

# ASTIR

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

Our message:  
no compromise  
on standards



ASTI Annual  
Convention

Report on day of  
strike action

Teacher mental  
health

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Letters, comments and articles are welcome

All submissions will be considered by the ASTIR Editorial Board. Email [astir@astl.ie](mailto:astir@astl.ie).

## No compromise on standards

Twenty-seven thousand teachers have united to protect Ireland's second-level education service. This coming together of second-level teachers in every community demonstrates their professionalism and their commitment to their students. This has been a long campaign for the ASTI. It has included consultations with ASTI members, research, political lobbying, a petition to the Minister for Education and Skills, communications with parents and, of course, industrial action, including strike action. What has continuously struck me throughout this campaign is the strength and consistency in the views expressed by members of the ASTI and the TUI. Teachers all over the country wholeheartedly believe that assessing their own students will have a damaging effect on standards, equity and fairness.

### Support from parents

I believe that many parents share teachers' views on assessment. Parents want their children to experience an exams system that is fair, impartial and transparent. They have high levels of trust in Ireland's education system. The most recent Chief Inspector's report on second-level schools states that 90% of parents surveyed agreed with the statement that the teaching is good at their child's school. The OECD publication *Government at a Glance 2013* found that Ireland had the highest level of public satisfaction with education and schools out of 34 countries. In a Millward Brown opinion poll last May, 60% of the public supported the view that teachers should not assess their own students for Junior Cycle certification. Read more about public support for the ASTI's position on Junior Cycle reform on page 10. Parents understand that under the current Junior Cert exam arrangements an A grade achieved in Cork is the same as an A grade achieved in Donegal. This is because we have an independent, objective, transparent and rigorous model, which ensures consistency right across the country. This is what the Minister and her Department propose to change. We must continue to talk to parents on the ground. January 22 gives us another opportunity to reassure parents that teachers want reform of the Junior Cycle, but not at the expense of quality education. Our message must be clear: No compromise on standards. A leaflet for parents produced by the ASTI and TUI is being distributed to schools and can be handed out prior to, or on, January 22.

### School stewards

I wish to take this opportunity to thank ASTI school stewards, who are playing a crucial part in the campaign. School stewards are the face of the ASTI in the school. This can be particularly challenging when the union is involved in industrial action. Additional tasks emerge almost daily, such as: communicating policy; distributing strike material; explaining directives; communicating with school management; liaising with branch officers, regional representatives and Head Office; organising picketing rosters; and, dealing with local media. This work is very much appreciated.



**Philip Irwin**  
ASTI President

## A time to restore

A key focus for the ASTI in 2015 will be to ensure that the economic recovery spreads to all of society. However, our confidence in the Government's willingness to restore resources to education has been undermined by failure to pay salary increments due since December. After a number of years of savage cutbacks, it appears that the Troika/Government target of bringing the Budget deficit below 3% of GDP will become a reality in 2015. While we are told that this economic recovery is "fragile", it is essential that the opportunity is grasped to relieve the pain inflicted in the name of austerity. The worst of the cuts must be rescinded. The public service trade unions – including the ASTI – should now begin the process of wage recovery. This must start with the pension levy. In education, there must be a move to restore the resources which have been stripped from schools over the past seven years. The worst of these cuts include reduced teacher numbers, the abolition of the ex-quota guidance counsellor provision, the moratorium on posts of responsibility, and the cuts to the capitation grant. The ASTI will continue its campaign to convince the Government of its obligation to ensure Ireland's long-term recovery is sustainable through investing in education. As the recent OECD publication 'Education at a Glance' notes, the public return on investment in education is double the value of the original investment.

### Permanency deal

Our pressure does work. The ASTI's determination to address the crisis of casualisation, along with the TUI, brought concrete results. We secured a major breakthrough for temporary/part-time teachers in the new permanency deal. From September 2015 teachers will qualify for a contract of indefinite duration (CID) after two years. Our concern now is to ensure that the deal is implemented. Both unions are in discussions with the Department to ensure that the Department's Circular (on how the agreement is implemented) is signed off as soon as possible. We will not tolerate any delay or fudging on this issue.

### Failure to pay increments – a disgrace

The Government's failure to pay the salary increments that were due on December 1, 2014, under the Haddington Road Agreement, is a disgrace. All teachers, but especially young teachers, have been put to the pin of their collar by the austerity measures imposed on them. Teachers budgeted for their increments in December and need to be able to rely on receiving what is rightfully due to them. The Department of Education and Skills has agreed that the delay is unacceptable and apologised for the IT difficulties which caused the problem. We have also been critical of the Department's failure to inform the teacher unions about the problem any earlier. We understand that the correct increments will be paid on February 19. We continue to communicate with the Department about the difficulties caused by this issue and to emphasise that this can never happen again.



**Pat King**  
ASTI General Secretary

## Salary increment delays

The ASTI made strong representations to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in December and January over the failure to pay teachers annual increments due. The union also brought the matter to the attention of the Teachers' Conciliation Council.

Many ASTI members were due increments on December 1 in line with the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA). The HRA states that increments due in 2014 are to be delayed by three months for those earning less than €65,000, and by six months for those earning over €65,000. Since most teachers receive their increments in September, the effect of the HRA is that a significant number of teachers should have been awarded increments on December 1, 2014. However, IT difficulties mean the payment will not be made until February 19, 2015.

The ASTI criticised the inability of the DES to pay increments deferred under the HRA on the due date, and the failure to inform the teacher unions about this at an earlier stage. In addition, the ASTI continues to demand a date for the payment of monies due to 2011 entrants whose pay scale was upgraded as a result of a campaign by the teacher unions. In response the Department has stated that:

- it is working to ensure the increments will be released as soon as possible;
- it is not in a position to give a definitive date at this point in time;
- it is committed to giving a definitive date when it is certain that these difficulties have been resolved satisfactorily;
- it is committed to prioritising the payment of the revised scale for 2011 entrants following the payment of increments; and,
- it apologises for the delay in the payment of the increments due.

Please keep an eye on the ASTI website for developments.

## New schools to cater for growth in student numbers

The construction of five new second-level schools will begin in 2015. In addition, work will begin on the extension and/or refurbishment of eight existing second-level schools. The construction of more than 20 second-level schools will continue in 2015 as well as the extension and/or refurbishment of 35 second-level schools. The construction of new schools and the extension of some existing schools comes as a result of significant and ongoing increases in the number of students entering second level. It is expected that the second-level student population will grow by 25,000 in the next two years and will continue to grow up to at least 2026.

Second-level schools going to construction in 2015:

South Suburbs Post Primary School, Cork  
Carrigaline Post Primary School, Cork  
Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin, Cork  
Carrigtwohill Post Primary School, Cork  
Claregalway Community College, Claregalway

Information on school construction and extension/refurbishment projects is available on the Department of Education and Skills website – [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

## Junior Cycle dispute

As this edition of *ASTIR* goes to press, preparations are being made for the day of strike action on Thursday, January 22. This strike day was announced by ASTI Standing Committee following the breakdown of talks between the teacher unions and the Department of

Education and Skills in November 2014. While there was some shift in the Department's position in the November talks (see page 10 for details), issues of critical importance were not resolved.

**STRIKE ACTION**  
**THURSDAY**  
**JANUARY 22**

### New attempt to resolve impasse

In recent weeks there has been a new attempt to resolve the impasse between the teacher unions and the Department of Education and Skills. Dr Pauric Travers, who acted as independent chairperson in the November talks, convened a meeting of both sides on January 14. No agreement was reached and the January 22 strike day will go ahead as planned. Further talks will take place after January 22. Standing Committee has stated that a third strike day will also go ahead, if necessary.

## New teacher 'fitness to practise' procedures

Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act (Fitness to Teach) is expected to commence shortly.

This means that the Teaching Council will have the power to consider and investigate complaints from members of the public against teachers on a number of grounds including professional conduct issues and being medically unfit to teach. However, unless there are good and sufficient reasons, in particular as regards child protection, the Teaching Council will generally not look into a complaint unless existing school complaint or grievance procedures have been exhausted.

The ASTI, which is represented on the Teaching Council, will work to ensure that any investigations into teachers are conducted fairly and with due process. As teachers are already subject to robust grievance and disciplinary procedures at school level, a Teaching Council investigation should only occur where all other avenues have been exhausted and the prevailing evidence is that such an investigation is warranted.

### Public hearings

The Teaching Council will also have the power to hold hearings in public, as is the case with other professional regulatory bodies in Ireland and in other jurisdictions. While public hearings are expected to be rare and exceptional, the ASTI position is that Teaching Council hearings be held in private as the default procedure.

More information on Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act can be found under the Professional Standards section of the Teaching Council website – [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

## Education International launches petition to stand up for school

Education International, the international federation of educators, is attempting to build the world's biggest petition to demand that all children around the world are in school and learning.

