

BOOK 2

Convention Reports

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING

When schools closed indefinitely in March 2020, enormous efforts were made by teachers to provide continuity of teaching and learning for their students remotely. This was a fraught experience for many and was further compounded by the inadequacy of broadband provision nationwide and the lack of investment in digital infrastructure for schools for many years. ASTI prepared a document to seek to assist teachers in their work in that respect.

It focused on our views on what should be the mainstay of such provision.

- Teachers' cannot replicate the weekly/daily school timetable online. The latter works in schools because students are physically present in a dedicated space. Both conditions are absent online. In this circumstance, it is not feasible to require that post-primary teachers should engage with students on the days that they are normally timetabled for lessons. We argued that each school needs to develop a sustainable online timetable in the event of school closures.
- The concept of sustainability is critical. It comprehends an acknowledgement that, in order for online teaching to be effective, lessons need to be carefully planned and appropriate methodologies deployed. While high quality CPD can develop individual teachers' skills, the onus is on education support services to prepare the content and explicate the appropriate teaching methodologies across the subject and programme areas.
- An online timetable must also be sustainable for students. Teachers have gained significant insights and understanding of their students' capacity and motivation to engage in online learning. Schools need to collate this expertise and develop realistic and achievable timetables for students across the year groups.
- An online timetable must also make explicit that both teachers and students need time to engage in feedback as part of their weekly interactions. Because learning is individualised online, assessment and feedback is also personalised. The latter is hugely time-consuming and teachers were finding that this dimension of their 'out-of-school' work had increased exponentially.
- Collaboration and collegiality are essential to the effective and harmonious functioning of schools. Teacher professionalism underpins both practices. Departmental guidance should explicitly acknowledge teacher professionalism. Failure to do so for a long period of time has damaged the morale of the profession. In this context, the statement in the current guidance that 'school leaders will maintain oversight of teachers' work in facilitating continuity of provision for all students throughout the period of the new arrangements' has proved to be particularly offensive to teachers. It demonstrates both a lack of understanding of fundamental concepts of teacher autonomy, itself a dimension of teacher professionalism, and of

the actual nature of collegiality and accountability in schools, including the role of the school principal. It has actually added to the burden that teachers are currently experiencing and has generated significant resentment by teachers as it demonstrates a complete lack of trust in the professionalism of teachers and reflects a negative approach to the teacher management relationship.

- Teacher well-being emerged as a global concern during the current pandemic. Teachers are overwhelmed with work, miss their students, are concerned for the welfare and safety of individual students and, simultaneously, are facing all of the stresses and challenges presented by the pandemic and lockdown. There was a perception among teachers that their work during the current period was not adequately affirmed. The Department of Education and Skills has a particular role in this regard and must assume responsibility to set the standard for the health, safety and welfare of its teaching workforce. Guidance is urgently required on how schools can operate public health measures such as social distancing, hygiene and related requirements and to support school Boards of Management in fulfilling their obligation to provide a safe and health working environment. The Department of Education and Skills needs to prioritise teacher well-being in a real, meaningful and structured manner. This requires that teacher representation be involved as an equal partner in any initiatives in the area of teachers' health and well-being.

Advice for ASTI members regarding continuity of teaching and learning

A new strain of coronavirus, COVID-19, emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and updated its classification to that of a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

In Ireland, as the COVID-19 health emergency continued to escalate, the Irish Government introduced a range of measures and restrictions to slow down the spread of this virus.

In announcing the closure of schools on 13th March, the Minister for Education & Skills stated that, in order to minimise the impact on teaching and learning, all schools were asked to continue to plan lessons and, where possible, provide online resources for students or online lessons where schools are equipped to do so. Schools were asked to be conscious of students that may not have access to online facilities and to consider this actively in their response. Schools were advised to prioritise supporting exam classes to continue to prepare for State examinations.

In his further communication with schools on 24th March, the Minister stated that 'education continuity is critical, in this crisis.... In that respect, all schools are expected to proactively ensure that all of their staff contribute to the continuation of educational provision for their students during this period'.

Circular 0024/2020 issued on 27th March, reiterated that the primary focus of employees in the education sector is on continuing to deliver tuition to all pupils during the current school closures.

All schools and teachers are required to continue to plan lessons and where possible, provide online resources for pupils or online lessons where schools are equipped to do so. Schools should also take into consideration pupils that may not have access to online facilities. Employers will need to consider how best to utilise employees to facilitate the delivery of educational services.

The virus and the restrictions have had a major impact on how teaching and learning has been transacting and has brought significant challenges and disruption.

ASTI has responded while working remotely, by providing practical information and guidance on key issues as they arise on our website www.asti.ie.

Teachers have responded with creativity and commitment:

Teachers have responded to this unprecedented situation with creativity, commitment and professionalism. Their first duty is, as always, to their students. This is despite the enormous challenges related to the sudden shift to remote teaching and insufficient and unequal access to required support and equipment for both teachers and students alike. Teachers are now faced more acutely than ever with the consequences of a decade of cuts and austerity.

The vital social role of the teaching profession is now obvious to everyone. Attempts to shift to online and distance teaching are reminding families just how skilled education professionals are, underlining the fact that teacher-learner interaction is essential in quality education. This is especially true for learners whose special educational needs or difficult home environments make self-directed or parent-supported learning impossible. A return to normal classroom provision cannot come quickly enough.

Teachers have been thrust into a situation for which they have been ill prepared while continuing to provide an essential service. ASTI's position, communicated to management and teachers alike, is that every effort should be made in a context that encompasses reasonable expectations of all concerned. The school timetable cannot be replicated online.

The best advice is to maintain a specific time-bound work routine: allocate a certain number of hours to work each day; take into account circumstantial limitations (such as availability of broadband in your home); utilise where possible the technology you are most comfortable and competent with – this can be as simple and as effective as Gmail or other tools that you find effective; follow the broad objectives of your termly subject plans; get advice or encouragement from your colleagues; keep up to date with the emerging supports provided by PDST, NCSE, Scoilnet, Webwise, etc.

What is expected of teachers during the period of COVID-19 school closure?

What supports are there for teachers to adapt to this new situation?

Adapting to the idea of learning and teaching online is challenging: teaching is above all a relational rather than a transactional process. Face-to-face interaction with young people in a structured timetable is the norm. Teachers also have varying degrees of confidence, competence and knowledge of ICT. In these circumstances, teachers can feel cut adrift, given the rapidity of school closure and the resultant limited capacity of schools to prepare coordinated responses.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Digital Technology team has developed a new dedicated webpage of

curated content to support schools and teachers engaged in distance learning in order to provide continuity to pupils/students.

www.pdst.ie/distancelearning
www.teachercpd.ie

PDST has also prepared a new online teacher training course to help teachers continue to teach and support their students' learning online. For those to whom this is completely new and quite challenging, it covers how to get started. Those who are already comfortable with providing online support to their students will also find this course useful as it covers finding online resources, communicating with students and creating digital resources.

www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie

Further access to a variety of resources and information that has been developed by other service providers can be accessed at www.scoilnet.ie/support.

Teachers should use their professional judgement and expertise to select an appropriate range of resources for their students that will assist in the appropriate management of their work.

What is expected of teachers in terms of teaching?

Circular 0024/2020 states that teachers are required to continue to plan lessons and, where possible, provide online resources for pupils or online lessons where schools are equipped to do so. Teachers cannot replicate the daily classroom experience online: nor should they be expected to. The same applies to students. Rather, teachers are expected to continue to support students' learning during the school week. Teachers need to remind themselves that the current requirement for online tuition is a contingency measure in the context of a national emergency and therefore should adopt a balanced approach. Their normal planning documentation is important in this regard and should guide teachers in identifying the key learning objectives to be achieved by the end of the school year.

Crucially, what teachers do online depends on the class they are teaching; teachers know their students, their capabilities and needs. Teachers are focused on ensuring that students are completing the subject courses and are assisted in preparing for examinations. Teacher collaboration is also critical at this time: sharing approaches and content with fellow subject teachers will reduce individual teacher's workload - and stress level. Teachers have already strong traditions of collaborating online via Twitter - #EdChattie, #EdShareie and #EdChatie - and other social media platforms.

It is important to bear in mind that teachers and students are both learning in this new online classroom. Some activities will work well, some won't. Teachers should also be mindful that not all students have the same degree of accessibility to ICT devices or broadband. Communication with students is key as is flexibility in terms of modalities for students to submit their completed work.

Finally, under the *Digital Strategy for School 2015-2020: Enhancing teaching, learning and assessment*, each school is required under Circular 0018/2019 to develop a Digital Learning Plan. All teachers are advised to work in parallel with their school plan.

Stay protected together online!

It needs to be stated that online learning is not without its risks. Many home computers, including those of teachers, may not have adequate levels of protection. Teachers should be confident that their computers are adequately protected by appropriate anti-virus software before using them for teaching. Insofar as is possible, use

ICT resources and platforms which are already in use in your school. All schools are required to have an Acceptable Use Policy for students use of the internet at school that specifies the rights, responsibilities and privileges and sanctions connected with computer use. This policy complements the school's Digital Learning Plan.

The national internet safety site *BeSafeOnline* has practical advice for all levels of usage of ICT devices - www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/be-safe-online/.

Additional information, advice and education resources are also available at www.webwise.ie addressing a range of internet safety issues and concerns.

Teachers are in communication with their students using a wide variety of platforms.

Contact between pupils and teachers should only be through a platform endorsed by the school and not through personalised accounts open to public viewing, comments or sharing.

ASTI advises members not to use or exchange personal email addresses or phone numbers with pupils.

Teachers should not be expected to carry out any online teaching with which they feel uncomfortable or in the absence of agreed protocols.

Real-time teaching or live communication

It must be borne in mind that real-time teaching or live communication can potentially give rise to concerns such as privacy and child protection. There are no current agreed guidelines in operation regarding such engagement with students. There have been few or no risk assessments undertaken in the vast majority of schools with regard to these activities and whole school policies have not been developed. It is in that context that teachers should consider the usage of such facilities. Many schools are uploading material for students rather than engaging in real-time teaching or live communication.

ASTI is also aware that some teachers may occasionally have to engage on a one-to-one basis with students as part of their work, i.e., Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain. The strong advice is that such teachers first check in with their management to ensure that how they are delivering their guidance counselling service for example is in agreement with and supported by management. This point cannot be over emphasised.

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors have provided guidance to their members that may be useful on their website: www.igc.ie.

Communication with Parents/Guardians

Schools should strive to maintain a sense of normality for students, teachers and parents wherever possible. Communication is the key to ensuring this objective can be met. Where the school needs to contact individual students or parents, this should be in accordance with current contact protocols. Teachers should not be asked to personally contact students daily but only at times where normal classes are scheduled throughout the week.

Ensuring a work-life balance teaching from home?

Remote working or working from home is challenging – especially for teachers whose daily work is face-to-face engagement with young people, defined timetables and established school routines. It is easy to underestimate how important such routines are and to feel isolated in the current situation. The best advice is to

maintain a specific time-bound work routine. Have a dedicated work space and allocate time each day to your teaching, including marking and responding to students online. Time boundaries are critical for work-life balance, especially when working from home. Use the technology you are most comfortable and competent with, follow the broad objectives of your termly subject plans and collaborate, get advice and encouragement from your colleagues. This is an unprecedented situation for every teacher, including those who are very skilled in ICT usage. Teachers working from home can only carry out a reasonable workload.

Supporting Students

School closure has hugely disrupted the daily lives of students. Many are finding online learning difficult on many levels. Teachers should assign work that is relevant and manageable, mindful that such work will be carried out independently. Students need structure and guidance. The key objective is to ensure continuity of learning. Teachers should use their professional judgement in the assignment of independent work, whether written or practical, in line with the learning needs of students and available resources. Similar judgement should be exercised regarding feedback to students. While ASTI is aware of the support that Parents are providing to their offspring, they cannot be expected to replicate the professional service that teachers provide.

Inequality of provision

It should also be remembered that there are also issues with access that arise for students. Some students do not have a quiet place to work or may have to take care of younger siblings or perform household chores. ASTI is aware of difficulties for many families where siblings and parents working from home are experiencing difficulties with internet access and availability of equipment. Broadband provision is at best sketchy in many rural areas in particular. ASTI has demanded that measures are put in place to ensure that the digital divide across the country is addressed to enable all teachers and students to engage appropriately.

ASTI has urged the Department of Education and Skills to provide resources and to ensure that every reasonable accommodation is made to prevent wider disadvantage occurring.

Teachers are also continuing to provide huge social support to their students, some of whom are experiencing multiple stressors in their homes. Teachers are themselves feeling stressed by this situation. The most appropriate response to students communicating distress is to refer students to the established school structures for pastoral care and guidance counselling and, where necessary to follow the Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools.

The Department of Education and Skills has provided guidance from NEPS on student wellbeing: www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/COVID-19.html

Also, the resources to be found at the following link may prove useful for students:

www.gov.ie/en/publication/256911-leaving-cert-2020-practical-supports/#managing-your-wellbeing-at-this-time

Vulnerable Children

As is always the case, teachers continue to be alert to the possibility of child protection concerns that may arise in the course of their work. In such instances, ASTI members should continue to follow the normal reporting procedures, in accordance with their school's

policy and the Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools. Teachers should contact their schools Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and report their concerns in the normal way. Further information is available on the Tusla website: www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/concerns/

Staff meetings - Croke Park Hours

Croke Park hours as we have known them are the means by which Staff Meetings are to be held in schools. In the current context, it is not possible to conduct such meetings. Accordingly, decisions on matters such as whole-school Post of Responsibility reviews are not possible at this time and should be deferred. Where pressing matters arise in the current circumstances, ASTI would expect school managements to consult remotely with teachers to the maximum possible extent.

What advice has the Department of Education and Skills issued?

The Department of Education and Skills issued a document entitled '*Guidelines on Continuity of Schooling - For Primary and Post-Primary Schools*' dated 2nd April 2020. www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/guidance-on-continuity-of-schooling.pdf

This document was issued without any consultation with teacher unions despite a number of representations having been made to them to work with us to generate an agreed document. ASTI has protested this approach and an apology was issued.

What emerged is a poorly crafted document which is inconsistent and in a number of instances advocates unrealistic approaches and outcomes.

ASTI believes that an important opportunity has been missed to provide agreed guidance that would be truly beneficial to all interested parties at this time. The published document enjoys no standing from an ASTI point of view and must be rejected as a purportedly useful intervention to support the continuity of teaching and learning during this Public Health Emergency.

The coronavirus outbreak currently dominates everyone's lives. The number of stressors that are being faced on a daily basis and the exponential increase in COVID-19 related information has generated high levels of anxiety. It is very important to mind our mental and physical health at this time.

The Department of Education and Skills operates an Employee Assistance Service for the 55,000 teachers in the country. The scheme is run by Inspire Workplace Services (formerly Carecall), which provides a 24-hour 7-day help line for teachers.

The 24-hour Employment Assistance Service helpline can be contacted on 1800 411 057. The ASTI along with TUI and INTO had been seeking such a service for many years. Under Health & Safety legislation employers have a duty of care for their employees and this service is funded by the Department to address part of that duty.

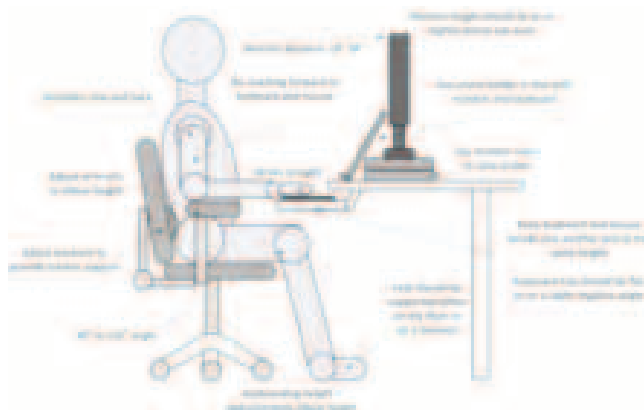
Teachers who are experiencing personal and work-related problems e.g., health, relationships, addictions, bereavements, stress, trauma etc will be able to get direct access to advice. Where appropriate this may involve free short term confidential one-to-one counselling. Further information can be found at www.inspirewellbeing.org/workplaces.

The HSE provides advice on how to mind your mental health: www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/COVID-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html

Remote working has also thrown up new challenges for teachers that can affect our physical health. Sitting at a computer for long periods is a very new experience in contrast to the active movement teachers have been used to throughout their working day. Below are some tips that members may find useful.

Good working posture

The number one ergonomic priority is establishing a good working posture at your workstation. You must be able to sit or stand in a neutral body position with a relaxed posture that requires no stressful angles or excessive reaching to complete tasks.



At a computer you should sit with hands, wrists, and forearms that are straight, inline, and parallel to the floor. The head should be level, facing forward with no turn to the left or right, and generally be in line with the torso.

Standing at the workstation is also recommended and potentially ergonomically sound, assuming you stand straight and your arms and wrists remain in the neutral position.

The proper keyboard and mouse configuration are just as important as posture when it comes to neutral body positioning. Reaching for input devices can lead to excessive fatigue, and after lengthy exposure, injury. Keyboards and mice should be placed where they can be accessed without breaking any of the neutral positioning rules. (See diagram on next page.)

Adjustable chairs and desks

To encourage good posture and the neutral body position, you should use high-quality adjustable chairs, furniture, and equipment.

Proper display height and distance

Monitors and other display devices should be placed at eye level with the individual using them. Viewing a display should not require straining of the neck nor squinting of the eyes. Ergonomics dictates that individuals not be required to turn their neck to the left, right, up, or down to view a display.

Reducing repetitive movement

In an enterprise setting, more musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are caused by repetitive motion. Even if an individual applies perfect ergonomic principals, repeating the same motion over and over is going to cause stress and eventually lead to injury. The best way to combat this problem is by routinely changing tasks.

Fig 4

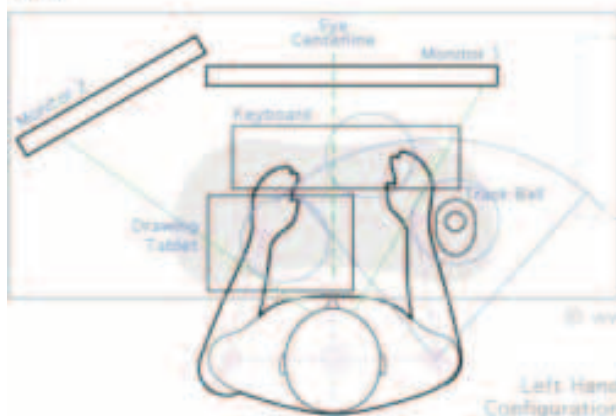
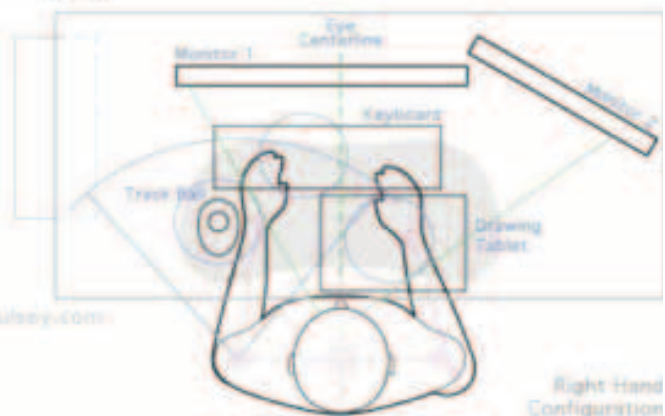


Fig 5



Standing up and moving around

Once an hour, workers should stand up and take a few minutes to walk down the hall, get a drink, look out the window, anything that gets you out of your chair.

Environmental setting

Lighting should not cause glare on computer screens, which means that many workplace settings should be equipped with softer light systems. Lighting that is good for reading printed material is not necessarily the best lighting for computer displays. To prevent MSD injuries in particular, colder temperatures should be avoided.

Looking around

To reduce the stress on the eyes, you should systematically look away from the monitor every 10 to 20 minutes or so to focus on something more than 20 feet away. Changing focus to something in the distance will cause the eyes to adjust and give the close-in focus muscles a chance to relax.

Ergonomic accessories footrest, headsets, document holder, and ball

Over the years, office equipment suppliers have developed ergonomic accessories to help enterprises and individuals improve their workspaces. Smaller individuals may benefit from a footrest when workstation desks are not adjustable, for example.

When it comes to office equipment, everybody should do whatever is reasonable to make workstations as healthy and ergonomic as possible.

Insurance

ASTI has engaged with the Management Bodies for schools on the question of insurance arrangements in the context of teachers engaging with their students remotely.

Each of the management bodies stated that they had some engagement with relevant insurers in their sector.

All have indicated that the typical policies extend to cover the home working of Schools Employees. Teachers should follow best practices/guidelines as they would in normal operational settings and in these changed circumstances that remains the rule.

In the case of Community and Comprehensive Schools they are indemnified by the State. The indemnity states that:

The State shall indemnify the Board and the teaching and non-teaching staff in respect of actions claims or demands taken or made against

them arising out of the discharge of their duties whether in respect of pupils or otherwise.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Commission (DPC) has issued guidance entitled "Protecting personal data when working remotely"

www.dataprotection.ie/en/dpc-guidance/blogs/protecting-personal-data-when-working-remotely

This DPC guidance provides practical advice about how employees can maintain appropriate levels of data security when working away from their normal workplace. It relates to the use of devices; email protocol and cloud and network access. It would also be beneficial for members to familiarise themselves with their school's data security policies.

Other useful information can be accessed at this link:
www.dataprotectionschools.ie.

Teachers should keep personal data safe when working from home and follow the data protection policy around the use of email in their school. As previously advised, they should only use the school's trusted networks or cloud services and comply with any rules and procedures about cloud or network access, login details and data sharing. All stored data should be adequately backed up in a secure manner. A good tip is to always back-up your files so that if you or your students have problems, you can always retrieve the work. A simple backup can be a USB stick with sufficient storage or a USB drive.

Tax Relief – Working from Home

As teachers have been asked to work from home as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 ASTI is looking into whether members can avail of Revenue's e-worker tax relief.

Many workers have worked from home since before the COVID-19 outbreak and Revenue has made provisions for these people to be reimbursed for work-related expenses. These include heating, electricity and perhaps broadband expenses

Under the provisions of the scheme, an employer can pay €3.20 a day to their employee to cover these additional costs. This payment is tax free, which means that PAYE, PRSI or USC won't be deducted from that amount.

Employers have no legal obligation to pay the tax relief.

However, even if an employer doesn't pay the €3.20, these expenses may be eligible for tax relief and the homeworker may claim tax back on them.

The scheme requires that claims made will need to be supported with evidence in the form of receipts and possibly a letter from the employer stating that the worker, in fact, worked from home and that they did incur these expenses. Claims should be made at year end and the maximum of a four year look back rule applies.

The allowance or rebate claimed must be reasonable, allowing for the fact that the utilities are for both personal and work and benefit everyone else in the home. Refund received will be based on only a portion of the overall expense.

The information provided above is as a guide only and is not professional advice, including legal advice. Members can get more advice and information on www.revenue.ie.

Draft ASTI Guidelines on best practice in the use of Information Technology by teachers in the current climate.

In November/December 2020, a Sub-committee of Standing Committee was set up to further this work and, in particular, *Draft ASTI Guidelines on best practice in the use of Information Technology by teachers in the current climate.*

This work is on-going at time of writing. In particular, it will focus on the law in this area. ASTI is mindful that there must be appropriate protections in place to ensure protections for teachers and students in the context of online interaction with students. In looking at the area of remote teaching and learning, the general principles of data protection, child protection and employment law must be applied.

Schools must develop policies that provide appropriately for this provision and should particularly include recordings, access to live lessons, access to school systems, screen time and privacy.

BACK TO SCHOOL - SEPTEMBER 2020

The return to school in September 2020 was like no other. The workplaces that teachers and students left on March 12th were transformed. Every fragment of physical space in the building was precious and maintaining required distance was essential. Rigorous cleaning, face coverings and sanitisers were further precautions to minimise viral spread.

ASTI worked assiduously throughout Summer 2020 to ensure that appropriate investment and support would be put into the reopening effort. ASTI negotiated and a package of measures worth €375 million was put in place to support school leaders and staff.

We insisted that the role of the lead worker representative would be vital in overseeing safety in schools. We ensured that those who would perform this function would be released from timetable for two hours each week.

The pandemic amplified issues which have been incessantly highlighted by the ASTI including class size, equal pay, supervision, better infrastructure, training, equipment and underfunding in education.

The value of teachers in society had to be clearly acknowledged.

It was an enormous challenge to open schools and educate 350,000 second-level students alongside the most serious problem ever to have affected education.

ASTI insisted that in every instance in our schools, the health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre must be implemented in full. Our members, together with their students



Updated February 11th 2021

The ASTI continues to monitor Covid-19 issues in schools. We will provide information on this page as updates become available. The ASTI is demanding that the safety of students, teachers and everyone within the school community is protected.

Latest FAQs:

[Back to School February 2021: Interim Phase of Re-opening](#)
[ASTI questions to NPHE/HPSC - October 2020](#)
[Covid Leave](#)
[Department of Education FAQs](#)
[Health and Safety](#)
[Lead Worker Representative](#)
[Resources](#)
[Additional Teaching Support](#)

More

[A-Z of Rights and Conditions](#)

[Pay](#)

[Key Employment Issues](#)

[Department Circulars](#)

[Substitute Placement Scheme](#)

and everyone in our school communities had to be in COVID-19 secure workplaces.

We provided the Government with a comprehensive list of requirements that needed to be put in place prior to schools reopening. Many were included in the *Roadmap for the Full Return to School* following our strong representations.

We engaged in several meetings with the Department of Education and addressed the *Dáil Special Committee on COVID-19 Response* to impress the need for a safe reopening of schools.

We insisted that the Minister for Education and Skills initiate a review of the interim health advice and guidance from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, particularly regarding the wearing of face coverings in schools, in advance of schools re-opening.

ASTI kept members informed with a very comprehensive *Latest News and FAQs* section on our website www.asti.ie.

Among the many issues that ASTI addressed with the Department of Education and Skills were extra supervision resources for schools, employment of a school re-opening aides, Lead Worker Representative(s), supporting wellbeing in schools, framework for maintaining physical distancing in schools, Transition Year guidance, Leaving Certificate Applied guidance, guidance on Learning and School Programmes, guidance for managing/preventing congregations and gatherings in schools, additional funding for Schools to cope with COVID-19, Helpline for schools, training materials and posters for schools, videos for Parents and Students, procedures for dealing with suspected cases and confirmed cases in schools, Practical Subjects guidance, discipline policy, measures to increase teacher supply, Protocol for registered teachers on school placement during the 2020 / 2021 academic year, arrangements for teachers who fell into the Very High Risk medical category and many more.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The ballot of ASTI members on Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021 -2022 was conducted in January/February 2021.

The Central Executive Council of the ASTI met on the 9th January to consider the proposals. After detailed consideration, CEC adopted the following motion.

"That CEC ballot members on 'Building Momentum' with a recommendation to reject the agreement."

The agreement does not achieve equal pay for post 2010 entrants to teaching. While the agreement includes modest pay increases for teachers, it follows a 12-year period where teachers endured significant cuts to pay and increased work demands.

Key excerpts from Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022

Chapter I

Economic and fiscal context:

Against the backdrop of the current economic and fiscal context, this agreement is an extension of the framework of public service

agreements, including the most recent agreement (the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018 – 2020)

Supporting society and the economy:

The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 saw an unprecedented display of commitment, flexibility, hard work and agility in service provision across the range of civil and public services. The following example is cited.

The delivery of school and third-level tuition in new ways, including online, in a very short space of time, to ensure continuity of learning for students, and to facilitate the calculated grading system for the leaving certificate examination, during the last academic year. The September return to classrooms was then managed and delivered with a determination to ensure that schools and colleges operate safely and can stay open.

Maintaining the momentum for reform:

This agreement reflects a commitment by the parties to harness this momentum for change to meet the immediate challenges that present in the lifetime of the agreement, and to prepare for future challenges. These include:

Ensuring that schools remain open safely and that challenges in learning that may have arisen for children during the crisis are addressed.

Accommodating the potential of remote working where appropriate in line with the Programme for Government and establishing the public service as a driver of best practice in this area.

Addressing the challenges presented in the public service by digitisation and other new technologies, including the need to retrain, recruit, retain and develop a high performing workforce.

Sustaining an agile public service that is responsive to the changing needs of citizens, communities and businesses.

The parties to this agreement are committed to continue the co-operation with regard to flexibility and change to support effective responses to the challenges posed by COVID-19. The parties agree on the need to look beyond traditional ways of working, where necessary and appropriate, and to manage change to ensure high quality public services, high performance, the maintenance and development of staff skills and competencies, and the delivery of measurable outcomes for the public.

The potential for technology to transform service delivery:

Through the provisions of this Agreement, the parties agree to further embrace and support the use of technology through:

Engagement with new and emerging technology, software, mobile applications and other tools in ways that are productive for employees, employers, and the public.

Implementation and Reporting:

Action plans, linked to the reform agenda outlined in the agreement will be developed for each sector of the public service and will be developed by sectoral management in consultation with unions.

These Plans will establish objectives, deliverables and timelines, and be submitted to the relevant departmental Secretary General by 31st March 2021. Plans will be published by the Department of Education and Skills.

In consultation with unions in relevant oversight or equivalent sectoral IR structures, sectoral management will subsequently report on:

- *Delivery on the sectoral action plan, giving detailed information on progress delivery, and*
- *Compliance with the industrial peace provisions of this agreement.*

The Secretary General of the DES will submit these reports to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform at least one month before any scheduled pay increase under this agreement. Reports will be published by the relevant departments.

Key Elements of the Government's Reform agenda for Education are appended to the agreement as follows:

Education Strategy 2021-2023, annual Action Plans for Education and underpinning strategies and developments, curricular and assessment reform including Primary curriculum; continued reform of the Junior Cycle, and Senior Cycle reform within Schools; National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy (2011 to 2020); Digital Strategy; Gaeltacht Education Strategy; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Policy Statement 2017-2026; Modern Foreign Language Strategy "Languages Connect" 2017-2026; and Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

Chapter 2

Sectoral bargaining:

A Sectoral Bargaining Fund will be established to be allocated within sectors under this Agreement. The purpose of the sectoral Fund process is to deal with outstanding adjudications, commitments, recommendations, awards and claims within the terms of the Fund and within the Exchequer funding limit in place. All public servants covered by the Agreement will be encompassed by this process.

To balance the need to protect the Exchequer and to address pressure points as identified by trade unions a quantum of cost to be expressed as 1% of basic pay will be allocated to this Fund. Grade or sector-based pay claims and outstanding adjudications and awards will have to be resolved within this process.

In agreement with sectoral management, each sectoral bargaining unit or union will have the option of using some or all of the sectoral fund to address claims appropriate to the process or, in the alternative, to elect for the funds involved to be used as a sectoral pay round.

Where a sectoral bargaining unit opts to use the Fund to deliver a sectoral pay round, all the union/s encompassed by that sectoral bargaining unit agree that in so doing, they may not pursue any grade or pay or pay related claims relating to that sector for the duration of this agreement.

Implementation Process:

A series of steps will be followed to identify appropriate sectoral bargaining units (by end February 2021) how the bargaining fund will be used (March 2021) and finalised proposals (June 2021)

Compliance with procedures and maintenance of Industrial Peace

Participation in the sectoral bargaining process will require full compliance with the terms of the Agreement by the union concerned, including and importantly cooperation with and operation of dispute resolution procedures and maintenance of industrial peace.

Where issues are not resolved at sectoral negotiations the parties will follow the dispute resolution process set out in the Agreement.

Participation in the process and the implementation of its outcome will be discontinued for any group that engages in industrial action on matters covered by this Agreement.

Chapter 3

Pay:

This agreement is an extension of previous public service agreements, including the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018-2020. This

section sets out the agreed approach to public service pay for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022.

The provisions of previous agreements apply save where varied by this Agreement.

The Parties have reached agreement to provide for the following pay adjustments over the period of this agreement.

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on 1 October 2021.
- The equivalent of a 1% increase in annualised basic salaries on 1 February 2022 to be used as a Sectoral Bargaining Fund in accordance with Chapter 2 of this Agreement.
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on 1 October 2022.

Basic pensionable pay is to be taken to mean basic pay inclusive of allowances in the nature of pay, which are fixed periodic pensionable allowances and pensionable premium pay.

Chapter 4

Haddington Road Agreement and other matters:

The parties to this Agreement recognise and accept that certain measures introduced under the Public Sector Stability Agreements (PSSA), including the "Haddington Road Agreement", are considered outstanding matters to be resolved as part of this Agreement and are to be addressed and implemented as follows.

Additional Working Hours:

An independent body will be established by end-March 2021 to assess issues arising in addressing this matter pertaining to the Haddington Road Agreement and make appropriate recommendations to be applied equitably across all affected grades, groups or categories and affected sectors. The body will consider, and fully take into account, submissions made by the parties to this Agreement and will be tasked to report by end-2021.

Roll out of the body's recommendations will be initiated within the lifetime of this Agreement. In this regard, to enable commencement of the recommendations during 2022, on the publication of the Report, an envelope of €150m under this agreement will be made available across all affected grades, groups or categories and affected sectors

All parties commit fully to this process, and the process and delivery of outcomes are contingent on the parties adhering to the provisions of the section of this Agreement Resolving Disagreements and Ensuring Industrial Peace.

New Entrant Teachers:

The parties agree that, in final conclusion to the arrangements put in place in September 2018 as part of the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018-2020, the following measure will be implemented, to resolve in full the remaining salary scale issues pertaining to new entrant teachers.

New entrant teachers who have been recruited since 1 January 2011, after progressing to point 11 of the teaching salary scale will, on their next increment date, move to point 13.

New entrant teachers, recruited since 1 January 2011, who have already reached point 12 or higher on the teaching salary scale, will on their next increment date after the commencement of the Agreement, move one point further than they would under normal incremental progression.

Chapter 5

Resolving disagreements and ensuring industrial peace:

This section of the agreement sets out the architecture of the machinery to be availed of to resolve disputes that arise.

It provides for a tiered approach consisting of local engagement, a Public Service Agreement Group and a Tripartite Implementation Body.

The parties agree that the TIB is the final arbitrator in relation to matters encompassed by the Agreement.

The delivery of industrial peace is an essential requirement of this Agreement. Accordingly, all forms of industrial action are precluded in respect of any matters relating to remuneration or to any matter covered by this Agreement.

The benefits of the Agreement will be confined to those employees represented by unions in membership of ICTU or other unions or representative associations which have notified the WRC of their intention to comply with the Agreement.

No Cost Increasing Claims:

The Parties agree that there will be no cost-increasing claims for improvements in pay or conditions of employment by trade unions during the period of the Agreement.

Review of Agreement:

The Parties affirm that public service pay and pensions and any related issues shall not be revisited over the lifetime of this Agreement save where the assumptions underlying this Agreement need to be revisited. In such circumstances the Parties commit to prior engagement.

Pension Parity:

The principle that there should be pension parity between serving and retired teachers has long been defended by ASTI. This is the concept that any increases in the pay of serving teachers are also applied to our retired members. ASTI pressed hard to ensure that this will be maintained for the duration of the agreement.

Subsequent to the release of the text of the proposed Agreement Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021 – 2022, a letter has been issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Key extracts state as follows:

“As you are aware, the policy on pension increases which has been in place since 2017 is as follows:

An equitable approach must be adopted for the various public service pensioner cohorts who are not only differentiated by amount of pension in payment (determined by grade and service) as heretofore but also by date of retirement (in particular pre- and post-end February 2012).

Accordingly, for those who retired or will retire post end-February 2012, to the extent that they retired on reduced salaries, they will receive pension increases in line with the pay increases due to their peers in employment.

When alignment is achieved between pre- and post-end February 2012 pensioners, pay increases will continue to benefit pensions in payment.”

“Accordingly, I can confirm that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has given approval to the continuation of the above policy approach for the period to the end of 2022.”

Sectoral Bargaining:

The agreement contains a clause to address sectoral issues. A fund equivalent to 1% of basic pay will be allocated to a fund where Grade or sector-based pay claims and outstanding adjudications and awards could to be resolved within the process. In the alternative, a sectoral bargaining unit such as teachers can elect for the funds involved to be used as a sectoral pay round whereby each member would receive a 1% pay rise.

Additional Working Hours under the Haddington Road Agreement:

As stated in the agreement, an independent body will be established by end-March 2021 to assess issues arising pertaining to the Haddington Road Agreement and make appropriate recommendations. The body will consider, and fully take into account, submissions made by the parties to this Agreement and will be tasked to report by end-2021.

Roll out of the body's recommendations will be initiated within the lifetime of this Agreement. To enable commencement of the recommendations during 2022, on the publication of the Report, an amount of €150m will be made available across all affected grades, groups or categories and affected sectors.

Ballot Result:

ASTI members voted to reject the proposed public service agreement Building Momentum by 79% to 21%.

The result of the ballot on Building Momentum was as follows:

Electorate:	18033	
Turnout:	5092	
Spoiled papers:	14	
Total Valid Poll:	5078	
YES	1047	(21%)
No	4031	(79%)

At time of going to press, the ASTI was due to participate in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' aggregate vote process. The outcome of the ballot and of the ICTU aggregate vote would be considered by Standing Committee in due course.

Ballots October 2020:

The ASTI Central Executive Council, at its meeting on 19th September, 2020, decided to hold a postal ballot of members in respect of a number of key issues. These include:

- unilateral changes to work practices in some schools without consultation;
- serious health and safety concerns around COVID-19; and
- equal pay for equal work, for which a ballot in March 2020 had to be postponed.

The results of the ballots were as follows:

Ballot Paper - I

Do you vote in favour of authorising ASTI Standing Committee to direct ASTI members not to co-operate with any changes to work practices unless a consensus on the proposed changes is achieved at a staff meeting?

YES 5359
NO 1400
Turnout 42%

Ballot Paper – 2

Do you vote in favour of authorising ASTI Standing Committee to direct ASTI members not to engage in any changes to work practices unless such changes are time-neutral?

