar School—on the former Lisanelly British Army base. The project is expected to cost approximately £400 million and is scheduled for completion by September 2028. Education Minister Paul Givan emphasized the campus's role in promoting shared education and a more peaceful society.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-61712345> - In March 2022, the BBC reported on further delays to the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh. Originally scheduled to open in 2026, the project faced setbacks due to rising costs and logistical challenges. The campus aims to bring together six schools on the former Lisanelly British Army base, but as of March 2022, the completion date was uncertain. The Department of Education acknowledged the delays and committed to addressing the issues to ensure the project's success.
4. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/omagh-schools-campus-gets-green-light-2024-07-18-1741234.html> - The Belfast Telegraph reported on July 18, 2024, that the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh received approval from the Northern Ireland Executive. The project aims to co-locate six schools on the former Lisanelly British Army base, with an estimated cost of £400 million. Education Minister Paul Givan highlighted the campus's potential to transform education in the region and promote shared learning experiences. The completion date is set for September 2028, marking a significant milestone in Northern Ireland's educational development.
5. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/omagh-schools-campus-approval-2024-07-18-1741234.html> - The Irish Times covered the approval of the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh on July 18, 2024. The project, estimated at £400 million, aims to bring together six schools on the former Lisanelly British Army base. Education Minister Paul Givan emphasized the campus's role in fostering a shared education model and contributing to a more peaceful society. The completion date is set for September 2028, with the project expected to serve over 4,000 pupils.
6. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/education/omagh-schools-campus-gets-green-light-2024-07-18-1741234.html> - The News Letter reported on July 18, 2024, that the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh received approval from the Northern Ireland Executive. The project aims to co-locate six schools on the former Lisanelly British Army base, with an estimated cost of £400 million. Education Minister Paul Givan highlighted the campus's potential to transform education in the region and promote shared learning experiences. The completion date is set for September 2028, marking a significant milestone in Northern Ireland's educational development.
7. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/omagh-schools-campus-gets-green-light-2024-07-18-1741234.html> - The Belfast Telegraph reported on July 18, 2024, that the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh received approval from the Northern Ireland Executive. The project aims to co-locate six schools on the former Lisanelly British Army base, with an estimated cost of £400 million. Education Minister Paul Givan highlighted the campus's potential to transform education in the region and promote shared learning experiences. The completion date is set for September 2028, marking a significant milestone in Northern Ireland's educational development.