GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Government Strengthens Foundations for Education, Youth Development and Sports in 2026 Budget

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The Government of the Virgin Islands has reaffirmed its commitment to building a modern, equitable, and future-focused education system with an allocation of **$76.2 million** to the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports in the 2026 Budget.

This investment continues the multi-year transformation of school infrastructure, teacher development, youth empowerment, and sports programming across the Territory.

Premier, Honourable Dr. Natalio Wheatley emphasised the central role of education in the Territory's development, noting that "Education is our greatest investment — an investment written not in numbers, but in lives; not measured in years, but in generations. Through education, we nurture the thinkers, builders, and leaders who will shape a resilient, prosperous, and forward-looking Virgin Islands."

Over the past year, the Ministry has advanced its education agenda through three core priorities: upgrading and modernising school facilities, empowering educators through training and professional pathways, and expanding the resources and tools available to support high-quality teaching and learning.

Major rehabilitation projects were completed across several school campuses to improve structural safety, air quality, accessibility, and climate resilience. These upgrades included reinforced roofing, standardised windows and doors, improved plumbing and electrical systems, restored water capacity, enhanced fencing, CCTV installations, and revitalised playgrounds and sports courts.

The completion of the Eslyn Henley Richiez Learning Centre, the first purpose-built special education school in the OECS, stands as a milestone in advancing inclusive education. As the designs for the new Althea Scatliffe Primary School are finalised in 2025, works are expected to begin in 2026 to continue expanding access to modern learning environments. Work will also continue with planning for a vocational and technical secondary school on the eastern end of Tortola, and dormitory development at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College to expand access to tertiary education.

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Honourable Sharie B. de Castro emphasised that the Ministry's work has been driven directly by feedback from educators and students. She stated:

"We consulted with our educators and they identified three priority needs: infrastructure, resources, and training. Our mandate is to continue strengthening each of these areas in a sustainable way. Schools will continue to receive major renovations to ensure safe and comfortable learning environments. We have already invested millions in resources based on educators' wishlists because we want to give them exactly what they need in order to achieve improved student outcomes. And through new training initiatives, including the Walden University programme for education degrees where Government will cover 90 percent of tuition costs, we are directly investing in the instructional quality that shapes student success."

To support learning in the digital age, schools continue to benefit from improvements in technology-rich environments, including interactive smart boards, robotics kits, upgraded computer labs, music equipment and digital learning platforms. The Full STEAM Ahead initiative has expanded students' exposure to robotics, coding and creative problem-solving. This progress gained international recognition when Team BVI placed 42nd out of 181 countries and first in the OECS region at the FIRST Global Robotics Competition.

In 2026, the Ministry will continue to focus on climate-ready school environments, inclusive learning, early childhood development and parental engagement. Planned works include improving air quality, addressing water intrusion, upgrading electrical systems to support smart classrooms and expanding learning spaces. Support for neurodiverse learners will grow through the establishment of sensory spaces, adaptive tools and additional support staff.

Beyond the classroom, the Ministry will continue strengthening youth development, sports and the arts to support well-rounded growth and positive identity formation. Increased investments will expand opportunities for young people to build discipline, confidence and teamwork, while also providing greater access to intervention and restoration pathways.

Through these sustained investments in infrastructure, training, inclusion, innovation and youth empowerment, the Government remains committed to building a strong foundation for future generations and a resilient, forward-looking Virgin Islands.

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Additional Documents or Media

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