YES 5274
NO 1514
 Turnout 42.2%

Ballot Paper - 3

Are you willing to take industrial action up to and including strike action, as directed by ASTI Standing Committee, in the event that the DES either directly — or indirectly through the HSE or its agencies — fails, by 30th October 2020, to put in place the following measures?

a) Physical distancing of two metres in every classroom;

YES 2579
NO 3940

b) Free provision of N95 masks to all students and teachers;

YES 2995
NO 3646

c) Redefinition of a close contact as any person who has spent more than 15 minutes in a classroom with a positive COVID-19 case;

YES 4210
NO 2443

d) A serial testing programme for schools;

YES 3863
NO 2924

e) Guaranteed test turnaround times of 24 hours;

YES 3767
NO 2962

f) Equal pay for post-2010 teachers;

YES 4158
NO 2453

g) Guaranteed offer of a permanent contract, on full hours, for any teacher who returns to the system, either from Ireland or abroad;

YES 2292
NO 4304

h) Provision for any teacher in the high-risk category to either teach from home or have guaranteed reasonable accommodations made in school;

YES 4570
NO 2134

i) Free provision of laptops, procured centrally rather than by means of grants to schools, for students and teachers to ensure that learning can continue as much as possible if classes are required to self-isolate, or schools required to close due to COVID-19.

YES 3685
NO 2973
 Turnout 42.3%

Ballot Paper - 4

Are you willing to take industrial action, up to and including strike action, for equal pay for equal work, to be taken in conjunction with one or both of the other teacher unions and as directed by ASTI Standing Committee?

YES 4122
NO 2586

Turnout 41.6%

ASTI members voted to take industrial action unless the Government immediately addressed key COVID-19 issues in schools.

ASTI members clearly stated that they wanted schools to remain open for students during this pandemic. They demanded that the Government step up and provide 24-hour test turnaround, a redefinition of close contacts for school settings, a comprehensive testing programme, and appropriate arrangements for teachers categorised as 'high risk'.

ASTI members also mandated the union to pursue a range of issues. These include the provision of IT resources for students and teachers to facilitate continuity of learning.

In addition, ASTI members decided that they will not accept unilateral decisions by some schools to implement changes to working conditions without any consultation with teaching staff.

Equal Pay for Equal Work:

In a separate ballot, ASTI members voted to take industrial action for equal pay for equal work, to be taken in conjunction with one or both of the other teacher unions. ASTI members remain absolutely committed to achieving equal pay for teachers who entered the profession from 2010.

ASTI Equal Pay for Equal Work campaign:

The ASTI has been to the forefront of a campaign to challenge this injustice and have it reversed.

- 1 We refused to vote to accept any proposals that have emerged to deal with the issue as they did not bridge the pay inequality gap
- 2 We took strike action in 2016, seeking to have the injustice resolved.
- 3 In taking strike action, ASTI members endured the full force of emergency legislation (FEMPI) imposed upon them (increment freezes, pay freezes, withholding of supervision and substitution payments etc.) even though the crisis had long since been declared over by senior government ministers.
- 4 ASTI protests have been many and varied.
- 5 ASTI has intensively lobbied politicians of all parties and none.

ASTI Equal Pay for Equal Work campaign – achievements to date

The ASTI campaign has already secured some important gains, narrowing the pay gap since the debacle began in 2011.

- 1 In 2013, a reversal of the cut in qualification allowances for those who entered teaching in the period 1st January 2011 to 31st January 2012 was achieved.

- 2 In the negotiations leading to the Haddington Road Agreement, ASTI and their colleague teacher unions secured improved pay scales for both the post 1st January 2011 and post 1st February 2012 entrants. These pay scales came into effect from 1st November, 2013.
- 3 In 2016, ASTI action secured the incorporation of the Honours Primary Degree allowance into the pay scale of new entrant teachers.
- 4 In 2018, the removal of the 4th and 8th points of the new-entrant pay scale was secured.

Arising from these ballots, ASTI issued the following two directives to members:

DIRECTIVE

ASTI members are hereby directed not to cooperate with changes to work practices in schools unless a consensus on the proposed changes was achieved at a staff meeting.

DIRECTIVE

ASTI members are hereby directed not to cooperate with changes to work practices in schools unless the proposed changes require no additional time commitment.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

For the last number of years the ASTI has monitored the operation of the Teachers' Occupational Health Service (OHS) and contact has been maintained with officials from the Department of Education & Skills (DES) on this matter.

Occupational Health – Illnesses Categories

Once again the largest group of applications for retirement on medical grounds is psychiatric disorder and stress. Year on year this has proved to be the most significant category for medical retirement applications for teachers. In line with previous years, musculoskeletal disorders and cancer-related conditions are the second and third most common causes.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE (EAS)

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) continues to provide a confidential and free-of-charge advisory and counselling service to teachers and their family members, including children over 16 years of age. The EAS is operated by Spectrum Life.

Since 2020, Spectrum Life has taken on responsibility for providing an employee assistance for teachers and provides free counselling services.

A number of meetings were held with the EAS during 2020 to explore the benefits of a joined-up approach to dealing with mental health hazards in the workplace – an approach which would look at resilience building and risk control simultaneously.

SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

Committee Members:

- Fergal Canton
- Lily Cronin
- Séamus Meskill
- Bernadette Normoyle
- Geraldine O'Brien
- Deirdre Mac Donald – Immediate Past President
- Michael McGrath - Chairperson
- Ann Piggott - President
- Eamon Dennehy - Vice President

Executive Officer: Industrial Relations, Conor McDonald provides professional support for the committee.

The current pandemic has brought health and safety into a new focus. One of the central elements of good workplace health and safety is the representative and consultative function. There is a clear and well accepted body of evidence that demonstrates a scientific link between safe, healthy workplaces and a representative function.

The creation of the Lead Worker Representative role is built on the extensive evidence that workplaces with Safety Representatives (as legally provided for under the Safety health and Welfare at Work Act 2005) statistically experience less injury and harm at work.

The ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Committee was central to the organisation to the Lead Worker Representative (LWR) Seminar held in November.

At the seminar many LWRs raised concerns about lack of social distancing, poor ventilation and opportunities for training. This discussion covered topics such as the complaints procedure, leave, the ASTI website FAQs, time, confidentiality, definitions, and issues of stress, anxiety and resilience.

These issues were discussed in an open panel and the ASTI compiled a list of issues which it addressed with the Department.

As schools remain closed and teachers work remotely the question of our right to disconnect comes into ever increasing focus. The WRC have begun a public consultation on developing a right to disconnect code of governance. We have supported the submission by the Irish Congress of Trade unions (ICTU) to this consultative process which reaffirms the right of employees to disconnect from their work and to not receive or answer any work-related emails, calls, or messages outside of normal working hours.

The ASTI Safety, health and Welfare Committee has continued to prioritise mental health in the profession and is actively progressing the development of a specific Teachers Charter with the other teacher unions - built upon the previous charter but updated. Furthermore, and in order to fulfil the Department of Education's commitment to staff wellbeing as outlined in Policy Statement and Framework for Implementation the committee also seeks that all whole school inspections include reporting on the school's Safety Statement - is the Safety Statement up to date and does the risk assessment contain an audit of psychosocial hazards?

The committee has continued our co-operation with the HSA to promote and use their Work Positive tool to improve the

psychosocial environment in schools. Together we are developing an Educational Sector Mental Health Tool and are hopeful it can be introduced for the 2021/22 school year.

The centrality and importance of health, safety and welfare for workers and to their working conditions was never more evident than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its relevance for workers' physical and mental health requires that its significance be reflected in the ASTI structures and the committee would like to propose that the Safety, Health and Welfare Committee become a Statutory Committee of the ASTI.

ICTU HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The ASTI is represented on the ICTU Health and Safety Committee by Deirdre Mac Donald and Executive Officer: Industrial Relations, Conor McDonald. Deirdre Mac Donald has continued throughout 2020 in her role as a board member of the Health and Safety Authority.

2020 has been an especially busy year for those focused on workplace health due to the global pandemic and subsequent focus on the health & safety. At an early juncture ICTU was engaged in the development of the government's return to work protocols and specifically the creation of the Lead Worker Representative role.

Building a system based on consultation and representation could not have been achieved without the direct input from the ICTU Health & Safety Committee. Deirdre Mac Donald's experience and position on the Health and Safety Authority Board was an invaluable link to the national negotiations.

The ICTU Health and Safety Committee has continued to engage with the Health and Safety Authority to prioritise Mental Health in the workplace. Remote working has thrown a new set of hazards at staff and management that few were initially familiar with.

A public consultation process has begun and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) who have been tasked to develop a Code of Practice to ensure that both employers and employees are aware of their requirements and entitlements in a remote working scenario.

The WRC is undertaking a public consultation to inform the drafting of the Code and in this regard ICTU have made a submission to the public consultation process - the contents of which almost exclusively mirror UNIGlobal's Right to Disconnect Best Practices document.

As a difficult year ends many lessons were learned and the ASTI's participation at the heart of ICTU's Health & Safety Committee has assisted us raising the difficulties and experiences of so many teachers and workers during a global health crisis.

STUDENT AND PARENT CHARTER

The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 was initiated in the Seanad and had passed second stage at time of the General Election early in 2020.

The proposed legislation required that every school must publish and operate a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national guidelines published by the Minister.

These guidelines are to be published after consultation with the education partners including the ASTI.

After the General Election there was some confusion as to whether the Bill would continue to progress. At time of writing that matter remains unclear. However, the current Government has indicated an intention to proceed with such legislation.

The approach being taken in the legislation is to create a framework for how schools should engage with students and their parents. It should be recognised that schools already do this very well and can attest to the benefits for all of such positive engagement with students and their parents.

Each school will be required to prepare and implement a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national charter guidelines. The guidelines will be published by the Minister after consultation with all of the education partners.

The Department of Education and Skills claims that the legislation would be intended to address concerns of students and their parents at an early stage in the school and there are a number of provisions in the Bill which help achieve this aim in relation to providing information to students and their parents, consulting students and their parents on school plans and policies and responding to feedback.

The Bill provides for new standard school grievance procedures to be set out in the national charter guidelines. Each school will be required to implement the new standard grievance procedures. Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998 is being replaced and the new Section 28 as provided for in the Bill sets out that the grievance procedures will set out the requirements to be complied with by the school and the student or parent, how grievances will be investigated and the giving of reasons for decisions in relation to grievances.

ASTI, together with colleague teacher unions has been very proactive in seeking substantial changes to this legislation. All political parties were lobbied. Even the title is completely unacceptable as it makes no reference to teachers. Schools are vibrant learning communities that rely on full equality of participation of all stakeholders. ASTI has a long track record in promoting equality, democratic participation and transparency in all that schools do. It matters that the experience of schooling is one of support in the most positive and open fashion possible and ASTI members work in partnership with students and parents in fashioning the culture and policy platform of a school. This bill ignores these realities.

There should be no room for the language of the market economy to be superimposed on the complexity of the relationships that characterise the learning communities in our schools. The bill also promises to address the necessity to introduce

statutory provisions that provide for procedures for dealing with grievances of students (over 18) or their parents relating to the school.

This is something that ASTI has supported in order that such procedures will align with the provisions of the Teaching Council Act. However, this is a matter that should have been dealt with separately as a single piece of legislation. ASTI continues to actively monitor these developments.

ASTI is determined to ensure that any discussions that might arise on the national guidelines will provide workable and respect fair procedures. They must not add enormously to the already creaking and overburdened bureaucracy that is smothering schools.

ASTI wrote to all the political party leaders and other legislators and set out our position clearly.

The following is some key text from those letters.

You are aware that the Minister for Education and Skills, Joe McHugh T.D. published the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill, 2019 on 10th September 2019. ASTI has a number of key concerns regarding the provisions of this Bill. Uppermost of these is our view that this is not an inclusive piece of legislation, best exemplified in the title of the bill. Teachers have been excluded. This is not in keeping with the fact that schools are inclusive learning communities and as such we would ask that the title and other provisions of the bill be changed to reflect this.

It is clear that the general elements of the Student and Parent Charter as laid out in the Bill, will impact on teachers and schools in a variety of ways including:

- 1 How schools will engage with students and parents, collectively and individually.
- 2 How students and parents will be consulted and invited to participate meaningfully in matters relating to the student's experiences in the school.
- 3 How students and parents can be empowered by the provision of information.
- 4 How the school will be accountable to students and parents.
- 5 How specific Information on school performance in teaching and learning will be provided.
- 6 How feedback will be invited and how student and parent concerns will be identified.
- 7 How the school will seek to be responsive.
- 8 How grievances and complaints will be handled.

Regarding the matter of how grievances/complaints against teachers should be handled, we like other education stakeholders, have been calling for this to be set out on a statutory basis over a long period of time. Under Section 28 of the Education Act 1998 the Minister can prescribe procedures to allow grievances of "students, or their parents, relating to the students' school" to be submitted and processed and to allow the "parent of a student or, in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, to appeal to the board against a decision of a teacher or other member of staff of a school". ASTI believes that this can and should be dealt with as a separate matter by the Minister engaging with the relevant parties, including representatives of parents and students, to agree and approve the necessary procedures.

Overall, we consider that the general elements were not consonant with the concept of education as a common good. The overall

thrust of the Charter and particularly the material the DES chose to put forward to the media at the time of announcement of the proposed legislation is redolent of policies which aim to commodify education as primarily a relationship between providers and consumers. The language and tone of the Departmental documentation does not make explicit that education as a common good is a fundamental principle of educational discourse in the Irish context. Indeed, the conception of education as a common good underpins state policy on education.

In the context of and notwithstanding the foregoing, ASTI would ask that you would deploy your political resources to seek to secure the following amendments to the Bill.

Title of Bill: Sub-committee underlined the need to seek title change to Education (Charter for Schools) Act 2019.

Amendments: Following sections to read as:

- 27B. (1) (iii) teachers and other school staff
- 27B. (3) (a) the procedures for consulting with students, their parents, teachers and other school staff on such matters relating to the school as may be specified from time to time in the charter guidelines, including by inviting, and responding to, proposals from students and their parents on any such matter;
- 27B. (3) (e) the procedures to be established by a board under Section 20 for the purposes of informing students, their parents, teachers and other school staff of matters relating to the operation and performance of schools;
- 27B (g) the information to be provided to students, their parents, teachers and other school staff relating to monies that the school receives (including voluntary contributions made by parents) and the expenditure of those monies by the school, and the form and manner in which that information is to be provided;
- 27B (h) the information to be provided to students, their parents, teachers and other school staff relating to the school calendar, closures and timetables, and the form and manner in which that information is to be provided;
- 27B (i) the procedures for dealing with grievances of students or their parents relating to the school;
- 27B (j) delete this section in its entirety
- 27C (b) foster and promote the relationship and a spirit of partnership within the school between students, their parents, teachers and other school staff,
- 27C (c) foster and promote mutual respect in communications within the school between students, their parents, teachers and other school staff,
- 27C (d) ensure, as appropriate, confidentiality in communications within the school between students, their parents, teachers and other school staff,
- 27C (g) monitor and review the provision of education by the school to students, including by consulting with, and responding, as appropriate, to comments and suggestions made by, students (to the extent appropriate to their age and experience) and their parents, for the purposes of improving such provision on an ongoing basis,
- 27 C (i) address and resolve concerns of students, their parents, teachers and other school staff relating to the school, as far as possible, at an early stage, and

- 27 C (j) ensure that grievances of students, their parents, teachers or other school staff relating to the school are dealt with efficiently, effectively and fairly and, as far as possible, in an informal manner consistent with the principles of fair procedures.
- Page 11- Short title, commencement and collective citation 11 (1) This Act may be cited as the Education (Charter for Schools) Act 2019

BUDGET 2021

Notwithstanding that it was planned under the shadow of a no-deal Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, Budget 2021 was unduly cautious and an utter disappointment. No cushion was provided for PAYE tax payers to help them cope with the higher prices and other costs that could be faced following the UK's departure from the European Union.

It provided an allocation to the Department of Education and Skills of €8.9 billion, up from €8.5 billion the previous year.

Capital allocation remained no more than steady.

While the budget did provide for an increase in the numbers of teachers, these were essentially accounted for by increases required by demographics.

There was no improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio. It is simply unacceptable that the pupil-teacher ratio at second level remains higher than it was 10 years ago.

Much more could have been done for second-level education. The fact that Ireland ranks in last place out of 35 countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of GDP needs to be addressed. While teachers are enduring an enormous and unsustainable workload, our students are missing out on key education services.

It is frightful that restoration of guidance and counselling teaching services for students to pre-economic crash levels has not been achieved. The need for further restoration of middle management posts in schools in 2020 was another serious omission.

Decades of under-investment in Irish schools left them extremely vulnerable during the pandemic. Large class sizes, insufficient staffing, and inadequate accommodation and equipment are challenging at any time, but were shown to be detrimental during a crisis such as COVID-19.

ASTI continually made the point that equity in the delivery of and access to remote teaching and learning can only be achieved through substantial investment in school IT. The Government failed to learn from the school closure period during which a significant proportion of students and teachers were disadvantaged due to lack of access to appropriate IT equipment and broadband. A vague commitment to provide extra funding in the Budget was insufficient.

Budget 2020 was almost a non-event that will have serious repercussions for school communities throughout the country.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION

The purpose of the 'Scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration for Teachers' is to provide a means acceptable to:

- the Ministers for Education and Skills and Finance,
- the Managerial Authorities of national and second level schools and,
- the Teacher Unions; for dealing with claims and proposals relating to the salaries and other emoluments and the conditions of service of teachers and other specified grades, and to secure the fullest co-operation between the parties in maintaining and improving the quality of the education service.

Meetings of the Teachers' Conciliation and Arbitration Council (TCC) were held on six occasions over the past year.

The issues discussed included the following:

Claim to have lifted the date restriction of 31 October 2018 imposed by the DES for the claiming of outstanding qualification allowances

The Department of Education and Skills is still considering this matter.

Claim for establishment of an occupational injury scheme for teachers

The Department of Education and Skills and the unions continue to engage on this matter.

That teachers acquire the right to opt in or out of the Supervision and Substitution scheme on an annual basis

ASTI has vigorously pursued this claim in accordance with ASTI policy. The Department is resisting on the basis that it is a cost increasing claim.

Principal and Deputy Principal appointment appeals

At time of writing the matter is with the DES for implementation.

Payroll issues

A number of payroll issues were raised at meetings of TCC throughout the year.

Sick Leave

Aspects of the implementation of the new sick leave arrangements including pregnancy related sick leave and critical illness issues were raised at a number of TCC meetings.

Refund of fee provision for teachers undertaking third-level courses

A review is underway. Provisions currently operating will continue in the interim.

ASTI criticised the length of time taken to progress the review and argued that this area needs a substantial injection of funding.

Section 28 of the Education Act: Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019

The legislation to commence procedures under section 28 of the Education Act had made some progress through the Senate prior to General Election 2020. A student and parent charter is

proposed. The current Government have now also indicated that they intend to pursue this legislation. The teacher unions have repeatedly raised concerns. ASTI had been informed that the legislation that will be enacted will be an enabling framework. Development of the framework will be done in consultation with stakeholders. ASTI re-iterated that it would not countenance variable school procedures; they must be national or sectoral. ASTI insisted at every opportunity that the bill should be inclusive and the title of the bill should be amended to reflect this. Several amendments to the bill have been proposed by ASTI.

H Dip.Allowance/PME Allowance

The restoration of this allowance is a vital priority of ASTI. A formal claim procedure was proceeded with during the year. The DES rejected the claim. It is now submitted to the arbitrator for determination.

Bereavement Leave

Following changes to the civil service scheme, Staff side have sought application of the scheme to teachers. There has been no progress on the matter to date.

Leave with substitute cover for purposes of voluntary search and rescue commitments

The DES conceded this claim.

Recording of Pregnancy-Related Leave separately to Sick Leave

ASTI raised the issue of whether pregnancy related sick leave could be recorded separately to ordinary sick leave on the OLCS from the beginning of the absence. The Official side stated that they would discuss the issue with the relevant line sections of the Department.

Permanent Appointments: Interpretation of Circular Letters (including Circular 59/2016 and 08/2018)

ASTI has pursued the matter of ensuring that the barriers to ab-initio permanent appointments are removed.

Partial Absences

ASTI continually raised the matter of how partial absences are recorded. This matter was also comprehended by the provisions of the "Outcome of Department of Education and Skills and ASTI Discussions – 29 November 2016" document. It has still not been possible to reach agreement on this to allow for the issuance of a Circular Letter.

Pre-retirement job sharing wind-down scheme

ASTI has pursued the re-introduction of a pre-retirement wind-down scheme at TCC. The initiative would be aimed at facilitating teachers who do not otherwise enjoy enhanced superannuation benefits, in reducing the amount of actual service commitment in the year's immediately preceding retirement. It would be intended to benefit individual teachers who would, rather than retire, wish to continue teaching on less than a full-time basis. At time of going to press, the Department of Education and Skills and DPER are considering proposals submitted by ASTI.

Reproductive health issues and the need for a leave provision for teachers in respect of reproductive health-related absences

ASTI raised the need for leave provision for teachers who incur reproductive health-related absences.

Substitute Teachers: payment for attendance at CPD on a day when they would otherwise be paid as a teacher

ASTI raised the issue of casual substitute teachers attending CPD courses and as a result losing the opportunity to be paid for that day. The Official side have conceded this claim.

Voluntary redeployment scheme extension nationwide

ASTI has continued to pursue this matter at TCC. No progress can be reported.

Administrative requirements re Child Protection Complaints to BOM

ASTI raised several issues related to the administrative requirements associated with dealing with Child Protection complaints to schools.

Violence at work definition and terms of Circular 0061/2017

ASTI has submitted that the below text from the ILO Convention 2019 should be inserted/reflected in Circular 0061/2017

The Convention recognizes that violence and harassment in the world of work "can constitute a human rights violation or abuse...is a threat to equal opportunities, is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work." It defines "violence and harassment" as behaviours, practices or threats "that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm." It reminds member States that they have a responsibility to promote a "general environment of zero tolerance".

The Department of Education and Skills are considering the proposal.

Encroachment on teacher hours through inappropriate employment of PME students to work in schools

ASTI raised the several issues relating to the role of PME students in schools.

CHILD PROTECTION AND WELLBEING

Annual Report of Special Rapporteur on Child Protection

The reports of the Special Rapporteur are made to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and provide important input to the development and review of child protection policy and legislation as well as an objective and independent expert view of the child protection system in Ireland. The 2020 Annual Report contains an examination and discussion of the findings of reports of national and international bodies published during 2019 in relation to child protection in Ireland. Almost all of the reports gave examples of positive developments at systemic level and/or good practice at individual case level. They provide evidence of important progress and a desire to improve the level of protection provided to children at risk of abuse and neglect. However, reports also point to some areas of significant concern. The most prominent of these are the child protection risk posed by the increasing incidence of child homelessness and the existence of a culture of denial and obstruction on the issue of State responsibility for historical violations of children's rights. There is room for further improvements to be made in the area of inter-agency collaboration, governance and leadership, and also evidence that essential services are under-resourced at key stages in the child protection system

In relation to child protection in schools, the Report contains a study of implementation of mandatory reporting in schools by way of interviews completed with sixteen Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) for child protection in Irish primary schools. The results of this study would doubtless be replicated at post-primary level. All of the participants agreed that training should be provided regularly for DLPs, with some participants feeling it was so important that it should be done on a yearly basis and that it should be mandatory (rather than by invite only). In relation to training provided to school staff in general participants were unanimous in agreeing that training in the area of child protection was unsatisfactory. They felt that it was so important staff members were aware of their duties as they are the people who are working with children every day. The study questioned whether the Tusla online e-learning programme, which is designed to support people from all backgrounds and all experiences in recognising concerns, is sufficient training for teachers in the context of their mandatory role and the significant role that teachers play in detecting and reporting child abuse.

Child protection, schools and COVID-19

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 set out specific oversight requirements that apply to all school boards of management, including in relation to the provision by the school Principal of a Child Protection Oversight Report at every board of management meeting. Following the closure of schools in March 2020, the Department advised schools that the requirement to provide a Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) would not apply to board meetings held remotely. This was because it was not thought possible in the context of such meetings to meet the requirement to provide the board with the specified documentation in the secure and confidential manner required by the procedures. The Department advised at that time that Principals should continue to maintain the relevant data and records so that the CPOR could be provided at the next face to face meeting of the board and that the data in that next report must reflect cases arising since the previous CPOR was provided to the board.

EVALUATION AND INSPECTION IN SCHOOLS

In advance of the reopening of schools in August 2020, the ASTI called for the cessation of inspections and evaluation visits to schools. In response to the challenges and context faced by schools, the Inspectorate suspended its programme of inspections and evaluations as set out in Circular Letter 0041/20. An additional Circular Letter, 0002/21, set out the nature of the Inspectorate engagement with schools up to June 2021. The focus of this engagement in Term 1 of the current school year included:

Advisory Support: through telephone calls, video conferencing and through in-school visits in a total of 1293 engagements with post-primary schools and centres for education.

Research and Evaluation: surveys of principals, teachers, parents and students in a sample of primary, post-primary and special schools; focus groups of students in a small sample of primary and post-primary schools. The information from the surveys and the student focus groups complemented data provided by principals during the advisory sessions.

Inspection: inspections that had commenced in February/March 2020 but which had to be halted when schools closed on 12 March were completed. In collaboration with the Health and Safety Authority, the education partners and a sample of schools, a number of school visits took place to monitor the implementation of safe working practices as schools reopened and operated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 303 such visits took place in post-primary schools and centres for education during the September to December 2020 period. 97% of schools were considered to be fully compliant with the public health advice on safe operation of schools. A number of priority inspections including Follow-through Inspections and Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections were conducted.

Working with HSE: During the final months of 2020 evidence emerged from contact with schools which showed the need for additional support for schools and school leaders when COVID-19 cases arose. Since November 2020, a number of inspectors have been assigned for a portion of their time to the HSE School Support Service. This support will be increased as schools and centres for education reopen.

Since January 2021, the Inspectorate continued to provide support to schools in the context of the return to remote teaching, with particular emphasis on reaching out to and supporting students with special education needs and students disengaged from learning.

REDEPLOYMENT

There are two redeployment schemes currently in operation in second-level schools. In addition, a voluntary redeployment scheme is currently under discussion.

The scheme that affects the largest number of schools and teachers is redeployment scheme for teachers surplus to requirements other than in situations of school closure.

Redeployment scheme for teachers surplus to requirements other than in situations of school closure.

A scheme allowing for the redeployment of teachers into schools with teaching vacancies (other than in situations of school closure) was included in the Croke Park Agreement, which was accepted by ASTI members in January 2011.

Nominating teachers for redeployment

If a school or VEC has one or more teachers employed in excess of their allocation, they must notify the Director of the Redeployment Scheme of the teachers identified for redeployment. If a school or VEC believes that its surplus position is short-term or transient, it may present its evidence of this opinion to the Director, who may defer a decision in relation to redeployment.

Only permanent/CID teachers can be redeployed.

In the first instance the school or VEC will ascertain if any member of staff wishes to be considered for redeployment voluntarily. Those teachers who volunteer for redeployment will be offered vacancies first and can choose to refuse a redeployment vacancy.

At the same time, teachers will be identified for compulsory redeployment based on seniority and the school's curricular needs.

Any teacher nominated for redeployment should be provided with a statement by the school setting out the basis for its decision. This statement should include a list of all permanent/CED teachers in the school together with their teaching subjects. It should also include a statement of the curricular reasons, based on the curriculum audit, why the school believes “it is not possible to cope without” the services of any teacher below them on the Seniority List for Redeployment.

A teacher nominated for redeployment can appeal to the Director of the Redeployment Scheme if they feel the correct process and procedures were not complied with in their identification for redeployment.

Identifying vacancies

Each year schools and VECs must notify the Director of the Redeployment Scheme of any vacancies, permanent or temporary, that exist in their school. The Director will then try to assign redeployed teachers to these vacancies.

Assigning teachers to vacancies

A teacher identified for redeployment may be assigned to a school within a maximum radius of 50km from his/her existing school or, where they request, from their place of residence.

The Director of the Redeployment Scheme will seek to match a teacher to a vacancy that matches their qualifications and experience and will take into account the curricular needs of the school, the teacher’s preference where more than one post exists, travelling time for the teacher and any other factor deemed relevant by the Director.

If the Director is unable to redeploy a teacher because there is no suitable vacancy available, the teacher will not be redeployed in that year.

Teachers will transfer their reckonable teaching service for promotion purposes in the previous school to the receiving school, except in the case of teachers being redeployed from one voluntary secondary school to another voluntary secondary school.

Any post-holder who is redeployed will retain their post of responsibility allowance and will be required to carry out in-school management duties in the receiving school.

Redeployment in the case of school closures

The second redeployment scheme in operation in second-level schools deals with redeployment in the case of school closures. It was negotiated between the ASTI/TUI and the Department of Education and Science in 2007. The scheme covers all qualified permanent and CID teachers in recognised second-level schools who are surplus to requirements due to school closures.

Redeployment in 2020

There were 34 teachers redeployed in 2020: 12 “Ward” CID holders (2 of whom were voluntary); 16 as a result of school closure (including two post-primary teachers teaching in primary schools which closed); 10 arising from surplus in schools (of which 6 were voluntary); and 11 under the pilot voluntary redeployment scheme.

Voluntary redeployment

The pilot voluntary redeployment scheme established in 2013 is to continue in 2021. The pilot voluntary redeployment scheme 2021 is confined to teachers in Galway, Roscommon and Wicklow who

wish to be redeployed in September 2021. The scheme allows Permanent/CID teachers who are employed in schools in these counties to express an interest in being redeployed to another post-primary school. In addition, any teacher outside of Dublin who wishes to be redeployed to Dublin can apply.

If a you apply for voluntary redeployment and a vacancy exists, you may be offered a redeployment to that vacancy. However, you will only be redeployed if a suitable teacher can be redeployed to your school to replace you.

Your school must indicate its willingness to release you and so accept a replacement teacher on redeployment. Principals should declare on the form the preferred subject options that the school requires as a replacement for you, if you are redeployed. These subjects do not have to be your subjects; this gives the school an opportunity to address a curriculum mismatch within the school.

The ASTI continues to press for the introduction of a purely voluntary redeployment scheme.

RELATIONS WITH PARENTS

The ASTI continues to maintain cordial relations with parents’ groups. Formal meetings have been held with the National Parents Council (post primary) and with the Parents’ Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools. At these meetings issues of mutual concern to parents and teachers are discussed. The Deputy General Secretary has attended the conferences of parents’ organisations and has contributed to their proceedings.

POSTS OF RESPONSIBILITY

A new Circular “Leadership and Management in Post-Primary Schools” (Circular 0003/2018) was issued in January 2018. This Circular superseded all previous Circulars in relation to posts or responsibility at Assistant Principal and Special Duties level and Programme Co-ordinator posts.

Appeals:

An appeal system for Assistant Principals continues to operate. The procedures for appealing are outlined in the Circular referenced above. An appeal system for Principal and Deputy Principals has been agreed between the ASTI, the TUI, the ACCS, ETBI and JMB. This procedure had been passed to the Department of Education and Skills for implementation. At the time of writing the Department have not yet issued a circular letter on this appeal system.

NCSE DEPARTMENTAL COUNCIL

In the Autumn of 2019, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) established a Council for processing industrial relations issues involving employees of the NCSE. This body is the equivalent of the Teachers' Conciliation Council for these workers. The first meeting of the NCSE Departmental Council took place on November 19th 2019. Represented on the Council are NCSE Management and the following unions: Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants (AHCPS); ASTI; FORSA; INTO and TUI. The ASTI is represented on the council by the Deputy General Secretary. The Council is currently discussing the proposals by the NCSE to change the nature of the employment of Visiting Teachers by the NCSE.

EXAMINATIONS

Due to the unprecedented situation caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, normal meetings with the State Examinations Commission did not take place in 2020. Issues relating to State Examinations are dealt with in the sections in this Handbook: Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle.

SURVEYS 2020

ASTI RESEARCH ON CLASS SIZE

CLASS SIZE AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS: THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE MARCH 2020

In February 2020 the ASTI commissioned RedC Marketing and Research to gather data on class size, on teachers' perceptions of the impact of class size on teaching and learning in the Junior Cycle, and their perceptions of other aspects of the physical work environment in their schools. 1,829 members took part in this survey which represents a response rate of 16% - a strong response in methodological terms.

Key findings

Class size has a negative impact on aspects of teaching and learning and disciplinary climate in schools

Most subjects have class sizes in the range of 21-30. Core subjects such as English and history have larger than average class sizes, followed by geography, business studies and religious education. Class size depends on the nature of the subject: subjects which require specialist equipment have smaller classes. More than half of all classes in short courses such as CSPE, SPHE and physical education have classes in the range of 26-30.

Most teachers have 2 or 3 class groups for each year of the junior cycle. Teachers of practical subjects such as home economics, physical education, science and technology subjects have 3 or 4 class groups for each year of the junior cycle.

The majority of teachers state that large classes have a negative impact on teaching and learning and on the disciplinary climate in the classroom. At least 4 in 5 teachers feel that class size inhibits range of teaching strategies used and opportunities for students to engage in group and other collaborative work.

ICT in the classroom

While 3 in 5 teachers rate the provision of core ICT equipment – digital projector, whiteboard and computer – as adequate, this rating drops significantly in relation to computers for students, video cameras and mobile multi-media stations. The majority of teachers – 7 in 10 – use ICT in the classroom every day. Those who use it once a week or less cite delays in getting technical assistance and lack of time for planning as the main reasons for low level of usage. Key measures to support greater usage of ICT in the classroom include smaller classes, more computers in the classroom and more time for classroom planning.

Physical infrastructure in schools

Overcrowding in the classroom is the biggest concern, followed by inadequate storage space and inadequate sound-proofing. Less than half of schools – 47% - have dedicated office space for Assistant Principals. Slightly over half have staff-rooms with dedicated work spaces for teachers. Just over one third of schools – 39% - have dedicated rooms for teachers' meeting and planning activities. Overall, just over 1 in 3 teachers agree that the quality of the physical environment in their school was good. More than half -52% -stated that their school was overcrowded. Adequacy of facilities for students such as canteen/dining spaces, corridor space and toilet/sanitary facilities were also of concern.

Teacher wellbeing

The main sources of stress for teachers are workload, expectations of parents and other stakeholders and the quality of management-staff communications in school in that order. In addition to the three factors above, class size is the next major source of stress. Almost 4 in 5 teachers believe that their workload has increased significantly in the last three years. The level of job satisfaction has decreased to 48% - down from 77% in 2009.

ASTI SURVEY ON REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING

KEY POINTS RELEVANT TO STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION ON RETURN TO SCHOOL

Background

The ASTI survey was issued to members in early May in order to obtain feedback on their experience of remote teaching and learning. The survey was completed by 3,526 members – equivalent to a very high response rate of 22%. At the time of issue of the survey, schools had been shut for 6 weeks (exclusive of the Easter holidays). A number of questions had options which invited teachers to elaborate on their answers. In almost all such questions, every single one of the 3,526 teachers submitted replies, many running to several hundred words. This qualitative data provides a very detailed and comprehensive overview of teachers' experiences across a number of areas

Key Findings

- Before school closure, ICT was already integrated into classroom teaching – 84% of teachers used ICT in classroom teaching on either a daily basis or a few times a week

- 68% of teachers stated their school management provided guidance on continuity of learning after school closure
- Over a third of teachers – 35% - had engaged in online learning after school closure
- Majority of teachers – 85% - reported a significant increase in their workload following shift to remote teaching
- Most teachers reported a negative impact on work-life balance with only 30% stating that the impact was manageable or negligible
- The top three priorities for return to school are health and safety, address teacher workload and attend to teacher wellbeing

Key thematic issues - School support for shift to remote teaching

- Just half of teachers - 50% - had been provided with a school laptop to support their teaching*
- 68% of teachers stated that school management provided guidance on continuity of learning follow school closure
- Support from school management included:
 - Online tutorials on school's platform, using school email system
 - Whole-school zoom briefings on school's response including communications with staff, school leadership, school support structures, students and parents
 - Digital Learning Team's provision of whole-schools and one-on-one mentoring on using devices, software, synchronous and asynchronous teaching
 - Circulation of links to online training and other supports from PDST, NCSE, NCSE, etc
 - Provision of laptops and other digital devices to teachers
 - Regular emails and phone calls to staff

* Note survey question only asked re laptops: it did not include other digital devices. It is clear from answers to open questions that teachers had been provided with other devices to support their classroom teaching, e.g., iPads, tablets. However, teachers reported that they needed both to engage in effective online teaching.

Notwithstanding the above, a number of developments have emerged which teachers experienced as intrusive, disrespectful of their professional autonomy and, in some instances, insensitive to teachers' personal circumstances. They include:

- Circulation of emails 'at all hours of the day and night' leaving teachers feeling over-burdened with administrative tasks and whole-school planning issues
- Requirement that teachers rigidly adhere to the school timetable and grossly under-estimating the amount of time it takes to prepare content for online classes
- Requirement that teachers provide a weekly report to school management on the delivery of their classes and on the names of students who haven't submitted homework or otherwise engaged in learning
- Requirement that teachers contact parents to address student non-engagement is causing both extra work and extra stress for teachers as such communication would typically have been undertaken by Year Heads or other designated teachers

- A number of teachers experienced repeated phone calls from the Principal re level of engagement despite the fact that such teachers had already indicated adverse personal circumstances such as ill-health, care responsibilities and other limiting situations.

ASTI response in the event of future school closure/partial return to school

- 1) All schools must have an agreed written plan setting out how schools will support and communicate with staff
- 2) ASTI and school management bodies to agree a protocol to address issue of online privacy, GDPR, 'right to disconnect' and clear parameters around working time (teaching AND preparatory work, corrections and feedback to students) and private time
- 3) Such protocol also include requirement that parents adhere to established procedures for communicating concerns/complaints (as distinct from directly emailing the teacher)
- 4) School management to cease demanding weekly reports from teachers on how they deliver their remote teaching – this is unprecedented and undermines the core precept of teacher autonomy
- 5) School management conduct an audit of teachers and students' digital hardware needs with a view to ensuring greater compatibility between devices and schools' IT system and also as a means of addressing educational disadvantage.

Workload and the shift to remote teaching

Teachers have collectively experienced an exponential increase in their workload arising from the shift to remote teaching. This increase has largely been driven by:

- Teachers having to assemble and create digital content for their subject areas and differentiate this content for classes
- Lack of compatibility between students' and teachers' digital devices has dramatically increased the amount of time teachers are spending on marking homework. Students are primarily submitting homework via mobile phones and the quality of the images are frequently poor requiring the teacher to enlarge/enhance each individual image. Teachers' devices cannot 'write' on this image and are required to send the marking feedback to each individual student by email.
- Huge variation in students' digital literacy skills means that teachers have had to phone students to 'talk through' simple procedures such as opening word documents, PowerPoint, etc. Students need rapid upgrading of digital literacy skills
- Significant levels of student disengagement are causing extreme stress for teachers. They are worried about such students' wellbeing, their ability and motivation to re-engage in the new school year. In turn, teachers are making huge efforts to keep such students 'on board' by talking to them, giving personalised tuition and homework. This is time-consuming. Teachers reported engagement levels – responding to emails, taking part in zoom classes, submitting homework – as ranging from 40% to 80% of students. Teachers in DEIS schools reported lower levels – 20% to 30%.
- Teachers' workload is also increased by the fact that they are having to learn how to use digital technologies and applications as they teach. 30% reported that they engaged in online training since school closure.