World leaders promised to get every child into school by 2015 but progress has stalled. Millions of children are forced out of school because of child labour, child marriage and discrimination, and attacks on schools and schoolchildren are on the increase. In April 2014, 192 girls were kidnapped by the extremist group Boko Haram in Nigeria for going to school. Despite global efforts to find the girls, the majority are still missing. September saw the disappearance of 43 students of education in Mexico. The details of their fate are still unknown, but what is clear is that their attempts to speak out against the discriminatory hiring practices of the government were answered not with dialogue, but with violence. In December, 132 children and nine teachers were massacred by the Taliban in Peshawar, Pakistan. There are still 58 million children out of school around the world. And for many of those, even the opportunity to learn is fraught with great risk. As members of Education International, the ASTI is asking that teachers encourage their students to be part of this global movement and help to collect signatures. The petition will be delivered by Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy on Education, to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and leaders who can make it a reality. Teachers are pivotal in this movement – and in helping to make this petition the world's largest. In order to help with this petition, teachers and their students can join the global campaign and help to collect signatures by emailing [upforschool@aworldatschool.org](mailto:upforschool@aworldatschool.org) and by using the toolkits available at [www.upforschool.org](http://www.upforschool.org) to stand #UpForSchool.

### Keep up with the latest developments

While *ASTIR* aims to keep you abreast of important developments in teaching, education and the trade union movement, it's not always possible to bring you the latest news on time. However, you can keep up to date and get your information first hand by doing one or all of the following:

- visiting the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie);
- signing up to ASTI news feeds at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie); and,
- following us on Twitter/Facebook.

## ASTI spearheads teacher mental health initiative



*From left: Richard Wynne, Director, Work Research Centre; Deirdre MacDonald, Chairperson, ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee; and, Patricia Murray, HSA organisational psychologist, at the joint ASTI, TUI and IMPACT safety, health and welfare seminar.*

Research shows that schools are among the most stressful environments in which people can work. Authorities and employers currently focus on responding to the consequences of work-related stress once they present, e.g., as mental or physical illness. While having mechanisms to assist such teachers is important, the ASTI believes that there is a need to systematically identify and address the causes of work-related health issues for teachers.

The ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee is spearheading a consultation process with the education partners on addressing the health challenge in all its forms in the school work environment. This process has included a seminar jointly hosted by the ASTI, TUI and IMPACT trade unions and the management bodies to consider proposals for a national health promotion programme for school employees. The goal is to establish a programme that integrates health promotion and ill health prevention, and which would operate alongside the current supports available to school employees such as the employee assistance service Care Call. Read more about teaching and mental health on page 22.

## This issue in numbers...

**27,000**

**NUMBER OF ASTI AND TUI**  
members who participated in strike  
action in protest at proposed  
changes to the Junior Cycle.

(P.10)

**381**

**NUMBER OF TIMES IN**  
which the ASTI appeared in the  
media in December.

(P.14)

## AVC Scheme Annual Report

ASTI members who are members of the ASTI AVC Plan should note that, in accordance with pension scheme regulations, a full copy of the Irish Life Trustee Services annual report for the year ending March 31, 2014, is available for examination by contacting the General Secretary of the ASTI.

## UNICEF report

A new UNICEF report has found that Ireland is among the countries most badly affected by child poverty since the recession began. *Children of the Recession: The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Child Well-Being in Rich Countries* ranks Ireland 37th out of 41 European and OECD countries in terms of child poverty between 2008 and 2012. The report states that Irish families with children have lost the equivalent of 10 years of income progress. The child poverty rate in Ireland rose from 18% in 2008 to 28.6% in 2012.



The report found that the recession has hit 15- to 24-year-olds especially hard. Ireland ranks 14th out of 41 countries in a league table measuring the change in NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Peter Power, Executive Director of UNICEF Ireland, said: "Countries should place the well-being of children at the top of their priorities during recessions. Not only is this a moral obligation, it is in the long-term self-interest of societies". Previous research has shown the impact of the recession on children in Ireland. The 2012 ESRI survey 'Work and Poverty in Ireland' found that in 2010, 22% of people were living in jobless households and over one-third of those were children. Anecdotal evidence from teachers indicates that increasing numbers of students are experiencing financial difficulties in the home. For example, some teachers are stating that more students are arriving to school hungry in the morning.

## Do we have your up-to-date contact details?

If you have changed postal address, email address or telephone number recently, please let ASTI Head Office know. Contact our membership department at 01-604 0162, or email [membership@asti.ie](mailto:membership@asti.ie).

## Important dates 2015

**Career breaks/job sharing closing dates:** Members wishing to apply for a career break or to extend a career break in the 2015/16 school year must submit their application before March 1, 2015. Members wishing to apply for job sharing or to extend job sharing must submit their application before March 1, 2015. For more information see page 24.

**Retirement closing dates:** Members who are due to retire, or who are considering retiring, in the 2014/15 school year, should note that the Haddington Road Agreement grace period has been extended until June 30, 2015. Members retiring on or before this date will have their pension benefits calculated on their salary as at June 30, 2013 (including supervision and substitution). If you wish to avail of the grace period, please ensure that you give adequate notice of your retirement date to your school or your ETB – at least three months for schools or two months in the case of ETBs. Unions are seeking an extension of this date. For more information visit the Retirement section at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## ASTI supports Unite members

The ASTI has donated €1,500 to the Unite union members who are involved in the JJ Rhatigan dispute. The money will go to the hardship fund for the workers, who have been on strike since September 2014. ASTI President Philip Irwin presented the donation to Paddy Redmond, Unite shop steward at Rhatigan, at a fundraiser for the workers. For more information see [www.unitetheunionireland.org](http://www.unitetheunionireland.org).

## ASTI submission to the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy

The ASTI has made a submission to the Department of Education and Skills on its Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. The submission covered the need for more research on students' attitudes and motivations towards language learning, in order to identify future awareness-raising strategies. The topic of supporting the language needs of migrants in second-level settings was also covered, as was the question of how foreign languages are currently taught in Irish classrooms. The submission also discussed teacher education and foreign language learning. Read the ASTI Submission to the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy in the Submissions section at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

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**PERCENTAGE OF ILL HEALTH**  
retirements among teachers in  
2013 attributed to mental  
illness/stress.

(P.22)

500

**NUMBER OF DELEGATES**  
who attend ASTI Convention  
every year.

(P.29)

## Celebrating 40 years of adult education in community and comprehensive schools



ASTI members Robbie Harrold and Jackie Connolly with guest speaker Professor Brian Lucey (centre).

A gala dinner was held recently to celebrate 40 years of adult education provision in community and comprehensive schools. The function took place in the Sheraton Hotel in Athlone and was part of the National Association of Adult and Community Education Directors' annual conference. A special commemorative publication was launched at a reception prior to the dinner. ASTI member Robbie Harrold noted that a long tradition of adult education had been established and maintained in the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS): "This represented many years of endeavour and there was much to celebrate and reflect upon".

## Deletion of part of FEMPI legislation

The Government has announced that it is to delete section 2B of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation. The move follows a campaign by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and individual unions, including the ASTI, for the repeal of the legislation. Section 2B of the legislation allows the Government, in the event of there being no collective agreement with trade unions, to impose unilateral changes to the pay and conditions of public sector workers. While the FEMPI Act was enacted in 2009, and was used to impose unilateral pay cuts by the then Government, section 2B was inserted in 2013.

"The very section of the legislation that was used to cut the pay and threaten the working conditions of ASTI members prior to the union signing up to the Haddington Road Agreement, is to be deleted," said ASTI General Secretary Pat King. "While we welcome this move by the Government, it is outrageous that such a draconian piece of legislation was enacted in the first place."

In 2013 the ASTI addressed representatives from other trade unions on the issue of FEMPI at the ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference. The ASTI also raised its concerns with the ICTU Public Services Committee. These concerns were raised directly with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin TD, by representatives of the ICTU Public Services Committee.

## Pilot voluntary redeployment scheme moves to Munster

The voluntary redeployment scheme established in 2013 is to continue in 2015. The scheme will operate in Munster in 2015, having operated in the North West in 2013 and in Connacht in 2014. The scheme, which was negotiated by the ASTI and TUI under the Croke Park Agreement, allows for teachers in schools not in a surplus teacher situation to transfer on a voluntary basis to another school or geographical area. It is important to note that, while a teacher must be teaching in Munster to avail of the scheme, he/she may seek to be redeployed to any part of the country.

### Redeployment in 2014

The vast majority of redeployments in 2014 were voluntary (64 out of 75 redeployments). Twenty-six teachers were redeployed under the pilot scheme in Connacht (vacancies were identified for 32 teachers but six of them rejected the offer).

### Details of pilot scheme

- The pilot voluntary redeployment scheme 2015 is confined to teachers employed in the Munster region (i.e., counties Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford). It does not apply in those schools that have teachers for compulsory redeployment.
- The pilot voluntary scheme will only be used if it facilitates the compulsory redeployment of a teacher from a surplus school.
- Permanent/CID holder teachers employed in these schools may express an interest in voluntary redeployment to another school anywhere in the country.
- Interested teachers should complete form VOL-RD1 15-16 and have it certified by the school principal and the chairperson of the board of management (or the CEO in the case of ETB schools). This form is available to download from the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

The ASTI is continuing to pursue a permanent nationwide voluntary redeployment scheme.