ASTI response in the event of future school closure/partial return to school:

- 1) Scoilnet education portal to be upgraded to provide more subject-specific content and lesson plans for teachers, including differentiation, formative assessment and group work
- 2) ASTI and school management bodies to agree a template for how blended learning should be delivered – teachers cannot be expected to teach a live class and simultaneously prepare a separate online class
- 3) NCCA to review current junior and senior cycle curriculum to give guidance on what areas could be condensed
- 4) Specific focus, with provision of adequate resources, on identifying and responding to the 'learning regression' of students who have disengaged from remote learning

Teachers' experience of remote working

Teachers' experience of remote working is primarily characterised by an exponential increase in workload. There are also other factors which are impacting on their work-life balance and overall wellbeing. Teaching is a highly gendered profession and childcare duties fall disproportionately on women. Many teachers stated how hard it was to teach remotely (i.e., prepare, deliver, mark and provide feedback on digital content) and simultaneously look after and home-school their children. Many have spouses/partners who are either also working from home or are essential workers. Sharing devices with spouses/partners and school-going children adds to the strain of adhering to the school timetable. Many households have become highly stressed. While teachers are not unique in this regard, policy makers must consider the issue of childcare in planning for the return to school. As underlined in a recent NERI report, little consideration appears to have been given to the misalignment between the reopening of economy and society whilst access to childcare remains so limited.

Workload combined with home care duties are invariably described as 'overwhelming' by most teachers. This latter feeling was amplified by teachers' feeling that their sense of self-efficacy was significantly challenged by not being in the classroom where they are confident and competent in their teaching. Having to learn-as-you-go is not a comfortable zone for teachers whose work requires planning, reflection, and direct engagement with students' in the classroom. Most teachers were explicit in stating that their mental, and in many instances, physical wellbeing had diminished.

Finally, a repeated theme was the perception by teachers that their work was largely unacknowledged and under-valued by society. This perception was widespread and is damaging to teachers' morale at an individual and collective level.

ASTI response in the event of future school closure/partial return to school:

- 1) Workload issues to be addressed, especially in the context of 'blended' learning
- 2) Department of Education and Skills must take the lead role in ensuring that childcare is available for teachers, who are essential workers, when schools reopen. The current government initiative under the DCYA whereby essential workers are to be provided with childcare must be extended to teachers

- 3) Tailored digital literacy skills must be provided to teachers in the context of the school's digital learning plan and by the education support services, e.g., PDST
- 4) Government and in particular the Minister for Education and Skills have a duty to support and appreciate the work of teachers in the current crisis. There is insufficient leadership demonstrated to date in this regard which is out of step with the public appreciation of the work of schools and the high level of contact with families and students during this period of school closure

Teachers' priorities for the re-opening of schools

The top three priorities for return to school are health and safety – 72%, the need to address teacher workload – 59% and attend to teacher wellbeing – 57%. These priorities are absolutely consonant with the statements from teachers in the open-ended questions. Teachers cannot envisage how the reopening of schools can be managed unless drastic measures for social distancing, hygiene and sanitation are addressed. Many schools are already overcrowded and lack adequate classroom and communal space not to mention toileting facilities for both staff and students. While physical health and safety is the paramount concern, allied to it is the concern for teachers' individual and collective wellbeing. The past number of months has been so hectic and so demanding - compounded by the drawn-out uncertainty re the status of the Leaving Certificate examination – which teachers are deeply apprehensive of what the new school year will bring. School management has a duty of care to teachers and must ensure a safe working environment. A key dimension of the latter is an explicit focus on teacher wellbeing and morale. Protocols must be developed to ensure that teachers' workloads are sustainable, their autonomy respected and where necessary, flexibility is exercised in relation to teachers who have particular health, care or other circumstances.

RATIONALISATION

ASTI ENGAGEMENT WITH RATIONALISATION

Meetings are held as required with the Department of Education and Skills, Planning and Building Unit regarding interests of members employed in schools facing amalgamation or closures. Similarly meetings are held with Education Training Boards concerning the assimilation of schools into their ETBs. Other management bodies and trustee representatives are also met. Schools facing amalgamation or closure are visited by ASTI personnel.

Rationalisation issues which arise include assimilation rights, agreement on school type, position of part-time and temporary staff, contracts, redeployment rights, transfer rights, retirement, post of responsibility allocation, staff allocation, principalships, deputy principalships, planning and facilities. Advice is given to members in relation to these and other related issues. Schools enlist the assistance of the ASTI to advance their claims for funding for extensions, refurbishments and completion of buildings in cases of amalgamations.

POST PRIMARY MAJOR SCHOOL PROJECTS

Details are set out below of the Post Primary Major School Projects that (a) were substantially completed in 2019 and (b) are under construction.

Post Primary School Projects Substantially Completed in 2020

County	Roll No.	School
Cork	68325L	Coláiste Chiaráin. (St Joseph's College/St Aloysius College)
Kildare	70700A	Maynooth Post Primary School
Cork	71020G	Davis College, Summerhill, Mallow
Cork	71050P	St Colman's Community College, Midleton
Galway	71270G	Clarin College (Gairmscoil Mhuire), Athenry
Limerick	71840V	Coláiste Chiaráin, Croom
Kildare	76193Q	Maynooth Community College
Dublin	76213T	Lusk Community College - Phase II
Dublin	76475D	Swords Community College
Cork	70950A	Clonakilty Community College
Louth	71780G	Scoil Uí Mhuirí, Dunleer
Roscommon	72290R	Roscommon Community College, Lisnamult
Kerry	61220I	St Joseph's SS, Ballybunion
Limerick	64130W	Scoil Pól
Limerick	64290V	Ardscoil Mhuire, Limerick
Mayo	64700O	Coláiste Rís, Westport
Offaly	65620V	Sacred Heart School, Tullamore
Galway	68074M	St Jarlath's College, Bishop Street, Tuam
Kilkenny	70600T	Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown
Mayo	72100J	St Tiernan's College, Crossmolina
Tipperary	72480W	St Ailbe's Schools
Offaly	72530L	Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara
Wicklow	81016V	East Gendalough School, Station Road, Wicklow Town

Post-Primary School Projects Under Construction

County	Roll No.	School	Project
Carlow	61130H	St. Mary's College, Knockbeg	Large Scale Major Project
Kildare	61702D	St. Paul's Secondary School, Monasterevin	Large Scale Major Project
Wicklow	61830M	St. David's Holy Faith, Co-Educational School, Greystones	Large Scale Major Project
Mayo	64520M	St. Mary's Secondary School, Ballina	Large Scale Major Project
Roscommon	68325L	Coláiste Chiaráin (St. Joseph's College/St. Aloysius College)	Large Scale Major Project
Clare	70830N	Ennis Community College	Large Scale Devolved Project
Cork	70950A	Clonakilty Community College	Large Scale Major Project
Meath	76088T	Ratoath Community College	Large Scale Devolved Project
Kildare	76194S	Naas Community College	Large Scale Devolved Project
Dublin	76213T	Lusk Community College	Large Scale Major Project
Cork	76273O	Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin	Large Scale Devolved Project
Louth	71780G	Scoil Uí Mhuirí, Dunleer	Large Scale Devolved Project
Kildare	70700A	Maynooth Post Primary School	Large Scale Devolved Project
Kildare	76193Q	Maynooth Community College	Large Scale Devolved Project
Limerick	71840V	Coláiste Chiaráin, Croom	Large Scale Devolved Project

SUMMARY OF NEW POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO OPEN IN 2020 AND 2021

Details of new post-primary schools due to open in 2020 and 2021 are outlined below.

Area	Size*	Year of Opening	Patron
Blanchardstown West D15 & Blanchardstown Village D15 (Regional Solution)	800	2020	Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB
Goatstown/Stillorgan DLR	800	2020	Educate Together
The Ice Enfield (Kilcock school planning area)	500	2020	Louth & Meath ETB
Citywest, Saggart (Tallaght & Newcastle/Rathcoole school planning areas - Regional Solution)	1,000	2020	Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB
Dublin6, Clonskeagh & Dublin 6W (Regional Solution)	1,000	2020	Educate Together
Kilcoole & Greystones (Regional Solution)	800	2020	Kildare & Wicklow ETB
Gaelcholáiste Mhaigh Nuad	c. 500	2020	Kildare & Wicklow ETB
Ballincollig	600	2021	Le Chéile Schools Trust
Booterstown, Blackrock & Dunlaoghaire (Regional Solution)	1,000	2021	Educate Together
Dunshaughlin	600	2021	Louth & Meath ETB
Gorey	500	2021	Educate Together

*Size for post-primary schools refers to the number of students.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

There were no school closures in 2020.

(The ASTI wishes to acknowledge with thanks the co-operation of the Planning and Building Unit, Department of Education, in the supply of this information.)

PENSIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Pensions Sub-committee is elected biennially at Annual Convention. The sub-committee was last elected at Convention 2018. The current elected members of the sub-committee are: Denis O'Boyle (Chairperson), Bernardine O'Sullivan, Ger O'Donoghue, Pauline Nagle and Gloria Helen. Desmond O'Toole (Organisation and Development official) provides professional support for the work of the sub-committee. The ASTI President, Vice President and General Secretary are *ex officio* members of the Sub-committee. The sub-committee has met four times since Convention 2020 on the following dates: 17th September 2020, 26th November 2020, 14th January 2021 and 25th February 2021. A further meeting of the Sub-committee is scheduled to take place on 18th March 2021 before Convention. All meetings took place on-line. The following key issues were addressed by the Sub-committee in the last year:

Pay and Pension Parity

Pay and pension parity secures the principle that any salary increases paid to serving teachers are applied pro-rata to the pensions of retired teachers. This continuing obligation was specifically acknowledged in the *Public Services Stability Agreement 2018-20 (PSSA)*, but only for the duration of that agreement, i.e. to the end of 2020. Under this Agreement, the pensions of retired teachers were increased for the second time following the 1.75% increase in incremental pay and pensionable allowances received by serving teachers on the 1st October 2020. As a result, gross pensions were then increased by 1.75% of that part of the value of the pensions of retired teachers that was linked to incremental pay and pensionable allowances.

The ASTI is strongly committed to the preservation of pay and pension parity and the Pensions Sub-committee continued to support the effort to ensure that this principle was respected in the successor national agreement to the PSSA, namely *Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022*. In the context of the publication of this document, a letter was issued on 15th December 2020 by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to the Alliance of Retired Public Servants confirming that the policy of pay and pension parity would continue for the lifetime of this new national agreement, i.e. to the end of 2022.

Single Public Service Pension Scheme

The Pensions Sub-committee has also maintained a particular focus on the pension arrangements for more recently qualified teachers who joined the profession since 1st January 2013 and are members of the Single Public Service Pensions Scheme (SPSPS). These

members face reduced pension benefits compared to their more established colleagues as their benefits are effectively based on their career average earnings, rather than on their final salary. This has the effect of depressing the total value of their pension benefits. In addition, the minimum retirement age for members of the SPSPS is set at the age at which they are entitled to draw the State Contributory Pensions, currently 66 years of age and rising to 67 and 68 over the next eight years. The Pensions Sub-committee has continued to express concerns that the contributions made by the DES/ETBs to the SPSPS Scheme underperform the contributions made to earlier pension schemes and that they should be required to make meaningful and improved contributions to the 'referable amounts' set aside each year for members of the scheme, especially during the early years of post-2013 teacher's careers.

Meeting with other Teaching Unions

As reported last year, on the initiative of the Pensions Sub-committee a meeting of the three teacher unions was convened by the ASTI on the 10th January 2020 to consider pension-related matters. At that meeting, the three unions agreed to seek further means to specifically enhance the value of pension benefits for members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme and restated their joint position that (a) a teacher's pension should always be regarded as his/her deferred pay, (b) there is greater strength in enhancing and protecting teacher pensions by the three Teacher Unions working together and sharing information on pensions issues, and (c) that pension benefits have continued to deteriorate significantly over the years. The three unions agreed that they would meet annually to co-ordinate their positions on pension matters, but it was not possible to convene that meeting in the last year due to the ongoing public health situation. The Sub-committee is hopeful that such a meeting will be convened in the coming months as the public health situation improves, and is especially interested in gaining the support of our sister unions for a programme of research on the matters of interest described above.

Gender Issues

Following a symposium hosted by government departments in January 2018 entitled "Rising to the Challenge: Addressing Ireland's Gender Pay Gap", the Pension Sub-committee examined the role that gender inequality plays in determining the pension entitlements of teachers. The Pension Sub-committee remain very conscious of the existence of gender-specific implications for pensions in professions which have a very large proportion of women employed within them. As reported last year the Pension Sub-committee began engaging with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) on this issue. The ASTI was represented by the then Vice President, Gloria Helen of the Pensions Sub-committee and the Official at a meeting with the NWCi's Head of Policy and Women's Economic Equality Coordinator on 6th February 2020. The meeting discussed how the ASTI's relationship with the NWCi could be deepened and examined opportunities for future collaboration.

Work has continued on this important topic this year, with the sub-committee examining means by which the union might commission research that could provide evidence of the specific role that gender plays in determining teachers' pensions. A meeting between the ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee and the ASTI Pensions Sub-Committee has also been scheduled. This meeting will look more broadly at the role that gender plays in determining teachers' pay, pensions and working conditions.

Communications

The ASTI continues to be very active communicating with members about pension and retirement issues. The successful annual

programme of retirement seminars moved on-line this year and member of the Pensions Sub-committee again attended and spoke at the second evening of the retirement seminars alongside Cornmarket. Feedback received from members who attended these seminars continued to be very positive. The pensions and retirement section of the ASTI website was rewritten and enhanced earlier this year as part of the general uplift of the ASTI website. The opportunity has also been taken to increase the amount of pensions-related material published on the website, including information on the 26 week limit on not making pension contributions for teachers who leave teaching, and the recent suspension of pension abatement rules for retired teachers who return to teaching (see below). A feature article on the Single Public Service Pension Scheme is due to be included in the March 2021 issue of *ASTIR*.

Other Matters

Winding Down Scheme: The Sub-committee has been pressing for the introduction of a Winding Down Scheme for teachers approaching retirement which would gradually reduce working hours in the period leading up to retirement while maintaining the value of pension benefits. Following representations by the Sub-committee a claim was tabled by the ASTI at the Teachers Conciliation Council (TCC) in 2019. The ASTI continues to press for a decision on this claim.

ICTU Retired Workers Committee: Two members of the Pensions Sub-committee, Denis O'Boyle and Ger O'Donoghue, were elected to the ICTU Retired Workers Committee in October 2019 and continue to serve on this body.

Pension Scheme Announcements: Several key announcements were made in the last year which are of interest to members of the Teachers' Superannuation Schemes, including the Single Public Service Pension Scheme, namely-

- (i) *State Contributory Pension:* In October 2020, the Government announced the withdrawal of changes that had previously been introduced to progressively increase the age at which qualifying persons could access the State Contributory Pension up to 68 years of age. The current qualifying age of 66 will remain in place, subject to a further assessment of the State Pension system.
- (ii) *Spouses and Children's Scheme:* In November 2020, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform issued Circular 18/2020 which extended the benefits payable under the Spouses and Children's Scheme to certain same sex couples who were unable to enter a marriage or civil partnership prior to their date of retirement. This decision addressed the last remaining issue regarding the extension of survivors' benefits to same sex spouses and civil partners.
- (iii) *Abatement:* In January 2021, the Department of Education published Circular 03/2021 as a response to current teacher shortages. The Circular is designed to attract retired teachers back into teaching by suspending the 'abatement' rule for a period of up to three years commencing January 2021. Retired teachers will be able to return to teaching with no limit on the salaries they may earn on top of their pension, and hence no fear of abatement, for up to 50 school days per calendar year. A school/ETB will have to confirm that it is not practicable to meet the teaching requirement other than by the employment of a retired teacher. A retired teacher may be employed on a casual substitution basis up to a fixed-term temporary contract.

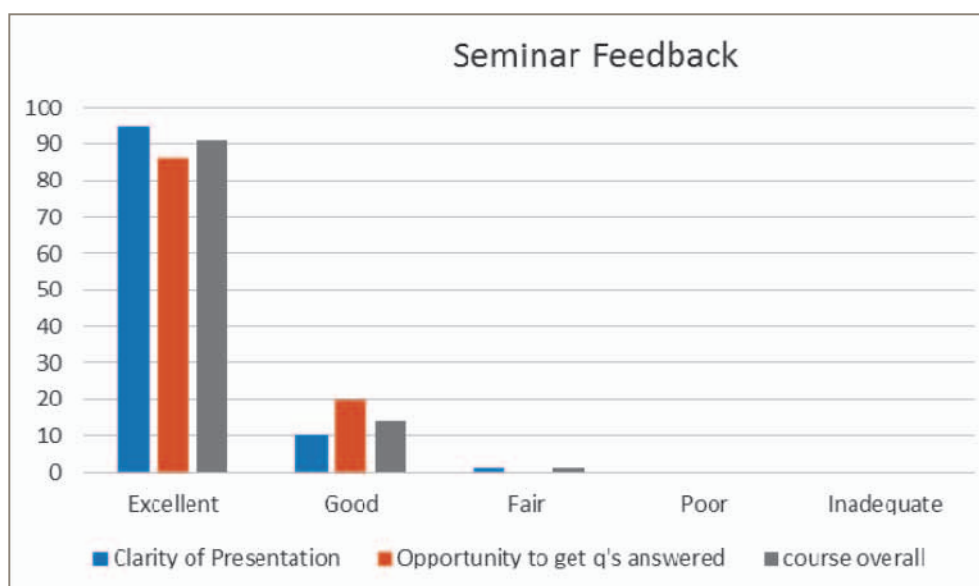
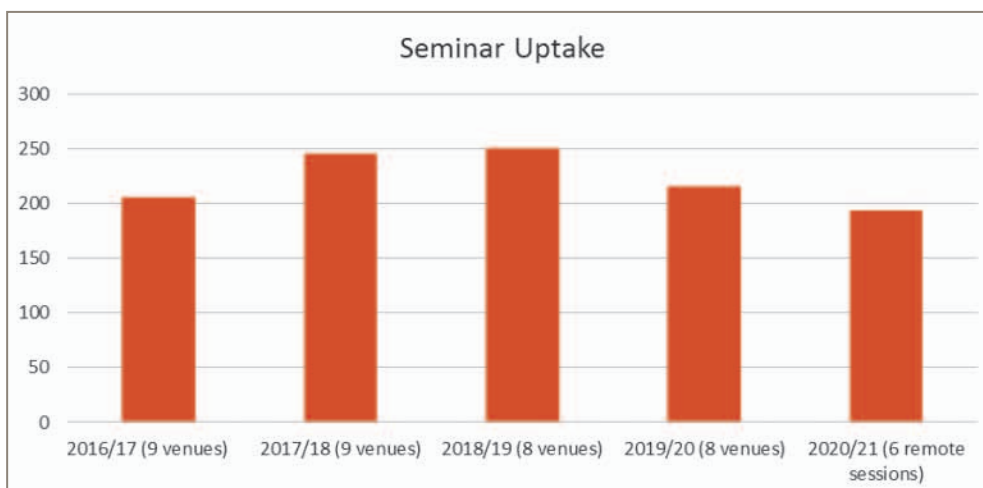
RETIREMENT QUERIES AND SEMINARS

The ASTI continues to provide direct assistance and advice to members enquiring about retirement. This support is supplemented by a completely updated pensions and retirement section on the ASTI website and the addition of a second official to assist in dealing with members' queries. Furthermore, the ASTI held a series of six on-line retirement information evenings from November 2020 to February 2021, as well as two additional sessions delivered by Cornmarket. The information evenings attracted registrations from 194 ASTI members. These seminars ensure that members considering retirement have access to the information they need to make an informed decision on retirement.

Part 1 of the seminar was presented by Desmond O'Toole, ASTI Organisation, Development & Industrial Relations Officer, and covered topics such as retirement options, overview of pension scheme, how to retire, calculating your pension, and enhancing your benefits. Each of the six sessions lasted three hours and the official remained available for a further period afterwards for follow-up questions and private consultation.

Part 2 involved two on-line sessions presented by Cornmarket representatives and covered topics such as AVCs and financial planning, preparing mentally for retirement, overall wellbeing and life after work. As part of these sessions, members of the ASTI Pensions Subcommittee provided an overview of their role and work programme. Each of these sessions were of 90 minutes duration.

Attendees are asked to fill out a short feedback questionnaire at the end of each seminar, and a summary of that feedback is provided below:



ASTI SUBMISSIONS

ASTI SUBMISSION TO SPECIAL OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 RESPONSE - JUNE 2020

Introduction

Planning for the return to school in a context of an evolving public health situation is a fraught and complex process. It is also a process of profound societal importance. The closure of schools has deepened society's appreciation of the role of schools as social institutions where young people learn as a community, make friends and are supported in their personal and social development by qualified and caring teachers. The planning process for the return to school cannot be reduced to a consideration of logistical challenges. The latter are significant but are only the first step. Lockdown has strongly impacted on young people's mental health and social wellbeing. Schools will be central to responding to this wellbeing challenge and how they are enabled to do so must be prioritised in the planning process.

Teacher wellbeing is equally critical. Teacher health and well-being is intrinsically linked to workload and lack of adequate resourcing. Well-being in school starts with teachers. They are in the front line of the work of schools and it is hard for them to promote emotional and social well-being of others if they feel uncared for and burnt out themselves. The importance of occupational health, safety, health and welfare at work was never more evident in all workplaces, including schools at this time.

"While changes to daily behaviour are crucial for the collective good, some people may become less vigilant and cooperative as the crisis lengthens. Schools can help counteract this by regularly reminding students and parents of social distancing measures, hygiene practices for schools and home and, if available, the value of vaccination. Children can act as messengers, raising awareness about safety and precautionary measures among relatives. Teachers also play an important role: Not only are they the providers of information, they also increase the legitimacy of child-delivered health messages as families are aware that the information." (OECD, 2020)

Challenges for re-opening of schools and procedures that will need to be put in place

1) Ensuring the health and safety of students, teachers and other school personnel

The Board of Management has the duty of care to its students and staff. Each Board must conduct an extensive COVID 19 risk assessment of the entire physical infrastructure of the school and put a comprehensive COVID-19 response plan in place. Thus each school must update their Safety Statement, their statutory obligation under the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005. Hygiene and ventilation facilities will have to be upgraded; caretaking and cleaning routines reviewed; provision made for regular deep-cleaning; availability of PPE equipment for all staff, plastic barriers and sanitising equipment in line with public health advice. These

extra requirements have substantial financial costs for schools, this will require additional resourcing. School capitation grants require to be reviewed to meet the additional costs of ensuring compliance with return to work safely protocols.

2) Adjusting the physical infrastructure to maintain social distancing

On the 9th June, when the Special Oireachtas Committee on COVID 19 wrote to ASTI seeking this submission, we were invited to make a contribution on the issue of how schools will operate under social distancing. The committee was not to know that the Minister would release a report on 12th June in which it is envisaged that no physical distancing would apply in classrooms. A key quote from that report states as follows:

"A differentiated approach to physical distancing in schools versus requirements for other parts of society or business could be considered appropriate and reasonable when the particular nature of the school environment is considered," (DES, 2020).

That line implies a willingness on the part of the Minister for Education and Skills to operate an inferior social distancing regime in schools than that which will pertain in other parts of society. This would also lead to mixed messaging around the importance of social distancing in the community at large. Such an approach will be entirely unacceptable from an ASTI perspective.

It is our view that most schools will require significant re-ordering and refurbishment of classrooms to ensure adequate social distancing. In many instances, additional seating/desks/shelving will be required to create additional learning spaces. Schools will need to have high quality visual markers on all floor/ground surfaces to ensure social distancing. The summer grants scheme for remedial work must be supplemented to ensure that Boards of Management have access to funding to complete these works in the coming weeks.

3) Return to Work Safely protocol and compliance

The national Return to Work Safely protocol is the foundation for safe workplaces. The current DES stakeholder discussions on return to school are examining this protocol to identify additional necessary measures when the workplace is shared with hundreds of young people. The Lead Worker Representative is a mandatory position under the protocol. The person who holds this role must have the confidence of both the staff and management. The role involves consulting with management around what is required under the protocol and on a daily basis to complete a specific checklist, to ensure compliance with the COVID-19 protective measures. There are time implications for carrying out this role and due consideration needs to be given to this. Training for the role is imperative, (Government of Ireland, 2020).

4) Vulnerable members of the school community

In every school there will be teachers and students who are vulnerable in terms of their health status or particular personal circumstances, including pregnancy. Agreed protocols must be in place in advance of the return to school for such situations. The former must also include procedures for actions to be taken should a person become unwell while in the school.

5) Initiative Overload and Inspection

Schools and teachers will have huge additional challenges in the academic year 2020/2021 to those that they address in the normal course of the school year. The key stakeholders in post primary education – staff and management – acknowledge the problem of initiative overload. There is an enormous added workload on management and teaching staff brought about by these many initiatives. Teaching through a blended approach, rigorous oversight of the physical environment in schools will add to the demands on teachers and school management, therefore it is important that the load caused by additional initiatives be paused for this year in order that the time and space be given to what school staff deem appropriate with their limited time and resources.

This will require a change in the approach of the inspectorate, with a more helpful, supportive role in post primary education over the coming year. Teaching and learning in this new educational environment is a sufficient challenge in itself for all concerned in the coming academic year. The inspectorate needs to be seen as a resource to support the teacher rather than someone evaluating teacher performance. This is a critical aspect for the new school year. There is a real opportunity to reframe the role of the inspectorate in post primary education, which would benefit students and teachers.

Impact on students, teaching and learning and challenges of potential staggered attendance

Again, the Special Oireachtas Committee on COVID 19 requested input on the advantages and disadvantages/challenges of potential staggered attendance. The Minister's report on 12th June appears to suggest that he does not envisage a necessity for such arrangements. Notwithstanding that position, the ASTI remains of the view that such would be likely having regard to all the circumstances to date. In that context, we state the following:

1) Make equity the priority at national and school level

The closure of schools had highlighted the unequal nature of Irish society and the difficult home circumstances of many children, whether its food poverty, lack of physical safety, or access to play and green spaces. There is now abundant evidence on the extent of the 'digital divide' among students and the negative consequences this has for their access to remote teaching. This digital divide exists amongst teachers also. Schools should conduct an audit of both students and teachers' needs in relation to digital equipment, connectivity and other learning resources. The Department of Education and Skills must continue to provide additional funding to schools to support the purchase of the necessary equipment. It also needs to engage with other Departments to ensure that families have the capacity to pay for / have access to broadband and students have basic study equipment. Much good practice has already emerged on how schools are co-operating with local community services to meet the needs of disadvantaged families.

2) Students with special and additional educational needs

Students with special and additional educational needs have been particularly negatively impacted by school closure. Lack of one-to-one teaching, disconnection from peers and daily routines have resulted in set-backs to all developmental goals. Schools' response must be multi-focused and practical. The evaluation reports of provision for these students have consistently identified a number of areas which need to be addressed, including the deployment of additional teaching resources and training for classroom teachers. The need for a dedicated SEN Coordinator to lead the SEN team was a consistent theme. Schools must be facilitated to put these

structures in place as part of the whole-school response to the return to schools of students with special and additional educational needs. SEN, students who are compromised due to existing health conditions pose a distinct challenge for education provision under the new regime and it is important that all concerned have realistic expectations of what can be provided.

3) Supporting students' wellbeing

The return to school this year will be like no other. Careful consideration needs to be given to how to support the wellbeing of students; identifying those who are in distress and delivering appropriate interventions. ASTI is extremely concerned that cutbacks to the guidance and counselling service will really impair schools' capacities to support students' wellbeing. The reduction in promotional posts in schools over the last decade has placed huge pressures on schools' pastoral structures.

Schools require a greater allocation of guidance and counselling hours within the school. Agencies such as NEPS, CAMHS must also be allocated the necessary resources to be available to schools in late-August.

These agencies and Tusla/EWS must be available to schools without the current long delays and waiting lists. A national plan for supporting young people's wellbeing must be developed as part of the overall return to school plan.

4) Teaching, learning and staggered attendance

ASTI research has indicated that the shift to remote teaching and learning has been difficult for many, if not most, students, (ASTI, 2020). As time went on, teachers noted increasing levels of disengagement, especially among disadvantaged students. This trend was attributed in part to the ICT difficulties and the home situation of students, many of whom had to care for siblings. However, the over-riding factor was the dwindling of students' morale and motivation in the absence of the social context of the classroom and the daily routines of school life. Teaching and learning are profoundly social experiences which depend on relationships rather than the transaction of content. While national guidance is necessary on staggered attendance, teachers and school leaders are best placed to make decisions on how it will operate at local level. Staggered attendance will invariably require the delivery of blended learning and schools will need guidance on how best to deliver a hybrid of classroom and remote teaching. (ASTI, 2020).

Protocols must be put in place around online teaching and learning prior to the commencement of the new school year. This will facilitate protection of both students and teachers. Any documentation around continuity of schooling must be developed through collaboration and agreed on by teacher unions and school management.

A key concern of the ASTI is the impact of the learning losses during school closure on teachers' capacity to deliver the curriculum in the next school year. Proposals to 'taper' or reduce the curriculum are not feasible, not least because each teacher in each school has their own annual plan. Instead, the focus should be on reviewing the assessment arrangements for the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations. In particular, content and choice in examination papers can be adapted to provide the necessary flexibility to students. Such a measure would also dramatically reduce the pressure on students and teachers in examination years. Consideration must also be given to the role of ICT in enabling the holding of the State examinations in the context of future school closure.

5) Digital literacy skills

ASTI research has demonstrated that many students are struggling with remote learning in part because of poor digital literacy skills. Schools will need to address this skill gap as a priority. The education support services should ensure that age appropriate short courses/modules are available to teachers upon return to school, including CPD for teachers. Schools need to prioritise digital learning skills as part of their digital learning plan which schools have been required to develop since 2018.

Impact on teachers

1) Remote teaching

School closure and the shift to remote teaching has been as dramatic and challenging for teachers as it has been for their students. An immediate consequence has been an exponential increase in teacher workload driven by a number of factors including lack of dedicated education portals; incompatibility/lack of ICT devices; learning 'on the job'. Working from home has dissolved the normal work-life boundaries which, in a highly gendered profession, has been largely a negative experience. As underlined in a recent NERI report, little consideration appears to have been given to the misalignment between the reopening of economy and society whilst access to childcare remains so limited, (NERI, 2020).

Underlying this regressive situation are a complex of emotions arising from not being physically present in the classroom, missing their students, worrying about them and their wellbeing.

2) Blended learning

Staggered attendance and blended learning pose logistical and pedagogical challenges for teachers. On the positive side, it is clear from ASTI research that the teaching profession has significantly upskilled itself and this will serve to enable the development of viable and effective school responses. On the other hand, specific resource deficits need to be addressed. ASTI research confirmed that only 50% of teachers had been provided with a school laptop as a standard teaching resource. This is unacceptable. Teachers also need a dedicated portal for subject content, lesson plans and assessment instruments. Generic issues such as GDPR, privacy and the 'right to disconnect' need to be clarified for teachers in order to sustain their confidence in blended learning. An additional dedicated post of responsibility for leadership of their digital learning plan should be available in schools.

3) Teacher wellbeing

Long before the pandemic, teacher wellbeing was increasingly identified as problematic. Workload, innovation overload and a perception that their work was not valued by society have been repeatedly identified in the research in undermining the morale and wellbeing of the profession. Unequal pay structures remain deeply corrosive. ASTI research demonstrated that the three most important considerations in terms of the return to school were the centrality of health and safety, the need to address workload, and a focus on teacher wellbeing. The latter can no longer be dismissed as an occupational side product. If the pandemic has taught us anything it has to a collective acknowledgement of how important wellbeing is to individuals' resilience and self-efficacy. The same is true for teachers whose work is focused on the growth and flourishing of young people. Teachers are in the front line of the work of schools and it is hard for them to promote emotional and social wellbeing of others if they feel uncared for and burnt out themselves.

The issue of teacher health and well-being must not be a mere box ticking exercise, as it has been to date. A focus on teacher health and well-being must be addressed in a holistic and structured way and approached in a collaborative manner. This approach which is well recognised in international occupational health and workplace health promotion, is implemented in a number of countries including Finland. The Department of Health endorsed the importance and efficacy of a proactive approach to workplace health and well-being at their conference 2019 – Workplace Health Promotion – The Business Case. The Department of Education and Skills (2018) acknowledges the importance of teacher health in the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document, the time to act on this is now.

Conclusion

Teachers are the frontline workers in the education system. Sudden school closure radically disrupted their working lives but within days, the shift to remote teaching was underway and with it, teachers' skills and innovative approaches ensured that students were continuing to receive instruction, guidance and support. With the return to school in late August, teachers will bring new approaches and insights which will be central to managing the ongoing disruption of normal school arising from the pandemic. However, society must ensure that schools are safe spaces for teachers and students: health, safety and welfare must be the priority of school management and the Department of Education and Skills. Addressing teacher workload and focusing on their wellbeing can no longer be sidetracked in education policy but must be underpin the overall policy response to the re-opening of schools. From whichever prism you view the practicalities of return to school, physical distancing, school organisation, curriculum demands, pastoral care involvement etc will require additional teaching posts.

ASTI, 2020. Teachers' experience of remote teaching.

Department of Education and Skills, 2018. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

Department of Education and Skills, 2020. Planning for the reopening of schools in line with the Roadmap for reopening society and business. Report to Government.

Government of Ireland, 2020. Return to Work Safely Protocol. Prepared by DEBI and DOH.

NERI, 2020. Employment and access to childcare during the COVID-19 crisis.

OECD, 2020. Spotlight 2 I. CORONAVIRUS: BACK TO SCHOOL

Calculated Grades Submission:

The Leaving Certificate examination is one of enduring strengths of the Irish education system. It has high levels of societal trust, is transparent and fair and underpins internationally acknowledged high educational standards. However, in the context of public health advice and the need to bring certainty to teachers and students in relation to the examination, the ASTI engaged with the other education partners to develop an emergency Calculated Grades model. We did so in the knowledge that this could not possibly be regarded as a viable substitute for the normal Leaving Certificate examination in normal times. While ASTI members engaged with the process in good faith, given that the process is on-going and the outcome is unavailable it is not possible to provide any conclusions on the success or otherwise of the process. The primary concerns of the ASTI in this process was that (i) the process was as fair as possible, based on evidence of students' progress in learning and not open to bias or influence and (ii) to protect teachers' professional judgement. Specifically, one of our

concerns was related to the potential for teachers and school leaders to have to bear legal costs should civil proceedings be taken against them arising from discharge of their functions under the calculated grades model, notwithstanding that a state indemnity had been put in place. The ASTI subsequently secured full indemnity for ASTI members while they undertake this work in good faith. Crucially, the Department of Education and Skills has given an undertaking that in all cases where the indemnity applies, the Chief State Solicitors Office will take over the running of the litigation.

Non-school students:

One of the difficulties that emerged for schools in operating the process of providing Calculated Grades was with regard to students taking subjects on an extra mural basis. It emerged as a clear weak point in the process. There was some confusion as to who precisely was required or in the best position to provide the marks and whether external personnel were appropriately skilled or qualified to do so. School Principals reported unease regarding the sign off on grading material supplied by external personnel. ASTI is of the view that it was a mistake to allow persons who are not qualified or registered teachers to participate in the marking process.

Impact on CAO system and third-level admissions:

The impact of the application of the Calculated Grades model on the CAO system and third level admissions remains to be seen. ASTI has been assured that the process will align with the CAO system in accordance with the manner in which the normal Leaving Certificate does.

ASTI OPENING STATEMENT TO SPECIAL OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 RESPONSE - SEPTEMBER 2020

Chairman,

Firstly, I want to thank you and this committee for the invitation to attend today and the opportunity to address you.

Planning for the return to school in a context of an evolving public health situation was a fraught and complex process. The profound societal importance of the reopening of schools was understood by all. And of course, there is a lot of trepidation and worry amongst ASTI members. In terms of the preparation for this, phenomenal work over several long days was undertaken by school management teams, teachers and ancillary staff across the country.

I propose to make my opening statement here today loosely under three broad headings – the arrangements that have been put in place, the guidance that has been provided that underpins them and how the reopening is operating in practice.

Over those weeks mentioned earlier, the ASTI commissioned a piece of research which once again exposed the consequences of serious under-investment in school buildings for many years.

The survey found that school principals faced serious infrastructural challenges as they were preparing to re-open their schools in line with the government's Roadmap and COVID-19 Response Plan for Schools.

Example findings from the survey include:

- 84% of principals said their school did not have a dedicated ventilation system;
- 25% of principals said their school did not have warm water in the school's toilet facilities;

A RED C Survey commissioned by ASTI and carried out prior to the pandemic among teachers also found that 49% of teachers believed they work in schools with overcrowding in classrooms and 60% considered that there was inadequate storage available for staff and students

As we know, Ireland ranks in last place out of 35 OECD countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of GDP.

We are coming from a low base.

This pandemic has put the spotlight on our underfunded schools. It is now glaringly obvious that Irish second-level schools operate on a shoe-string budget, with most schools having to fundraise to meet some of their day-to-day running costs. This lack of investment must be addressed if schools are to continue to operate safely in the context of COVID-19.

That is why the ASTI are demanding that the Department of Education commission new school buildings and in the meantime order prefabs in recognition of the fact that the Government approach of 'living alongside the virus' into the future is going to require major investment in school infrastructure.

With the number of students attending Irish schools increasing this year, principals also expressed concerns about the feasibility of social distancing for students throughout school buildings. More than 70% of principals surveyed rated the feasibility of social distancing in school corridors and other communal areas as weak.

The ASTI has also demanded that an urgent review be undertaken of the physical distancing requirements for schools, given the NPHET advice that only six people should congregate in any indoor setting and also in the context of the lack of clarity in the guidance that underpins the operation of schools.

In that regard, we wrote on the 21st August to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre seeking a meeting but they declined to accede to our request.

We then wrote to the Minister for Health on 24th August to ask that he intervene and set up such a meeting.

To date of submission of this opening statement (01/09/2020) we have received neither acknowledgement or reply.

We have very simple questions. These include:

The HPSC have been speaking in public of the possibility of fast track testing in place for schools, to get results back in 24 hours (similar to those in healthcare) or 48 hours at most. Why has this not been recommended and put in place?

- Why was there no recommendation to put Perspex in front of the teachers' desks in classrooms?
- Why is there no temperature testing, at least for adults, when they arrive in school each day?
- Why was no guidance given on the numbers that could congregate for assemblies, staff meetings in schools and so forth?

The reason why there was such controversy last week on the holding of large assemblies was that there was a lack of clarity. Schools were unsure should they follow DES advice which was silent on the matter or government advice that was well known.

It was an extraordinary omission given that we were in the middle of the controversy on large congregations over in Clifden.

It was only when we in the ASTI stepped in and advised our members not to attend large gatherings in schools that the matter was sorted out.

At the meeting we have sought with the HPSC, we also want to seek clarity on the safety issues involved for teachers and students in the High-Risk health category.

The ASTI is receiving a significant number of calls from teachers whose illnesses include chronic kidney disease, cancer and serious heart disease. Anxiety levels for this group are very high. It is unconscionable that teachers who suffer the likes of these illnesses are being required to return to classrooms teaching sizeable groups.

For the avoidance of doubt, ASTI is demanding that the Minister for Education make alternative arrangements, such as working from home, for teachers and students who are in the 'high risk' category.

As we have stated in the past, well-being in school starts with teachers. They are in the front line of the work of schools. The importance of occupational health, safety and welfare at work was never more evident in all workplaces, including schools at this time.

Additional concerns that we would like to discuss with the Health Protection Surveillance Centre have emerged further to the publication last week by the Department of Health and the HSE of the Schools pathway document for COVID-19. It sets out the Public Health approach to managing isolated confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school community, and also the principles that will underpin the management of outbreaks or potential outbreaks and the aligned testing strategy within an educational facility.

Provisions that are of concern include:

- (1) When a case has been confirmed it will not be automatically assumed that a whole class will be deemed as close contacts
- (2) There is no blanket policy on testing entire year groups and classes in place
- (3) Schools are not to inform parents or staff if a pupil or staff member goes home with symptoms
- (4) If someone goes home with symptoms -other staff and students do not need to be removed from class including siblings or other household members.
- (5) Contact tracing will be done on a case by case basis.

It is interesting that on RTE Primetime last week Professor Luke O'Neill argued that if a single child is infected, the entire pod has to go home and isolate for two weeks – and get tested.

Essentially, we want our concerns addressed and the rationale for much of what has been put in place explained. It is regrettable that those who are effectively making the decisions on these matters are refusing to meet representatives of those directly affected by them.

Another matter of concern to ASTI is the fact that the Department of Education and Skills appear to be doing little or no planning for the possibility that there might be individual or groups of school closures. At the outset, I want to make it clear, we all want the sustained reopening of schools and hope that none of this will happen. However, this virus has shown itself to be persistent and it would be foolhardy to discount the possibility.

Since the closure of schools in March 2020, the ASTI has repeatedly stated that remote learning is no replacement for face-to-face interaction between students and their teachers. There has been a sustained output of research on the impact of school closures on children's and young people's wellbeing, health and education.

One of the key messages emanating from this research is the centrality of school to the lives of our children and young people.

Learning is essentially a social activity and the role of the teacher is absolutely central in creating an atmosphere for learning, encouraging students to persevere with difficult topics and enabling them to problem solve together.

This has been borne out by research from the ESRI and the ASTI which found that a significant number of students found remote learning challenging and their ability to self-organise and remain motivated diminished as the closure of schools continued.

We have also expressed our deep concern about the lack of access to IT resources and broadband in many households.

Teachers have spoken of three and four siblings working from one device, and in some cases the device has been a mobile phone.

However, despite all of our best efforts, we might find ourselves back there again.

We have demanded that the Department of Education bulk purchase laptops for students and teachers so that every student has access to reliable IT equipment in the event of future closures.

On another matter, principals also said that while the appointment of additional second-level teachers is to be welcomed, the measure is inadequate in terms of achieving manageable class sizes and cover for COVID-19 sick leave during the pandemic. This is a major concern.

The ASTI's message here today is that investment in education must be seriously increased. We need to see important enhancement of support for teachers and students' health and wellbeing, particularly with the provision of alternative arrangements for the most medically vulnerable in our school communities. Guidance and advice to the system on the arrangements, including those related to physical distancing need to be reviewed and updated. Staffing levels need to be adequately maintained and there must be proper contingency arrangements put in place to prepare for all eventualities that may arise.

ASTI SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE - NOVEMBER 2020

ENSURING THAT SCHOOLS ARE OPEN IN A MANNER WHICH IS BOTH SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE

Introduction

The reopening of schools after the prolonged closure from March until August 2020 was a mammoth task. Enormous efforts by school managements, staff and students were made to seek to ensure that the reopening was a success. The challenge now is to ensure, in a context that has seen a deterioration in the containment of COVID-19 in wider society, that schools remain COVID-19 secure and that school communities are safe. This is vital in order to ensure a sustainable second-level education provision for the school year 2020-2021. With the right supports, schools can meet this challenge. While teachers all over the country are commending their students for their willingness to comply with the new school procedures, at the same time, they are reporting that social distancing is not being achieved on a consistent basis in school canteens, yards, corridors, stairs and even in classrooms in many schools. With the best will in the world, it is hard for young people to resist the need to congregate, socialise and walk home in groups. With the hindsight of a couple of months of re-opened schools, teachers are more aware of the challenges ahead and are reporting increased levels of concern for their own safety and that of their students. These challenges are set out below.

Ensuring the health and safety of students, teachers and other school personnel

The duty of care of school Boards of Management to their students and staff has never been more acute. Each Board has conducted an extensive COVID-19 risk assessment of the physical infrastructure of the school and are committed to implementing and monitoring their COVID-19 response. Boards have also been required to update their Safety Statements setting schools' statutory obligation under the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 in accordance with Guidance issued by the Department of Education and Skills. Notwithstanding these important governance measures, differential capacity of schools to implement key aspects of the COVID-19 response plan is a fact. Hygiene and ventilation facilities still need to be upgraded; cleaning routines reviewed and enhanced. The availability and suitability of PPE for all staff and students also needs to be reviewed. During the month of July, the ASTI commissioned research on principals' views on the safe re-opening of schools. Key findings included the fact that 84% of schools did not have a dedicated ventilation system; 25% of schools did not have warm water in the school toilet facilities; and 76% of schools have to re-purpose communal areas to meet the 1-metre social distancing requirement in classrooms.*

**Europlan Group Health and Safety, 'Survey of ASTI Principals views on preparedness for reopening schools', July 2020*

Earlier research commissioned by the ASTI provides further evidence of the challenges many schools face in terms of physical

capacity and space. Key findings included: majority of English and Irish classes in the junior cycle level have class sizes of between 26-30; 45% of teachers reported that their classrooms were overcrowded. In fact, overcrowding was a dominant theme in the RedC research: only 39% agreed that the quality of the physical environment in their school was good; even less – 31% – agreed that the school was not overcrowded; and only 20% agreed that class size was not a problem in their school.**

***RedC Research and Marketing, 'Physical Environment in Schools for Junior Cycle: The Teachers' Perspective' March 2020*

ASTI has publicly raised the question of whether the current arrangements in school are sufficient and/or appropriate given the significant change in the prevalence of COVID-19 in wider society since schools reopened in August 2020. Given the implementation of stricter restrictions in wider society and the growth in community transmission throughout the country, ASTI has called for intensive daily monitoring of the progression of the virus in schools and that there be a rapid response to any deterioration of the situation in individual schools or across the network. Prioritising schools for rapid testing and tracing is absolutely necessary if we are to keep schools safe, keep schools open and reduce the stress levels of teachers.

Monitoring compliance and ensuring accountability

Boards of Management have a duty to continue to monitor compliance with the return to work protocols and other public health guidelines. To that end, ASTI is anxious that the Inspection model that is currently being piloted by the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority will be rolled out nationally without further delay. The importance of leadership from the Department of Education and Skills in this and other accountability mechanisms cannot be overstated.

The ASTI has also expressed specific concerns regarding the move to Level 5 restrictions. The Departmental guidelines specify that schools staying open is contingent on recommendations based on situation and evidence at the time. It is not clear if this is on an individual school basis or for all schools collectively. The testing and tracing regime in place has also given rise for concerns. In particular, tracing has been slow to bring to completion in some schools.

Vulnerable teachers and students

In every school there are teachers and students who are vulnerable in terms of their health status or particular personal circumstances, including pregnancy. The ASTI is dismayed that many of these members have been required to attend schools and no remote or reasonable accommodations have been implemented to allow them to participate in their work or studies in a more appropriate setting. The Department of Education and Skills must direct that schools can exercise flexibility in certain circumstance and that such teachers can work remotely. We renew this call in the context of the escalated prevalence of the virus.

ASTI members' concerns

The ASTI Central Executive Council, at its meeting on 19th September, 2020, decided to hold a postal ballot of members in respect of a number of key issues. These included serious health and safety concerns around COVID-19; unilateral changes to work practices in some schools without consultation and the necessity to resolve the longstanding ASTI campaign equal pay for equal work for all our members. The latter not only serves to demoralise teachers but also reduces the attractiveness of teaching as a

profession. At a time of serious strains in the supply of teachers, the impact of unequal pay on entry and retention in the profession can no longer be disregarded.

This balloting process sought to provide a comprehensive framework for the ASTI to take industrial action, if necessary, on a range of current issues. While strike action would be a last resort, for a trade union it is vital to have all the tools at our disposal to deal with whatever issues arise.

ASTI members voted to take industrial action unless the Government immediately addresses key COVID-19 issues in schools. These include the need for a comprehensive testing programme, rapid testing and turnaround, appropriate resources for schools to ensure continuation of learning where there are school closures/ self-isolation, a redefinition of close contacts for school settings and appropriate arrangements for teachers categorised as 'high risk'. ASTI members are clearly stating that they want schools to remain open for students during this pandemic. They are demanding that the Government provide the necessary resources for sustaining education for our children and young people.

On unequal pay, ASTI members voted to take industrial action for equal pay for equal work, to be taken in conjunction with one or both of the other teacher unions. ASTI members remain absolutely committed to achieving equal pay for teachers who entered the profession from 2010. We will not stop until this abhorrent inequity is removed.

The issues we seek to have addressed have been highlighted above and include appropriate physical distancing arrangements in every classroom, appropriate mask supplies, testing and tracing that is quick and efficient, etc. ASTI notes that a 'close contact' in Irish schools appears not to conform to the definition being implemented elsewhere. ASTI has called for a broadening of the definition in use to one which would be more consistent with other workplaces.

We have also called for the free provision of laptops for students and teachers to ensure that learning can continue as much as possible if classes are required to self-isolate, or schools are required to close due to COVID-19.

Finally, ASTI members are reporting that a lack of communication protocols in schools where an outbreak has occurred has been a major issue since reopening. While everyone accepts that privacy is important for anyone affected by COVID-19, the fears and anxieties that an information vacuum engenders in those circumstances are difficult to contain. Teachers are not told in many situations if positive cases have been detected or not which gives rise to an unhealthy rumour mill. It is necessary that schools are guided on how to communicate in these circumstances and in a manner that addresses and alleviates concerns.

COVID-19 is an occupational health problem

The ASTI is heartened by the recommendation issued by the COVID-19 Oireachtas Committee that the disease be designated be a reportable disease under health and safety regulations and for more inspectors for the HSA to ensure enforcement and compliance with the Return to Work Safely Protocol. This decision is consonant with the view of the ICTU that if a worker acquires an illness in the workplace, it must be reportable to the HSA, and must be examined by the HSA to identify how the injury/ illness was acquired and how future injury/infections can be prevented.

The objective would be that the HSA would then examine each incident where COVID-19 is acquired in the workplace, to identify the causes, and to identify improvement in practices that will reduce future infections. This is exactly the kind of robust and practical response that is necessary to keep our schools open and safe. Workers' health and safety, their very lives, cannot be relegated to the realm of legal quibbles over definitions in the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. We urge this Committee to follow the lead of its colleagues in the COVID-19 Committee. The pandemic requires us all to rethink what were once certainties and to adopt creative solutions to unprecedented challenges.

Conclusion

Teachers are essential workers in the education system. It is essential that schools are safe spaces for teachers and students: health, safety and welfare must be the priority of school management and the Department of Education and Skills. Teacher workload and focusing on their wellbeing underpin the overall policy in ensuring that schools are open in a manner which is both safe and sustainable.

SCHOOL BULLYING AND THE IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH - ASTI SUBMISSION TO JOINT OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION & SCIENCE - FEBRUARY 2021

Introduction

Globally, there is growing awareness and concern about violence and bullying in schools. UNESCO has declared the first Thursday in November as the International Day against Violence and Bullying at School including Cyberbullying, recognizing that school-related violence in all its forms is an infringement of children's and adolescents' rights to education, health and well-being. Ireland has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, Article 19 of which requires states to protect the child from abuse and neglect. In its first report to the Irish government in 2006, the UN Committee recommended that the State takes measures to combat bullying and that its impact be dealt with in a responsive and child-sensitive way. In 2013, Department of Education and Skills published the National Action Plan on Bullying and directed all schools to implement the related Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. More recently, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) refers to the duty of school in terms of responding to bullying cases.

Bullying and its impact on children's mental health

Bullying is increasingly understood as a form of abuse and violence. The highly-acclaimed Anti-Bullying Centre in DCU ¹ identifies three main features of bullying:

- 1) Intentionality: Bullying is a goal-oriented and systematic abusive behaviour;

- 2) Repetition: Bullying happens repeatedly;
- 3) Imbalance of power: the systematic abuse of power is perpetrated by someone (perpetrator) who is either physically or psychologically stronger than the target.

The impact of bullying on children has been extensively documented in the national and international literature and is uniformly deeply damaging in terms of the victim's psychological and physical wellbeing. In many instances, it has a life-long negative impact. All of the reports on children's wellbeing in Ireland refer to bullying as a major issue in children's and young people's lives. For example, the report of Comhairle na nÓg to the 2016 UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child stated:

Mental health and physical safety are the two main areas that we, as young people, are concerned about in Ireland. Bullying is the number one issue that worries us, followed closely by stress, and the pressures of school and home life.²

Bullying happens in various contexts, especially when adult supervision is low. Cyber-bullying thrives in the latter environment. Cyberbullying consists of negative behaviour occurring through electronic means of communication that is either repetitive and long-lasting or occurs one-time. It is intrusive, invasive of privacy and security and 'always-on'. A widely acknowledged definition describes it as wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.³

Overall, cyberbullying has similar elements to offline bullying, but it can involve a larger audience, distance between the perpetrator and the victim and anonymity frequently for the former. Certain unrepeatable acts, such as posting an embarrassing picture online can harm the target by its repetitive exposure to others; hence, repetition is not one of the main criteria in cyberbullying.

Schools' response to bullying

The 2013 Action Plan sets out a range of recommendations and actions to address bullying in schools, chief among which are developing a positive school culture and climate. It also underlines the need for evidence-based intervention strategies. The Anti-Bullying Procedures include a template for schools to record incidents of identity-based bullying such as racist, homophobic and cyber-bullying. Identity-based bullying is a particular issue for children of Traveller, Roma and migrant backgrounds, children with an illness or disability and LGBT+ young people.

The reports from the Office of the Chief Inspector of the Department of Education & Skills provides aggregated data on quality and standards in primary and post-primary schools. The most recent report published in 2018 stated "schools are doing good work to tackle bullying and there is a marked improvement since the last report in the percentage of parents and students that are confident that schools will deal with bullying promptly and effectively".⁴

Significantly, 85% of students stated that they could get help from a teacher if they were being bullied.

Research by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre confirms that while the 2013 Procedures provide a clear framework for responding to allegations or incidents of bullying, concerns exist around the capacity of schools to engage in the prevention and intervention approaches recommended in the Procedures.⁵

The latter are central to the concept of the inclusive school and the creation of a positive school environment which foregrounds

respect, dignity and safety for all students. The ASTI can absolutely confirm this research finding. Austerity measures in the last decade has resulted in a devastating loss of middle-management posts in schools. The latter are key to ensuring that whole-school policies such as that specified in the 2013 Procedures are delivered, monitored and regularly reviewed.

Research also confirms that teachers need more concrete tools for bullying prevention work with adolescents, helping them to build resilience and self-confidence, as much as they need clear guidelines to intervene when bullying is detected. In its submission to the Departmental consultation on the 2013 Anti-Bullying Action Plan, the ASTI underlined the need to support the Procedures with a national programme of Inservice for teachers. This did not happen. The need for such a programme has not gone away. If anything, the changed societal landscape - in particular the growing emphasis on mental health and wellbeing, living safely and ethically in the online space, the need to have specific measures to protect the dignity of minorities and of LGBT+ students - is infinitely more complex and challenging than that which prevailed as recently as 2013. Huge advances have also taken place in the research space while at system level, schools must implement a Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice. The latter identifies bullying, aggression and violence as key risk factors for students' wellbeing.⁶

The Framework is a complex and multi-faceted approach to student wellbeing. It is predicated on complex organisational practices such as 'collaborative problem-solving approaches', 'school-based screening and intervention tools to assess social, emotional and behavioural difficulties', 'policies and plans setting out how inclusive practice will be implemented in a way that fosters school connectedness, acceptance and celebration of diversity'. This Framework was not accompanied by a national training programme either. No additional resources in the form of additional middle-management posts or Guidance Counselling posts have been provided to ensure the effective implementation of this Framework in each school.

ASTI recommendations for supports for schools

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically made society aware of the centrality of schools to the wellbeing of young people. Policy-makers must reflect on how government can better support the vital work of schools in educating, supporting and socialising our young people in the post-pandemic period. Schools are seriously under-invested in given the multiplicity of roles that they clearly discharge. Schools cannot effectively address complex societal problems such as bullying if there are not enough teachers, not enough dedicated leadership posts, not enough specialist teachers such as Guidance Counsellors, no training programmes for teachers. Many of the recommendations which the ASTI makes in this section of our submission are relevant to other areas of school life.

Recommendation 1: Review the current Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools to represent current bullying prevention and intervention research and the societal landscape in which children and adolescents live, in particular the digital landscape.

Recommendation 2: Increase the number of middle-management leadership posts in schools to ensure coordinated and evidence-based approaches to bullying prevention, including cyber bullying.

Recommendation 3: Introduce a national CPD programme for teachers with particular emphasis on preventative approaches and restorative practices.

Recommendation 4: Prior to implementing a revised SPHE/RSE programme in schools, a dedicated CPD programme must be provided for teachers of this programme.⁷

A specific post-primary qualification for teaching SPHE and Wellbeing is also required to ensure high quality delivery of this course content. Currently, such a qualification is not provided by any higher education institution.

Recommendation 5: Avoid curriculum overload. Anti-bullying prevention and intervention should be embedded into existing school policy and school curricula to avoid overload. Teachers must be provided with professional time to discharge their non-classroom teaching duties, work as members of teams and engage in CPD. Relying exclusively on policies without enabling teachers to actually implement the policy is a deeply flawed approach to innovation in our schools.

Recommendation 6: Ensure continuous evaluation of effectiveness of the online safety and anti-bullying and cyberbullying prevention and intervention programmes delivered in schools and elsewhere. Online safety messages need to be designed in such a way that they resonate with, and are understood, by young people.

Recommendation 7: Department of Education and Skills needs to have stronger engagement with social media and other online platforms/corporate bodies in order to optimise the reporting process and provide schools with effective ways to report cyberbullying and work on take-down measures. There is a widespread perception among teachers and principals that the corporate sector could and should play a more proactive role in promoting internet safety, protecting privacy, and listening to the online experiences of young people.

Recommendation 8: Youth mental health services must be radically expanded. Camhs – the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service - has come in for much criticism in recent years due to funding and staffing shortfalls. There are regular reports of children spending months or even years on waiting lists for an initial appointment. Regional disparities in terms of access to the service are stark. Last year it was revealed that nearly half the staff positions in Camhs were unfilled.⁸

Teachers consistently report that when school responses are exhausted or insufficient to meet young people's needs, the latter simply do not have access to Camhs or any other mental health service.

Recommendation 9: Schools provide valuable life-enhancing activities such as sport, clubs and the arts to young people. These extra-curricular activities can have a huge impact in developing young people's life skills, self-esteem, confidence and resilience as well as providing opportunities to make new friends. It is a matter of regret to the ASTI that we are being told by teachers that they simply cannot engage in these activities due to their heavy workload. Research commissioned by ASTI in 2018 found that the working week for teachers was typically 40+ hours.

Aside from the fact that heavy workload is a major stressor in teaching, with its attendant debilitating consequences for teacher morale and wellbeing, it is now impacting on what schools can offer young people outside their timetables.

Recommendation 10: Prioritise the wellbeing of teachers. Why is teacher well-being important? Being healthy physically and emotionally, being socially active and being able to take care of themselves and of others helps teachers to become and remain

happy and confident, positive and engaged in their own learning and teaching. It must now be recognised that teachers' overall well-being must be fostered, developed and supported alongside their professional and intellectual development. The Department of Education and Skills should support the Work Positive Process – a joint teacher union and school management pilot project to identify, assess and control psychosocial hazards the workplace.

1
antibullyingcentre.ie

2
www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/PictureYourRights0515.pdf

3
data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_education_further_and_higher_education_research_innovation_and_science/submissions/2020/2020-11-05_opening-statement-and-submission-dr-angela-mazzone-postdoctoral-researcher-national-anti-bullying-research-and-resource-centre-dublin-city-university_en.pdf

4
assets.gov.ie/25244/4f5eb802e7664dc4a9c6abdd9a93922b.pdf

5
www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/wellbeing-policy-statement-and-framework-for-practice-2018%E2%80%932023.pdf#page=35

6
ncca.ie/media/4462/report-on-the-review-of-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-in-primary-and-post-primary-school.pdf

7
www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/youth-mental-health-services-in-spotlight-after-kris%20A9gel-d%C3%BAAn-laoghaire-cases-1.4074845

8
www.asti.ie/document-library/teachers-work-work-demands-and-work-intensity-march-2018/

ASTI SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS STATEMENT OF STRATEGY 2021-2023

Background:

In accordance with the Public Service Management Act 1997, following the appointment of a new Minister, a new statement of strategy must be prepared by the Department. The Department of Education and Skills provided a briefing to the education stakeholders on the draft Statement in October 2020. The latter is primarily based on the three-year strategic framework 2019 – 2021 of the National Action Plan for Education – Cúmasú.

The latter has 6 high-level goals:

- Improving the learning experience and success of learners.
- Increasing progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs.

- Helping those delivering education to continuously improve.
- Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community.
- Providing better national planning and support services.
- Implementing evidence-based policies

ASTI Submission to Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

Introduction

The ASTI welcomes the opportunity provided by the review of the Statement of Strategy to submit its views on core aspects of education policy. Given the extraordinary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system, this review provides a valuable space for the education stakeholders to communicate their ambitions, concerns and proposals to the Minister. In these unprecedented times, this Departmental strategic planning exercise has a unique import and urgency. Decisions and directions taken in the coming months and years will have an enduring impact on the capacity of the education system to contribute to social and economic rebuilding – and rebuilding back better.

Investing in education

In the last six months, two OECD reports have highlighted the abysmal record of under-investment in education. We are now ranked in last place out of 36 countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of GDP.¹

'*Education at a Glance 2019*' confirmed that in 2016 Ireland invested 1.2% of GDP on second-level education compared to the EU average of 1.9% and the OECD average of 2%. Overall, Ireland invested 3.5% of its GDP in education compared to the OECD average of 5%. This trend of under-investment was also highlighted in Volume 5 of PISA 2018. Across almost all indicators – material and human resources available to school, ICT infrastructure – Irish second-level principals confirmed that inadequacies were hampering the work of their schools. This cannot continue. The Irish state will not achieve its wider goals of economic and social progress if it does not invest in education.

Effective teacher policies

Effective teacher policies are the foundation for building successful education systems. While Ireland has strong teacher policies in relation to initial teacher education, registration and quality, problems in supply and retention have become pronounced. The Teacher Supply Action Plan, launched in November 2019, must remain a priority of the Department. Notwithstanding the fact that a number of its actions are being operationalised as part of the COVID-19 response plan, this area of education policy must not be allowed to drift. Supply and retention are central to ensuring quality in the profession as are supports for professional learning and opportunities for school leadership. ASTI must firmly put on record its concern about the corrosive impact of unequal pay on the attractiveness of teaching as a profession and its demoralising impact on the entire profession, not least those thousands of teachers who suffer the injustice of unequal pay for equal work. Effective teacher policies must also take cognisance of wider social discourse on schools and the profession. A key finding in ASTI research on teachers' experience of remote teaching underlined how negative media narratives was really impacting on teachers' morale.²

The Department of Education and Skills has a responsibility to facilitate a balanced public discourse on teachers and their work.

Goal 1: Improving the learning experience and success of learners

The curriculum provides the context for students' learning experiences. Teachers are reluctant to engage in curriculum change if they perceive that the latter is at odds with their own experiential knowledge of what works best in the classroom. This professional response of teachers is sometimes unfairly described as 'resistance' to change. The latter charge also misrepresents the nature of teaching which is about creating relationships in the classroom which sustain students' motivation to learn. Policy makers must acknowledge the cumulative impact of 'innovation overload' on the profession and school leaders. While the pandemic has stalled the introduction of new initiatives, policy makers should reflect carefully on how best to manage future change programmes. Irrespective of the nature of the latter, key requirements include time for planning and collaboration; CPD and opportunities for professional learning; dialogue with the profession; strengthened school management; ongoing evaluation and review.

Priority actions:

1. Ensure adequate supply of teachers, including provision for upskilling teachers and incentivizing further professional learning.
2. Sustainable process of curriculum review underpinned by an implementation strategy which is resourced and does not add to teachers' workload
3. Sustain investment in the digital strategy for schools. (While Circular 0074/2020 represents an initial step in this direction it does not provide for contingency funding to schools to ensure that all students have appropriate ICT devices and access to broadband in the event of future school closures. Moreover, it does not address the lack of leadership capacity in schools to ensure that Digital Learning teams are in place to sustain peer learning, develop content and deliver wellbeing and other non-classroom supports to students.)

Goal 2: Increasing progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs

The introduction of the new Resource Allocation Model for students with additional and special educational needs in September 2017 was welcomed by the ASTI as representing a more transparent and effective resourcing model. The ASTI has communicated teachers' concerns to the Department around the need for a national training programme; a post for a SEN co-ordinator in each school; restoration of the allowance for advanced professional learning.

As regards improving the progress of students at risk of educational disadvantage, the ASTI again puts on record for the Department its view that the DEIS model must be supplemented by "tapering of funding" approach based on the DEIS model as recommended by the 2015 ESRI evaluation of the DEIS programme. At second level in particular, the DEIS model of targeting areas of high levels of deprivation results in many students' needs outside such areas being unacknowledged and unmet, given that the majority of educationally disadvantaged young people do not live in DEIS-designated areas.

The shut-down of schools in mid-March dramatically exposed poverty and adverse family circumstances of many young people.

Lack of access to school meals was a key issue as was lack of access to books, dictionaries, etc – not to mention ICT devices. With public libraries and other community resources shut, many families experienced overwhelming difficulties in supporting their children keep up their learning.

The ASTI is concerned that little progress appears to have been made on the education actions in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021. It was profoundly disturbing to read the recently published 6-country report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights³ and the alienation of Traveller and Roma children from school and their wider peer groups. The next Statement of Strategy must contain specific measures to implement current policy, including procedures for schools to respond to racism and xenophobia.

Priority actions:

1. Support the NCSE SET Allocation Model with national training programme for teachers and the allocation of adequate co-ordination hours.
2. Implement the recommendations in the 2015 ESRI DEIS evaluation, in particular with respect to tapering of support to support students in non-DEIS schools.
3. Prioritise actions on education in the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.
4. DES to cooperate with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to ensure that families experiencing severe deprivation are not left behind.

Goal 3: Helping those delivering education to continuously improve

Teachers are central to quality education. Prior to COVID-19, there was strong evidence of stresses on the teaching profession, in particular problems of retention and supply. A strategy aimed at helping those delivering education services to continually improve must therefore address the root problems of malaise and low morale in the profession. Increased access to CPD and other 'upskilling' responses will not in themselves address the underlying problems of workload, working conditions – in particular unequal pay, deteriorating wellbeing and job satisfaction. Notwithstanding the professional mobilisation to keep schools open and safe, these problems have, if anything, become more pressing. The Statement of Strategy should acknowledge the need to commit to support the teaching profession into the future and identify key actions to this end.

Priority actions:

1. Develop a strategy to address teacher workload, drawing on the experience of the UK 'Teacher Workload Survey' initiative and that of Scottish government⁴
2. The Department of Education and Skills must re-join the OECD's quintennial teaching and learning international survey – TALIS. This survey provides unsurpassed data on core aspects of teachers' professional lives, including workload, access to leadership roles, professional learning, pedagogical challenges and school improvement.
3. The Department of Education and Skills introduce the Integrated Work health Management Initiative (IWHMI) developed by the teacher unions and school management bodies.⁵

Goal 4: Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community

Schools are at the heart of the local community. The ethos of Irish schools of promoting the holistic development of young people ensures that schools have multiple 'bridges' with their local communities. Schools' extra-curricular activities such as sport and games, the arts and cultural activities, community and volunteering, wellbeing projects, faith-based activities, etc., are part and parcel of the local fabric of life across the country. Such activities depend on dedicated and experienced teachers. However, teachers are increasingly stating that their workload, compounded by ongoing curriculum innovation, supervision and substitution duties is such that they are no longer in a position to engage in extra-curricular activities.

Extra-curricular activities are but one of the complex role schools perform in local communities. There has been a sustained output of research on the impact of school closures on young people's wellbeing, mental and physical. The social importance of school for young people was succinctly captured in the HSE paediatric experts' report when it stated that:

*School is central to a child's social life and wellbeing, this is particularly true for marginalized children. School is the vehicle through which the State channels much of its investment in children.*⁶

Schools are not sufficiently funded to perform the range of socialisation and support functions now ascribed to them. The Departmental 'Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023' remains aspirational. The key barrier in this regard is the lack of capacity at school leadership level. There are simply not sufficient school leadership posts currently available to schools to enable the complex planning processes to implement the models of good practice identified in the Framework. The other key 'disabler' in relation to wellbeing is the huge variation in the type of support schools can expect from local service providers such as CAMHS, EWS, NEPS, SENOs, etc. Inadequate staffing levels in these service means that waiting lists are long, staff have high caseloads, preventative work takes second place due to the need to prioritise critical cases, etc. The redeployment of speech, language and occupational therapists to work on contact tracing and other COVID-19 related measures is compounding an already fraught situation for thousands of children. The promise of the School Inclusion Model, which includes an In-School Therapy Demonstration project, to support inclusion inside and outside the classroom, will never be realised until systemic problems of supply, recruitment and retention of professional staff are addressed in the health services.

The guidance and counselling service is a key bridge between schools and the wider society. Career orientations are formed early and primarily outside the school context. The guidance counselling service aims to assist students in making choices and successful transitions in personal and social, education and career areas. The service is of particular support to students from lower socio-economic groups and students with special educational needs. The 2019 Indecon consultants' review of career guidance contains key recommendations, including the provision of high-quality guidance tools and career information; information on multiple pathways including apprenticeships; and enhanced enterprise engagement.⁷

These need to be operationalised in the Strategic Plan, not least the specific recommendations on e-guidance tools and platforms. The current allocation ratio for guidance counsellors is completely

inadequate and is not meeting the needs of students. The advent of the COVID-19 crisis is placing unsustainable demands on the service.

Priority actions:

1. Reduce teacher workload to sustain motivation and capacity to engage in extra-curricular activities.
2. Restoration of number of post to pre-austerity level
3. Develop a roadmap for implementation of the recommendations in the Indecon review of career guidance, including a review of the allocation ratio.

Goal 5: Providing better national planning and support services

National support services are an important part of the education infrastructure and promote peer learning. However, coordination between national initiatives and support services remains a challenge. For example, the SEN resource allocation model introduced in September 2017 was not accompanied by a national training programme. Moreover, communication to schools via circular letter failed to reach the classroom teachers, many of whose first indication of the new model was when they were directed to co-teach with the SET teacher. On top of this, teachers were expected to engage in individualised planning processes which the majority felt entirely unprepared for. Moreover, while NCSE was a key information provider for schools, it has no direct communication channels with teachers to promote a mass-communications exercise, particularly around its support services. This sequence of inadequate planning is not unusual and requires analysis. Teachers have the primary responsibility for implementing change in the classroom yet are generally not identified as the key audience for communicating, supporting and pre-planning for the change model. The fallout from this poor coordination is manifest in the evaluation reports on provision for students with special educational needs which highlighted the need for schools to improve SEN co-ordination and for teachers to deploy appropriate differentiation and assessment strategies – precisely the areas where ASTI reiterated that teachers needed training. Clarification of roles and responsibilities is an indispensable dimension of effective policy implementation.

The current review of senior cycle curriculum is causing unease among teachers: the protracted process of securing agreement on implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle has left an abiding mistrust. An overly technocratic approach to change frequently fails to take into account the impact of curriculum on teachers' workload, in particular, on their professional time. These and other issues must be addressed in advance of senior cycle curriculum change. Policy design and policy implementation is an iterative integrative process rather than linear.

Priority actions:

1. The conclusions and recommendations in the forthcoming OECD report on policy implementation for curriculum change must be given careful consideration in the Strategy Statement.
2. The development of a communications/engagement strategy to focus on those required to implement change, namely teachers. The top-down model of circular letters and long guidelines is no longer an adequate communications tool in complex, increasingly networked educational institutions.

3. All change projects/reforms need to address the capacity issues of school. Teachers' time, level of leadership posts in schools and training are the core resources which need to be in place.

Goal 6: Implementing evidence-based policies

Effective policy design requires evidence from multiple sources. An important dimension of the evidence base is learning from previous reforms. In this regard, the delay in ensuring a longitudinal research project to capture teachers' experience of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle is regrettable. From the perspective of the ASTI, this delay not only constituted a failure to implement an agreed action: it was perceived as bypassing the experiential knowledge of the profession. Another lesson learned from the protracted process of the implementation of the Framework was the over-reliance by the Department of Education and Skills on the NCCA to disseminate information to the system. The NCCA is essentially a consultative body to provide advice to the Minister for Education and Skills. The latter has the responsibility for communicating such advice to the system and for putting in place a well-resourced implementation strategy. As noted above, clarification of roles and responsibilities is critical.

One of the many unprecedented consequences of COVID-19 has been the rapid research output by academics, teacher unions, ed-tech companies, research institutes, etc, on the impact of school closure on children's learning and wellbeing, teachers' pedagogical responses, and parental involvement in their children's learning. This output provides a rich evidence base for policy. In particular, the overwhelming evidence of digital and other resource inequalities among students must be taken into account in all future pandemic/shock planning. At the same time, the capacity of a wide range of actors to produce quality contemporaneous research points to exciting potential for enriching and extending the evidence base. At the same time, there needs to be an awareness of the import and rationale for different sources of evidence in education. In this regard, the ASTI is concerned that there is an under-appreciation in the Department of Education and Skills of the scale of global for-profit ed-tech monopolies on education discourse; the ethical challenges arising from 'big data'.⁸

There is absolutely no doubt that the digital 'turn' in education is accelerating and there is an urgent need for wide and sustained discussion on this phenomenon. Equally there is a need to address as a matter of urgency the current deficiencies in supporting digital literacy among students and teachers. The latter is no longer a question of being able to use ICT. Rather it is a question on how we educate young people to live in the online world. The latter has both positive and negative consequences. The latter are already causing profound disruptions in terms of rising extremism, threats to democracy, and the very idea of science and rational thinking.

Policy actions:

1. Statement of Strategy should include a commitment to developing a framework for research in education to sustain the evidence base for policy.
2. Statement of Strategy should inform the development of the agenda for the proposed Citizens' Assembly for Education which identifies the 'big' questions facing schools and educators.
3. Statement of Strategy should set out a commitment to examine the impact of the 'digital shift' on education, including how best to embed digital literacy across all areas of teaching and learning.

The ASTI acknowledges the complexity of the six strategic goals outlined in the consultation. COVID-19 has dramatically exposed the inadequacies and inequities embedded in our education system and in the wider social infrastructure. The economic and social costs of COVID-19 will mark a generation.

1
OECD 2019 Education at a Glance; OECD 2020, PISA 2018 Results Vol 5: Effective Policies, Successful School

2
ASTI 2020 'Teachers' experience of remote teaching' www.asti.ie/document-library/asti-survey-on-remote-teaching/

3
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/roma-travellers-survey>

4
assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594696/TWS-2016_FINAL_Research_brief_Feb_2017.pdf
education.gov.scot/education-scotland/news-and-events/teacher-work-load-study/

5
The IWHMI looks to address many of the shortcomings of the return to work scheme for teachers in addition to developing a working environment which truly protects and promotes teachers' health particularly by applying the HSA's recommended Work Positive system.

6
National Clinical Review on the Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on Children and Guidance on Reopening of Schools and the Normalisation of Paediatric Healthcare Services in Ireland National Clinical Programme for Paediatrics and Neonatology Clinical Design and Innovation, Health Service Executive, August 2020

7
assets.gov.ie/24951/dffde726604b451aa6cc50239a375299.pdf

8
www.ei-ie.org/en/detail/16858/edtech-pandemic-shock-new-ei-research-launched-on-covid-19-education-commercialisation

SCHOOL TRANSPORT AND RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

Introduction

School Transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018. A key trend in recent years has been special education transport making increasing contributions to the overall growth in school transport costs, while mainstream school transport has been falling. This in turn is reflected in the mixed type of transport involved, with increasing numbers of taxis and minicabs among the contracted vehicles. The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) prepared a Value for Money Report on the scheme in August 2019 and currently the DES is conducting a review of the scheme.

Safety is the primary consideration

As with the re-opening of schools, the most important criteria are the health, safety and welfare of students and staff. The same criteria apply to school transport. Irrespective of its variegated nature, school transport providers must ensure that they are in full compliance with public health guidance. Specifically, each provider should:

- Produce COVID-19 risk assessment
- Maintain 2 metres physical distancing
- Implement measures to manage transmission risk, reinforce cleaning procedures and promote good hygiene regimes
- Require the wearing of a face mask as is currently the requirement on public transport
- Provide sanitisers at vehicle entry and exit points
- Communicate how safety measures are being implemented to parents, students and schools and make clear what is expected of transport users

Regulatory compliance should be national responsibility

The current mix of service provision requires that the state retain responsibility for ensuring compliance with the public health advice. Schools cannot be expected to enact the role of quality assurance for a service which they have no direct responsibility for.