## Your pay will be stopped

Your pay will be stopped if you don't renew your Teaching Council registration.

Since January 2014, teachers must be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be employed as a teacher paid from State funds. Almost half of all registered teachers have a registration renewal date of March 28 each year, as they were automatically registered on that date in 2006 when the Teaching Council was established.

Teachers will receive a final notice via registered letter from the Teaching Council to renew their registration within one month of the date of this final notice or their registration will lapse.

It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that they renew their registration on time. Lost pay due to failure to renew your registration in time will not be restored.

You can check your registration status and renewal date at [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

# ASTI Special Convention sanctions changes

ASTIR reports on the recent ASTI Special Convention, which took place in November.

A Special Convention on the operation and structures of the ASTI, held on November 14 and 15, made a number of decisions relating to supports for schools, branches and union activists. Due to time constraints a number of recommendations were not taken. As some of the decisions involved rule changes, the ASTI will issue a new version of its rules and constitutions in early 2015.

## Key outcomes

### Associate members

- Associate members will be given all the rights and privileges of full members of the union. Associate members are those on fixed-term *pro rata* contracts.

### School stewards

- There will be increased training and support for school stewards.
- Schools may elect a school union committee, to include the school steward. The other members of the committee may assist the school steward with their duties.

### Boards of management

- All ASTI members on boards of management will be offered training.
- There will be a feedback process to ASTI members from teacher representatives on boards of management.

### School visits

- A structured programme of visits to schools by Standing Committee representatives will be undertaken.
- The current programme of visits to schools by officers and officials of the ASTI will continue.

### Improving branches

- School Union Committees will be asked to ensure that one member attends each branch meeting and reports back to members in their school.
- Branches will be asked to convene meetings for specific groups, e.g., fixed-term teachers, subject groups, etc.
- Engagement by all present at branch meetings should be encouraged through techniques such as discussion groups.
- Branches will be asked to invite appropriate external speakers to branch meetings.

- Branch officer training will be organised.

### Emeritus members

- In order to become emeritus members, members who retire must be fully paid up members of the ASTI immediately prior to their retirement.

For full details of all rule changes and recommendations, please see [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).



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**Deadlines 04.03.2015 (KA1) & 31.03.2015 (KA2)**  
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Teachers on strike at Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire, Cork, including ASTI Vice President Máire G. Ni Chiarba.



Teachers on strike at Loreto Dalkey, in Dublin.

# United for education

ASTI and TUI strike action on Junior Cycle reform attracted support from parents, students and education colleagues.

Twenty-seven thousand ASTI and TUI members picketed outside 730 schools on December 2 to protect education standards and the reputation of the Irish education system. From early morning until evening time, a united second-level teaching profession sent a clear and strong message to the Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O’Sullivan TD, and the general public, that teachers are deeply concerned that aspects of her Junior Cycle proposals pose a threat to education standards, fairness and quality. Union activists visiting picket lines during the day reported that school staffs were unified and were receiving much support from the public, including warm wishes, deliveries of coffee/tea to picket lines, and honking of horns from passing motorists.

Two hundred picket lines were visited by ASTI Head Office officials and Standing Committee representatives on December 2. All representatives received warm welcomes from picketing teachers. This was a last resort for the two teacher unions who have campaigned on proposed Junior Cycle reform for more than two years. There have been consultations with members, political lobbying, a petition signed by over 10,000 teachers, ballots of members, and a lunchtime protest. Despite a request from the unions that the Framework for Junior Cycle be deferred until the dispute between teachers and the Minister for Education and Skills and her Department was resolved, implementation of the Framework began in September 2015 with the introduction of the English specification. A talks process between the teacher unions and the Department of Education and Skills broke down in November, due to the Department’s

Teachers on the picket lines reported significant support from the public.

refusal to engage on issues such as resources and training unless the ASTI and TUI first agreed that teachers would mark their own students for Junior Cycle State exams.

### Achievements

As a result of the ASTI and TUI campaign, Minister O’Sullivan has restored the State Certificate at Junior Cycle. And in moving on the assessment issue (from 100% school-based assessment to 40%), the Minister has acknowledged that assessment is an important issue. However, teachers want all exam components to be externally assessed.

### Junior Cycle reform – what are we looking for?:

- retention of State Certificate for Junior Cycle;
- equity between schools and for students;
- commitment to a quality education experience for all students;
- maintenance of consistent standards through the external assessment model;
- investment in high quality CPD for teachers at individual and whole school level; and,
- investment in school resources.

### Parents, principals, students voice their support

Teachers from picket lines around the country reported support from parents of primary and second-level students. This included visits from parents who expressed their support. Messages of support from students included this one from a students’ council, which was published in the *Irish Examiner* and the *Meath Chronicle*:



Teachers on strike at St Caimin's Community School, Shannon.



Teachers on strike at St Flannan's, Ennis.



TUI General Secretary John MacGabhann and ASTI General Secretary Pat King on the picket line at Pobalscoil Rosmini.



Teachers on strike at St Declans, Cabra.

"I, and the Student Council of St Patrick's Classical School, Navan, support the continued industrial action taken by teachers in our school and around the country who oppose the current reforms of the Junior Certificate, which are being implemented by the Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan.

Our Student Council represents around 900 students and we acknowledge our students' views that the current Junior Certificate should be retained as it prepares you for the most important examination of your life, the Leaving Certificate, and for further university exams.

Many subject syllabuses in our view need to be reformed with thought and input from all sides, with the State Examination Commission having authority of development, assessment, accreditation, and certification of both the Leaving and Junior Certificates.

Overall we support the industrial action taken by the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI) and Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) members, and we will support more action by teachers if needs be. Gearóid Dardis, PRO, Student Council, St Patrick's Classical School, Navan"

The ASTI Principals and Deputy Principals' Committee represents approximately 1,000 principals and deputy principals around the country.

This is what the Committee had to say about the ASTI's Junior Cycle campaign: "We are fully supportive of the ASTI position on the Framework for Junior Cycle. We believe that teachers assessing their own students for State Certificate purposes will have a negative impact on student-teacher relations and consequently on the entire school community. In addition, as principals and deputy principals we are very concerned about the capacity of schools to implement the Framework for Junior Cycle. Second-level schools have endured significant cuts to resources in recent years. These cuts have been implemented at a time when a number of new initiatives and obligations have been introduced. This has led to a huge increase in workload and administrative burdens for schools at a time when many are at breaking point".

## Keep up the conversation

The ASTI Junior Cycle campaign has highlighted the important role teachers play in developing awareness of education issues in their communities. We urge individual teachers and school staffs to keep up the conversation with individual parents, parents' associations, local politicians and others.

## Solidarity and support on social media

Comments on social media showed the high level of support for the strike from the public. Members of the public shared messages of solidarity and teachers described the support they were receiving on the picket line from car horns to gifts of coffee and food.

**USi Ireland** @USI\_Ireland · Dec 2  
Teachers in Ireland on strike today- we salute you! #juniorcyclestrike #TUI #ASTI youtube.com/watch?v=21GiVH... #edchatie Plz RT

**Noel Buckley** @nollaigobuachal · Dec 2  
Great support from Primary students parents in Clonmel, worried re Assessment . #juniorcyclestrike #astionion RT

**John Fox** @foxymm12 · Dec 2  
Teachers at St. Eunan's College, Letterkenny after a delivery of tea & buns from 6th yr prefects #juniorcyclestrike

**Teachers Talking** @teach\_talk\_back · Dec 2  
Judging by car horns heard at picket in our area, plenty of support for @astionion & @TUUnion strikes today. #juniorcyclestrike #edchatie

**karl foster** @kpdfoster · Dec 2  
Great support on the picket line from members of the public in Swords today. People telling us to keep up the work. #juniorcyclestrike

**Cllr. John Lyons** @JohnLyons2014 · Dec 2  
Great spirits amongst teachers on the #juniorcyclestrike pickets I visited today: passionate, caring, determined.

ASTI retweeted  
**Adrian Guinan** @adrianguinan · Dec 2  
@astionion Scoil Dara Kilcock, Jammies Cafe Kilcock lending their support to ASTI members .




**Coláiste Bríde D22** @Colaistebride · Dec 2  
Random act of kindness "you are part of our lives" by Clondalkin man - lunch for teachers on strike @astionion TQ!