NON-PERMANENT TEACHERS

NON-PERMANENT TEACHERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Non-Permanent Teachers Advisory Committee meets approximately 4 times a year. The Committee represents teachers who are working in fixed-term teaching positions and part-time (casual and non-casual) teaching positions. The main focus of the Advisory Committee's work is the proper and fair implementation of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act and the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act. The other function of the Committee is to advise Standing Committee on matters of concern to non-permanent and part-time teachers.

The Committee members are as follows:

- Michael McGrath - Chairperson
- Lorraine Finn
- Órlagh Nic Eoin
- Cian O'Grady
- Michelle Ryan
- Ann Piggott - President
- Eamon Dennehy - Vice-President
- Kieran Christie - General Secretary

Executive Officer/Industrial Relations: Bernard Moynihan provides professional support to the committee.

The main issues which are dealt with by the Committee are:

- Issues around teaching and learning due to Covid-19 restrictions
- Increasing casualisation of the teaching profession
- Predicted grades
- Teacher allocation
- Cyberbullying
- Implementation of the Ward Agreement
- Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022
- Successful cases taken by the ASTI
- Communication strategy of the ASTI with Non-Permanent members
- New entrants to teaching
- The Pupil:Teacher ratio
- Privately paid teachers

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

Congress is the largest civil society organisation on the island of Ireland, representing and campaigning on behalf of some 800,000 working people. There are currently 44 unions affiliated to Congress, north and south of the border.

Congress Mission

Congress will strive to achieve economic development, social cohesion and justice by upholding the values of solidarity, fairness and equality.

The primary instrument for the achievement of this mission will be the organisation of workers in unions. Congress will also construct and advocate for a platform of policies capable of delivering our vision of a just society. We will engage with Government, employers, civil society organisations, voluntary groups and international bodies to promote its attainment. We will support unions in their efforts to secure a fairer distribution of the wealth their members create.

Arising from this there are four key objectives:

- 1 To build capacity in recruitment, organisation and advocacy;
- 2 To improve Congress capacity to regulate relations between affiliated unions;
- 3 To achieve the financial viability of Congress;
- 4 To create a broad base of support or empathy with a concept of the common good which will help us to translate our vision of a just society into reality.

Working Together

Congress seeks to shape and influence government policy in key areas, such as taxation, employment legislation, education and social policy. In general terms, the role of Congress is to:

- Represent and advance the economic and social interests of working people;
- Negotiate national agreements with government and employers, when mandated to do so by constituent and member unions;
- Promote the principles of trade unionism through campaigns and policy development.
- Provide information, advice and training to unions and their members;
- Assist with the resolution of disputes between unions and employers;
- Regulate relations between unions and ruling on inter-union disputes.

Congress also pursues these objectives at both the EU and the global level. Congress is the sole Irish affiliate of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the representative body for trade unions at European level and is also affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Executive Council

The ICTU Executive Council meets on a monthly basis. Amongst the issues dealt with at these meetings are the following.

- Economic Analysis of the Irish Economy including Northern Ireland
- Trade Union Organisation
- Industrial Disputes
- Public Sector and Private Sector Employment Policy
- International Matters
- Social Justice Issues
- Trade Union (Workers') College
- Collective Bargaining /Legislative Changes
- Pensions
- Pre-Budget Submissions.

Biennial Delegate Conference

The 2019 Biennial ICTU Delegate Conference was held in Dublin. The venue for the 2021 Biennial ICTU Delegate Conference is not known at time of going to print.

ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie serves on the Executive Council of the ICTU.

Covid-19

Throughout 2020 Congress was actively campaigning with regard to a variety of issues.

Much of their work consisted of lobbying Government regarding the myriad of issues related to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Return-to-Work Protocol was negotiated by ICTU.

The payments to workers that become unemployed during the Pandemic were negotiated by ICTU

Several Oireachtas submissions and presentations were made by ICTU

A flavour of some of the other issues that were pursued were as follows.

Raise the Roof



Raise the Roof is a broad civil society movement that sees trade unions, political parties, women's groups, student unions, housing agencies and community groups join forces to demand radical action on the housing crisis.

Raise the Roof includes the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the National Women's Council (NWC), the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the National Homeless & Housing Coalition (NHHC) and a range of housing agencies and community groups.

Homes for All

The housing crisis is an issue for everyone and the greatest single challenge facing society.

As house prices spiral beyond people on average and low incomes, many can no longer afford a home of their own. Soaring rents have also put huge financial strain on workers, students and their families. Overall, the rental sector is characterised by poor quality accommodation and no security of tenure.

It is a major issue for women as our rate of female homelessness is now double that of other EU states and more than 60% of homeless families are headed by lone parents, the majority of whom are women.

Housing waiting lists grow ever longer and homeless numbers are at record levels. Thousands are crowded into unsuitable accommodation, with families forced to raise children in hotel rooms and other emergency dwellings.

In October 2018, the Dail overwhelming passed an opposition party motion that set out a number of key measures to address the crisis:

- Declare a Housing Emergency
- Invest in a major programme of public housing construction, through local authorities
- Take action on rent certainty and security of tenure
- Create a legal Right to Housing

Agreed opposition party motion on Housing

This Dáil notes that:

Access to secure and affordable housing is increasingly out of reach for many people from the locked-out generation of students and young workers or unemployed people to older workers facing into retirement, high-cost insecure accommodation is a reality for too many people.

The failure of successive governments to provide an adequate supply of good quality public housing in sustainable communities lies at the heart of the housing crisis. The most graphic symptom of this crisis is the growing number of children living in emergency accommodation.

A new approach to housing is required to meet the housing needs of all those locked out of the private market including young people, those on modest incomes, those on low pensions, those on Council waiting lists, Travellers, people with disabilities, older people and students.

Important proposals to address the Housing Crisis have been put forward by a wide variety of groups including the National Housing and Homeless Coalition and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

This Dáil calls on Government to:

- Declare the housing and homeless crisis an emergency
- Dramatically increases the supply of social and affordable (including cost rental) housing by increasing capital spending on housing to €2.3bn in budget 2019; increase Part V requirements to 20% in standard developments & 30% in Strategic Development Zones; prioritise the delivery of public housing on public land; and aggressively target the return of vacant houses to active use
- Reduce the flow of adults and children into homelessness with emergency legislation to make it illegal for landlords, banks and investment funds to evict tenants and homeowners in mortgage distress into homelessness; provide real rent certainty by linking rent reviews to an index such as the CPI; introduce a target for ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough
- Hold a referendum to enshrine the right to housing in the Constitution.

United Nations position

The United Nations, in March 2019, launched a scathing attack on government housing policy and its response to the current housing emergency. In a damning indictment of the official response, Ms Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing - wrote directly to the government highlighting how current policy undermines 'housing as a human right' and condemned the huge levels of global capital invested in the sector, which has led to the 'financialisation of housing'.

*"We are writing to express our concern with respect to your Government's practice of adopting laws and policies which treat **housing as a commodity and undermine the enjoyment of housing as a human right**. We invite you to reflect on the following concerns with a view to developing a human rights-based response" she stated.*

"Our chief concern lies with those laws and policies which have allowed unprecedented amounts of global capital to be invested in housing as security for financial instruments that are traded on global markets, and as a means of accumulating wealth.

The full text can be accessed at the following link:

www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/un_on_housing_crisis_march_2019.pdf

ICTU demands are as follows:

- A major Local Authority led investment in public housing
- The building of affordable homes

- The cessation of evictions into homelessness
- The creation of a legal right to housing
- Security of Tenure and Rent Control for Renters

Building a Housing Campaign for 2020

The trade union-led *Raise the Roof* campaign has enjoyed more success than any other initiative on housing in recent years, since it was formed in late 2018.

This includes two of the largest public protests to take place on housing in several decades: Oct 3, 2018 and May 18, 2019.

Crucially, it has also built a strong consensus on the crisis across a broad coalition of political parties, trade unions and civil society groups.

That support was reaffirmed on October 2, 2019, when the **Housing Declaration** was signed by more than 50 trade unions, political parties, housing agencies, student unions, women's organisations, Traveller groups, children's rights organisations and housing experts. Central to the initial success of *Raise the Roof* was the creation of a clear, accessible policy platform - the Dáil motion - that drew heavily on the *Congress Charter for Housing Rights*.

An indication of the on-going work by the *Raise the roof* campaign can be seen in the context of the attached document published in May 2020 – *Remaking Ireland – A New Deal For Housing*.

Read more at the following link:
www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/remaking_ireland_-_a_new_deal_for_housing.pdf

An ICTU Survey Revealed Shockingly High Levels of Under-Reporting of Sexual Harassment at Work

Ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, Congress surveyed more than 1,300 union members with experience of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace.



Sexual harassment is defined in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. It is prohibited under the Acts.

Four out of five workers experiencing sexual harassment at work do not report the incident to their employer.

Of all the alarming statistics thrown up by the polling, the fact that jumped out of the data was the unacceptably high levels of under-reporting and dissatisfaction with their employer's action among those who do report sexual harassment.

81 per cent of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual behaviour to their employer, while only one in four of the minority who did report such incidents felt it was taken seriously and dealt with satisfactorily.

The national opinion poll of 1,347 union members with experience of sexual harassment at work was conducted online between 1 and 14 November 2019. Around 7 out of 10 (72 per cent) of the responses were from women (971). The survey focuses exclusively on people's experience of sexual harassment in the workplace, rather than measuring the scale of the problem.

ICTU wanted a deeper understanding of workers' experience of sexual harassment at work - the types of incidents experienced, the perpetrators and location, the barriers to reporting, and the impact sexual harassment has on the lives of those affected.

The extent of unwanted sexual behaviour from colleagues taking place online was also reported and points to a growing problem in the modern workplace.

One in five sexual harassment incidents reported had taken place at a work-related social event. One in seven had taken place on the phone, by email or online.

While the #MeToo movement has shed light on the hidden problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault at work and empowered women to speak out, the fear of a negative impact on their career or of not being believed or taken seriously were the most common reported reasons for not pursuing a complaint.

Trade unions and employers play an important role in preventing violence and harassment against women at work. Congress together with trade unions across Europe have called for the ratification by Member States of the ILO Convention 190 to address violence against women, including in the world of work.

The Employment Equality Acts places an onus on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers must act urgently and proactively to tackle this problem – raise awareness that such behaviour is unacceptable and may be subject to discipline, implement a comprehensive policy, set up proper, timely procedures for reporting, support the victims and deal with the perpetrators. There needs to be real consequences for those employers who don't comply with their obligations.

Key Headline Findings:

Incidence

ICTU asked respondents to select from several options the type of sexual harassment experienced and let them select more than one option in recognition of the fact they might have had multiple experiences.

- More than half (54 per cent) of respondents have been subject to unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature.
- Two in five (41 per cent) reported receiving unwelcome verbal sexual advances in the workplace.
- More than a third (37 per cent) have been subject to unwelcome comments of a sexual nature about their body or clothes.
- More than a third (37 per cent) have experienced unwanted touching, such as a hand on the knee or lower back.
- A third (34 per cent) have been subject to unwelcome questions or comments about their sex life.
- Around a quarter (23 per cent) reported receiving unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature by email, text or over social media from colleagues.
- Around one in six respondents (17 per cent) have been exposed to displays of pornographic photographs or drawings in the workplace.
- Around one in seven (15 per cent) reported experiencing unwanted sexual touching or attempts to kiss them.
- Around one in seven (15 per cent) have been subject to unwelcome questions or comments of a sexual nature about their sexual orientation.
- Two per cent of all respondents reported being seriously sexually assaulted or rape at work, of which five respondents said that this occurred within the past 12 months.

Perpetrators and location

- In line with existing research on sexual harassment, the Congress survey found that in eight out of ten cases (81 per cent) the perpetrator of the most recent incident was a man.
- For the majority, the harasser had been a colleague (54 per cent).
- One in three (31 per cent) reported that their direct manager or another manager was the perpetrator.
- Over half (55 per cent) of sexual harassment incidents reported had taken place on work premises.
- However, a significant minority (20 per cent) of the sexual harassment reported had taken place at a work-related social event such as a Christmas party.
- One in seven (14 per cent) incidents reported had taken place on the phone, by email or on social media.

Reporting

- Four in five respondents (81 per cent) did not report the sexual harassment to their employer.
- Of the minority (19 per cent) who did report the unwanted sexual behaviour to their employer, very few saw a positive outcome. Three quarters (15 per cent of all respondents) felt that it was not dealt with satisfactorily, half of whom reported that they were treated worse as a result e.g., passed over for promotion or other opportunities, targeted for further bullying or harassment.
- Around one third of respondents who did not report the incident to their employer feared that doing so would have a negative impact on their working relationships (32 per cent) while one in four feared it would have a negative impact on their career (27 per cent).
- Around one quarter (28 per cent) did not think they would be believed or taken seriously, while a further one in eight (12 per cent) thought they would be blamed if they reported the unwanted sexual behaviour to their employer.
- One in four (26 per cent) did not believe the person responsible would be sufficiently punished.
- One in four (26 per cent) said they were too embarrassed to report the unwanted sexual behaviour to their employer.
- One in ten (10 per cent) did not report the incident because the perpetrator was part of the reporting process.
- One in five were unaware that they could report or know how to report the harassment.

Impact

- Those polled were asked to choose from several options describing the effect that the harassment had on them. Half reported that they felt embarrassed (52 per cent).
- Two in five (41 per cent) reported that they avoid certain work situations as a result.
- Around one third (30 per cent) reported that they felt less confident at work, while one in five (18 per cent) felt it had a negative impact on their performance at work.
- One in four (26 per cent) reported that the harassment had a negative impact on their mental health, and a further one in ten (10 per cent) reported that there was a negative impact on their physical health.
- One in six (16 per cent) had wanted to leave their job as a result but had been unable due to financial or other factors. A further one in twenty (6 per cent) reported the harassment had caused them to change their role within the company or to leave their job with that employer.

Sustainable Development Goals



The then Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment appointed 12 chosen champions, organisations including ICTU, who are leading by example in achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The 12 champions will raise public awareness of the goals, and illustrate practical ways in which organisations and individuals can contribute to achieving the goals. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are an ambitious set of targets, covering the social, economic and environmental requirements for a sustainable future. They cover policy areas such as poverty eradication, economic development, protection of the environment, access to health and education services, gender equality, peaceful societies and human rights.

Congress is looking forward to participating in the SDG Champions programme and demonstrating the important role that trade unions have to play in achieving the SDGs. He pointed out that "progress is far too slow on meeting SDG targets in that 70% of the World's population has no access to social protection, 300 million workers in emerging and developing countries earn less than 1.9 dollars a day; and 81% of all countries in the world have violated the right to collective bargaining."

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into



the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Congress has been asked to concentrate on four Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all forms everywhere,
- Goal 8. Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality in and among countries
- Goal 16. Promote just peaceful and inclusive societies

The evidence suggests that the world is seriously off-track in terms of achieving the goals and unions around the world are calling for a new social contract to put us back on track.

Workplace Passport scheme announced by ICTU and IBEC for workers with disability

Congress and IBEC have jointly launched a Workplace Accommodation Passport scheme to enable disabled workers to carry out their work on an equal footing with others. The joint launch took place on International Day of People with Disabilities.

Often there are fears around what reasonable accommodation in the workplace means – the Reasonable Accommodation Passport will help the conversations to happen.

Structured conversations about the impact of disability and what supports individual's needs are facilitated by the Reasonable Accommodation Passport.

Decent work is now a crucial part of Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals that chart the global development agenda for the next 11 years. Target 8.5 set out under Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals - states that:

"By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value".

ICTU believes that social dialogue is a key mechanism to ensure that the goals are achieved and that is why they have embarked on this joint initiative and hope that the scheme will prove a useful one for advancing the employment and retention of disabled people in Irish workplaces.

The scheme was brought to ICTU attention by the TUC in the UK and the GMB trade union who brought a motion urging trade union support for such an initiative in Ireland. The motion – which has the strong support of our Disability Committee of ICTU – acknowledged the significant benefit of quality work for disabled people and recognises the valuable contribution that they make to the workplace. Equality legislation requires employers to make reasonable accommodation to enable disabled workers to carry out their work on an equal footing with others.

The right of disabled people to decent work is frequently denied. ICTU hopes that this joint launch will lead to the widespread use of the model in Irish workplaces and makes a contribution to the attainment of decent work for our disabled workers.

Nevin Economic Research Institute

The Nevin Economic Research Institute is an all-Ireland research organisation funded by all trade unions affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It aims, through information gathering, analysis, policy recommendations and educational activities to inform and assist others in the achievement of a just, sustainable and equitable society on the island of Ireland.

The Institute is organised as a charitable company with a remit as approved by the founding trade unions and incorporated into its articles of association to:

- advance knowledge and understanding of economics and the social sciences, with particular reference to the economic and social conditions in or affecting the island of Ireland;
- undertake, to the benefit of the public, research and analysis on the impact of economic policy development and its effects towards the attainment of a more equitable and just society;
- publish and promote research findings in order to advance awareness and comprehension of economic theory;
- undertake activities to ensure a broad dissemination of the research and analysis; and
- provide education, training and capacity building programmes to increase understanding of economic and social science policy among the general public.

The Institute, through its Director or Co-directors, is accountable to the Chair of the Institute's Governing Council concerning organisational and financial affairs. The Council is composed of representatives of all trade unions affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The Co-directors and staff of the Institute develop the research work programme of the Institute. This is in consultation with the Chair and the Governing Council. Work published in the name of the Institute is the sole responsibility of the Co-directors of the Institute. A Research Advisory Group assesses the research quality and policy and user-interest relevance of NERI research output.

Long-term Goals for 2020-2023

- 1 A major and comprehensive series of reports on economic development on the island of Ireland and in the EU including analysis of policy directions for the future. [NERI/2020/GC04]
- 2 A series of reports dealing with analysis of wages, jobs and living standards
- 3 A series of reports dealing with analysis of employment, collective bargaining and the future of work.
- 4 A series of reports on key areas of the welfare state and the 'social wage': housing, education, childcare and eldercare, pensions, health and transport. Related to this will be a complementary series of reports on fiscal policy and areas of taxation.
- 5 Periodic reports and analysis of policies on climate change mitigation and the just transition.
- 6 Analysis of special topic: Coronavirus. A series of papers and reports dealing with both the aftermath of the pandemic and what needs to change in the future.

Short-term Outputs

1. Working Papers and Research in Briefs:

- i. Economic development post-coronavirus: Policy responses to the economic and social impacts: Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- ii. Collective Bargaining: Theory and Evidence
- iii. Social Security: Principles for a new settlement in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- iv. Social Security: Models for wage replacement and sufficiency.
- v. Poverty: In-work and out of work responses
- vi. Carbon lock-in: Theory and Evidence
- vii. Carbon lock-in: How does the Republic of Ireland Compare?

2. Report Series and Research in Focus:

- i. Social Security: Outcomes in Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- ii. Economic Report: Economic outlook and fiscal Policy in the Republic of Ireland
- iii. Over-qualification: Skills in the Republic of Ireland
- iv. Over-qualification: Implications for Social mobility
- v. Labour Market Observer: Republic of Ireland and Coronavirus in 2020
- vi. Labour Market Observer: Northern Ireland labour market and coronavirus in 2020
- vii. Carbon Decoupling: What is driving the change in the Republic of Ireland?
- viii. Private Sector Wages: Outlook for the Republic of Ireland
- ix. Economic Inactivity: Long term issues in Northern Ireland

3. Long-Read Series (selected):

- i. 'Foundations of social security models in Europe'
- ii. 'What should we seek from a social security model' [NERI/2020/GC04]
- iii. 'The economic case for collective bargaining'
- iv. 'After Coronavirus: Building a better Economy'

4. Collaboration with ICTU (selected):

- i. ICTU Budget Submission
- ii. Pay Bargaining Guidance
- iii. Just transition
- iv. Collective Bargaining
- v. All island economy

NERI education and training work

- Ongoing media contributions (print, TV, radio)
- Economics course with the People's College
- Political economy course with Maynooth University
- Internship programme with Ulster University
- Briefings for Congress committees and affiliates
- Professional training for Congress and affiliates including collaborative work with the ICTU social policy team
- Organisation of Annual Donal Nevin Lecture, NERI Labour Market Conference, monthly NERI seminars and policy roundtables
- Contributions at events, conferences, media and other occasions
- Contributions of articles, blogs and related materials to economic research, NGO, trade union platforms
- NERI staff are also on a variety of advisory groups and forums

Continuing professional development of NERI staff

- Review of skills needs and development (including statistical methods, media, writing, presentations)
- Collaboration with Maynooth University on a PhD programme for NERI staff.

ICTU WOMENS COMMITTEE

The ICTU Women's Committee has 32 members and is currently chaired by a representative from Forsa. ASTI is represented by Breda Lynch, Executive Officer: Industrial Relations, and Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary. The role of the Committee is to advise Congress on gender equality issues, including the thematic focus of the annual ICTU Women's Conference.

During the year, the Women's Committee focused on following issues and made recommendations to Congress on the following issues:

- Gender pay gap
- Costs of childcare
- Pensions
- Reconciling work and family life
- Monitoring implementation of the National Strategy on Women and Girls

- Submission to Citizens Assembly on gender equality
- Sexual harassment in the workplace

Members of the Committee also engaged in advocacy on these issues in their relevant work areas at national and local level.

The Committee developed proposals for the ICTU women in trade union leadership programme which commenced in Spring 2020.

The ASTI motion for the 2020 Annual Women's conference was as follows:

This conference calls on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to seek statutory leave for workers who are engaged in medical and/or related treatments in relation to reproduction and family formation.

ICTU GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The ICTU Global Solidarity Committee has 32 members and is currently chaired by a representative from SIPTU. ASTI is represented by Ann Piggott, President, and Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary. The role of the Committee is to advise Congress on global solidarity and sustainable development issues, including the thematic focus of the annual ICTU Global Solidarity Summer School.

During the year, the Global Solidarity Committee focused on following issues and made recommendations to Congress on the following issues:

- Sustainable Development Goal 8 – decent work for all
- Business and human rights
- Just transition and climate change
- Human trafficking and migrant workers
- Irish Aid development aid programme and human rights
- New social contract and work of international trade union federations

The Committee also had two long-standing campaigns, Justice for Colombia and Justice for Palestine, including the ICTU policy of boycott, divest and sanctions which aims to put pressure on Israel to ensure that it complies with international law and respect the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Members of the Committee also engaged in advocacy on these issues in their relevant work areas at national and local level.

The 2019 Global Solidarity Summer School focused on the work of the International Labour Organisation in recognition of its centenary celebration.

EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL / ETUCE

Education International

Education International represents teachers' organisations and other education employees across the world. Representing more than thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, it is the world's largest federation of unions.

Education International's principal aims are:

- to further the cause of organisations of teachers and education employees;
- to promote peace, democracy, social justice and equality through the development of education and the collective strength of teachers and education employees;
- to seek and maintain recognition of the trade union rights of workers in general and of teachers and education employees in particular;
- to enhance the conditions of work and terms of employment of teachers and education employees, and to promote their professional status in general, through support for member organisations;
- to support and promote the professional freedoms of teachers and education employees and the right of their organisations to participate in the formulation and implementation of educational policies;
- to promote the right to education for all persons in the world, without discrimination through the establishment and protection of open, publicly funded and controlled educational systems, and academic and cultural institutions, aimed at democratic, social, cultural and economic development and the preparation of every citizen for active and responsible participation in society;
- to promote the political, social and economic conditions that are required for the realisation of the right to education in all nations;
- to foster a concept of education directed towards international understanding, tolerance, and good will, the safeguarding of peace and freedom, and respect for human dignity;
- to combat all forms of racism and of bias or discrimination in education and society due to gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, political opinion, social or economic status or national or ethnic origin;
- to give particular attention to developing the leadership role and involvement of women in society;
- to build solidarity and mutual cooperation among member organisations;
- to encourage through their organisations closer relationships among teachers and education employees in all countries and at all levels of education;
- to promote and to assist in the development of independent and democratic organisations of teachers and education employees, particularly in those countries where political, social, economic or other conditions impede the application of their human and trade union rights, the advancement of their terms and working conditions and the improvement of educational services;
- to promote unity among all independent and democratic trade unions within the educational sector and united action and cooperation with independent trade unions in other sectors;
- to contribute to the further development of the international trade union movement.

World Congress 2019

Education International is governed by its World Congress which is held every four years. It brings together delegates from all EI member organisations and observers from international organisations and intergovernmental agencies with which EI maintains strong relations.

Education International, of which ASTI is an affiliate, held its 8th Education International World Congress over 6 days in July 2019.

It was attended by then ASTI President Breda Lynch and General Secretary Kieran Christie

The World Congress adopts a four-year programme, budget and policy resolutions and elects the Executive Board, which monitors and implements EI's activities. The Executive Board meets at least once a year to steer the implementation of decisions taken at the Congress. The secretariat headquarters of EI is based in Brussels, Belgium. There are regional offices in Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The EI World Congress is the supreme decision-making body of Education International. It meets every four years. Over 1400 people attended and brought together delegates from EI member organisations in 151 countries and intergovernmental agencies with whom EI maintains on-going relations.

The World Congress determines the policies, principles of action, programme and budget of the organisation, and elects the organisation's leadership. The World Congress is composed of delegates nominated by and representing its member organisations.

The extra-congress events covered topics including LGBTI rights, Indigenous Peoples rights, Higher Education and Women's rights.

The theme for the Congress was 'Taking the Lead'.

Speakers included:

- Rashidah Shuib, Board Member, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women who spoke on leadership and social justice.
- Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi spoke on the same topic with a motivational speech on leadership, change and justice.
- Haldis Holst, EI Deputy General Secretary, gave an oral report highlighting the *EI@25 review: Review of Work to Advance Gender Equality in Education, Unions and in Society*.
- Guy Ryder of the International Labour Organisation and Maria Ressa of Rappler addressed Congress and offered words of encouragement and solidarity.

- Maria Rappler, Philippine Journalist and the editor of Rappler (2018 Time Person of the Year) addressed Congress.
- On the theme “Advancing the Profession”, in his keynote address UNESCO’s Dr Jordan Naidoo stressed the importance of having qualified teachers for attaining the that seeks inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.
- Guest speaker Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and former EI Vice-President, argued that education workers’ unions must be involved in the fight for democracy, a new social contract and climate change.

Four parallel breakout sessions in which participants had the opportunity to share and learn from each other:

- Living our values: No to harassment;
- Making it happen: Confronting privatisation;
- Taking the lead: Tackling climate change; and
- Union renewal: Unions fighting back.

The second day of the 8th EI World Congress was dedicated to democracy and the ways in which education can support and protect it. The launch of “*On Education and Democracy: 25 Lessons from the Teaching Profession*”, a book co-authored by Fred van Leeuwen, Education International General Secretary Emeritus, and Susan Hopgood, Education International President took place.

The third day of Education International’s 8th World Congress was a celebration of human rights and an expression of the collective strength of the teaching profession. The theme of the day was ensuring free quality education for all.

In a video message to EI Delegates, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, saluted teachers and reaffirmed her full support for them and their unions.

A host of Lunchtime fringe events were organised to discuss a range of topics.

These included:

- Academic freedom – how can we make it a union issue
- Education Unions take action to end school-related Gender-based violence
- Global Response in Europe
- Learning through Play
- Organising for Quality Education
- Private Tuition and Public Education
- Teacher Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Teaching for Global Competence
- The Role of unions in improving teachers’ living standards
- Union renewal and student organising

The resolutions were organised on the basis of the Congress themes, which were adopted by the Executive Board.

EI 2019 Congress passed motions on all of the following:

- Educators and their unions taking the lead
- School Leadership
- Disaster Preparedness and Response
- Strengthening equitable access to teaching, learning and research materials
- Defending Education – Sustaining the World
- Education and Research play a crucial role for the environment and the future of humanity
- Peace Education- No Arms Expenditure – Books not Bombs
- Decolonising Education
- Modern Day Slavery
- Education for Refugees
- Child labour
- Education for Democracy
- Women and Girls Rights
- Securing LGBTI Rights
- Multiple and Intersecting Forms of Discrimination
- Gender Equality
- Eliminating all forms of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in Education Unions
- Quality Public Education and Free Trade Unions are the cornerstone of Democracy
- Adoption of the EI/UNESCO Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards
- The Future of the Teaching Profession
- Teachers’ Mental Health
- Academic Freedom in Higher Education
- The relationship between Information and communications technology, teacher policy and student learning
- Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Global Citizenship Education
- Quality Early Childhood education for all
- Continue Action against child labour by fighting school dropout and working towards quality inclusive education for all
- Request for exchange of Students and Teachers at Junior, Secondary or Tertiary between EI member countries to create a global school community
- Protect the Rights of immigrant and refugee Children
- Education Union renewal: The new imperative

ASTI Contribution: ASTI General Secretary brought the congress’s attention to the use of FEMPI legislation in Ireland.

Education International: Since the outbreak of Covid-19

As governments worldwide stepped up to combat the Covid-19 outbreak, educators and their unions were doing their part to support each other, their students and their communities. EI sought

to collate information and data worldwide and advocate for the rights of teachers and their students globally.

For instance, Education International together with UNESCO, called for educators to be considered a priority group in Covid-19 vaccinations in December 2020.

Open Society Foundations, Education International and the Global Student Forum hosted a webinar on the impact of Covid-19 on education.

From the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, Education International called on global education union solidarity to help member organisations respond to the sanitary crisis and emerge stronger from it in terms of mobilising, organising and capacity-building.

As the pandemic brought education systems to a halt, Education International aimed to help its affiliates remain operational during the Covid-19 crisis, so they could play their role in the development of effective national responses to this crisis.

To this end, it established the Covid-19 Response Fund and issued an urgent action appeal for solidarity. ASTI contributed to this fund.

The Education International's Covid-19 Response Fund further supported member organisations' efforts to collect evidence on the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on education systems and communities and use it for advocacy purposes. Unions carried out surveys and consultations that allowed them, for example, to have a better grasp of online education.

On International Day of Democracy, Education International joined with the UN, civil society organisations and others to address the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

They urged governments to be transparent, responsive, and accountable in their Covid-19 response and to ensure that any emergency measures are legal, proportionate, necessary, and non-discriminatory.

International Virtual Summit of the Teaching Profession (ISTP)

The International Summit on the Teaching Profession is organised by Education International and the OECD and brings together education ministers, union leaders and other teacher leaders from education systems across the globe to review how best to improve the quality of teachers, teaching and learning.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that the tenth ISTP, hosted by the Spanish Government and scheduled for June 2020 was held virtually. Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary attended.

Learning the lessons of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on education systems and starting to discuss a roadmap for the future were the twin overarching themes of the Summit.

Nineteen Ministers for Education from OECD countries attended the Summit.

The central section of the Summit discussion focussed on three themes.

Discussion theme 1

What has been the quality of dialogue between Ministries and the teaching profession during the crisis?

Discussion theme 2

How have new measures been implemented during the crisis and how has the teaching profession responded?

Discussion theme 3

How have disadvantaged students been supported during the crisis and what support should be given?

Social dialogue emerged as a major strand of discussion. EI member organisations emphasised that consistent dialogue between unions and government were essential in order to enable a safe return for students and staff to schools.

A consistent discussion strand was on *digital learning*. Member organisations said that digital learning had limitations despite the necessary emergency teaching initiated by teachers themselves. Aspects of the discussion on this theme are set out below. For some, with systems in place, the transfer to emergency teaching had been relatively smooth. The ASTI General Secretary pointed out that in Ireland it had been difficult because of the lack of guidance, resourcing and planning.

He noted that teachers had been faced with additional workload when remote learning took place. There is a need to respect teachers' working hours and holiday periods. There needs to be a heightened focus on teacher well-being.

Another strong theme centred on *schools as the centres of their communities*. Participants emphasised that they were essential for teaching social skills. One member organisation highlighted the damaging effect on student learning and local communities of school closure which could be made permanent by austerity policies post Covid-19.

Another strong strand in the discussion was how the crisis had highlighted the importance of *teacher professionalism* and that it had won recognition.

The way the crisis had exacerbated *student disadvantage* was a strong thread in the discussion. The crisis had highlighted the deficits in education systems. The impact of poverty on student engagement was huge. Student well-being was a major issue. There was a need to focus on students' social, emotional and mental health and on the provision of psychosocial support. Child poverty levels had to be reduced.

One strand emerged on the need to *protect both education as an effective public service and its funding*. Some Member Organisations warned against the introduction and penetration of *privatisation* during and after the pandemic.

The General Secretary of Education International, David Edwards, in closing remarks emphasised the need for trust in education. He reiterated a member organisation's view that the response to the pandemic had to be characterised by humility. He said that we had all had to be in the crisis together and that there was a need to respect the pain that everyone had shared. He said that evidence must inform education and that a collaborative approach to enquiry had a much greater chance of success.

He emphasised that health and safety was of high importance for everyone in communities. He said that the teaching profession had responded to the challenge. He stressed that the quality and equity we wanted for education systems could only be built by teachers with the right tools, adequate time to train and collaborate and be supported by a climate of mutual trust between systems and schools.

Overall, member organisations and Ministers brought new insights to the process of reviving education systems, particularly in the areas of teaching profession/union/government relations, the effects of digitalisation and remote learning, student well-being and learning and research.

The issues which emerged in the Summit were social dialogue, digitalisation, blended learning, disadvantage and student well-being, schools at the centre of their communities, research, school funding and privatisation-are at the centre of Education International's policy development.

The ISTP's unique feature continues to be that it brings together Ministers and Union Leaders without the mediation of Ministry officials.

ETUCE

Established in 1977, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) is the teachers' social partner at European level and a defender of teachers' interests to the European Commission. ASTI is an affiliate.

In November 2010 a new European Structure was adopted by the Extraordinary Conference / General Assembly, at which ETUCE became an integrated part of Education International, EI. ETUCE is now the EI Regional Structure in Europe.

Following the new structure, ETUCE represents 132 teachers' unions in 50 countries. In total numbers, ETUCE represents 11 million members all over Europe.

ETUCE is composed of national trade unions of teachers and other staff in general education - early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, vocational education and training as well as higher education and research. ETUCE is also a European Trade Union Federation of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

The aims of the ETUCE are:

- To promote and implement the aims of Education International (EI) in the European Region
- To advise the EI Executive Board on policies and activities to be undertaken by EI in the European Region, including the development of responses to proposals and policies which emanate from other international bodies such as OECD or UNESCO
- To develop and maintain positive relationships with organisations in Europe which have similar aims and objectives, including ETUC and PERC/ITUC
- To determine and promote policies in relation to the Council of Europe, and any such other European inter-governmental body, which addresses issues of concern to education unions
- To promote the development of strong independent and democratic education unions throughout the European Region
- To determine and promote policies in relation to European Union (EU) and EFTA matters
- To represent member organizations in EU consultative structures and at EU meetings

- To respond to proposals, policies and decisions of the EU affecting the members of education unions in Europe
- To develop and implement projects and programs designed to further the interests of education unions in the European Region and, especially, in the EU/EFTA countries
- To be the social partner for education workers in the EU Social Dialogue process
- To be the trade union federation representing the education unions in the ETUC structures

The ETUCE Conference is convened in ordinary session at least once every four years to consider and decide on policies, principles of action and programme of ETUCE, approve the activity report, the financial report and the proposed budget, determine the supplementary membership fees, appoint the internal and external auditors and elect the President, Vice-Presidents and other members of the ETUCE Committee.

The Conference is a decision-making body composed of the ETUCE Committee and representatives from each member organisation. It provides an opportunity for representatives of all ETUCE affiliates to meet and strengthen the bonds of solidarity between teachers and other education employees. The focus of this meeting lies on the role of education trade unions in addressing challenges for the future of Europe, not the least in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the conference was organised as a virtual event in 2020. Taking into account the limitations of this way of gathering, the conference dealt with urgent constitutionally matters exclusively. Policy documents and resolutions – with the exception of the resolution on the conference theme, which was taken, will be debated and adopted at an extra-ordinary Conference which will be convened in July 2021.

At the ETUCE Regional Conference, scheduled every four years, that took place online on 2 and 3 December 2020, member organisations across the European region gathered virtually to represent the realities and challenges facing teachers and other education personnel. The European Education Trade Union movement adopted a new resolution on “Campaigning to Enhance the Teaching Profession for Solidarity, Democracy, Equality and Sustainability” and over 260 education trade union delegates from 127 national education trade unions at all levels of education from 51 European countries debated and voted on a new Work Programme 2021-2024 to face the challenges teachers and other education personnel are confronted with in these difficult times of global crisis.

Ms. Ann Piggott, ASTI President and Mr. Kieran Christie, General Secretary, attended on behalf of ASTI.

Renewing their call for increasing public investment, effective social dialogue, as well as teachers' and education personnel's professional rights and fair working conditions, delegates adopted the Resolution on Campaigning to enhance the Teaching Profession for Solidarity, Democracy Equality and Sustainability.

RESOLUTION

Campaigning to enhance the Teaching Profession for Solidarity, Democracy, Equality and Sustainability

Further to and consistent with the Resolutions adopted by the 8th EI Congress in Bangkok in 2019, the Resolutions adopted at the

ETUCE Conference in Belgrade in 2016 and at the Special Conference in Athens in 2018, this ETUCE Conference

Acknowledges that:

1. In the past decade, socio-economic inequalities, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, unequal distribution of wealth, unequal access to resources, and a prevailing individualistic approach at the expense of a collective one, have led to a number of issues that challenge the core principles of democracy, solidarity, non-discrimination, the rule of law, equality, and respect for human dignity on which our society is built. While we witness the spread of populism, right-wing and conservative political discourses as well as of neo-liberal policies, fuelling radicalisation, xenophobia, stereotypes and extremist attacks, migration as well as the fourth industrial revolution and climate emergency policies are issues that are not properly and sufficiently addressed by the European institutions and national governments.

2. In 2020, the whole world including the European region faced an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis linked to the outbreak of the Covid-19. This crisis has had and will have a major impact on the education sector, education personnel and students alike, as well as on the implementation of fundamental and trade union rights, quality of social dialogue, equality, democracy, and inclusion in Europe. Due to measures of quarantine and isolation introduced by most European governments, schools, universities and other education institutions were forced to move to remote education provision. This has raised a number of serious challenges for education personnel, from the lack of digital tools, concerns of personal data protection, academic freedom and professional autonomy, including teacher training on how to teach remotely to many issues regarding continued employment, continued pay and social benefits, workload, work-life balance, and psychosocial well-being.

3. The closing of schools and universities due to lockdowns made everyone realize how essential education institutions are and the key role they play in society. Education facilities do more than just educate learners. They offer them shelter, care, safety, structure and the opportunity for interaction with their peers and their trusted teachers and other education personnel. The crisis therefore was an eye-opener on the various roles taken on by the education department and its personnel and what is expected from them by society. Already a few months of remote teaching and learning have laid bare crucial overall learning losses and negative impacts on students' wellbeing and involvement in learning due to the absence of face-to-face classroom education. It shows clearly that although online or otherwise remote teaching can be of additional value, it can never replace face-to-face education.

4. Instead of enhancing a coherent approach in solidarity to jointly address these challenges and find common solutions, many governments are hiding behind national interests, reversing the successes that have been achieved in the field of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination and replacing them with stigmas, anti-democratic and anti-trade union processes and the elimination of human rights.

5. As Europe is spiralling into the deepest recession of the last century in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and governments are forecast to be under pressure to increase social protection and support for public health while public debt and deficit levels are rising to unprecedented heights, some European countries appear reluctant to commit to boosting public investment in education for sustainable, sufficient and equitable education systems.

6. Furthermore, the catastrophic results of the unsustainable approach to our environment and its natural resources cannot be ignored anymore. The past 19 years (since 1998) have been the hottest years on record leading to rising sea levels, more frequent natural disasters, destruction of the forests and lakes, dangerous level of air pollution, food and water shortages, biodiversity loss and all other serious consequences of the environmental crisis. Environmental problems also significantly widen socioeconomic gaps between people, countries, and regions having a more severe impact on disadvantaged social groups and economically poorer countries.

7. A number of frameworks clearly outline the aims and targets for solidarity, democracy, equality, and sustainability, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality, Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, a European Green Deal, and other international and European instruments. These principles are also outlined in the education focused policy documents, e.g. 'A New Skills Agenda for Europe', European Commission's Communications on 'Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies' and 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture'. However, the monitoring of their implementation shows that Europe is far from achieving even the bare minimum of the set-up targets. The lack of political will and public investment to implement the equality and non-discrimination strategies and policies are named among key reasons for many inequalities still existing in Europe.

Notes that:

8. All the above-mentioned tendencies have an undeniable impact on our education systems, education community and education personnel, and therefore, on education trade unions. Education systems need to develop, innovate and transform in order to be able to prepare open-minded, culturally sensitive and responsible citizens with solid democratic values, while preserving and strengthening the free provision of public education.

9. Acknowledging the diversity of the workforce, it is important that diversity is reflected in trade unions' membership and that trade unions represent a wide range of different needs of the workforce in the education sector.

10. In times of societal change, pandemic viruses, migration and the refugee crises, and rising individualism, human rights and democratic citizenship education as well as sustainable development are fundamental in educating committed, critical-thinking and active citizens and providing a sense of belonging and opportunities for active participation for all learners, especially for those disadvantaged and marginalised. We are citizens of a planet in danger. This requires comprehensive and practical curriculum and supportive policy frameworks on citizenship education. Sufficient time within the schedule, clear guidelines for addressing these issues and professional support for teachers, academics, and other education personnel are vital.

11. Correlations between different subjects and elements within the education system need to be reviewed to initiate a process of thinking differently with a view to saving not only our climate but our planet as a whole. We, as a society need to adopt a significantly more sustainable way of life and this must start and be reflected in education.

12. Teachers, academics, and other education personnel also face an increasing diversity among learners coming from different realities, languages, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and often feel unprepared not only to address the needs of all learners but also to deal with such challenges, as personal identity conflicts, controversial discussions, fake news and influence of social media on students' minds, and many other.

13. The increasing diversity also requires schools and education systems in which all learners of different socioeconomic, language and cultural backgrounds can meet each other, interact and learn from each other. Especially in schools where learners from disadvantaged and very diverse backgrounds are concentrated, it is difficult to offer equal chances to learners and to address the challenges they face. This is a major issue still not addressed well enough, not only in terms of teacher training, but also in terms of financing of education and the attractiveness of the profession.

14. Education institutions and an education sector built on principles of equal opportunities, democratic governance, enhancement of diversity of views and backgrounds, academic freedom and professional autonomy for teachers and other education personnel, are inherent elements of the sustainable development of education and of the European society at large, and are fundamental for ensuring that the pronounced principles of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination in education and the teaching profession lead to concrete results and do not remain a mere declaration of rights.

15. For high quality, inclusive and sustainable education systems based on principles of equality and democracy, an attractive teaching profession is of utmost importance with high status in the society, decent salaries and pensions, decent working conditions including adequate workload, continuous professional development adapted to teachers' needs, supportive, safe and healthy workplaces, both from a physical and psychosocial perspective, and attractive career opportunities. An attractive teaching profession also means more equal and diverse education personnel.

16. Digitalisation in the education sector and remote teaching are set to create a wide array of new challenges for the teaching profession and the education community as a whole. Notable areas of concern include the development of teaching and learning policies and practices adequate for the digital era, questions surrounding the impact of the use of new technologies on the employment and working conditions of education employees, privatisation and commercialisation of digital teaching and learning tools, personal data protection and issues surrounding the use of Artificial Intelligence in education systems, with particular regards to ethical concerns. The Covid-19 pandemic and a forced transition to remote teaching has impacted and exposed a number of major issues related to the working time, workload, work-life balance, and health and safety (including psychosocial wellbeing) of education personnel that need to be addressed to ensure adequate and attractive working conditions in the education sector.

17. Further to this, the introduction of, and increasing pressure, to use digital tools to assist teaching and learning purposes leads to growing concerns for the future of the teaching profession. Indeed, digital technologies adapted to the education sector are being sold to governments and education institutions as innovative teaching techniques, and risk being misused as an alternative to teachers. This would severely endanger the quality of education, as teachers, and teacher/student interaction are central to developing knowledge on a specific subject, as well as equality, critical thinking, and social and emotional skills. The Covid-19 crisis clearly showed

that teachers are at the core of the education and learning process. While large parts of the education systems across Europe closed schools, universities and other education institutions, and moved their coursework and teaching online, education personnel showed an extraordinary flexibility and ability to adapt to new circumstances and new ways of teaching to maintain the pedagogical link with students and the connection with parents and communities. It is therefore of utmost importance that digital technologies, when introduced into education institutions and teaching and learning methods, do not lead to the deprofessionalisation of educators, and fully respect their professional autonomy and academic freedom. Instead, education professionals should be involved and supported by public investment in developing technologies, digital tools, and teaching content for education and in taking decisions on when and how to use them.

18. The introduction of new, digital, and innovative tools in teaching and learning practices requires an adequate level of public funding. Failing to address this issue would deepen existing inequalities in access to quality education, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic where the digital divide and unequal access to distance teaching and learning material was closely linked to the socio-economic and geographical background of students and teachers. Already, governments across Europe advocate for an increase in public/private partnerships as a means to integrate digital tools in education. The collective reflection around these aforementioned points and digitalisation in education in the wider sense will require the inclusion of, as a central point of focus, the expertise, views and experiences of education trade unions at all levels.

19. Social dialogue is an inherent mechanism of the democratic society. Europe can only be a place of social progress, social justice and economic development, when the rights of education personnel to participate, through their representative education trade unions in the process of consultation, proposal creation and negotiations on decent work and fair working conditions, design and implementation of education policies, is respected and promoted. Furthermore, as an effective, meaningful and inclusive mechanism governing relations between the education workforce and employers, as well as governments, at all levels, namely local, regional, national and European, social dialogue remains vital to the achievement of sustainable development across Europe. Respecting the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, supporting the social partners in their capacity to engage in social dialogue are pre-conditions to unleash Europe's inclusive and sustainable growth potential and to address the far-reaching social consequences of the crisis in education and in society.

20. The principle of solidarity is at the core of trade unions' existence and trade union rights. In the face of such threats as commercialisation and privatisation of education, populism and right-wing political discourse, climate crisis and attacks on trade union rights, education trade unions should collaborate not only with each other at regional, national, European and global level, but also within the whole education trade union movement and with other relevant stakeholders in education. Furthermore, the burden set by the need to adapt to a fast-changing society should not be borne by the education sector alone: it is a shared responsibility of all actors in civil society.

21. Principles of solidarity, equality and enhanced diversity are also crucial for the structure of education trade unions themselves. With a view to regaining their place in the society and strengthening their voice and role, education trade unions need to be more active by addressing the needs of all education personnel, promoting diversity

of views and backgrounds among their members, and by engaging with those who are most marginalised or under-represented in the education sector. Asserts the commitment of ETUCE Member Organisations to:

22. Continue promoting the central role of teaching in education within European and national education policies as well as in their implementation;

23. Strengthening the work on the issues of equality, inclusion, and sustainable development in the education and teaching profession and enhancing these topics through social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels;

24. Working towards strengthening social dialogue and trade union rights, and ensuring that social partners are fully recognised as equal partners in the sectoral social dialogue in education at all levels and at all times, even during crises and extraordinary circumstances;

25. Demanding an increase in investment in public education and the design of public education budgets in a manner that provides sufficient, predictable and sustainable public resources, alongside demanding governments' accountability, public scrutiny and transparency of education budgets to assess the equitable distribution of public resources and to ensure that they meet the needs of those most marginalised in our society;

26. Mobilising against all attempts to expose education systems to marketisation, privatisation and commercialisation, that pose a threat to the broader social and collective objectives of education, such as those of equity, social cohesion and inclusion.

TEACHING COUNCIL

New Council Membership:

The membership of the Council changed in April 2020 after the election of sixteen teacher members. The teachers who are union nominees to the Council and all other nominees were nominated in 2018 to continue to 2022 so there would be some continuity of membership into this new 2020-2024 term.

ASTI now have five seats on the Council and the TUI have six.

One seat went to the ETB sector from the Voluntary Secondary sector due to changes in sector size ahead of the last elections and an additional seat of the eleven post-primary seats went to TUI for the same reason. The ASTI and TUI contest the one seat for the C&C sector on Council each time these elections occur and this seat went very narrowly to the TUI in this Council.

Niall Duddy and Seán O'Neill were successfully re-elected and Kathleen Burke was newly elected as an ASTI member on this Council.

ASTI representation on committees in the new Council:

Niall Duddy and John Holian are on Registration Committee.

Kathleen Burke and Seán O'Neill are on Education Committee.

John Holian is on Finance Committee.

Niall Duddy and Noelle Moran are on the Investigating Committee.

Kathleen Burke and Seán O'Neill are on Disciplinary Committee

Noelle Moran and Seán O'Neill are on the Executive Committee.

Seán O'Neill was elected Chairperson of the Education Committee for this Council term and Noelle Moran was elected Deputy Chairperson of the Council until 2022 when local rotation arrangements between the ASTI and TUI mean TUI will take up this position.

All of the above ASTI members of Council are members of various panels and working groups of the Council also.

The new Council has been meeting remotely during 2020 and continues to do so into 2021. The first Council meeting of the new Council took place in June 2020.

Registration:

The following figures are from January 2021, the most recent available at the time of writing. They show that there are 108,957 teachers registered, 46,629 of those are post-primary teachers. 96% of registration renewals were done online during 2020. 1,712 teachers lapsed from the register for non-payment, 43 of those returned to the register later. There have been 3,421 Newly Qualified Teachers added to the register this year. Registration regulations have been going through a series of drafts and re-drafts and should be ready for approval sometime later this year. The Registration Committee approved a commencement date of 1 January 2021 for two new post-primary subjects, Politics & Society and Computer Science. The Committee agreed a commencement date of 1 January 2023 for the introduction of the revised subject requirements for the other post-primary subjects. The register replacement programme is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2021. The new registration database will be known as Novus. Registration renewals are ongoing. Registration Panel deals with conditional registration and teachers who have expiring conditions are advised to engage fully with the Council in order to retain registration. There are generally 100-200 cases with expiring conditions each month. Communication is issued to teachers with expiring conditions 4 months in advance. Registration Panel met 8 times during 2020 and considered 112 cases.

Vetting:

22,173 Vetting Disclosures were received from the National Vetting Bureau in 2020. The re-vetting process is continuing with teachers receiving five months advance notice of their re-vetting deadlines. For example, in October 2020, 8,807 teachers were notified of their vetting renewal month of March 2021.

Cosán:

Cosán is still in the developmental stage. Workshops for schools have been developed by the Education Centres. There has been one Working Group meeting held since the lock-down. There are two ASTI members, Niall Duddy and Seán O'Neill, on the Working Group.

Droichead:

Droichead is now the sole route of induction for Newly Qualified Teachers. There are 3,051 teachers in 1,464 schools on the Droichead programme, 1,523 of those are in Primary and 533 Post Primary schools. The Droichead Quality Assurance programme is in place to see how well Droichead is working. An online survey has been issued to Droichead schools to seek feedback on experiences of the Droichead programme. PST training for

Droichead is online this year. Registration Committee recently approved special transitional arrangements to make provision for Droichead in situations of school closures, certified sick leave and periods of self-isolation.

Fitness to Teach:

At time of writing there were approximately 35 live complaints before the Investigating Committee. These complaints are at various stages of investigation. Some take longer than others to process for various reasons such as seeking more information, difficulty in obtaining information, ambiguity regarding if local procedures have been exhausted, granting a request for deferral or waiting on the outcome of court procedures.

Most cases do not make it beyond Investigating Committee.

The Investigating Committee has eleven members – seven of whom are teachers. Niall Duddy and Noelle Moran are ASTI members on this committee. It is written into the Teaching Council Acts that the Deputy Chairperson of the Council shall chair the Investigating Committee and as such Noelle Moran chairs this committee currently.

How the process works:

When a complaint comes into the Teaching Council the Director of Council can refuse the complaint on four grounds namely if the complaint is deemed frivolous, vexatious, bad faith or abuse of process. However, a complainant has 21 days in which they can appeal the Director's decision. In the event of an appeal this complaint will come before the Investigating Committee on this appeal.

Regarding any complaint which comes before the Investigating Committee there are initial decisions which must be taken:

- Does the complaint relate to the teacher's fitness to teach?
- and
- Have Section 24 procedures been exhausted? In some cases, it becomes apparent that the Section 24 procedures have not been commenced or are not contemplated by the school and in such cases, they are deemed exhausted.

If a complaint does not relate to a teacher's fitness to teach, or if a complaint is the subject of Section 24 procedures at the school it can be refused by the Investigating Committee at this point.

Regarding the above considerations:

1. Schools sometimes choose not to contemplate local procedures and legally they cannot be compelled to do so which can result in cases being dealt with at regulator level which would be better placed in the Teaching Council's view addressed and resolved at local level.
2. Once it is established that the allegation, if true, would relate to fitness to teach and that there are no school procedures in train the Act specifies that the Teaching Council 'shall' investigate. Once the two conditions above are satisfied the Investigating Committee is compelled to investigate the complaint.

Disciplinary / Inquiry Stage:

Twelve complaints have been referred to Disciplinary for inquiry since the commencement of the Fitness to Teach function in July 2016. This is a very small percentage of the total number of complaints made to the Teaching Council which shows the vast majority of allegations end without the teacher having a case to answer.

Five inquiries have been completed to date and the Disciplinary Committee is working through the other cases. A two-day inquiry took place in hybrid format in late October. The Inquiry Panel was present in Maynooth and all other parties participated remotely.

After an inquiry takes place the full Council takes the decision on what information should be published on the Teaching Council website regarding findings and decisions in the inquiry. Two such decisions were taken in December 2020 and are available to view on the Teaching Council website beneath the Fitness to Teach tab.

Section 28 of the Education Act 1998:

The difficulty in relation to the non-implementation of Section 28 of the 1998 Education Act still remains. Section 28 compels school management to employ procedures to deal with complaints at local level. These procedures are separate to Section 24 procedures.

As a result, until such time as Section 28 is commenced, a teacher can be complained about to the Teaching Council without any attempts to resolve the issue at school level.

The Teaching Council, unions and other bodies represented on the Council have written to different Ministers for Education in this regard over the past number of years with no resolution to date.

The last Minister for Education published the Student and Parent Charter Bill 2019 and it was the then Minister's intention that part of that Bill would statutorily commence local procedures in schools to fulfil the implementation of Section 28.

ASTI members of the Teaching Council are very aware that our union is fully supportive of putting in place a complaints procedure that would ensure that complaints would, in the main, be dealt with at school level without the need to complain to the Teaching Council.

ASTI members of Council are also very aware that there are many aspects of the 2019 Bill to which ASTI is opposed. ASTI members of Council will continue to highlight the difficulty of the lack of Section 28 procedures for our members who the subject of complaints while welcoming and fully supporting our union's call for the separating out of the local complaints procedures from the Charter.

Céim:

Céim, Standards for Initial Teacher Education programmes, was approved by Council in October 2020. This was developed after a lengthy consultation process with input from the relevant stakeholders.

Féilte:

The Féilte event was held online this year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

John Holian
 Noelle Moran
 ASTI Nominees to the Teaching Council

BRITISH AND IRISH GROUP OF TEACHER UNIONS

The Presidents and General Secretaries of the teacher unions associated with BIGTU met in June, September and November 2020 via Zoom.

Unions who participate in the BIGTU meetings are ASTI, TUI, INTO, IFUT, Ulster Teachers' Union, Scottish Secondary Teachers' Union, University and College Union (UK), Educational Institute of Scotland, National Education Union (UK) and NASUWT (UK).

The BIGTU group of unions seeks to exchange information on developments in their respective jurisdictions. A co-ordinated approach for meetings of Education International and ETUCE is sought.

BIGTU has recommended that EI would launch more campaigns and focus on privatisation of education, growth of artificial intelligences and the implementation of good governance. It was also agreed that precarious work also needs to be addressed by EI.

ASTI General Secretary, Kieran Christie, gave updates on issues relating to unequal pay for post 2010 entrants to teaching in the Republic of Ireland.

The most dominant item for discussion at BIGTU meetings in the past year was the challenges across the systems posed by the Covid-19 epidemic. It was useful to hear and share experiences and approaches regarding schools reopening together with remote teaching and learning in each jurisdiction.

There was also discussion on the impact of unrest in number of countries and the working conditions of teachers in those countries.

Brexit was discussed at length. As a standing item on BIGTU meeting agendas, its potential impact on the education systems in the jurisdictions across the British Isles could be immense. Issues related to mutual recognition of qualifications, trade union membership are to the fore and of major concern.

The British and Irish Group of Teachers Unions nominated ASTI General Secretary to serve on the Education International OECD Advisory Committee during the year.

The mandate of that committee includes examination of aspects of Globalisation and the recognition of education as a key instrument to enhance social and economic development.

OECD'S profile and influence on the education policies of many countries has increased significantly as a result of its key international studies including Education at Glance, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS), and the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). The OECD's influence over domestic policy is also reflected in its decision to act as an education consultancy for some member states.

ASTI is an affiliate of Education International. Since the creation of Education International in 1993, meetings have been convened of member organisations in the OECD countries on a regular basis with the purpose of discussing education policy developments in their countries and to develop common strategies to meet ensuing challenges.

The EI's OECD Advisory Committee was established by the Executive Board in 2011 in order to provide more focused guidance for EI work on the OECD's activities and work programme

The tasks of the Committee are:

- to advise the Executive Board on EI advocacy at the OECD and on responses to initiatives and policies on education developed by OECD, and to initiate relevant research, including collecting information on best practices and reforms.
- to help ensure that the work of OECD is monitored and evaluated.

RSTA

ASTI continues to enjoy excellent relations with the Retired Secondary Teachers Association.

In keeping with our desire to continue to nurture this valuable association, a meeting is held annually between the Officers of ASTI and the Officers of RSTA. This allows for discussion of matters of mutual interest.

Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, ASTI provided use of room facilities for meetings during the year. ASTI also hosted very successful functions for RSTA members. It is to be hoped that a return to normality in the coming period of time will allow for resumption of such provision.

The RSTA officers have also expressed delight that the following motion was passed at ASTI Convention 2019.

That the ASTI support retired secondary teachers by giving effect to the long-standing policy of pay and pension parity: That, when increases to the salary of secondary teachers are being processed, the ASTI shall as a matter of course raise a claim that a corresponding pro rata increase be applied to retired secondary teachers' pensions.

ASTI was very instrumental in ensuring that pension parity is to be maintained for the duration the current pay agreement.

Among other issues raised by the RSTA with ASTI have been the need for pensioner representation on national fora and representation on the Retired Workers Committee of ICTU.

RSTA has joined in the campaign to secure the appointment of a Commissioner for older people and asked for ASTI support. There is already such an office in place in Northern Ireland.

The RSTA is affiliated to the Alliance of Retired Public Servants. The Alliance represents retired public servants in pension negotiations with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

ASTI provides an annual financial subvention to the RSTA.

POLITICAL LOBBYING

The ASTI is a registered lobbyist and lobbies on behalf of members on issues of concern to teachers.

The union engaged in lobbying activities in relation to a number of issues in 2020, including:

- Covid-19 safety
- Equal pay for post 2010 entrants
- Special needs education
- Teacher workload and wellbeing
- Curricular change
- Investment in education
- The student and parent charter
- Pension parity
- Flat-rate expenses

The ASTI conducted two grass roots lobbying campaigns in 2020. In the run up to the General Election 2020 ASTI members lobbied their local politicians on a range of issues including equal pay and investment in education. The ASTI also participated in a joint campaign with the INTO and TUI in November 2020 which involved members lobbying their local TDs on the issue of post 2010 entrants' pay.

All lobbying activity co-ordinated or undertaken by ASTI Head Office is reported to the Standards in Public Office Commission in accordance with the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (except where an activity is exempted under the Act). The ASTI's submissions to the Standards in Public Office Commission can be viewed at www.lobbying.ie.

ICTU DISABILITY COMMITTEE

The 27-member Disability Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is charged with promoting the interests of persons with disability; both within the workplace and in wider society.

The ASTI is represented on the Committee by Paul O'Reilly and by the Deputy General Secretary.

ICTU DISPUTES

In June 2017, ASTI submitted a complaint to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) regarding some losses of membership. The kernel of the complaint revolved around the contention that, under ICTU rules, the Teachers Union of Ireland were debarred from recruiting any ASTI members while we were in dispute with our employers.

An ICTU Disputes Committee was established to investigate the complaint. The Disputes Committee mandated that a full independent cross matching exercise of names of teachers who left ASTI and may have joined TUI be carried out by an audit firm. Their final report is set out on the following page.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Disputes Committee Report 01/18

Parties:	ASTI and TUI
Date of Hearing(s):	27 November 2017 and 27 February 2018
Dispute:	ASTI allege that TUI accepted into membership members of the ASTI in breach of the requirements of the Constitution of Congress
Committee:	Phil Ní Sheaghdha (Chair and Executive Council Member), Adrian Kane (SIPTU) and Ian McArdle (CWU).

-
- 1. Introduction.**
 - The dispute relates to a claim by the ASTI that the TUI accepted into membership former members of the ASTI in breach of the requirements of the Constitution of Congress.
 - 3. Background.**
 - In 2016 both the TUI and the ASTI were in dispute with the Department of Education and Skills on the issue of new entrant pay and on Junior Certificate reform. During that year the TUI negotiated a package of measures which allowed that union to remain within the public service pay agreement. However, the ASTI continued to be in dispute with its employer. In 2017, as part of their dispute, ASTI members took industrial action. This resulted in the Department of Education and Skills withholding certain payments to members of the ASTI.
 - The ASTI claim that during the period from 1 January 2017 until the 10 June 2017, 1,235 members resigned from the ASTI and sought membership of the TUI. They further claimed that, as they were in dispute with their employer at that time, no other union was entitled to enrol into membership members of the ASTI as to do so is contrary to the Constitution of Congress. They further claim that the TUI did not consult them about applications from former members of the ASTI.
 - On the 29 June 2017, the ASTI wrote to Congress complaining that the TUI had breached the terms of the Congress Constitution. A preliminary meeting between the parties took place on the 14 August 2017. As there was no resolution of the

dispute at this meeting, a Disputes Committee was asked investigate the claim made by the ASTI. The Disputes Committee held two meetings with the parties on the 27 November 2017 and on the 27 February 2018 respectively.

7. Meeting 27 November 2017

8. At the meeting held on the on the 27 November 2017 the ASTI provided the Disputes Committee with a written submission.

9. The ASTI submission can be summarised as follows:

- that the TUI was in breach of the Congress Constitution because it had admitted into membership members of the ASTI while the ASTI was in dispute with its employer;
- the ASTI claimed that TUI had accepted ASTI members into membership of the TUI without any attempt to consult the ASTI. They offered two examples to support this claim;
- the submission sought to demonstrate that in the first six months of 2017 the membership of the TUI had grown substantially and that the membership of the ASTI declined. The ASTI referenced deduction at source (DAS) data obtained from the Department of Education and Skills by way of parliamentary question.

10. The TUI did not make a written submission at this meeting. It did make some preliminary remarks in response to the ASTI submission but undertook to provide a written submission responding to the points made by ASTI.

11. One of the important considerations for the Disputes Committee was to seek to establish if in fact a dispute existed between the ASTI and their employer. At this meeting, it was agreed by both the ASTI and TUI, that for the purposes of the Disputes Committees deliberations, the ASTI was in dispute with their employer from the period of the 1 January 2017 until 10 June 2017. This period of time was then established by the Dispute Committee as the agreed period in dispute between the ASTI and TUI - hereafter referred to as the agreed period.

12. During this meeting, the ASTI provided the Disputes Committee with a list of members of the ASTI who had left that union in the agreed period. The ASTI requested that the Disputes Committee seek to establish if the people listed were now members of the TUI.

13. The TUI agreed at the meeting that they would fully co-operate with the Disputes Committee in any examination of the ASTI list.

14. Audit by Mazars

15. With the agreement of the parties to the dispute, in December 2018 the Disputes Committee asked Mazars to carry out an audit to establish if any of the names listed by the people on the ASTI list were now members of the TUI.

16. On the 8 January 2018, Mazars reported the following to the Disputes Committee:

- the total number of names listed by the ASTI was 1,235;
- In 1,026 of these or 83.1%, the name and school were fully matched on the TUI database;
- 33 of these or 2.7%, partially matched (name only) on the TUI database;
- 10 of these or 0.8%, partially matched (name only) on the TUI database but joined TUI outside the agreed period; and
- 166 of these or 13.4% were not matched on the TUI database.

17. Correspondence to the Parties

18. On the 24 January 2018, the Disputes Committee received a written submission from the TUI. This submission was a response to that made by the ASTI at the meeting on the 27 November 2017.

19. On the 24 January 2018, the Disputes Committee provided a copy of the TUI submission together with Mazars report to the ASTI. They also supplied the TUI with a copy of the Mazars report.

20. The Disputes Committee also invited the parties to a further meeting on Tuesday 27 February 2018.

21. TUI Submission

The TUI submission can be summarised as follows:

- The submission detailed the losses that ASTI members continued to endure as a result of their repudiation of public service pay agreements;
- The submission argued that at all times the TUI acted in good faith and did not seek to attract, entice or recruit members of the ASTI. It does not accept that it acted in breach of the Congress Constitution in the manner alleged by the ASTI;
- The submission argued that the TUI had been vigilant in respect of applications for membership from members of the ASTI and arising from this they had discovered a problem with their online membership application system which they had since rectified;
- The submission places particular significance on the difference in the wording between paragraph 46(b) and 46(c) of the Congress Constitution. Paragraph

46(b) reads as follows *“No member or ex-member of another union should be accepted until the Union has been consulted”* while paragraph 46(c) reads *“no member of another union should be accepted when under discipline, engaged in a trade union dispute or in arrears with contributions, save only with the consent of the other union”*. They claim that because there is no reference to “ex-member” in paragraph 46(c) they are free to take into membership ex-members of the ASTI even if that union is engaged in an industrial dispute.

- The TUI is of the view that what this case illustrates, more than anything else, is the unsatisfactory, anachronistic and occasionally absurd situation of having two unions representing teachers in an environment where both unions are present in a large and increasing number of dual schools and where both attend the same national negotiation forum. Both unions have policy positions that favour moving towards a single union for second level teachers.

22. Meeting held on 27 February 2018

- 23.** At this meeting the ASTI was asked if it wished to comment on the submission that had been made by the TUI.

24. The ASTI made the following response to the TUI submission;

- The ASTI is not disputing the bona fides of the TUI and the two unions have a good working relationship.
- The ASTI does not dispute that external financial incentives circular 0045/2016 may have been a motivating factor for some people in seeking membership of the TUI.
- The ASTI complained that at no stage did the TUI consult them about membership applications they had received from former members of the ASTI. The ASTI had always complied with this requirement of the Congress Constitution.

25. During this meeting, the TUI advised the Disputes Committee that they had reviewed the applications of the people on the ASTI list who are now members of the TUI. The TUI stated that from this review they had established the following:

- 607 people indicated on the application form there was no previous membership of another union;
- 350 people indicated on the application form that they had resigned or left the ASTI or their membership had lapsed;
- 121 may have been members of the ASTI at the time of application;
- 53 had applied for membership of the TUI outside the agreed period;
- For 22 people no application form could be found and no further information is available.

- 26.** The Disputes Committee at the meeting on the 27 February 2018 asked both unions to have bi-lateral discussions. The Disputes Committee understands that discussions did take place between the unions. However, on the 5 March 2018, the ASTI informed the Disputes Committee that in their view no resolution could be found through discussions between the unions. On the 5 March 2018, the TUI informed the Disputes Committee that it had hoped that a resolution might have been possible through bi-lateral ASTI/TUI engagement. Regrettably, that proved not to be the case.
- 27. Disputes Committee Findings**
- 28.** Arising from the material provided to the Disputes Committee by the unions, from the discussions that took place and from the work undertaken by Mazars, the Disputes Committee is in a position to make the following findings:
- 29.** The Disputes Committee noted that both unions accepted that during the agreed period incentives existed that motivated some people to seek to transfer from the ASTI to the TUI. In this regard, both the ASTI and the TUI drew attention to the unhelpful effect of the trade union identification form at Appendix 1 of circular letter 0045/23016. The Disputes Committee is concerned as to the perceived effect on industrial relations of any financial incentive aligned to trade union membership.
- 30.** It is agreed by both unions that between the 1 January 2017 and the 10 June 2017 the ASTI was involved in an industrial dispute with the Department of Education and Skills.
- 31.** Both unions indicated that they accepted the Mazars Report. This report showed, following an independent audit, that in the agreed period at least 1,059 members of the ASTI sought membership of the TUI and were admitted into membership of that union.
- 32.** The provisions of the Congress Constitution require that when a union receives an application for membership from a person who is, or was a member of another union, there is a requirement on that union to consult with the other union before consideration is given to admitting them into membership. The Disputes Committee finds that the TUI has failed to meet their obligations in this regard as stipulated in the Congress Constitution.
- 33. Decision**
- 34.** The Disputes Committee has given very careful consideration to the issues that have arisen in this dispute. The Disputes Committee is conscious of the excellent working

relationship that exists between the two unions concerned and more generally amongst the unions in the education sector. The Disputes Committee, in framing its decision, is mindful of the need to ensure the continuation of good and constructive working relationships between the unions in the sector.

35. Notwithstanding this, it is clear to the Disputes Committee that the TUI did not adhere to the requirements of the Congress Constitution.
36. In light of this, the Disputes Committee has decided as follows:
 - That the TUI write to the 1,059 members concerned and advise them that they have been admitted into membership of the TUI in breach of the rules of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and that they can apply to re-join the ASTI.
 - The ASTI will admit into membership any person within this category seeking to re-join.
 - 6 weeks after the TUI has corresponded with the members concerned, the General Secretary of Congress will meet with both unions. The purpose of this meeting is to establish how many of the 1,059 members re-joined the ASTI. Arising from this the TUI is required to make a financial settlement with the ASTI, which reflects the loss of membership subscription involved, if any. The General Secretary of Congress will be available to assist in determining the structure and size of the settlement if required by the parties;
 - The General Secretary of Congress will also require confirmation and verification from both unions of the procedures in place in relation to the transfer of members, which the Dispute Committee now understand comply with the requirements of the Congress Constitution.
 - The Disputes Committee notes that both the ASTI and the TUI have agreed, by virtue of motions passed at annual conferences, to develop closer working relationships and to achieve over time the goal of 'teacher unity'. The Disputes Committee is also mindful of the recommendations of the two reports of the Trade Union Commission and the specific reference to the potential for closer co-operation between the teacher unions. In light of this, the General Secretary of Congress is available to work with the parties to examine how their shared policy of achieving 'teacher unity' might be realised.

The Disputes Committee report was adopted by the Executive Council of ICTU.

Standing Committee considered the Disputes Committee report at its meeting of 26th and 27th April 2018.

It was decided that ASTI would not appeal.

Standing Committee authorised a re-recruitment campaign. Each teacher concerned was written to and invited to re-join ASTI.

Meanwhile, as the decision of the Disputes Committee, adopted by

Executive Council of ICTU, was open to appeal by both parties, the TUI lodged an appeal.

A further disputes committee was set up and undertook its work over the summer of 2018.

It reported in September 2018. The appeal by TUI was not upheld. This second ICTU Disputes Committee concurred with the first, that the acceptance of such members by TUI “*did not adhere to the requirements of the Congress Constitution.*”

Its report is set out on the following page.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Disputes Committee Report 02/18

Parties:	ASTI and TUI
Date of Hearing:	31 st July, 2018
Dispute:	Appeal by TUI Against the Findings of the Dispute Committee Report 01/18
Committee:	Ciaran Rohan, AHCPS, (Chair and Executive Council Member) Paddy Kavanagh, Connect Trade Union (Executive Council Member) and Anne Speed, Unison (Executive Council Member)

1. Background

The hearing was arranged for the purposes of hearing an appeal by the TUI of Disputes Committee Report 01/18. Disputes Committee Report 01/18 was concerned with the allegation that the TUI accepted into membership members of the ASTI in breach of the requirements of the Constitution of Congress.

Disputes Committee Report 01/18 was approved by the Congress Executive in April 2018 and following the approval of the report, the TUI advised Congress that it wished to appeal this decision. The Appeal was granted at the Executive Council meeting held in April 2018 and a new Disputes Committee was formed.

2. Preliminary Matters

There were some preliminary matters which were required to be decided on ahead of considering the substantive issues. This were as follows:

- A letter dated 14th June, 2018 to the Chair of the Disputes Committee from the General Secretary of ASTI seeking that the Board consider that persons referred to in the Mazars report, which was considered during the first Disputes Committee Report, were consequently excluded from the consideration and findings by the Disputes Committee on the basis that their recruitment into membership of TUI occurred outside the agreed period, and that ASTI had information that a number of others whose names were not submitted within the process may also have been so recruited.
- A letter dated 30th July, 2018 to the Chair of the Disputes Committee from the General Secretary of TUI in response to the letter sent to the Chair from the

General Secretary of ASTI outlined above, outlining that as set out in paragraph 45 (xiv) of the Constitution of the ICTU, if a party to the Report of a Disputes Committee “considers that the Report adopted by the Executive Council should be the subject of appeal...such appeal should be lodged with the Executive Council within one month of the date of issuance of the adopted Report”.

- The Disputes Committee noted that that in relation to the Preliminary Matters, as the correspondence from the ASTI dated the 14th June 2018, was outside the time limit in relation to reference to Disputes Committee Report 1/18 and therefore the only appeal which would be considered was that furnished by the TUI dated 9th July 2018. The ASTI was advised that the matters raised in the letter dated 14 June, would have to be the subject of a separate complaint.

3. TUI Case

The TUI submitted a document outlining the grounds for their appeal and this was supported by oral evidence. The grounds of the TUI appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The TUI contends that, in framing its decision, the Disputes Committee did not take sufficient account of or failed to take cognisance of certain important facts.
- The TUI contended that the Disputes Committee Report is incorrect in relation to stating when ASTI was in dispute with the Department of Education & Skills on the issue of New Entrant Pay and on Junior Certificate Reform in 2016.
- The TUI also contended that at no point (in June/July 2016 or subsequently) did ASTI communicate with TUI that they were going to take any form of industrial action.
- The TUI contended that at no point did they state that they were “free to take into membership ex-members of the ASTI even if that union is engaged in industrial action”. The TUI also contended that the ASTI had claimed that at no stage did the TUI consult them about membership applications which they had received from former members of the ASTI.
- The TUI contended that there was an increase of over 16,000 teachers into the system since 2011 across all levels and a recruitment process was ongoing. However, they had discovered a problem with their online membership application system which had since been rectified. This issue was brought to light by a branch of the TUI and not TUI Head Office. The TUI claimed that no

suspicions were raised by the increase in membership including those from voluntary secondary schools.

- The TUI contended that the Disputes Committee did not take cognisance of the fact that of persons applying for membership of the TUI, 607 persons out of a total of 1059, had indicated that they had “no previous membership of another union”.
- The TUI contended that there could also be an issue in relation to ‘Data Protection’ as under legal constraints that exist in respect of the data protection requirements that apply to trade unions, it would not have been open to the union to share data collected on/from the application forms of these persons with another union or third party, without the prior consent of the applicant whose data it was.
- The TUI claimed that the Disputes Committee Report does not take sufficient cognisance of the actual implication of the findings/decision (paragraph 36) for unions that represent the same grade and/or have a presence in the same workplace and where an applicant indicates that he/she is not or was not previously a member of another union would have to be the subject of consultation with the other relevant union/s in that workplace.
- The TUI contended that they did not seek to influence the decision of those who left ASTI to join TUI and that this decision was taken entirely on a personal basis which had nothing to do with the TUI.
- The TUI acknowledged that there is an issue to be addressed in respect of some 277 persons whose applications indicated current or previous membership of ASTI.
- The TUI contended that they had offered no inducements to persons who had left ASTI to join TUI. They contended that the Committee did not take enough cognisance of the fact that incentives which came with membership of the TUI came about from pay restoration and other measures under the LRA agreement which included avoiding punitive measures under the FEMPI legislation.
- The TUI contended that insufficient cognisance was not taken of the fact that it had sought advice from ICTU in relation to clarification regarding “what appears to be an ambiguity in paragraph 46 of the Constitution and Standing Orders of the ICTU”.

- In summary, the TUI contended that insufficient cognisance or account were taken of salient facts and that, as a result, the findings/decision set out in Disputes Committee Report 01/18 are inappropriate, and disproportionately severe, insofar as they apply to the TUI.