**Stephanie Lord** @stephie88 · Dec 2  
I'm not a teacher but I support the @astionion & @TUUnion teachersstrike.

**ATHE** @ATHE\_HomeFr · Dec 2  
Not easy being out on the picket line in protection of our fair education system. Great public support. Well done to all @astionion @TUUnion

**Lang | teachersireland favoured**  
**Ballymore CS** @BallymoreCS · Dec 2  
last leg of picket underway...great support from public @astionion @TUUnion #juniorcyclestrike



**pimguire** @pimguire · Dec 2  
Great support for teachers on strike @astionion @TUUnion well done all

**Oldham NUT** @OldhamNUT · Dec 2  
"TeachSolidarity" Solidarity with Irish secondary teachers, on strike today vs imposed 'reform' teachersolidarity.com/blog/irish-tea #juniorcyclestrike

**MRCI** @MigrantRightsIR · Dec 2  
Solidarity with all out on the #teachersstrike today - hope the rain holds off @astionion @TUUnion

**Alex** @bell\_alle · Dec 2  
@TeacherROAR @astionion @teach\_talk\_back as an Irish person who teaches in UK I agree with why they went on strike: external-better

**John Fox** @foxymm12 · Dec 2  
Nice to see some support after all the teacher-bashing in recent years #juniorcyclestrike #ast #teachersstrike

**I really hope people get behind our teachers on this! They are striking for the quality of education for our children the future of this country. They are not striking over pay cuts. It's about ensuring all children in this country get the opportunity to an objective marking**

**Swán Ó Murchú** We got some great support today and very little criticism. Based on my own experience today, the public are with us on this, contrary to what the minister claims.  
29 · 2 December at 07:41

**Andy McDonnell** I'll second that, great support shown up our way. What else will it take for the Minister to get the message?  
13 · 2 December at 07:57

**Rosemary Nunwick** Fantastic support today from parents in Trim... Thanks so much for the 'beeps' 😊  
8 · 2 December at 08:53

**Niamh O'Hara** We got a great amount of support too, parents do NOT want us assessing our own kids  
8 · 2 December at 08:00

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# Maintaining standards at Junior Cycle

The ASTI has been active in the media to explain the reasons for its joint industrial action with the TUI on Junior Cycle reform, appearing 381 times in December alone.



ASTI President Philip Irwin (left) and TUI President Gerry Quinn visiting Pobalscoil Rosmini during the recent strike action on Junior Cycle reform.

"We have engaged in petitions, in lunchtime protests and even when we were not being properly consulted we consulted with the teachers ourselves. It is because the implementation has gone on without our agreement that we have taken this strike action."

**Philip Irwin, ASTI President, *Irish Independent*, December 3**

"I've been here myself since eight o'clock this morning and the public and the parents have shown their support to us by coming up to us and thanking us for what we're doing, because they know we're doing it to try and maintain the standard of education and the standard of assessment which we have in this country, which is without compare."

**Máire G. Ní Chiarba, ASTI Vice-President, *Newstalk Lunchtime*, December 2**

"Irish teachers are willing to engage in oral work, practical work, portfolio work, project work – to do all of the things suggested in the Framework for the JC. What they are saying is we do not want to engage in State certification. We're not going to do that."

**Pat King, ASTI General Secretary, *RTÉ One, Prime Time*, December 1**

"Despite assertions from commentators that the Junior Certificate is low status, the fact is that it is valued by students, parents and teachers. It encourages students to develop goal-setting skills, it motivates students at the mid-point of their second-level education, and it offers students an important objective guide as they enter the senior cycle."

**Philip Irwin, ASTI President, *Irish Examiner*, December 2**

"Teachers are not generally minded to go on strike or to walk out on schools but to a man and a woman they went out. The reaction from the public was a very positive response."

**Pat King, ASTI General Secretary, *The Irish Times*, December 4**

"It's an absolutely fundamental issue; it's about fairness. The present education we have, for all its faults, and we accept that there are lots of faults, it is fair. A great deal can be done, and it can all be done under the current structures that we have for assessment."

**Eamonn Dennehy, ASTI Standing Committee member and teacher at Heywood Community School, Laois, *RTÉ Radio 1, Morning Ireland*, December 2**

"Every time I hear the Minister speak she doesn't seem to be able to understand what we're saying and we're saying that we don't think it's the right thing to moderate our own exams for the Junior Certificate. We feel that we should be having them externally assessed and she's not hearing us."

**Miriam Duggan, CEC/school steward and teacher at Pobalscoil Rosmini, *RTÉ One, Six One News***

"Bhí an tacaíocht a fuairamar ón bpobal do-chreidte – daoine ag stopadh chun labhairt linn, ag rá linn gur thuigeadar cén fáth go raibh an seasamh seo á thógaint againn, agus nā déan dearmad go bhfuil an seasamh seo á thógaint againn ar mhaithe le caighdeáin an oideachais, measunú náisiúnta agus, go háirithe, ar mhaithe leis na daltaí atá faoin ár gcúram."

**Máire G. Ní Chiarba, Leas-Uachtaráin an ASTI, *TG4, 7 Lá*, December 2**

"It is unfair to claim that teachers have not moved. Teachers support many improvements, including increased use of project and portfolio work and a move away from an excessive reliance on a terminal examination. However, they want these externally assessed."

**Philip Irwin, ASTI President, *Irish Times*, December 12**

# ICTU Youth Committee Five Rights Campaign



The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Youth Committee has launched its Five Rights Campaign for young people in Ireland. The campaign seeks to highlight five rights required by Ireland's youth to ensure that they can become fully active participants in Irish society. Ireland has extremely high levels of both youth unemployment and youth emigration – all of which is leading to a sense of youth disenfranchisement in Ireland.

Derek Keenan, Chairperson of the ICTU Youth Committee, said: "Young people have been among the hardest hit by the economic crisis. Youth unemployment remains at 25% and many of our generation still have to leave to find work".

Ciara Kinsella, member of CEC and ASTI representative on the ICTU Youth Committee, said: "With many younger teachers in precarious employment on fixed-term and part-time contracts, this is an important campaign for ASTI members. Equally, as second-level teachers, we wish to ensure that our students can become fully active participants in Irish society when they enter the working world".

The Five Rights Campaign identifies five demands to renew citizenship for young people in Ireland:

- a right to a future in Ireland;
- a right to a job;
- a right to decent and secure employment;
- a right to equal pay for equal work; and,
- a right to collectively bargain with their employers.

A recently published ESRI longitudinal survey of young people who had left second-level school in 2007/2008 found that, at the time of the survey in 2011, 40% of participants were in the labour market. Of these, nearly half the males surveyed and 40% of the females surveyed were unemployed. One-fifth of those in employment were working part-time.





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# Imagining a different society

As the New Year begins, TOM HEALY says it's time to set out a social vision for Ireland for the next 30 years.



Recent debates about politics, water charges, tax cuts and austerity have focused on the short term and how we can get out of the economic slump. This is understandable. Now we need a conversation in Ireland about our long-term goal and how the policies and goals of the immediate months ahead relate to our long-term objectives.

To avoid the terrible mistakes of the past we need to learn how to do things differently. This impacts on economic policy in areas such as inequality, incomes, financial regulation, industrial democracy and the growth of Irish-owned enterprises in export markets. Some of these fundamental goals will take many decades to fully realise. But the work begins here.

## Looking to a better future

If we had tried to imagine, back in 1984, what Ireland, Europe and the world would look like 30 years later in 2014, we would never have guessed it – a peace process in Northern Ireland, the fall of the wall in Central Europe, the spread of internet technology, email, smartphones, the Celtic Tiger, the crash of 2008 and even the recent tentative signs of economic recovery.

We need to imagine an Ireland in 2044 that is more prosperous, fairer and more sustainable. It would be hard for anyone to disagree with this. But, what would this mean and how exactly would we achieve it? These

are not idle questions. Already, there is pressure to reduce taxes on the highest earners, to continue a policy of outsourcing in the public service, and to allow the market to determine house prices so that they take off again, and rents to rise to astronomic levels.

A social vision for the next 30 years needs to be linked to a strategy for the short term (the next 12 to 24 months), the medium term (the next five to 10 years) and the long term (the next 30 years). The focus of public policy must be on:

- raising human well-being through more and better jobs;
- a growing but sustainable economy;
- stronger dynamic and exporting Irish firms – including small and medium-sized businesses;
- more democracy in enterprises, with workers and other stakeholders having a say; and,
- a stronger public service with education, health and accommodation seen as human rights and public goods, and not as commodities to be traded and restricted on the basis of ability to pay.

In other words: an economy that works for society and a society that puts the human well-being of all its citizens at the centre. This is the goal of trade unions throughout the world and was achieved with some

partial success in the Scandinavian countries, especially in the years following World War II. Today, there are examples and signs of good social policies in many European countries and further afield in South America.

**Aspiring to the best**

There is no perfect example or social model anywhere and never will be. However, we can aspire and strive to avoid the mistakes of the past and improve conditions for the future by attending to what needs to be done now.

To make this possible we need a different model of development, in which the State plays a key supportive role, especially in the area of credit and banking. A separate retail and investment banking structure is needed in which there is a place for a publicly-owned bank to provide a secure place for savers and a means of prudential lending to households and small businesses. We have something to learn from other small European countries with systems of national innovation and industrial support that target key markets, new products and services, and link new skills and emerging enterprises (e.g., Finland).

Societies need to:

- invest in people, communities, enterprises, and public goods and services;

- achieve a fair and equitable distribution of income including a living wage floor for families and individual workers; and,
- raise the importance of a ‘social wage’ funded and paid for by adequate taxes and social insurance contributions, where everyone contributes, but fairly and in proportion to their means.

Ultimately, the choice is whether we are serious about what needs to be done to build a better world for our children and our children’s children.

The Nevin Economic Research Institute is an alternative economic think tank funded by a number of trade unions, including the ASTI, which are affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It produces a weekly blog written by Tom Healy and others. To sign up to receive the blog by email, visit [www.ner institute.net](http://www.ner institute.net).

**Tom Healy**  


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*Tom is Director of the Nevin Economic Research Institute.*



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# Passing on the joy of reading

JENNY DUNNE asked some ASTI members to share their tips for helping students to enjoy reading for pleasure.



Encouraging students to read beyond the prescribed texts can improve not only their literacy, but all areas of their education, as well as setting them up for a lifelong love of reading.

## Make sure students have access to books

Breege O'Brien is a teacher librarian in Coláiste Pobail Acla, Co. Mayo. She says that one of the most important ways to encourage a reading culture within a school is to ensure that students have access to a variety of books, ideally in the form of a well-stocked library. However, even teachers in schools with no library facilities can make books available for their students. Breege said: "For teachers without libraries who want to encourage reading, I'd tell them just to start with a box of books. There are homes that have no books in them, so your students might not have access to books otherwise. Ask students to bring in books they've enjoyed and they can share them with their classmates. You can also ask other teachers to donate books and eventually the collection will grow".

## Involve the whole school

There are many initiatives that encourage all subject areas to become involved in encouraging reading. Deirdre Fitzgerald teaches English in Mount Carmel Secondary School, Dublin, where many of the school corridors are 'literacy rich walls', where keywords for the different subjects

are displayed on the wall near the subject classroom. This means that students are always reading and improving their vocabulary as they move around the building. Teachers from all subject areas in Mount Carmel also take turns to pick books to recommend to their students.

The school library in Coláiste Pobail Acla is also a hub for many different subject areas. Breege said: "If there's a subject-specific event, say French week, we'll try to have events in the library that tie into that like promoting books by French authors or even encouraging students to read something through French".

## Consider the effects of reading on students' well-being

Catherine Barry is an English teacher in Coláiste Padraig, Co. Kerry, and she notes that opportunities to read independently can be beneficial to students' mental health. She said: "Between one-third and half of students are introverts who can find the frenetic pace of school and the increasing use of group work exhausting. Library class is a welcome quiet time in the day, where they can go at their own pace and recharge their social interaction batteries". However, she also warns that such periods of silent, sustained reading "may be harmful to students who feel despair and/or shame because of their struggles with reading" and suggests making sure that these students have the individual attention they may need during these periods.

### Let students read about what interests them

For reluctant readers, sometimes it can be as simple finding something that they're interested in. "There's a book out there for everyone, once you find out what they're interested in," said Breege. "Many of our students would be from rural backgrounds and would be interested in things like tractors or livestock or local history, and like to read books about these topics. It's important to look beyond fiction when you're considering what kinds of book might interest a student." Deirdre Fitzgerald recommends Barrington Stoke books to catch the interest of students who are intimidated by reading. They are written to be accessible to students with a low literacy level and to get them 'hooked' on a story. Deirdre said: "These books are very high interest to students, as they deal with topics that they're interested in reading about like dating, friendships or drug culture. They can really help to get them into reading".

### Work with technology

It's becoming increasingly common for students to spend a lot of time looking at screens. Although it can be tempting to promote physical books above all else, the online world offers opportunities to encourage reading. "I might take a class to the computer room and tell them to find an article online about something that interests them and to read that. Once they're reading, it's helpful," said Breege.

"You have to work with students where they're at," said Deirdre "and where they're at is online. The thing is though, even though there's a lot of problems with things like social media, they are always reading when they're using it." However, sometimes technology can become a problem that needs to be discussed with parents. "There's no point spouting platitudes about the joy of reading while saying nothing about the elephantine Playstation/laptop in the bedroom," said Catherine.

### Share book recommendations

In Mount Carmel Secondary School, during periods of independent reading, the teacher and the librarian will also read their book to model good behaviour. "Students will always come up to you and ask what you're reading and want to discuss it to see if they might enjoy it too. It can be tempting to do your own work during these times, but it's really important for students to see you reading too," said Deirdre. In order to stay informed about what your students might be reading, Breege recommends that teachers work with their colleagues. "Reading to familiarise oneself with teenage fiction is in itself time consuming. Local teacher reading groups, maybe facilitated by local INOTE branches, could be a structure for helping teachers with this," she said.

### Make an event out of reading

There are a number of initiatives that schools can take part in to make reading an event. Breege has seen great results from the MS Readathon. She said: "One girl told me that before she thought she wouldn't be able to read a whole book at all, and now she loves reading after taking part in the Readathon. She had something of an epiphany". In both Breege and Deirdre's schools, students take part in paired reading initiatives. In Breege's school, first year students do a community read with incoming sixth class students, while in Deirdre's school students from nearby Trinity College do paired reading with the pupils.

## Other ideas

**Author visits** – have local authors visit and discuss their work with a class. Encourage students to read their book before the visit.

**Book in a bag** – In Mount Carmel Secondary School, all first year students must have a book in their bag to read during any free periods they may have.

**SLARI** – Consider joining the School Library Association in the Republic of Ireland.

**DEAR** – Have a set time for everyone to 'Drop Everything and Read', encouraging students to make reading a priority.

Do you have any tips for promoting reading among students? Send them to [astir@asti.ie](mailto:astir@asti.ie).

### Jenny Dunne

Jenny works in the ASTI Communications Office.

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# Saving St Mel's

Retired ASTI member Tiernan Dolan has documented the restoration of St Mel's Cathedral in Longford.



*Tiernan Dolan witnessed the fire that destroyed St Mel's Cathedral in Longford on Christmas Day, 2009, and photographed the Cathedral from the very beginning of the restoration process to the triumphant re-opening in December 2014. (Photograph: Alan Betson, courtesy of The Irish Times.)*

Tiernan Dolan, a retired teacher in Longford, has created a hugely popular series of photographs of the restoration of St Mel's Cathedral in Longford. The historic cathedral was destroyed in a fire early on Christmas Day 2009 and the mammoth task of rebuilding it was completed in December 2014.

Tiernan has taken thousands of photographs, which show the devastation of the fire and the complex work undertaken by master craftsmen in order to restore the neoclassical building to its former glory. He shared these photographs on his facebook page 'St Mel's Cathedral Restoration' and in a photography exhibition in Longford Library called 'Operation Restoration'.

The photographs have attracted interest internationally; people from 40 different countries have 'liked' the St Mel's Cathedral Restoration page. This has proved of great interest to the people of Longford who wish to follow their much-loved cathedral's restoration.

Tiernan said: "I swapped St Mel's College for St Mel's Cathedral. I was there the night the fire started, and the priest asked me to take photographs afterwards, for the records. Then he asked me to keep taking photographs of the work being done in the restoration. I had recently retired, so I suppose I had a bit more bit more spare time and I photographed the restoration work right from the start. I have to say, I loved every minute of it. I was brought up right across the road from the Cathedral, and it was a



Teams of skilled craftspeople and artists worked tirelessly to restore the Cathedral. (Photograph: Tiernan Dolan.)

privilege to be involved with the project.”  
 Tiernan’s photography has previously earned him an ASTI achievement award. He has volunteered with GOAL in many developing countries, photographing the projects as he works. These photographs, subsequently



Tiernan was present to document the terrible fire that destroyed St Mel’s on Christmas Day 2009. (Photograph: Tiernan Dolan.)

published in newspapers and magazines, have attracted funding for numerous GOAL projects in the developing world. You can see more of Tiernan’s photographs by searching ‘St Mel’s Cathedral Restoration’ on Facebook. For more about the ASTI Achievement Awards, see page 25.



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# The coping class

DEIRDRE MacDONALD asks: what are you coping with today, and how are you coping?



With ever-increasing demands on your professional life, 45 extra hours (33 Croke Park plus out of hours staff/parent-teacher meetings) and up to 22% less take home pay, around the country the staffroom is indeed the coping class room. In 2004 the largest and most comprehensive occupational health research carried out by four British universities found classroom teacher to be the most stressful occupation.\* Irish research conducted by the Work Research Centre over 20 years ago showed that 35% of all teachers were experiencing stress.\*\*

The ASTI, by prioritising teacher welfare, is acting in a progressive and proactive manner to support teachers' well-being and mental health.

## Changing times

The past 20 years, without doubt, have seen enormous changes in society, ranging from changes in family structure to the detrimental effects of personal and corporate greed and, most recently, mass unemployment. Schools and teachers have done their best to absorb and contend with these enormous changes, often to the detriment of the individual teacher's well-being. We are fast approaching saturation point, where more and more professional demands rather than increasing standards and productivity (Troikaesque language) will bring about breaking point. Teachers' ability to cope with the myriad of demands is declining, morale is seriously damaged and the constant media onslaught is exacerbating the situation. Teachers' health and welfare will undergo further degeneration unless something is done to protect and promote it.