4. Response of ASTI

ASTI provided the Disputes Committee with a detailed submission. This was supported by oral evidence during the hearing. The main points can be summarised as follows:

- ASTI in the course of their submission observed that the original Disputes Committee was fully cognisant of all the relevant matters when they made their finding and that in submitting the appeal that the TUI was seeking to re-run the original Disputes Committee.
- In relation to paragraph 4 and 5 of the Disputes Committee Report, ASTI stated that there was indeed a minor error of fact, and indeed differences of interpretation as to the chronology of the dispute over Teachers' Pay. However, ASTI contended that these minor errors and differences were not of sufficient weight to cast doubt upon the overall Disputes Committee findings.
- ASTI stated that TUI had raised issues regarding the ASTI application form. These issues had been dealt with as soon as they had been raised. There were no transgressions of ICTU rules arising from any weaknesses or omissions in the ASTI application form.
- The original Disputes Committee had considered the case of 607 applicants to TUI who had stated on their application form that they were not in any union, when in fact they were in membership of ASTI. Those statements, from those teachers, were not credible and ASTI believed that the original Committee accepted this.
- The TUI's statement that many people had been admitted in error through a lacuna in their computer system is difficult to reconcile with information from the Department of Education & Skills which showed that TUI had a 600% increase in membership in the Voluntary Secondary School sector in the first six months of 2017 and an increase of 1294% in the first nine months of the year. The ASTI expressed surprise that such a rate of increase excited so little curiosity in TUI Head Office.

- Of the 1059 ASTI members who found their way in to the TUI in this period, not one was the subject of consultation between TUI and ASTI as required by Clause 46 (a) of the ICTU Constitution.
- For all these reasons, the Appeals Committee was being asked to uphold the original Disputes Committee Report in its entirety.

5. Findings

The Disputes Committee accepts that the figures under consideration are those figures as provided for by Mazars.

This Disputes Appeals Committee does not accept that the original Dispute's Committee decision did not take cognisance of all the facts raised in the TUI appeal. While there were some minor errors of fact contained in the Disputes Committee report, these were not of enough significance as to lead the Disputes Committee to alter the original decision of the Disputes Committee as outlined in Disputes Committee Report 1/18.

6. Decision

The Disputes Committee has given detailed consideration to the oral and written evidence presented at the hearing and in light of this upholds the findings in Disputes Committee Report 01/18.

In light of this, it was expected that TUI would, in accordance with their obligations, write to the teachers concerned and advise them that they were admitted into membership of the TUI in breach of the rules of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and that they can apply to re-join the ASTI. The relevant section of the report provides as follows:

“That the TUI write to the 1059 members concerned and advise them that they have been admitted into membership of the TUI in breach of the rules of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and that they can apply to re-join ASTI.”

However, the TUI having adopted the Disputes Committee report, argued that there were legal impediments to application of aspects of its terms. In particular, they expressed concerns relating to Data Protection.

A number of meetings took place between the parties. Legal advices were sought and received by all three parties, ASTI, TUI and ICTU. Eventually an agreement was reached that a full page notice would be placed in “TUI News”. A copy of the notice is set out below:

<p>Teachers' Union of Ireland Aontas Múinteoirí Éireann</p> <p>73 Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6. D06 YP89 Tel: (01) 4922588 Fax: (01) 4922953 e-mail: tui@tui.ie website: https://www.tui.ie</p>	
22 nd February 2019	
Dear Member,	
<p>We wish to advise that following an ICTU Disputes Committee Investigation of an ASTI complaint concerning the period 1 January 2017 to 10 June 2017, the Disputes Committee found,</p> <p>“that the TUI write to members and advise them that members have been admitted into the membership of the TUI in breach of the rules of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and that they can apply to re-join the ASTI”.</p>	
Yours sincerely,	
	
_____ Seamus Lahart President	_____ John MacGabhann General Secretary
President: Seamus Lahart General Secretary: John MacGabhann Deputy General Secretary: Annette Dolan Assistant General Secretaries: Declan Glynn, Aidan Kenny, Michael Gillespie, Colm Kelly, Bernie Ruane, Joanne Irwin	

In the aftermath of this, it was then necessary to deal with the aspect of the disputes Committee report that required TUI to make a financial settlement with ASTI. The relevant paragraph provides as follows:

“6 Weeks after the TUI has corresponded with the members concerned, the General Secretary of Congress will meet with both unions. The purpose of this meeting is to establish how many of the 1059 members re-joined the ASTI. Arising from this the TUI is required to make a financial settlement

with the ASTI, which reflects the loss of membership subscription involved, if any. The General Secretary of Congress will be available to assist in determining the structure and size of the settlement if required by the parties”

Again there were protracted negotiations. In November 2019, the Executive Council of ICTU issued a recommendation regarding the matter. The recommendation from ICTU in that regard is published below.

Recommendation

Introduction

On the 29th June 2017 the ASTI made a complaint to Congress concerning the acceptance into membership by TUI of members of ASTI. It was contended by ASTI that the disputed transfers had occurred in circumstances that contravened Article 46 of the Constitution of Congress. Specifically, ASTI claimed that they were not consulted by TUI before accepting the transferees into membership, contrary to Article 46(b) of the Constitution of Congress, and that the transfers took effect at a time when the ASTI was engaged in an industrial dispute, contrary to Article 46(c) of the Constitution.

In line with normal procedures in these matters a Disputes Committee was appointed by the Executive Council to investigate this complaint. A preliminary meeting took place, with the parties, in August 2017 followed by further meetings on 27th November 2017 and 27th February 2018. Both parties agreed to the appointment of Mazars Consultants to carry out an audit of the exact number of members involved.

Having investigated the dispute, the Disputes Committee issued report 01/18, in which it upheld the complaint of ASTI on the principal grounds relied upon by that union. The findings of the Disputes Committee (01/18) were subsequently appealed by the TUI. However, the Appeals Committee upheld the findings of the Disputes Committee Report (01/18).

Disputes Committee Report

Paragraph 36 of Disputes Committee's Report provides as follows:

“6 weeks after the TUI has corresponded with the members concerned, the General Secretary of Congress will meet with both unions. The purpose of this meeting is to establish how many of the 1,059 members re-joined the ASTI. Arising from this the TUI is required to make a financial settlement with the ASTI, which reflects the loss of membership subscription involved, if any. The General Secretary of Congress will be available to assist in determining the structure and size of the settlement if required by the parties”.

Efforts to Reach Agreement

Pursuant to this aspect of the decision, I made myself available to the parties so as to assist them in determining the size and structure of the financial settlement that TUI were required to make with ASTI. I then asked Michael Halpenny B.L. and Kevin Duffy B.L. to meet with the parties so as to facilitate them in resolving this matter. Having met with the parties, they reported to me, in writing, on 5th September 2019. The import of their report was that the degree of divergence between the unions on the core issue of the size and structure of any financial settlement was such that no further effort on their part was likely to advance the resolution of the dispute. Subsequently, the officers of the Executive Council of Congress met with both parties.

I am satisfied that the continuation of this dispute is inimical to the interests of both unions and to the interests of Congress. Accordingly, I am putting forward a recommendation as to how the size and structure of the financial settlement provided for in the Disputes Committee Report should be determined.

Recommendation

In making this recommendation I have taken account of the following factors:

1. It is clear that the financial settlement envisaged by the Disputes Committee was intended to be compensatory, rather than punitive, in nature.
2. The Disputes Committee, in its report, referred to a financial settlement *"which reflects the loss of membership subscription involved"*. I do not believe that this statement can reasonably be interpreted as meaning that ASTI should be entitled to compensation reflective of the full contribution income that it potentially could have received if the disputed members had remained within that union for the remainder of their teaching careers. Nor do I believe that the payment of a nominal sum to ASTI would satisfy the direction contained at paragraph 36 of the Disputes Committee Report.
3. It is clear that the principal contravention of the Congress Constitution which the Disputes Committee found to have occurred was in relation to the members in question being party to an industrial dispute at the material time. That dispute continued for a period between 1st January 2017 and 10th June 2017.
4. When ASTI ceased to be engaged in industrial action, Article 46(c) of the Constitution could not have operated as an impediment to the members in question transferring to TUI subject to appropriate consultation with ASTI.
5. Following the issuance of the Disputes Committee Report, TUI informed the members in question that they were free to resume membership of ASTI, without fear of any detriment. I note that in response to this communication, 90 members re-joined ASTI while 969 did not.

Having regard to all the circumstances, I recommend that TUI should pay ASTI an amount equal to the membership subscription that the 969 disputed members would have paid to that union, had they remained members, in the six month period beginning on 1st January 2017. That amount should be calculated by reference to the contribution payable by a member on the mid-point of the pre 2011 salary scale (14th point). The calculation should be based on the formula contained in the rules of ASTI for determining the contribution payable by members.

By application of this formulation, I have concluded that the quantum of compensation payable by TUI to ASTI is €279,798.75.

Conclusion

I commend this recommendation to both unions as providing a fair and reasonable basis upon which this dispute can be finally and fully resolved.

By January 2020, it became manifestly clear that the TUI had failed to implement the terms of the Disputes Committee Report in that they have not secured the required financial settlement with the ASTI.

ASTI lodged a further complaint with the ICTU in accordance with Paragraph 45(xvi) of the ICTU Constitution which provides as follows:

In the event of a complaint being received that a Union has failed to implement a Disputes Committee Report, the Executive Council shall deal with such complaint in accordance with Paragraph 41 of the Constitution of Congress.

Paragraph 41 of the Constitution of Congress provides as follows:

- (a) *The Executive Council shall be empowered to investigate on its own initiative, or on complaint, made by an affiliated organisation, the conduct or action of any affiliated organisation which is alleged to be detrimental to the interests of Congress or affiliated organisations. The affiliated organisation whose conduct or action is the subject of investigation shall be informed in writing of the complaint or charge made against it and shall be given full and ample opportunity to reply to such complaint or charge. If the complaint or charge be proven and the Executive Council decides that the organisation has been guilty of conduct or action detrimental to the interests of Congress or affiliated organisations, then the Executive Council shall be empowered to do any of the following:*
 - (1) *call upon the organisation to desist from such conduct or action;*
 - (2) *require the organisation to take such steps as may be required to correct or alter the matter complained of;*
 - (3) *require the organisation to comply with such condition as may be required by the Executive Council.*
- (b) *Should the organisation refuse to carry out the directions of the Executive Council as authorised in clauses (1) to (3) of sub-paragraph (a) above, the Executive Council may thereupon suspend the organisation from membership of Congress pending consideration of the report and recommendation of the Executive Council by the next Biennial Delegate Conference.*
- (c) *Should the Executive Council consider that the complaint or charge proven against the organisation is of a most grave and serious nature, they may recommend to the next Biennial Delegate Conference that the organisation be expelled from membership of Congress and pending consideration of such recommendation by the Biennial Delegate Conference, the Executive Council may suspend the organisation from membership of Congress.*
- (d) *Where an organisation has been suspended from membership of Congress it shall generally be regarded as a non-affiliated organisation and shall not be afforded the services of Congress or the advice of its Officers or staff.*
- (e) *The Biennial Delegate Conference having considered the report and recommendations of the Executive Council as made under sub-paragraphs (b) and (c) above may (1) expel the organisation, or (2) terminate the suspension and restore the organisation to full membership subject to compliance with prescribed conditions if so required, or (3) continue the suspension for a further stipulated period subject to such prescribed conditions as may be required.*
- (f) *Full and adequate opportunity shall be afforded an organisation against which a complaint or charge has been proven, of appealing to the Biennial Delegate Conference against the report or recommendations of the Executive Council; but the organisation will only be permitted the right of audience at the Biennial Delegate Conference by the express decision of the Conference.*

In December 2020, ASTI was notified by the General Secretary of ICTU that the TUI “have confirmed to me that they are now preparing to make a payment in the amount of €280,000 to an ICTU holding account. We will liaise directly with them on these arrangements.” Accordingly, at time of writing it is envisaged that there will be no need to pursue the above complaint further.

Demarcation/Spheres of Influence

Arising from the previous dispute, a clear issue regarding the demarcation of spheres of influence and recruitment/organisation entitlements across all sectors emerged. ASTI felt that TUI failed to adhere to long established practices in terms of organisation across the various second-level school sectors.

ASTI further complained to ICTU in this respect under a different process. The objective would be to re-establish traditional demarcations of spheres of influence. This process was largely placed in abeyance while the matters pertaining to the complaint regarding recruitment of ASTI members by TUI during our dispute were being discharged.

In early 2020, A further Disputes Committee was established to deal with this complaint. The Disputes Committee held a meeting with the parties in February 2020. It was proposed at that meeting that a Joint Working Group be set up tasked with seeking to devise and scoping out the optimal organisational and representational structures required to deliver the best outcomes for current and potential members in the sector, now and into the future.

The work of the JWG was very severely impacted by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work of the group, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Mike Jennings, commenced its work in September 2020.

During this process, proposals were put forward by the Chairman that were not workable from the perspective of ASTI representatives.

Mr Jennings reported to the Disputes Committee in November 2020. In turn, the Disputes Committee reported to the Executive Council of ICTU. Notwithstanding that ASTI had not supported the proposals/recommendations of the Chairman of the Joint Working Group, the Disputes Committee decided to adopt them as the outcome of their deliberations. Having considered the matter, the Executive Council also adopted the proposals. In general terms, they would open all segments of the second-level sector to recruitment of members by ASTI and TUI.

Standing Committee considered the report at its meeting in December 2020. It was decided to appeal the report in accordance with the Constitution of the ICTU.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

The ASTI is a member of Amnesty International and responded to various campaigns and issues as they arose during the year. The major focus of the ASTI's contribution is on teachers and education personnel whose human rights have been abused or denied by Governments. The ASTI sent letters of complaint to Heads of State in a number of countries in Africa, South America and the Middle East on behalf of teachers, who had been harassed, detained, tortured and murdered by security forces.

AFFILIATIONS

The ASTI was affiliated to the following:

- (a) Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- (b) The People's College
- (c) Education International
- (d) Standing Committee on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)
- (e) AONTAS – National Adult Education Association
- (f) Educational Studies Association of Ireland
- (g) National Women's Council of Ireland
- (h) Irish Labour History Society
- (i) National Adult Literacy Association
- (j) Amnesty International
- (k) Reading Association of Ireland
- (l) National Irish Safety Organisation
- (m) The Children's Rights Alliance

TRADE UNION FRIENDS OF PALESTINE

In November, 2019 the ICTU and the Trade Union Friends of Palestine hosted a conference to mark the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention to draw attention to the deteriorating situation of Palestinian children in occupied territories of Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Since then the education union affiliates of the ICTU – North and South – have continued to work to support Palestinian education unions provide quality inclusive education for all Palestinian children. Projects under discussion school twinning; knowledge exchange; peer learning projects. AGS/ERO represents the ASTI on this Education Group.

EDUCATION

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Report of Education Committee

ASTI Education Committee Membership 2020/21

- Edel Farrell, Chairperson
- Ger Hanlon
- James Howley
- Seamus Keane
- James Mc Govern
- Pauline Nagle
- Sean O'Neill
- Kevin Wall
- Sarah Withero

Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary, provides the professional support for the work of the Committee.

The Education Committee meets up to seven times each year. Its work is focused on monitoring developments in curriculum and assessment, teacher education and broader policy areas. It provides reports after each meeting to Standing Committee. Education Committee members participate in the annual seminar for the ASTI representatives on the NCCA structures and contribute to on-going NCCA consultations on draft specifications and other curriculum proposals.

Curriculum Review

Junior Cycle Framework: The Education Committee continued its work of evaluating ongoing curriculum change under the Junior Cycle Framework.

Senior Cycle: The Education Committee continued to monitor reports from the NCCA review of senior cycle education.

The Education Committee also examined the OCED Report - *Ireland Senior Cycle Review: An OECD Assessment* - and prepared a summary of its key points below.

Ireland, one of the high-performing education systems across OECD countries, is committed to high quality education and to adapting its system to the challenges that the future presents.

The OECD team has undertaken desk-based research, an assessment visit to Ireland (June 2018) and participated in review meetings.

The OECD team identified current strengths:

- Irish students are motivated by their studies and Ireland has among the highest levels of completion across OECD countries in upper secondary education, high transition rates into tertiary or average levels of employment at this level of education.

- Senior Cycle enjoys high levels of trust in the public, and its final assessment (the Leaving Certificate) is strongly rooted in the national culture.
- The four programmes offered in senior cycle (LCE, LCVP, LCA and TY) aim to cater to different needs and preferences of the student body.
- Content is also regularly updated in response to perceived needs to learn about emerging topics. The aims, purposes and learning methodologies proposed in the curricular documentation aspire to align with international best practices.

Areas for development:

- The impact of the final assessment and the points system to access third-level education appears to drive this level of education, shaping decisions of many stakeholders. This impact is such that any changes made to senior cycle will have limited possibilities to succeed if the current assessment approaches are not reviewed accordingly
- Additionally, the recent reform of junior cycle would have implications for and result in challenges to achieve appropriate alignment between junior and senior cycles.
- Concern about not having a more rigorous and attractive vocational segment in senior cycle, one that gives real work-based experience to students and that is delivered in close coordination with employers.
- Finally, introducing wider subject choice could be more challenging in disadvantaged schools.

The report noted that Ireland's model of partnership and stakeholder engagement was important to build consensus on proposed changes to what is acknowledged as a high performing education system. However, even when convinced of the need for change, stakeholders tend to disagree on the nature and scope of the change, which makes finding common solutions considerably more challenging.

Contextual issues are also influential. There is consensus around the need to learn from junior cycle reform for a smooth change process. Collaboration among schools needs to be developed to facilitate potential senior cycle change. Providing school leaders and teachers with better support and training is a concern. Assessment approaches would need to be adapted to any potential changes, as evidence shows strong impact on the whole senior cycle. As equity has proven to be a key concern, it should be granted a more prominent place in the discussion. Finally, a high level of public scrutiny needs to be factored in.

Given that that OECD was primarily concerned about policy implementation, it outlined what it considered to be key elements for an effective implementation approach. The latter must be thought out and agreed in advance rather than an 'add-on' to a revised curriculum. In particular, discussions should be aiming at clarifying the options for adjustment of assessment methods, needs for continuing professional development for teachers, and guidance

services. Other areas include: defining a communication and engagement plan; securing resources; clarifying expectations concerning timing and pace; data gathering.

In an acknowledgement of the fraught and contested change process at junior cycle, the OECD identify stakeholder engagement as critical for policy design, implementation and sustainability. OECD noted that some important stakeholders were not as involved as they could be - namely, third level institutions, FET institutions, employers and other labour market actors.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STUDIES

OECD Education at Glance 2020

Education at a Glance is the OECD statistical handbook on education in 35-member countries. It has been published annually since 1992. The 2020 edition included a focus participation in vocational education and training at various levels of education, the labour market and social outcomes of vocational graduates as well as the human and financial resources invested in vocational institutions. A specific chapter is dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goal 4, focused on the quality and participation in secondary education.

Key indicators from Ireland include:

- Ireland ranked in last place out of 36 countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of GDP.
- In 2017 Ireland invested 1.1% of GDP in second-level education compared to the OECD and EU averages of 1.9%, according to the report.
- Overall, Ireland invested 3.4% of GDP in primary, second and third-level education in 2017 compared to the OECD average of 4.9% and EU average of 4.5%.
- Ireland is one the best performing countries when it comes to enrolment in second-level education; 93% of 15-19-year olds are enrolled in second-level compared to the OECD average of 84%. Participation in further education is also higher in Ireland: 45% of 20-24-year olds are full-time students compared to the OECD average of 41%.
- Ireland comes in second place out of 36 OECD countries for performance in reading tests. More than 85% of 15-year-olds in Ireland performed at Level 2 or above in an OECD reading assessment, ahead of countries such as Finland and Canada.

OECD Ireland Education Policy Outlook

The OECD published its second policy outlook on Ireland in June 2020 (first one was published in 2013). It focused on what it identified as key challenges in the Irish (pre-pandemic) context as follows:

- Although there is evidence of equity and inclusiveness in the system, with growing diversity within the school population, school patronage and admissions policies must continue to evolve to reflect this diversity.
- Enrolment in FET programmes among both youth and adults was below OECD averages and the sector suffered from a lack

of parity of esteem. Addressing this is important for improving skills matching and increasing the active labour participation of vulnerable groups. The employment rate of recent vocational education and training graduates at 75.9% in 2019 was below the EU average of 80.4%.

- A formal system of teacher and school leader professional development and appraisal, tied to career progression and professional development, could help improve both learner outcomes and satisfaction among the educational workforce.
- Although teaching appears to have high social status, Ireland has faced teacher shortages. At the system level, as regional initiatives develop, ensuring cohesion and clearly assigned responsibilities will be crucial, particularly within higher education.
- Finally, changing demographics have been putting increasing pressure on post-primary and tertiary institutions, requiring careful financial planning. In particular, there have been calls to agree on a new funding model for higher education.

See more at the following link:

<https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Ireland-2020.pdf>

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment: Vol. 5 - Effective Policies and Successful Schools?

Volume 5 of PISA looks at the characteristics of successful schools and while it underlines the profoundly encultured nature of education systems, it analyses how combinations of policies impact on 15-year olds' educational achievement and the overall quality of education. Indicators for Ireland on several key policy levers underline the impact of chronic under-investment in education:

- 44.8% of Irish students were in schools where the principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered to some extent or a lot by lack of teaching staff compared to the OECD average of 27.1%
- 44.6% of Irish students were in schools where the principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered to some extent or a lot by a lack of physical infrastructure (e.g. building, grounds, heating/ cooling systems, lighting and acoustic systems) compared to the OECD average of 33.1%
- 40.7% of Irish students were in schools where the principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered to some extent or a lot by inadequate or poor-quality physical infrastructure (e.g. building, grounds, heating/ cooling systems, lighting and acoustic systems) compared to the OECD average of 32.5%
- 56.5% of Irish students were in schools where the principal agreed or strongly agreed that the number of digital devices connected to the internet was sufficient compared to the OECD average of 67.2%
- 45.3% of Irish students were in schools where the principal agreed or strongly agreed that the number of digital devices for instruction was sufficient compared to the OECD average of 59%
- 45.4% of Irish students were in schools where the principal reported that an effective online learning support platform was available compared to the OECD average of 54.1%. Equity in education as measured by PISA performance scores in core

subjects was related to equity in access to an effective online learning support platform

- 47.4% of Irish students were in school where the principal agreed or strongly agreed that professional resources were available for teachers to learn how to use digital devices instruction compared to the OECD average of 64.7%
- Ireland outperformed comparator countries only in the areas of internet bandwidth or speed and the quality of digital devices
- At the system level, countries and economies whose schools offer more creative extracurricular activities tended to show greater equity in student performance.

Notwithstanding this abysmal failure to invest in education, Irish second-level schools have strong success indicators, namely quality as defined by high student achievement, equity and strong curriculum and assessment models. The relationship between quality and equity is critical. Despite the national evidence on income inequality and social deprivation, in Ireland this relationship was weak. In other words, a 15-year-olds socio-economic background has a lesser impact on their level educational achievement compared to many other OECD countries. Factors sustaining this positive relationship include admission policies which do not take into account students' academic record or other selective criteria; limited stratification or streaming according to ability; access to a common curriculum and assessment process.

TIMSS 2020

What is TIMSS?

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study is an international study conducted every four years by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, a non-profit organisation based in The Hague. It assesses the Mathematics and Science skills of students at fourth class in primary school and in second year at post-primary school level. TIMSS reports on students' mean scores relative to a TIMSS centre-point of 500, providing a solid measure of trends over time. TIMSS also collects contextual data on schools. At second-level, it involved 39 countries and 288,000 students. The Education Research Centre administers the survey on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

Second-year Irish students are among the top-performers in Europe in mathematics and science. Moreover, student performance in these subjects is stable with Irish students consistently performing at a high level, especially in mathematics. These findings were published in December 2020 in the 7th TIMSS report.

TIMSS looks at the performance of Irish 4th class primary students and 2nd Year second-level students in Mathematics and Science. Students are assessed across the four content areas for Mathematics: Number, Algebra, Geometry, and Data & Probability. Likewise, in Science it assesses across the four content areas: Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Earth Science.

In Mathematics, the mean score for Irish students was 524 – significantly above the TIMSS centre-point of 500. Students in Ireland significantly outperformed students in 26 out of 39 countries.

In Science, the mean score was 523 – also significantly above the TIMSS centre-point of 500. Students in Ireland significantly outperformed students in 23 out of 39 countries.

A marked feature of Irish students' performance was the small gender differences compared to other countries. Similarly, lower-achieving students performed relatively higher compared to peers. However, the report found that higher-achieving students were underperforming compared to peers.

In her statement on the publication of the TIMSS Report, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ms Norma Foley, said that a concentrated effort is required to improve the performance of our higher-performing students. High-quality continuing professional development for teachers which incorporates a specific focus on extending 'higher-achieving' students, dedicated resources and on promoting skills in Mathematics and in Science, including digital learning skills, will be part of the Department's response to the report's findings.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The Council is a representative structure. The membership is determined by the Minister for Education and Skills. The 25-member council comprises nominees of the partners in education, industry and trade union interests, parents' organisations and one nominee each of the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The members of the Council, who were appointed by the Minister to 28 February, 2022, are listed below.

Introduction

The NCCA is the statutory advisory body to the Minister of Education and Skills. Its remit is to advise the Minister on curriculum and assessment from early childhood to the end of second level.

The focus of this report from the Council is on the main developments at Second Level over the past year with particular emphasis on the continuing roll-out of the new Junior Cycle and the review of Senior Cycle. The first meeting of this Council took place in May 2019. The ASTI representatives on Council are Máire G. Ní Chiarba and Ed Byrne.

NCCA Meetings 2020/21

The NCCA like many other organisations has been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The last meeting to take place physically was on February 4th 2020. All other meetings have taken place virtually.

There have been seven other meetings in the virtual space on May 7th 2020, June 16th 2020, September 24th 2020, November 3rd 2020, December 10th 2020 and February 4th 2021. While ASTI representatives understand the need for virtual meetings in the current circumstances we feel they are less than ideal for robust discursive debate.

Membership

Chairperson	Prof. Mary O'Sullivan
Deputy Chairperson	Michael Redmond
Deputy Chairperson	Deirbhile Nic Craith
ACCS	Áine O'Sullivan
ASTI	Máire G. Ní Chiarba

ASTI	Ed Byrne
CIEB	Joyce Perdue
CPSMA	Fergal Kelly
NABMSE	Finn ÓMurchú
DES	Orlaith O'Connor
ETBI	Anne McHugh
Foras na Gaeilge	Edel Ní Chorráin
IBEC	Claire McGee
ICTU	Brian Tubbert
IFUT	Michael Delargey
INTO	Carmel Browne
INTO	Joe McKeown
JMB	Patricia Gordon
NPCp	Áine Lynch
NPCpp	Geoff Browne
Nominee of Minister of Education and Skills	Teresa Hagan
Nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Phil Lynch
SEC	Tim Desmond
TUI	David Duffy
TUI	Liz Farrell

JUNIOR CYCLE

The proposed Junior Cycle review is to go ahead. The terms of reference are not the longitudinal study promised. Due to the cost of the study, tenders had to be submitted. The tender winner was the University of Limerick. A subcommittee of five NCCA members had oversight of the process, the subcommittee was made of four members of the executive and one elected member of Council. All submissions were from Irish Academia with no international interest expressed.

Junior Cycle Reports

Junior Cycle Business Studies and Science reports were submitted. Consultation Evenings were held in Cork, Galway and Dublin. The report and reporting were very positive. ASTI representatives argued that this did not mirror the experience of those at the chalk face and most certainly not the experience of those reporting to them. The ASTI also made representations regarding concerns surrounding the lack of depth of treatment in most Junior Cycle Specifications, the increased workload brought about by classroom-based assessment (CBAs) and the expanse of the grade blocks particularly the merit grades, merit (55-74) and higher merit (75-89).

Junior Cycle English Report

The report was based on teacher feedback, 39 teachers were consulted over three evenings in Cork, Galway and Dublin. Submissions were made by the Department of Education's Inspectorate, the JCT team, the State Examinations Commission (SEC), Gorey Community School and individual online teachers. External Academic perspective was also given. The ASTI expressed reservations about the narrowness of the consultation process. The report was again highly positive and once more concerns were expressed that it did not mirror teacher attitude on the ground.

Junior Cycle Wellbeing

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the school community. The NCCA, in discussions about rolling out the four hundred hours of wellbeing, felt that insight should be gleaned into the effects of remote teaching and learning, believing this gave an opportunity to link it to student agency. ASTI representatives highlighted the negative impact on teacher's wellbeing and the increased workload that the remote model of teaching creates.

Junior Cycle Physical Education (PE)

The background paper was discussed in late 2020 and the paper should be published in early 2021. Concerns were expressed at NCCA about the CBAs and it was suggested these should be kept under review.

Junior Cycle CSPE (Civil, Social and Political Education)

The discussions surrounded the movement of CSPE from the 1996 syllabus to the 2016 short course. The report was generally positive with just some concerns that the subject was seen by many teachers and schools as a timetable filler. The report also suggests that the newer short course is achieving its goals of making students more aware as citizens. According to the report, teachers are happy with the outcomes model and the movement from report-based assessment to classroom-based assessment.

Junior Cycle Board of Studies

Due to Covid-19, meetings of the Junior Board of Studies were heavily curtailed and moved into the digital space and only held when necessary. Online meetings are far from ideal for the type of meeting required and are only useful for sharing information.

SENIOR CYCLE DEVELOPMENTS

Leaving Certificate Modern Languages: Specifications for Chinese (Mandarin), Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese

The Specifications were introduced into schools in September 2020.

Curriculum specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics

The completion date for the draft specifications had to be adjusted.

Curriculum specifications for Leaving Certificate Latin, Ancient Greek and Arabic

Council was informed that the Development Groups had been formed but due to Covid-19 restrictions there was a delay in convening the groups.

Review of the early enactment of Leaving Certificate Computer Science and Leaving Certificate Physical Education

Following the commencement of the review the timing had to be altered so that a complete picture of teaching, learning and assessment with these specifications could be established.

Updated plan of work 2020

Due to the emergence of Covid-19 the plan of work had to be updated.

Curriculum specifications for Leaving Certificate Gaelge are now due for completion in Q4, 2021.

Curriculum specifications for Leaving Certificate Latin, Ancient Greek and Arabic deferred to Q1, 2022.

Review of early enactment of Leaving Certificate Computer Science and Leaving Certificate Physical Education deferred to Q3, 2021.

Report on learning and teaching about Traveller culture and history deferred to Q4, 2021.

Draft Specifications for Leaving Certificate Gaelge Teanga 1 and Teanga 2

The draft specifications were presented to Council in November 2020. The specifications were approved for consultation.

Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Leaving Certificate Classical Languages

This paper sets out the background and context for the proposed development of new arrangements for the study of Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek and Latin.

Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Leaving Certificate Arabic

The paper sets out the background and context for the proposed review of Leaving Certificate Arabic. The review will involve the development of a revised specification.

Update on work on RSE

The NCCA has established two development groups – one for primary and one for post-primary. The first meeting of both groups took place in mid-October 2020.

Senior Cycle Review: Draft Advisory Report

The final draft report is due to be brought to the Senior Cycle Board of Studies in January, 2021. It will subsequently be brought before Council.

Education in Ireland: an OECD Assessment of Senior Cycle Review

This document was published on December 1st, 2020.

NCCA Working Groups

The NCCA established three working groups in 2020 to develop specific curriculum response to children in detention and care; Traveller culture and history in the curriculum; and relationship and sexuality education.

John Hammond retired from his position as CEO in November 2020. The newly appointed CEO, Arlene Forster, took up her position on November 30th, 2020.

SCoTENS

SCoTENS – Standing Conference of Teacher Educators, North and South – is a network of 38 colleges of education, university education departments, teaching councils, curriculum councils, education trade unions and education centres on the island of Ireland with a responsibility for and interest in teacher education. SCoTENS was established in 2003 to create a space for teacher educators – North and South – to come together and discuss issues of common interest, and explore ways of co-operating. The four teacher unions share representation on a rotational basis on the Steering Committee for SCoTENS. In 2020, a number of teacher unions in Northern Ireland have joined SCoTENS and a representative will also sit on the SCoTENS Steering Committee.

The SCoTENS annual conference provides a forum where teacher educators across the island of Ireland can engage in open, critical and constructive analysis of current issues in education with a view to promoting a collaborative response to these issues. The 2020 conference was an online event on the theme of 'Teacher Education in the COVID moment'. The keynote speaker was Prof. Neil Selwyn, Research Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia.

ASTI is represented at the Conference by the Deputy General Secretary, Diarmaid de Paor and Assistant General Secretary, Moira Leydon.

EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Equity in education and educational disadvantage

DEIS

The Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme was introduced in 2006 to bring together a number of earlier stand-alone schemes. The rationale for this approach is the existence of a 'multiplier effect', whereby students attending a school with a concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds have poorer academic outcomes, even taking account of individual social background. DEIS provides additional funding, access to literacy and numeracy programmes, and assistance with school planning. Currently 198 post-primary schools are in the DEIS programme.

ASTI took part in the stakeholder consultation on a refined identification model for DEIS conducted by the Education Research Centre. Currently the Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-primary Online Database (PPOD) are central databases for student and some school data, hosted by the DES. These databases are based on the 'October returns' are made online by schools each year. Students' addresses in POD and P-POD are geo-coded by DES Statistics Section using Eircode and converted to HP Deprivation Index scores. The latter is a statistical tool based on the quinquennial Census of Ireland to examine deprivation index for small areas and captures demographic profile, social class composition, and labour market situation. The decision to use this tool was contained in the 2017 DEIS plan. Usage of the HP Index enables the DES to compute the percentage of students in each

school coming from disadvantaged areas and compile an indicator of concentrated disadvantage. Schools were ranked in terms of the latter for inclusion in the DEIS programme.

While acknowledging the technical merits of HP Index approach to measuring educational disadvantage, the ASTI emphasised its concern about potential unintended consequences of the new model. Namely, in order to receive additional teachers and resources, students' levels of need, including educational need, will need to be high, while if a school then brings improvements in level of educational achievement, school attendance, etc, they may subsequently experience a reduction in resource allocation. 'Punished for being successful' was a major criticism of the former process of identification of schools for inclusion in DEIS. The ASTI reiterated its view that the recommendation in the 2015 ESRI Report – 'Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS' - which expressed concern over the sharp distinction in resource allocation between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, especially at post-primary level:

This means that schools with relatively high levels of disadvantage may fall below the cut-off for additional support. Research indicates that a significant proportion of disadvantaged students attend non-DEIS schools. In this context, there would appear to be a case for a degree of tapering of funding for schools rather than a sharp withdrawal below the specified cut-off point.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Education for persons with special and additional needs

Policy for inclusive education

In 2018, the Irish Government ratified Article 24 (2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Ratification of the Convention obliges States, *inter alia*, to ensure that children can access an inclusive, quality and free education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live. A dedicated UN Committee monitors implementation of the Convention. It has previously advised the Government that having a mainstream educational system and a separate special education system is not compatible with its view of inclusion and that parallel systems are not considered inclusive. However, the UN Committee acknowledges that significant change takes time to implement and accepts the concept of progressive realisation which permits countries to signal their policy intent and how the system will change over a period of time. In response, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Joe Mc Hugh, directed the NCSE to advise on the educational provision that should be in place for students in special schools and classes and to make recommendations on the provision required to enable them to achieve better outcomes. The previous NCSE policy advice was issued in 2011.

Since then:

- Government expenditure on special education has increased by 46% and currently represents just under 20% of the overall primary and post-primary education budget
- Special education as a percentage of the total education budget increased by 12.7%
- Additional teaching posts for special education increased by 46%
- Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts allocated increased by 51%
- Provision of special classes increased by 196%
- Number of students enrolled in special classes increased by 155%
- Number of special schools has increased by 13%
- Number of students enrolled in special schools has increased by 15%

The 2019 NCSE Progress Report – 'Policy Advice on Special Schools and Classes: An Inclusive education for an Inclusive Society?' – stated that it could not draw definitive conclusions, from the literature, that one type of educational placement is better than another for children and young people with special educational needs. It tentatively suggested that some of the more methodologically robust studies appear to indicate that students with special educational needs who are educated in mainstream settings have better short- and long-term outcomes than those who were in a special educational placements. Moreover, the Progress Report found that Ireland was not unique in having specialist provision: Eight European countries surveyed by the NCSE maintain such provision while the UK intends to expand it. The main reasons (as cited by special schools) why students attended special schools were that mainstream schools are not able to cope with the level of student's medical, behavioural and/or care needs; or students have already attended mainstream school and didn't progress there or felt very isolated. In total, 2% of the total primary and post-primary student body are currently educated in special schools or special classes of mainstream schools.

The NCSE had intended to finalise its report to the Minister in June 2020. A new date for same has not been announced at the time of preparation of the Convention handbook.

Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018

Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 commenced in 2020. Schools must explicitly state in their admission policies that they will not discriminate against an applicant on a number of grounds, including disability. The provisions of the Act also seek to ensure that 'soft barriers' do not exclude children, including by prohibiting schools from taking into account a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude in enrolment. The Act grants the Minister for Education and Skills powers to compel a school to designate a school place for a pupil with SEN, where the NCSE has identified a need for such provision.

Access to further and higher education

Ireland's National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 set an overall target for entry into higher education by persons with disabilities and has led to increases in participation rates. The proportion of students with disabilities in higher education institutions increased from 5.7% in the 2016/17 academic year to 6.2% in the 2017/2018 academic year. In 2020, the proportion was 10%.

The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) was made available to support initial teacher education providers to develop access programmes and routes to teacher education for currently under-represented groups in initial teacher education, including

students with disabilities. As noted in the 2019 Progress Review report, the focus on the profession of teaching is crucial, and is informed by the understanding of the power of teachers as role models and influencers in raising the aspirations of young people and encouraging the realisation of potential.

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a third level alternative admissions scheme. DARE offers places under reduced criteria to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges. In 2019, 1,723 DARE applicants received a reduced criteria offer: in that year, there was also a 20% increase in the number of reduced criteria DARE offers and a 13% increase in the number of reduced criteria DARE acceptances.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities assists further and higher education institutions in ensuring that students with disabilities have the necessary assistance and equipment to enable them to access, fully participate in and complete their courses. It also supports students from Ireland to study on approved courses in Northern Ireland, the UK and EU countries.

Access to further education for students with disabilities is increasing. In 2019, 3,705 students participated in Specialist Training Provision (STP) supported by SOLAS. SOLAS is currently conducting an independent evaluation of this model of FET.

ASTI and education for students with special and additional needs

Meeting with Minister of State for Special Education, Josepha Madigan

The ASTI was invited to meet with the Minister of State in July 2020. The agenda focused on ensuring ongoing supports for SEN students when schools re-opened in August and the on key ASTI demands for supporting inclusive schools. The latter included the need for a national CPD programme for all teachers. The ASTI presented research from its 2019 commissioned research which demonstrated that only 5% of Special Education Teachers (SET) had a SEN qualification while only 22% had been provided with access to SEN training. The ASTI also stated ASTI policy that every school would have an ex-quota post for an SEN Co-ordinator similar to that of the Programme Co-ordinator's post.