## The role of employers

Teachers have rights too. Schools are unique workplaces with a complex and divergent set of challenges and difficulties. Boards of management have statutory obligations under both employment equality and safety, health and welfare legislation, to face up to the issue of the mental health of their employees. This is a right, not an optional extra. There is obviously a significant lack of consideration of this area of school life, and a lack of compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005. Mental illness/stress was the most common reason for teachers' ill health retirement in 2013, according to the most recent figures from Medmark, the occupational healthcare service for teachers. Among teachers, mental illness/stress accounted for 35% of ill health retirements, compared to the next most common reason, cancer, which accounted for 20% of ill health retirement in 2013. Mental illness/stress also accounts for a large amount of teachers' long-term sick leave. In 2013, 34% of occupational health assessments for teachers were for mental illness/stress, compared to 8% for cancer. Employers have an obligation and a duty of care to put in place systems of work that protect employees from hazards that could lead to mental or physical ill health. A mere statement of intent is not sufficient to fulfill management's statutory obligation. An employer is expected to implement a process of continuous risk assessment and to implement control measures in order to eliminate or reduce workplace hazards.

'Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health – in Post-Primary Schools', a manual produced by the Health and Safety Authority, State Claims Agency, Department of Education and Skills, and School Development Planning Initiative omits the word welfare in its title. This manual aims to assist schools to conform to the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005, which sets out the requirements for securing and improving the safety, health and welfare of people at work.

### Extending policies and programmes to the staffroom

Under the "Principles of Prevention", outlined under Schedule 3 of the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005, there is acknowledgement of the impact of "working conditions, social factors and the influence of factors relating to the working environment" on safety, health and welfare in schools. This 236-page manual does refer to bullying and psychosocial hazards, but only in its glossary. The auditing tool section includes one page on bullying and one page on psychosocial hazards, compared to three pages on slips, trips and falls.

Currently anti-bullying policies and strategies in schools have the student body as their target group. What about bullying of teachers by pupils, parents, other staff members or school management? The problem of bullying in the workplace requires a distinct set of protocols and preventive measures to be developed, implemented and evaluated. According to a 2001 ESRI study, approximately 50% of workplaces have a policy on workplace bullying. How many schools have such a policy today? How many schools have a mental health policy for employees?

'A Vision for Change' – a document produced by the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, which sets out a policy framework for mental health – identifies the population perspective model of mental health promotion as a viable and productive template, because it can put in place programmes and interventions tailored to specific groups and settings. The school as a workplace is one such setting. This model of health promotion is important because it also includes those who may already have developed mental health problems, as well as the healthy population. It is seen internationally as a capacity building measure in that it empowers individuals, groups and organisations to fulfill their potential.

Prevention is better than a cure. However, at times a cure is required. Stress management is about how the individual copes with stress – it is a secondary intervention. The Employee Assistance Service is an example of such a facility. It is there to help teachers find coping strategies during times of stress. While this is vital, the service does not deal with the institutional aspect of preventing or reducing stress through organisational change. What is needed is a project that guides schools through the process of identifying institutional systems and work practices that cause teachers stress and have allowed the problem to fester. 'Creating A Healthy Teaching Environment – Teacher Stress Prevention', a pilot project in 2000-2001 in which the ASTI participated, provided such a model and was accredited with the quality assurance mark by the European Network of Health Promotion in the Workplace. In other words, the project was recognised as a model of best practice.

### Standing up for teachers' rights

It is time for teachers to start practising what they continually preach to students. Stand up for yourself and your rights. Examination of a random selection of school mission statements will show a proliferation of such words as nurturing, safe, secure, just, respectful environment, caring

community, fulfilling potential. What a pity so few actively pursue these statements with respect to staff welfare and well-being. Words are cheap. In fact in this case they cost nothing. Enough of the rhetoric! The time has come to ensure school management boards, the Department of Education and Skills and individual school boards of management live up to their words and comply fully with workplace legislation. The ASTI, by prioritising teacher welfare in line with the recommendations of the European Trade Union Committee for Education, is acting in a progressive and proactive manner to support practising teachers of all ages in a practical way to maintain their well-being and mental health.

So, what are YOU coping with today? How are YOU coping?

\*Millet, C.T., Johnson, S.J., Cooper, C.L., Donald, I.J., Cartright, S., Taylor, P.J. Britain's most stressful occupations and the role of emotional labour. BPS Occupational Psychology Conference, Warwick, 2005.

\*\*Work Research Centre. Stress Prevention in Teaching Pilot Project. Dublin, 2002.

### Deirdre MacDonald

Deirdre is the Chairperson of the ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee.



## Berlin Study Visit

### 6-9 April 2015

### For Teachers



MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

A visit to the city of Berlin, where National Socialism originated. It includes an overview of Jewish Berlin and its history and also visits to authentic Holocaust sites. Working with Holocaust scholars and educators, the programme allows participants to grasp the enormity of the Holocaust and its resonances within the city.

Cost: €695 (inclusive of travel, (hand luggage), hotel and entrance fees)

For information and details about all our teacher education programmes, contact

Holocaust Education Trust Ireland, Gillian Hynes, Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.  
Tel: + 353 1 8940583 Email: info@holocaustireland.org www.holocaustireland.org



# Career breaks/ job sharing

What you need to know if you are thinking of taking a career break or job sharing.



## Career break

**For family reasons, I am considering taking a career break for one year from this September. How do I go about this?**

First of all, you should note that March 1, 2015, is the deadline for you to apply for a career break for the 2015/16 school year.

A career break is a period of unpaid leave from your employment. It must be taken for at least one year. It may be taken for up to five years at a time (subject to your application being accepted each year) and a maximum of 10 years' career break can be taken over your teaching career.

A teacher wishing to take a career break must submit their application to the school (board of management/manager). The March 1 application deadline also applies to those on career break who wish to continue their career break for another year.

**Is the granting of a career break automatic, once I apply?**

No. Discretion lies with the school management. The ASTI holds the view that applications should be considered favourably and provisionally accepted subject to approval by the Department of Education and Skills of a funded replacement. The ASTI can offer assistance in relation to efforts to secure a Department-funded replacement.

**When will I be told whether or not my application has been successful?**

The employer must issue a written notice of approval or refusal by April 1. The employer must also submit notice of the career break absence to the Department, via the online claims system, on or before May 1.

**What will happen to my pension while I am on career break?**

A period of unpaid leave such as a career break does not accrue pension entitlements. However, teachers on career break may purchase notional service. This involves paying pension contributions at full actuarial cost in accordance with the relevant pension scheme, either during the career break or following a return to teaching. Arrangements must be made with the Department of Education and Skills/ETB.

**Do I need to maintain my Teaching Council registration?**

The ASTI strongly recommends that teachers on career break maintain their Teaching Council registration. If you allow your registration to lapse while you are on career break you will need to apply to the Council for registration at least four months prior to the end of your career break. At this point, you will be required to undergo the full application process, including the submission of transcripts and the Garda vetting process.

**Will my on career break count as a sick leave free year when calculating future sick leave entitlements?**

No. When you return from career break, the year or years you were absent from school on career break leave will be discounted for the purposes of calculating sick leave entitlements. For example, if in the year prior to your career break you took three days' self-certified sick leave and three days' certified sick leave, then these six days' leave will be counted when calculating your self-certified and certified sick leave entitlements when you return to work, as follows:

**Self-certified sick leave** – you will be deemed as having taken three days' self-certified leave from your entitlement of seven days' leave over a rolling two-year period.

**Ordinary illness/critical illness leave** – you will be deemed as having taken six days' leave from your ordinary illness/critical illness leave entitlements (this applies to your entitlements over a year and your entitlements over a rolling four-year period).

For full information on sick leave entitlements, visit [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## Job sharing

**I am applying for job sharing next year. How will I be timetabled?**

First of all, you should note that March 1, 2015, is the deadline to apply for job sharing or to extend job sharing. The overall guideline for timetabling of teachers who are job sharing is that, subject to the needs of students and the school, timetabling should be in accordance with the spirit of the scheme. The ASTI encourages schools to facilitate job sharers, while having due regard to the needs of other staff members, for example, clustering a job sharer's classes together, rather than staggering them over the entire day, if that is the preference of the job sharer.

**Do I have to attend Croke Park Hours meetings, and other meetings held outside my 11 hours' teaching?**

A job-sharing teacher must fulfil the Croke Park Hours (33 hours) commitment on a *pro rata* basis, i.e., 16.5 hours per annum. In addition, a job-sharing teacher must be available for parent-teacher meetings and staff meetings, though in some cases these meetings may be offset against Croke Park Hours.

For comprehensive information on career breaks and job sharing, visit [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie). You can also speak to one of our industrial relations experts by telephoning 01-604 0160.



# Take a bow



**The ASTI Achievement Awards**  
recognise the outstanding contribution teachers make to  
schools, students and society.

Nominate an outstanding teacher or teaching team for their achievements  
in school or outside their professional life

The ASTI Achievement Awards recognise teachers in three categories:

**The Outstanding Teacher Achievement Award**  
recognises the contribution of individual teachers to their schools and education

**The Outstanding Teacher Team Achievement Award**  
recognises the contribution of a team/group of teachers to their school and education

**The Outstanding Individual Achievement Award**  
recognises the outstanding achievement of individual teachers outside their professional life

Log on to the ASTI website to find out more or to nominate a colleague.

The closing date for applications is  
Friday, February 13th, 2015

[www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie)  
1850-418400  
[www.twitter.com/astionion](https://www.twitter.com/astionion)  
[www.facebook.com/astiteachers](https://www.facebook.com/astiteachers)

**ASTI**  
A century of service

## RSTA recruitment campaign

The President of the RSTA, Carmel Heneghan, is spearheading a recruitment campaign to strengthen the Association's hand to "Fight the Cuts and Defend Pensions". For this to be effective numerical strength is vital; consequently, we appeal to all retired teachers to join and those contemplating same to consider it seriously.

The RSTA is an affiliate of The Alliance of Retired Public Servants, the formalised representative body for retired public servants. The Alliance has succeeded in getting a right to a voice in the conditions of retired public servants for the first time and a promise of restoration of pensions.

Pressure must be applied now for a framework for an exit strategy from

the emergency legislation to enable implementation, hence the great need for increased membership.

## The RSTA Spring Break

The RSTA Spring Break, incorporating the National Conference, will take place in The Sheraton Hotel, Athlone on May 12, 13 and 14, 2015.

Details of the Conference, programme of events and a booking form will be published in the next Newsletter and online at [www.rsta.ie](http://www.rsta.ie).

### RSTA Membership Application/Renewal

First Name:  Surname:

Address:

Home Phone:  Mobile:

Email:  RSTA Branch:

Annual Subscription €24. Payment options:

1. Standing Order: Please complete the set-up form below and send to the RSTA National Treasurer.
2. Cheque: Please make the cheque payable to "RSTA" and send with this form to the RSTA National Treasurer.
3. Online Bank Payment: To make a transfer or set up a Standing Order online please refer to the Standing Order Form below for details of the RSTA Bank Account.

**PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO:**

RSTA National Treasurer: Mrs Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.

T: [murielmcnicholas@gmail.com](mailto:murielmcnicholas@gmail.com). M: 085-118 1330.

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS using black or blue pen.

To The Manager:  Date:

*(Name of Member's Bank)*

Bank Branch and Full Address:

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account.

Bank Account No:  National Sort Code (NSC):

Account Name:  with the amount of €24. Amount in words: **Twenty Four Euro**

Frequency: **Annually Until Further Notice** Start Date for payment:

And to CREDIT the account held in the name of: **Retired Secondary Teachers' Association AIB Bank, Sutton Branch**

NSC: 93-23-61 Account Number: 12729-080 IBAN: IE55 AIBK 9323 6112 7290 80 BIC: AIBKIE2D

Member's Name & RSTA Branch:

*(To identify the member's payment on the RSTA bank statement)*

Member's Signature:  Date:

*(You can cancel this Standing Order instruction at any time by writing to your Bank. The amount of the payment authorised above may not be altered except by your instruction to your Bank.)*

## FÉILTE 2015

Following on from the success of FÉILTE 2014, the Teaching Council has begun planning for FÉILTE 2015, which will take place on Saturday, October 3, 2015. FÉILTE, the Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence, promotes and celebrates innovation in teaching by showcasing the work of teachers who are leading innovative learning projects. The Teaching Council has issued an open call for teaching projects from teachers who would like to showcase innovative practice. More information is available at [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie) and @FÉILTE.

## Show racism the red card



Registration is now open for the Show Racism the Red Card Anti-Racism Creative Competition 2015. Schools who register will receive a free DVD education pack. Schools who submit an entry before the March deadline will have access to two tickets to the Ireland vs Georgia European Qualifier Senior International match in September 2015. Entrants are asked to use creativity to produce a message arising from the themes in the Show Racism the Red Card DVD. They can do this through written, visual or audiovisual means. Students can register today at [www.theredcard.ie/competition.php](http://www.theredcard.ie/competition.php).

## MATHletes



The MATHletes Challenge is a free online and in-person maths tournament for Irish and Northern Irish students and schools. A not-for-profit venture founded by entrepreneur Sean O'Sullivan and Ciaran Cannon TD, MATHletes develops students' confidence and competence in maths using Khan Academy. The four-month challenge provides participants with a fun, competitive, engaging and rewarding educational experience.

MATHletes is open to primary and secondary students from fourth class to fifth year (ROI) and from Primary 6 to Year 13 (NI). Top scorers advance to in-person playoffs in May, where over €20,000 in prizes and the title of MATHletes Challenge All-Ireland Champion are on offer. Thousands of students and over 250 schools competed in 2014.

Registration is FREE and opened on December 1. The Challenge was launched on January 5. For more information or to sign up, visit <http://mathletes.ie>.

## Dyslexia Courses Ireland

Wyn McCormack and Mary Ball have set up Dyslexia Courses Ireland, which offers the following services at second level:

- in-service courses for teachers, including courses on the teaching of maths and languages to students with dyslexia;
- information evenings for parents on how they can support their child at second level;
- study skills workshops for senior cycle students; and,
- individualised tuition for senior cycle students.

Full details are available at [www.dyslexiacourses.ie](http://www.dyslexiacourses.ie).

## All-island Schools History Competition

The 2015 'Decades of Centenaries' All-island schools History Competition is now open for entries. Second-level students are invited to submit a project on any topic relevant to the school history curriculum. Projects can be submitted by a class, group or an individual student. There are four categories: biography; local/regional; national; and, 'Decade of Centenaries'.

All winning projects will be published online on [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie). The winners in the 'Decade of Centenaries' category will also receive a year's subscription to *History Ireland*. One of the winners will also be considered for publication in *History Ireland*.

This cross-border initiative forms part of the 'Decade of Centenaries' commemorations, which are being organised to mark the centenaries of the many important historical events that occurred in the period 1912-1922. The deadline for receipt of completed projects is April 3, 2015.

### CLASSIFIED

#### Walking Guides

Love walking? Good knowledge of the hills and mountains in Ireland? Speak German or French?

We would love to talk with you.

IRELAND WALK HIKE BIKE.com Tel: 066-718 6181

or email: [info@irelandwalkhikebike.com](mailto:info@irelandwalkhikebike.com).

### CLASSIFIED

#### Wanted for Saudi Arabia Ladies Colleges

ESL teachers with post-secondary/vocational experience. Candidates to have a BA/Masters in English, TESOL, Linguistic or Education or a CELTA or TEFL certificate.

Yearly contract – tax-free salary \$50,000, flights, accommodation, healthcare included. Start immediately, European client.

Queries, etc., to [donal@mcarthyme.com](mailto:donal@mcarthyme.com).  
[www.mcarthyme.com](http://www.mcarthyme.com)

# ASTI Annual Convention 2015

The ASTI Annual Convention will take place in the Killarney Convention Centre from April 7-9, 2015

## VENUE

Convention will be held in the Killarney Convention Centre.

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation will be provided at The Gleneagle Hotel. It will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis. Delegates are asked to book in pairs or at least to indicate the person with whom they have agreed to share. Please note that there are a limited number of single rooms available.

The hotel family rate in The Gleneagle Hotel is as follows:

Family rooms are charged at a double room rate of €110 per night. Children under 12 years of age stay free when sharing with parents. Meals not included. Children over 12 years will be charged full adult price. Please note that there is a hotel maximum of three children per room. Further information relating to hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfasts in the area can be found on our website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## PLAY CENTRE

Facilities will be available each day during Convention hours in the Play Centre in The Gleneagle Hotel. Places must be reserved in advance but not later than March 13, 2015. Further information relating to crèche facilities can be found on our website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## ADMINISTRATION FEE

There is a registration fee payable by your branch of €30 per person, for all delegates, CEC members and Standing Committee members. The registration fee will be offset against branches' April quarterly cheque.

## CONVENTION DINNER

The Convention Dinner will take place on Tuesday, April 7 in The Brehon Hotel, Killarney.

The cost of a Convention Dinner ticket is normally €48 but if your branch reserves a table of ten before March 20, it will cost only €380, a saving of €100. If your branch wishes to join with another branch for a table the branch should book under one branch's name by emailing [info@asti.ie](mailto:info@asti.ie), reference 'Annual Convention Dinner'. Payment for reserved tables must reach the ASTI Accounts Department on or before March 27, 2015.

A limited number of tickets will also be on sale from 2.30pm – 3.30pm in the Convention Lobby, Killarney Convention Centre on Tuesday April 7 at a cost of €48. **Book early to avoid disappointment.**

Lunches are available on a cash basis in The Gleneagle Hotel each day.

## BOOKING FORM FOR CONVENTION 2015

Reservation number:  (This number will be provided when you ring the hotel to reserve a room – see below)

Arrival date:  Departure date:

**The Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney. Please tick whichever room you require**

Single €85  per night      Double/twin €110  per night      Family room

Please reserve one room for:

Name	<input type="text"/>	Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Tel No.	<input type="text"/>	Tel No.	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>	Email	<input type="text"/>

Child/children name(s) and age(s)

Please contact the hotel on 064-667 1550 prior to sending booking form to ensure availability. Booking forms sent without reservation number will not be guaranteed. CREDIT CARD NUMBER or €50 deposit is ESSENTIAL TO GUARANTEE BOOKING.

## COMPLETED BOOKING FORM TO

Central Reservations Department, Gleneagle Hotel Group, Muckross Road, Killarney, or email scanned version to [info@gleneaglehotel.com](mailto:info@gleneaglehotel.com).

**Ref. ASTI Accommodation Booking Form.**

# Convention – what’s it all about?

It’s your Convention – the time when teachers are in the spotlight. This year it’s in Killarney. Here’s a flavour of what’s on and why you should attend.

Every Easter 500 ASTI members – teachers from all over the country – gather to determine the ASTI’s policy priorities for the coming year. Each year a number of key debates take place on teaching, education and the ASTI’s role as a trade union. For example, motions on temporary and part-time teachers ensured that their rights became a priority issue for the ASTI. This led to the ASTI/TUI permanency deal, which entitles teachers to a CID after two years, subject to criteria, compared to four years under employment legislation.

## Teachers in the spotlight

The ASTI Annual Convention attracts significant media attention and provides opportunities to highlight some of the key issues for second-level teachers. Coverage focuses on speeches made during Convention, including the President’s address on Tuesday afternoon.

Topics for debate are dictated by motions which are submitted and selected at ASTI branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated. To attend you must be a delegate or an observer. Only delegates can speak on and vote on motions. Branches select delegates in January. If you would like to attend you should attend your branch meeting and express your interest. The cost of delegates’ travel is covered, and an overnight allowance is paid to cover delegates’ accommodation costs. There is a registration fee of €30, which is paid by your branch.

## Networking opportunities

There are plenty of networking opportunities and the ASTI encourages the use of social media during open debates. Social media platforms Twitter and Facebook allow the ASTI and delegates attending Convention to spread the news to their colleagues who cannot attend.

## Elections

A number of important elections will take place at Annual Convention 2015. These are: Steering Committee; Rules Committee; Education Committee; Equal Opportunities Committee; Investment Committee; Safety Health & Welfare Committee.

## Can’t attend? Follow us on Twitter/FB

If you can’t make it along to Convention, keep up with what’s happening on the ASTI website, Facebook and Twitter. Key speeches will be streamed live on the ASTI website on Tuesday April 7. Facebook and Twitter will be updated during open debate sessions (#ASTIconv2015).

**Branches must return their delegate nomination forms by January 30, 2015, so if you are interested in attending, you should attend your January branch meeting and express your interest in being nominated as a delegate.**

## Family-friendly experience

Natalia Campbell, a music and religion teacher at Presentation College, Tuam, attended her first Convention last year in White’s Hotel, Wexford. She brought along her three children, Thomas (10), Vivienne (7) and Amelia (2) and found the crèche facilities to be fantastic. She thought the Convention was great and was critical about the media reporting. She felt that much good work was lost in the negativity surrounding the reporting of the visit of then Minister Ruairi Quinn to the Convention.

When debates are underway, Natalia feels that two speakers for and two against would be sufficient for the delegates on any motion. That would speed up the proceedings. One other thing: she feels that there could be far more parents of younger children in attendance given the excellent crèche facilities.

## The NQT experience

Keith Howley is a newly-qualified teacher of maths in Pobalscoil Neasain in Baldoyle in Dublin who attended his first Convention last year. He was delighted to hear passionate, committed teachers discussing the matters relevant to them. Keith was particularly encouraged to hear fellow teachers arguing strongly for parity of pay for NQTs. He felt the Convention was well organised, ran smoothly and empowered those with opinions to speak. He would like to see more action afterwards from the union. “There have been so many cuts and there is too much acceptance. In relation to parity of pay, a step in the right direction is not enough – the pay is either equal or it is not.” He is attending this year’s Convention and is looking forward to hearing all views being aired. “I won’t agree with everyone’s opinion, but it’s good to hear them.”



*Keith Howley pictured at ASTI Convention.*

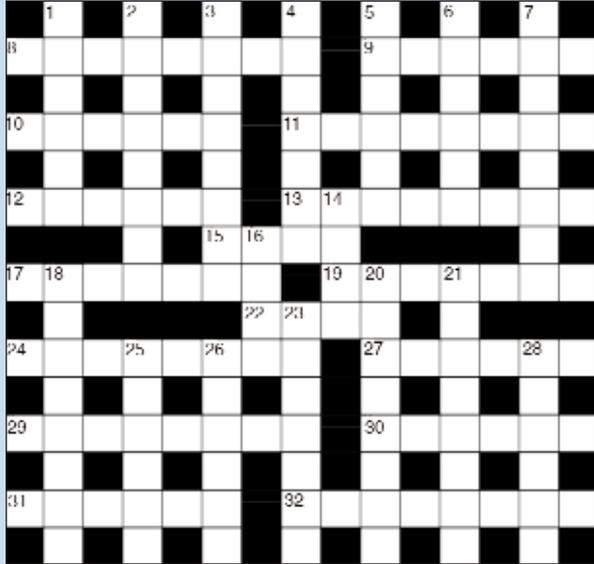


Sponsored by ASTI Credit Union

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 1501

The winner will receive €200

If you wish to keep your copy of ASTIR intact you may send a photocopy of the crossword. One entry only per member.



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 1501, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, February 13, 2015

CLUES ACROSS:

- 8 I've a last dribble therein (8)
- 9 Rudolf Diesel or Gabriel Fahrenheit for example (6)
- 10 Evening gathering (6)
- 11 An open clue as to how a billionaire might live in it (8)
- 12 Retest the city road (6)
- 13 Her Majesty in the offing to make a contribution (8)
- 15 A drab leader but could be competent (4)
- 17 In Italy you might be stuffing little turnips with pasta (7)
- 19 A listener's ailment (7)
- 22 Jockey without a horse is into music (4)
- 24 It's a family affair! (8)
- 27 Half a diameter found in your arm! (6)
- 29 Pick each edible plant (8)
- 30 Inform if not at first at end (6)
- 31 Resembles pied piper spotted from afar (6)
- 32 Robs more than a Mexican hat (8)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 Back from the pig and out on the elephant (6)
- 2 He is reputed to have said: "Lies, damned lies and statistics" (8)
- 3 Rent a pal for mother or father (8)
- 4 Spray container (7)
- 5 Brush off and polish again (6)
- 6 So pure, yet a phoney (6)
- 7 Any hitch could change this fragrant lily (8)
- 14 Fixed sums charged in coffee shops (4)
- 16 Auction nods (4)
- 18 After morning start comes the sty, hard and blue (8)
- 20 Dink, Nimby, Panks are modern day examples (8)
- 21 Listeners who look out for the fiddles! (8)
- 23 A pilgrim passerby could be going nowhere (7)
- 25 The editor chidingly presented me with this exotic flower! (6)
- 26 I'm deep because I cause destruction (6)
- 28 Run with the 'flu and unwind (6)

Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 1405

Across	Down
1. Boards	1. Barouche
4. Training	2. Assassin
9. Resent	3. Dandelion
10. Adoption	5. Rider
12. Uisce	6. Input
13. Heretical	7. Idiocy
14. Haiti	8. Gentle
15. Lament	11. Philip
20. Sniper	16. Merino
21. Wired	17. Newspaper
24. Education	18. Greatest
27. PPARS	19. Odysseus
28. Hacksaws	22. Tether
29. Sphere	23. Nuacht
30. Rotating	25. Asset
31. Gratis	26. Irwin

DID YOU MISS?

27,000 teachers participate in day of action  
Deadline for applications for career breaks in 2015

page 10  
page 24

Congratulations

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 1405: Adele Duffy, Coláiste Muire, Tuar Mhic Éadaigh, Co. Maigh Eo. West Mayo Branch member.

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into your classroom...  
bring your class into the  
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Clonmel Street, Dublin 2



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commitment  
to a world  
without poverty  
and hunger

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- » Workshops are FREE
- » 90 minutes long
- » 10.00 and 12.00 Mon-Fri  
Afternoons on request

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my students to  
the Centre, it has  
an enormous  
impact on them  
when they return  
to the classroom"

Visiting teacher



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**To make a booking:**  
contact Ruth Powell  
**T** 01 408 2832  
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**Irish Aid Centre**  
3 Clonmel Street (off Harcourt St.)  
Dublin 2  
[www.irishaid.ie](http://www.irishaid.ie)

# NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

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\*Terms and Conditions Apply. ASTI Credit Union is regulated by The Central Bank of Ireland.