ASTI Submission to National Council for Special Education

The ASTI met with the NCSE in October 2020 to review the implementation of the revised model of resource allocation to schools introduced in September 2017. The ASTI submitted a set of concerns and recommendations to the NCSE.

Recommendation 1: Communication with schools

A major flaw in the introduction of the new model in September 2017 was the failure of the DES and NCSE to adequately communicate with schools on the new model. There is a need to rethink how the Department communicates with schools when introducing change. The issuing of a Circular Letter to school management should be the first step in a communication process - not the only step. Given that all DES communication with schools is electronic, there is an unreasonable expectation that in-school communication processes are adequately resourced to ensure that each member of staff receives the relevant information. This gap in communication was particularly evident in the concerns raised by members at Branch and other levels leading up to the ASTI decision

re SEN planning in December, 2018. Moreover, there is an unreasonable expectation at Departmental level concerning the role of the stakeholders in communicating change programmes.

Recommendation: NCSE and DES should forward posters and leaflets to schools on the new model and teachers' roles and supplement same with online materials/information.

Recommendation 2: Deployment of additional resources

A primary concern of the ASTI is the lack of transparency at school level in the deployment of additional resources. The latter is compounded by the fact that teachers who had been teaching resource hours before September 2017 were continuing to do so. It is of note that in each of six SEN evaluation reports published to date, each one contained a recommendation along the lines of 'the board of management and the senior management team should ensure that all of the available allocation is used for its intended purpose'. Some reports noted that inappropriate deployment occurred because of staff shortages in schools, others due to decisions to reduce class size.

Recommendation: DES should develop a SEN Deployment template which would demonstrate the deployment of SEN resources in each school and that such a template would be displayed alongside the staff time-table and the S&S roster.

Recommendation 3: Co-ordination of SEN at whole-school level

The stipulation in Circular 0014/17 that co-ordination time be kept to a minimum is flawed and unworkable. Co-ordination is required across several domains of inclusion for students with additional and special educational needs. The 2017 DES Guidelines on Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs sets out the key features of a whole-school approach to supporting students with additional and special educational needs. They include:

- Inclusive education policy
- Whole-school planning
- Special Education Needs Team
- Parental engagement
- Student engagement
- Engagement with external bodies and agencies
- Transitions to further learning, training and employment
- Continuing professional development

The Guidelines stipulate that inclusive education policy and whole-school planning be integrated into the school's six-stage self-evaluation process.

In addition to the above domains, the issue of co-ordination of planning for SEN students is also critical. Such planning requires expertise, time and a team approach. The classroom teacher cannot be expected to perform these tasks as they don't have the expertise or time. A dedicated SEN co-ordinator, leading a SEN team, is required to ensure that appropriate planning, using the Continuum of Support framework, is implemented. Again, several of the published evaluation reports recommend that the school needs a core SEN team to ensure that a good level of planning is undertaken.

A neglected dimension of the work required for SEN students, but not exclusive to them, is the administration of tests for applications for RACE (Reasonable Accommodation in the Certificate

Examinations) and DARE (Disability Access Route to Education). Formerly, this testing would have been conducted by Guidance Counsellors whose qualification included relevant training. Increasingly, this work is now remitted to SET teachers in the absence of full restoration of Guidance Counselling hours in schools.

Recommendation: An ex-quota post for an SEN Co-ordinator similar to that of the Programme Co-ordinator's post should be allocated to schools.

Recommendation 4: Training for teachers

The new model of allocation and attendant Guidelines have radically changed the model of educational support for students with additional and special educational learning needs. In summary, the emphasis is now on in-class support with the classroom teacher having 'first-line' responsibility for the education of all students in their class. All classroom teachers are required to implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate meaningful inclusion, including:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Differentiation in pedagogy and assessment
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment.

In addition, the Guidelines require that they contribute to the planning process for SEN students and assist in the review of such plans; engage with the 'continuum of support' for identification of need and planning of interventions; and provide appropriate reporting to students and parents.

The new model aims to promote a culture of teacher collaboration and the widespread use of team-teaching. However, as the evaluation reports note, significant improvement is needed to develop team-teaching as an effective response to SEN. Continuing professional development for team-teaching should be provided

Recommendation: A national CPD programme for all teachers, similar to that which has been provided for major curriculum change such as Project Maths and the Framework for Junior Cycle, be provided. Incentives and supports to enable individual teachers to engage in further learning in this area are also necessary, specifically, the restoration of the allowance for the Post-Graduate Diploma and Masters' Degree in in Special Needs. Teachers who engage in fee-charging online learning programmes should be reimbursed by school management.

GAELTACHT EDUCATION POLICY

Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022

The policy on Gaeltacht education 2017-2022 was developed in the context of the Government's 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2020-2030. The policy is the strategic response to address the linguistic challenges facing Gaeltacht language planning areas. The uniqueness of the Gaeltacht as an area of significant linguistic,

cultural and economic importance is recognised in the policy. The aim of the implementation of the policy is to secure the vitality of Gaeltacht areas as the home of Irish-speaking communities.

The policy is set out under seven pillars, as follows:

1. Strengthening the structure of educational provision
2. Improving the quality of teaching through Irish
3. Building the capacity of school leaders and school management

Revised Leaving Certificate Applied Module Descriptors	Introduced to Fifth Year Students	First Leaving Certificate Examination
English and Communications	Sep 20	Jun 22
Mathematical Applications	Sep 20	Jun 22
Introduction to Information and Communication Technology	Sep 20	Jun 22
Information and Communication Technology: Specialism	Sep 20	Jun 22

4. Improving the curriculum for Irish
5. Improving language resources and supports
6. Strengthening early-years' educational provision
7. Building awareness of the benefits of Irish-medium education, communicating with, and supporting parents.

The policy is designed to strengthen and ensure the availability of high quality Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht language planning areas through a range of actions and targeted supports. It aims to build on the linguistic strengths which exist in the Gaeltacht in conjunction with local language-planning processes.

Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

Since the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme was launched in April 2017, a range of resources has been provided annually to schools participating in the Scheme to support the provision of a high standard of Irish-medium education for students attending Gaeltacht schools. Additional support hours for Irish were provided for each school, relative to school size, as part of a support package to meet the language needs of students - both for native Irish speakers and learners of the language. 105 primary schools and 29 post-primary schools participate in the Scheme.

A three-year Research and Evaluation Study plan was developed by the Gaeltacht Education Unit in collaboration with the ERC and the DES Inspectorate to evaluate the impact of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and to inform future policy and practice. The joint evaluation and research work in schools commenced in 2019 and it includes case-studies and observation of practice and focus group interviews in a selected number of schools with different sociolinguistic contexts, ERC surveys and assessments.

Best-practice Indicators for Immersion Education

The Best-Practice Indicators include a separate one-page guide for boards of management in order to support their role in the implementation of immersion education in an Irish-medium Gaeltacht primary or post-primary school.

e-Hub Pilot Project

The digital e-Hub pilot project commenced in 2019 to utilise online blended-learning delivery to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in isolated/small Gaeltacht post-primary schools, commencing with Leaving Certificate Physics. Currently, there are 3 e-teachers based in 2 e-hub schools delivering the Leaving Certificate Physics course to 22 students in 8 Gaeltacht post-primary receiver schools (including 3 island schools) under the supervision of e-mentors.

COGG Web Portal/An Tairseach

The COGG web portal will be linked to Scoilnet and relevant websites and will support whole-school planning, teaching, learning and assessment. All Gaeltacht schools will be informed of the range of Irish-language teaching and learning resources available on the portal. Schools will be supported on how to access and use the online resources, and on how their own resources can be developed and shared.

Special education in immersion-education settings

Research commissioned by COGG is underway to inform the development of a guide for Gaeltacht schools on special education in Irish-medium immersion education settings.

Links to the language-planning process

Work is underway to develop a short guide for schools in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Údarás na Gaeltachta, COGG and other relevant agencies, to provide information on how best to strengthen links, engagement and participation between the school management, wider school community and the local language-planning committee to extend the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities.

Links between early-years settings and primary schools

A research report on links between naíonraí and Gaeltacht primary schools, commissioned by COGG, and A Guide for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium Primary Schools: Strengthening Links between Early-Years Settings and Primary Schools, will be published in 2021 to support the implementation of immersion education. The Guide will include exemplars of good practice. Consultation with the Gaeltacht Policy Advisory Committee will take place prior to publication of the Guide.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

'Education for Sustainability: The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014-2020', is one of the key strategies underpinning the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. The aim of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development is to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more

sustainable future. The strategy sets out 8 action areas for the education system – from early childhood care and education to higher education as follows:

- Leadership and coordination
- Data collection and baseline measurement
- Curriculum at pre-school, primary and post primary
- Professional development
- Further Education and Training
- Higher Education and Research
- Promoting participation by young people
- Sustainability in action

The Steering Committee guiding the review of the Strategy comprises a wide range of development education agencies, representatives from government agencies and youth organisations.

The teacher unions are represented on the national Advisory Group by ASTI Assistant General Secretary/Education and Research, Moira Leydon.

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

On 15 June 2020, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party published 'A Programme for Government – Our Shared Future'. It contains actions for education and wider areas of government, including disability, migration/integration, criminal justice, young people and rural Ireland, healthcare and mental health, LGBTI+ young people, early childhood education and childcare, and online safety. Many of the latter areas also contain related actions for schools and the education system.

Programme for Government Actions for Education:

Standard of Education

- Establish a Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Education at primary and second level.
- Develop and embed a Digital Education Strategy, where teachers and students are supported in providing and learning from on-line resources and ensuring that digital literacy forms a part of the primary and post-primary curriculum.
- Use the Digital Education Strategy to engage pupils and students in structuring and shaping their own learning experience and engagement.
- Ensure all graduating teachers maintain high levels of pedagogical and content knowledge in order to provide excellence in teaching and learning experiences for all students.
- Continue to review and reform the post primary curriculums, prioritising elements such as critical thinking, problem solving and continuous assessment so that they feature more centrally.
- Establish a new Education Research and Policy Section within the Department tasked with ensuring that education policy development in Ireland is informed by a strong evidence base,

is outcomes focused, and cognisant of best international practices.

- Develop inclusive and age appropriate RSE and SPHE curricula across primary and post-primary levels, including an inclusive programme on LGBTI+ relationships and making appropriate legislative changes if necessary.
- Review the provision, content and delivery of teacher education and professional development, ensuring that the teacher community and professional dialogue is at the heart of teacher learning.
- Establish a new Primary School Healthy Eating education programme.
- Develop a new Modern Languages in Primary School initiative. Implement a strategy to support gifted and talented students at both primary and post-primary level.
- Seek to increase the capitation grant with a view to reducing the reliance on voluntary contributions made to schools.
- Seek to make further progress in reducing pupil teacher ratios in primary schools.
- Provide greater integration of the advisory service of the Schools' Inspectorate with supports such as continuous professional development (CPD), leadership development and specialist support services (e.g. NEPS, NCSE).
- Develop innovative measures to support school leadership and the quality of teaching, informed by data and a focus on student learning and potential.
- Conduct a comprehensive audit and inventory of all school buildings, infrastructure and facilities in the State, and the creation of a database of all school admissions policies.
- Examine a targeted government scholarship scheme to focus on encouraging graduates into subject areas where there is a shortage of post-primary teachers in the profession.
- Place the Minor Works Grant on a permanent footing for schools.
- Continue to recognise the importance of small schools to communities across Ireland.
- Develop Technical Support Service Teams, which will enable innovation in schools and clusters of schools.
- Deliver a programme to build and modernise PE and school sport facilities.
- Commit to a comprehensive review of school forward planning policy, recognising particularly the need for adequate supports for children with special educational needs, and the need to sustain green planning and green construction for schools in the future.
- Expand the Energy Efficiency Upgrade Pilot Programme for Schools.
- Increase funding to the Digital, STEM and Creative and other School Excellence Funds.

Cost of Education

- Enact the Student and Parent Charter Bill.
- Commence a free schoolbooks scheme pilot in September 2020 and, if successful review of that pilot, expand the scheme to schools nationwide as resources allow.
- Emphasise the rental and reuse of books to schools and discourage the use of workbooks.

- Provide clear guidelines to schools on cost effective and sustainable practices to decrease the costs for families in relation to school books, uniforms, IT and sport equipment.

Inclusive Education

- Support continued investment in our Special Needs Assistants.
- Ensure students get the right assistance at the right time building on the learnings from the pilot currently underway and subject to further consultation.
- Ensure each child with a special educational need has an appropriate school place in line with their constitutional right.
- Further progress the move towards a needs-based, responsive set of state supports for students with special educational needs and expand early intervention teams in schools over the next five years.
- Complete the new DEIS identification model ensuring the extension of DEIS status to schools that are identified as being suitable.
- Provide additional supports for students who are homeless, resident in family hubs, or in direct provision. Further develop access programmes to Higher and Further Education for students from disadvantaged groups, including members of the Traveller Community, those in direct provision and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.
- Ensure resourcing for students who do not speak English as a first language.
- Improve access to supports for positive mental health in schools.
- Update the National Anti-Bullying Plan to include gender identity bullying.
- Continue to review and expand the roll out of the new Hot School Meals initiative.
- Publish a new literacy, numeracy and digital skills strategy to support learners.
- Introduce a positive action programme to overcome barriers and increase the number of teachers from our migrant communities, in conjunction with the Teaching Council and further education authorities.
- Ensure robust data collection on the use of reduced timetables.
- Ensure that reduced timetables are only used in a manner that is limited, appropriate and absolutely necessary in line with the Department of Education's rules.
- Publish an evidence-based national policy on Initial Teacher Education encouraging further access to teaching from people from minority backgrounds.

Choice in Education

- Achieve the target of at least 400 multi-denominational primary schools by 2030 to improve parental choice.
- Expand and prioritise the transfer of viable schools to Community National Schools.
- Ensure a curriculum of multiple religious beliefs and ethics is taught as a national curriculum of tolerance and values in all primary schools.

- Work with communities to ensure the provision of clear, non-partisan information on the preparation for, and the consequences of, the divestment process and to respond to queries raised.

Irish Language & Culture in Education

- Continue to review and reform the teaching and learning of Irish, and increase the emphasis on spoken Irish in the classroom.
- Work towards doubling the number of young people currently in Irish medium schools.
- Provide a comprehensive policy for the Irish language from pre-primary education to teacher education for all schools.
- Increase supports to An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilíochta.
- Provide Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcoláiste where there is strong demand.
- Establish and fund an Irish language education School Excellence Fund.
- Task the NCCA to develop an Irish Cultural Studies Junior Cycle level 2 short course which values the heritage, language, nature, biodiversity and culture, including Traveller culture and history, of Ireland and history of the Irish Language in the global landscape.
- Expand the programme in which PE is taught through Irish to every primary school and continue to increase the number of post-primary schools in this programme.

Actions for Youth Participation

- Ensure a comprehensive national consultation with young people as to how better their voice can be heard and the issues that they want their Government to focus on for their future. We will develop a new National Strategy on Children and Young people's Participation in Decision-making 2021-2025.
- Increase funding to political parties to support youth, gender and diversity programmes.
- Examine the Scottish experience of reducing the voting age to 17 in order to draw conclusions.
- Establish a Youth Assembly, with various modules including ones for rural and urban young people. This Youth Assembly will consider issues of importance to young people and their future such as climate action, digitalisation, social media and communications, mental health and wellbeing.

JUNIOR CYCLE

Implementation Group

The Junior Cycle Framework Implementation Committee should meet quarterly to discuss relevant matters related to Implementation. In 2020, with the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic, no meetings took place after the school closures in March.

The President, Vice President, General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary: Education/Research represented ASTI at these meetings.

ASTI raises several matters of concern with the Department of Education and Skills.

These included the following:

- The provisions of Circular 0079/2018
- Many issues related to Continuous Professional Development
- Workload
- Professional Time.
- Recording of Classroom Based Assessments and Junior Cycle
- Profile of Achievement
- Subject reviews
- Scheduling of JCT symposiums on Saturdays
- Management Resource Hours – quantum of hours available - the usefulness of hours not divisible by 40 minutes.
- Longitudinal Study
- Provision in Special Schools
- Supports in smaller schools where there are very few post holders
- Time available for subjects.
- Core status of History and other subjects.
- Role of Junior Cycle Co-ordinator
- Lack of external oral examinations
- Mixed information and misinterpretation of the implementation by stakeholders
- Code of practice/protocol for filming of students and teachers
- Time window for conducting Classroom Based Assessments
- Issues associated with the number of CBAs and over assessment
- Data Protection issues
- Adult learners.
- Administration Grant
- Issues related to Maths and English examinations 2019.
- Issues related to sample papers issued by SEC.
- Junior Cycle Appeals
- Reporting Templates
- Wellbeing
- Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings.

The key issues raised by the ASTI included:

Wellbeing programme: The ASTI reiterated the concerns of members that the 400 hours allocated to the Wellbeing programme (implementation of which is currently deferred due to COVID-19) is reducing time available for subjects. Members are not satisfied that the new programme represents an improvement on the existing structures. In particular, the inadequate number of Guidance Counsellors in schools is a major source of frustration for schools in terms of delivering the Wellbeing programme.

Longitudinal Study on Junior Cycle: The ASTI underlined its previously expressed dissatisfaction about the delay in the commencement of this study. This delay has resulted in the concept of a longitudinal study becoming obsolete and, unlike the ESRI longitudinal studies underpinning the development of the Framework of the Junior Cycle, will not capture the year-on-year experiences and views of the cohorts of students from 2015 onwards. The ASTI had also previously underlined that developing policy for a review of senior cycle curriculum in the absence of evidence of the impact of the framework curriculum at junior cycle was a flawed approach to curriculum change.

History Short Course: ASTI was provided with clarification on the proposed History short course. Since the designation of History as a core subject in February 2020, the NCCA has commenced work on developing a short course in History for the Level 2 Junior Cycle programme.

PE Short Course: ASTI was provided with clarification on the current work of the NCCA on PE. Currently, PE is allocated a minimum threshold of 135 hours to be experienced over the three years of Junior Cycle (DES Circular, 0055/2019). DES has set out 4 options for provision of PE in JC:

- The specification for the NCCA short course in PE (100 hours)
- School-designed or externally-designed short course in PE (100 hours) using the NCCA template and 'Guidelines on developing your own Short Course'
- Other programmes/modules/units of PE developed using Appendix I of the NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines
- The Junior Certificate PE syllabus (2003)

Schools may choose a combination of these options. NCCA has developed a Background Paper as the first step towards the development of a 135-hour PE short course. The draft specification is planned for completion by end of May 2021.

COVID-19 and Junior Cycle examination: It was noted that stakeholder engagement on both the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations would take place. ASTI underlined the need to ensure that attention is also focused on the examination paper structure and content. Teachers are concerned that the duration of the examinations has been reduced but content remains the same. Teachers have also stated that very few students get marks in the highest category: less than 2% of candidates achieve 90% to 100%. Time for conduction CBAs and the Assessment Task also needs to be addressed.

Subject Inspections: ASTI raised the issue that many subject inspection reports have been critical of subject planning. For example, reports on English have been critical of teachers and subject departments with no indication for them of how to really improve planning. DES stated that this could be addressed in the context of a process of error verification

CPD/JCT Provisions: ASTI raised the issue of the variable quality of JCT training. The DES confirmed that all 120 JCT training team had moved online. Details of 21/22 year provision not yet finalised.

Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meetings

The matter of scheduling of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings in schools remains a big issue for ASTI. Some

schools continued to attempt to organise such meetings entirely outside normal school tuition hours.

The Appendix to the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (July 2015) and Circular Letter 0015/2017 both state:

"The 40 minute professional time period provided within timetable is available to teachers on the basis that they will use this time flexibly including bundling time periods and carrying forward time to facilitate professional collaboration. Teachers may also use the time periods for individual planning, feedback or reporting activities relating to Junior Cycle. In particular, time periods will need to be bundled to facilitate Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings. Since professional collaboration meetings can only be held when the relevant subject teachers can be present, a limited number of meetings may need to draw on teachers' bundled time to run beyond normal school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting"

In addition, a further clarification relating to SLAR meetings was provided by the Department of Education and Skills to ASTI in December 2015. It stated as follows:

"The Department confirms that any attempt to impose the organisation of SLAR meetings entirely outside school hours would contravene the agreement. The intention is that SLAR meetings will be scheduled to commence within the timetable, involving the inclusion of a normal timetabled period. However, given the required duration, flexibility to run beyond the normal school day for some of the duration of the meeting is required. This flexibility is essential to the feasibility of organising SLAR meetings."

In May 2018 the ASTI Central Executive Council passed the following motion.

"That CEC adopt the view that the current arrangement for SLAR meetings, where a portion of all these meetings takes place outside of school time, contravenes section 9.7 of the appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle reform."

"Therefore, CEC adopt the view that section 9.7 means that all SLAR meetings must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run over, and issue a directive to members to comply."


The implementation of that motion required a ballot of members. It was intended at the time to conduct the necessary ballot in September 2018. Standing Committee considered the matter further after the summer of 2018 and concluded that given that the 'New Entrant' proposals were imminent at the time, it would be sensible to delay the matter for a short time.

In October 2018, Standing Committee decided instead to adopt the following motion:

"That the ASTI issue an implementation declaration on the holding of Subject Learning and Review Meetings (SLARS) in accordance with the Joint Statement and implementation and Appendix to the Joint statement"

Regarding the holding of the ballot they took the view that for the moment, the ballot should stand in reserve.

The 'Implementation Declaration' issued to schools shortly thereafter.



**JUNIOR CYCLE
SUBJECT LEARNING
AND ASSESSMENT
REVIEW
MEETINGS**

The Appendix to the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (July 2015) and Circular Letter 0015/2017 both state:

"The 48 minute professional time period provided within timetable is available to teachers on the basis that they will use this time flexibly including bundling time periods and carrying forward time to facilitate professional collaboration. Teachers may also use the time periods for individual planning, feedback or reporting activities relating to junior cycle. In particular, time periods will need to be bundled to facilitate SLAR meetings. Since professional collaboration meetings can only be held when the relevant subject teachers can be present, a limited number of meetings may need to draw on teachers' bundled time to run beyond normal school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting"

A further clarification relating to SLAR meetings was provided by the Department of Education and Skills to ASTI in December 2015. It stated as follows:

"The Department confirms that any attempt to impose the organisation of SLAR meetings entirely outside school hours would contravene the agreement. The intention is that SLAR meetings will be scheduled to commence within the timetable, involving the inclusion of a normal timetabled period. However, given the required duration (approximately two hours per meeting), flexibility to run beyond the normal school day for some of the duration of the meeting is required."

In the context of the above, the ASTI is issuing the following Implementation Declaration:



**ASTI Implementation Declaration on
SLAR meetings**

**Subject Learning and
Assessment Review meetings
should be scheduled
within a school's timetable.
A limited number of meetings
may run beyond school tuition
hours for some of the
duration of the meeting.**

Moreover, the **APPENDIX TO JOINT STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES
AND IMPLEMENTATION** also provides as follows:

S.5. It is accepted that there will be timetabling implications for schools arising from the commitment to support professional collaboration among teachers and implications for leadership within schools arising from the significant changes that will be taking place in teaching, learning and assessment at Junior Cycle.

S.6. It is agreed that the reforms will not impose additional workload and time demands on teachers. It is also acknowledged that teachers' professional practice will adapt and develop significantly as a result of these reforms.

www.asti.ie



A significant development took place when at a meeting of the Junior Cycle Framework Implementation Committee on 14th January 2019, the Department of Education and Skills proposed that a small sub-committee be set up to explore solutions. These meetings commenced in February 2019. The discussions centred on seeking a solution that would respect the terms of the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (July 2015) and would allow for no intrusion on tuition time for students. In that regard, ASTI put forward its own proposals to break the impasse. The key features of this proposal required that there could be adjournment of SLAR meetings, wide time windows for the completion of SLARs and the introduction of a period of preparation/ reading time for SLARs that could be done prior to the meeting.

We also argued that schools should be encouraged to develop their calendar of functions/events in a manner conducive to facilitating SLAR meetings. These might include sports days, student wellbeing days, retreats, house examinations, show/concert preparations, whole school assemblies, cultural events, Seachtain na Gaeilge etc.

Schools/Subject Departments should be accorded autonomy to organise SLAR meetings where possible in the context of the opportunities that arise during the year and in keeping with the trust-based model.

However, ASTI also noted that substitution should be provided where necessary

At a meeting of the Sub-committee of the Junior Cycle Implementation Body, held in August 2019, the Department of Education and Skills tabled a proposal that a mutually acceptable

protocol be agreed. The further proposed that there be engagement to this end.

ASTI representatives stated that ASTI would not agree any protocol that breached the terms of Circular Letter 0015/2017, the Appendix to the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (July 2015) and the statement of clarification provided to ASTI by the Department of Education and Skills in December 2015.

A list of further issues that may be addressed in this process were also to be considered. They included;

- Schools where senior management insist on being at the SLAR meetings instead of trusting teachers to carry out the SLAR.
- Insistence on absolute records on the use of a teachers' professional time. This is supported by inaccurate statements that the inspectorate requires this level of record-keeping when inspections occur.
- Bundling of professional time and overuse of it for whole school/Department activities rather than student-focused activities and SLAR meetings.
- Use of professional time for other management activities in the school - additional meetings, policy/procedure review and drafting.
- 58-minute timetables make teachers feel cheated out of professional time where students may or may not be getting 29 x 58-minute classes.
- 61-minute classes that create allocation problems in the student timetable. $21 \times 61 = 28.47$ hours tuition.

- Schools using one-hour timetable where teachers teach a module for one hour per week for 11 weeks. Therefore, teachers do not have the 40-minute professional time each week- in breach of the agreement.
- Shared or team teaching where teachers are asked to go into a random class or pre-arranged class for one 20-minute period a week in schools operating one-hour classes.

Negotiations on a protocol that could be issued to schools, by way of a Circular Letter, which would deal with these matters commenced shortly thereafter.

At time of writing, the sub-committee charged with the responsibility to negotiate the protocol had met on a number of occasions. Unfortunately, no agreement could be reached and ASTI representatives withdrew from the process.

In November 2019, the necessary ballot to put in place the directive mandated by the CEC motion of May 2018 as set out above took place. ASTI members voted to authorise the ASTI to issue a directive on the scheduling of Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings.

This ballot on the timing and scheduling of SLAR meetings was undertaken because some schools consistently proposed that the meetings be held outside normal school tuition hours, contrary to the Appendix to the Junior Cycle Reform Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation.

93% of members voted in favour of the ASTI directing its members to only attend SLAR meetings which are in compliance with the agreed arrangements. The turnout was 55%.

Standing Committee considered the outcome of the ballot at their December 2019 meeting.

Arising from this, the following directive was issued in January 2020.

Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings

In November 2019, ASTI conducted a ballot of members on the scheduling of *Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings*. ASTI members voted by 93% to 7% in favour of authorising Standing Committee to issue the following directive to members.



ASTI

SUBJECT LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW (SLAR) MEETINGS

In November 2019, the ASTI conducted a ballot of members on the scheduling of Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings. ASTI members voted by 93% to 7% in favour of authorising Standing Committee to issue the following directive to members.

ASTI DIRECTIVE

In the context of section 9.7 of the Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform, ASTI members are hereby directed to only attend Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings on the basis that they must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run beyond school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting.

Notes:

This ASTI Directive takes effect from January 6, 2020.

The purpose of this Directive is to ensure that all Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings are held in accordance with the provisions of section 9.7 of the Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform.

All members are required to adhere to this Directive. Where a member of the ASTI becomes aware that another member is in breach of the above Directive, he/she should report this in writing to the ASTI General Secretary so that the matter may be formally investigated by the union.

Breachers of the Directive may result in union disciplinary sanction.

For further information on the operation of this Directive see <https://www.asti.ie/news/campaigns/subject-learning-and-assessment-review-meetings/>

ASTI Directive

In the context of section 9.7 of the *Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform*, ASTI members are hereby directed to only attend *Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings on the basis that they must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run beyond school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting.*

Notes:

All members are required to adhere to this directive. Where a member of ASTI becomes aware that another member is in breach of the above Directive, he/she should report this in writing to the ASTI General Secretary so that the matter may be formally investigated by the union.

Breaches of the directive may result in union disciplinary sanction.

The purpose of this ASTI Directive is to ensure that all *Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings* are held in accordance with the provisions of section 9.7 of the *Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform*.

Unfortunately, the negotiations on a protocol that could be issued to schools, by way of a Circular Letter, which would deal with these matters were unsuccessful. ASTI could not agree to the terms of what was being proposed by the Department of Education and Skills.

Circular Letter 0017/2020

In February, The Department of Education and Skills issued a new Circular Letter 0017/2020 to schools in which they sought to address the matter of scheduling of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings in schools. In this circular, a series of four options were specified, one of which must be chosen by each school, by consensus, to decide how such meetings will be scheduled in the school. The relevant extract of the circular is set out below.

Extract from Circular Letter 0017/2020

Options for scheduling the SLAR process and meetings

Each school must opt for one of the following arrangements (Option A, or Option B, or Option C or Option D) for the holding of all of its SLAR meetings. A decision on which option to be used will be made as described in section 5.9 above.

Option A

- Schools may choose to maintain or implement a timetable having four long days and one shorter day.
- This timetable will facilitate SLAR and other meetings relating to Junior Cycle to be held in the period following the conclusion of tuition on the shorter day, or at another time that does not impinge on student tuition time.
- Schools will be required to maintain the currently defined levels of student tuition time, i.e. 28 hours per week.
- Schools must not incur any additional costs through Substitution.
- Substitution and Supervision must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings.
- A SLAR meeting will be a single meeting of approximately 2 hours duration.

Option B

- An agreement is reached at school level between teachers and management that SLAR meetings will be held at a time suitable to the teachers in the subject groups without impinging on tuition time.
- Should circumstances allow, a meeting, or portion thereof, may take place within normal school tuition hours.
- Schools will be required to maintain the currently defined levels of student tuition time, i.e. 28 hours per week.
- Schools must not incur any additional costs through Substitution.
- Substitution and Supervision must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings.
- A SLAR meeting will be a single meeting of approximately 2 hours duration.

Option C

- The SLAR process will constitute 40 minutes of preparation time from within a teacher's professional time, and a collaborative portion of a minimum of 80 minutes' duration, the latter to be held as a single meeting.
- Once students have completed their CBA, their subject class teacher will carry out a provisional assessment of the students' learning as developed and evidenced by the CBA process, based on the Features of Quality. These provisional assessments may be modified in light of the discussions that take place at the SLAR meeting.
- In preparation for the collaborative portion of the SLAR process, each teacher will identify one sample of students' work for each descriptor, where feasible, for discussion at the meeting. Each teacher will submit his/her samples to the Facilitator, together with a brief note on each sample of students' work showing their reasons for their provisional assessment of the students' work. This will support all relevant teachers in reviewing the samples of students' work in the preparatory phase.
- The Facilitator will assemble and make available the appropriate examples of student work and attached notes supplied by the subject teachers some days prior to the commencement of the collaborative portion of the SLAR process.
- Teachers will use 40 minutes of their professional time to access this material, examine the samples and attached notes, and familiarise themselves with their content.
- The balance of the SLAR process (a meeting of a minimum 80 minutes' duration) will be held at a time suitable to the teachers in the subject group, without impinging on student tuition time and without the use of any substitution.
- Schools will be required to maintain the currently defined levels of student contact time, i.e. 28 hours per week.
- Schools must not incur any additional costs through Substitution.
- Supervision and Substitution must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings.

Option D

- SLAR meetings are held entirely during normal school tuition hours and the teacher allocation for professional time to the school is reduced to remove the equivalent of 8 hours of

professional time per full time teacher (and pro-rata amounts for part-time teachers).

- Additional paid substitution is provided to facilitate attendance of teachers at SLAR meetings.

Supervision and Substitution must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings.

- The reduction in teacher allocation to the school may result in the loss of teaching posts in the school. Normal teacher re-deployment arrangements will apply in situations where the number of teachers working in a school exceeds the approved teacher allocation for that school.
- The allocation to individual teachers of teacher professional time available to the school may be prioritised by giving professional time to teachers of Junior Cycle only.
- A SLAR meeting will be a single meeting of approximately 2 hours duration.

ASTI Standing Committee met and considered this matter. It concluded that none of the options contained in the circular letter are acceptable as a means to resolve the on-going difficulty in scheduling Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings in schools. It is clear that the options are not compliant with the terms of the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (May 2015) and Appendix to the Joint Statement (July 2015) and as such are unacceptable to ASTI. Indeed, if Option D set out in the circular were to be implemented it would constitute a reduction in investment in the operation of the Framework for Junior Cycle in schools, with consequent damage for the employment of teachers and security of tenure for the most vulnerable of our members. In particular, it can also be seen that options available to schools are clearly at variance with the Appendix to the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation paragraph 5.6 which provides as follows:

“5.6. It is agreed that the reforms will not impose additional workload and time demands on teachers. It is also acknowledged that teachers’ professional practice will adapt and develop significantly as a result of these reforms.”

Moreover, all the options are considerably out of line with the following extract from a letter containing clarification relating to SLAR meetings which was provided by the Department of Education and Skills to ASTI in December 2015.

It stated as follows: “The Department confirms that any attempt to impose the organisation of SLAR meetings entirely outside school hours would contravene the agreement. The intention is that SLAR meetings will be scheduled to commence within the timetable, involving the inclusion of a normal timetabled period. However, given the required duration [approximately two hours per meeting], flexibility to run beyond the normal school day for some of the duration of the meeting is required.”

The intention within the circular letter was that staff will make a decision, by consensus, regarding which option would be adopted by individual schools.

ASTI advised all members to vote against all of the options set out in the circular letter. In that context, there would be a failure to reach consensus in most schools. It will then fall to the Board of Management to make the decision. Members were reminded at the time that ASTI had recently issued the following directive:

“In the context of section 9.7 of the Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform, ASTI members

are hereby directed to only attend Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings on the basis that they must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run beyond school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting.”

Standing Committee decided that this directive remained in force. Irrespective of what decision is made within a school regarding the options in the circular referred above, or indeed how it is made, ASTI members are required to adhere to this directive.

Shortly thereafter, the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic occurred.

Impact of COVID-19 on 2019/20 Junior Cycle

Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, a number of decisions were taken in relation to the Junior Cycle 2020 examinations. These included the cancellation of the June 2020 certificate examinations, with the work and achievement of third year Junior Cycle students in 2020 to be recognised with a state certificate from the Department of Education and Skills. This was proposed by ASTI and found widespread agreement from within the wider education Stakeholder Group. The Department of Education conceded this demand.

In addition, schools provided students with a written school report on their learning achievements as soon as possible after the end of the 2019/20 school year. Specific arrangements would be put in place for adult learners and early school leavers to give them an opportunity to take final Junior Cycle examinations in autumn 2020. The Department of Education and Skills and the education partners recognised that exceptional measures were required in 2020 for the assessment and certification of students’ learning but that implementation of these measures will not be regarded as a precedent or as agreement to operate such measures in future years.

The Guidelines issued to schools to enact these arrangements are set out below:

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ON STUDENTS’ LEARNING AT JUNIOR CYCLE MAY 2020 GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

Context

Irish students completing their third year of Junior Cycle in 2020 have experienced a very disrupted period of learning in 2019/20 because of the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 crisis.

Teachers and schools have used a wide range of approaches to mitigate the effects of this disrupted schooling but the learning experience of students has varied across schools and students for a range of reasons over which these schools and students have had no control.

In these circumstances, it is not possible for students to undertake the Junior Cycle final examinations normally organised by the State Examinations Commission.

In addition, while many students have completed most of their classroom-based assessments (CBAs), short courses and/or priority learning units (PLUs), the normal range of assessment activities cannot be concluded consistently for all students.

In this context, the use of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) is not appropriate as a reporting and certification mechanism in 2020.

These guidelines set out alternative arrangements for the assessment and reporting on the learning achievements of students who are concluding Junior Cycle in May 2020.

Key elements

In 2020, the Junior Cycle learning achievement of students will be recognised through a specific form of certification designed to meet the current, exceptional circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For each student, certification will involve two elements:

- A State Certificate of completion of Junior Cycle from the Department of Education and Skills. Students should receive a State Certification that they have completed three years of Junior Cycle education in a number of subjects/priority learning units. This certification will be provided by the Department of Education and Skills.
- A School Report setting out the learning achievements of students in Junior Cycle. Students should receive a written report on the broad range of learning that they have achieved in each subject, short course and/or priority learning unit at the end of Junior Cycle. This assessment of their learning will be provided by their teachers. Schools will have autonomy in how this assessment is to be arrived at and the format in which the report is provided.

The school's assessment of students' learning achievements

The assessment of students' learning achievements in each subject will take place at school level and will be based on the teacher's professional knowledge of each student's learning. Schools will have autonomy to choose the most appropriate form of school-based assessments to put in place for the third-year cohort of 2019/20.

Schools may opt to use a range of evidence to inform their assessment of students' achievements. These could include:

- Evidence available from assignments, tests, tasks, journals, projects, practical and other work completed over the course of second year and third year
- Classroom-Based Assessments completed in second year and third year
- School-designed examinations, tasks, projects, assignments, essay style questions, presentations, or other tasks chosen by the teacher from the range of approaches agreed at school level.

Each school should adopt a whole-school approach to the assessment and reporting on student achievement following consultation with the teachers of third-year students to determine the most appropriate method of assessment for the third-year group and relevant subjects. The board of the school should communicate with parents and students in relation to the proposed actions that the school intends to take in relation to the planned end-of-year assessments.

For each subject, the evidence of learning to be used and any method of assessment chosen should be decided by the relevant subject teachers in the context of the whole-school approach

adopted above. Teachers know their students and can balance a variety of factors in arriving at the most suitable form of assessment to put in place for their students.

Any additional assessment or other form of end-of-year assignment agreed to be completed by students should be limited in scope and cognisant of the disrupted learning that students have experienced in 2020.

School-based assessments should be devised and marked by the class teacher. The method or format of assessment used (for example, written or electronic format) should take cognisance of students' accessibility to the mode chosen. The assessment format chosen should be accessible to all students in the class.

To ensure equity, greater weighting should be given to work that was completed by students in advance of the closure of schools on 12 March 2020. Cognisance may be given to work completed after that date but teachers should have regard to the impact that school closure will have had on students' ability to engage with further learning after 12 March 2020.

Where relevant the method or format of assessment used should be inclusive of students' with special educational needs (SEN) and provide differentiated approaches to allow students with SEN to access the appropriate assessment mode and be adaptable to their particular context.

Students should have the opportunity to complete any additional assessments within a clearly defined timeframe. A collaborative approach should be used in schools to devise a suitable timeframe for the completion of assessments and should be reviewed at whole-school level to ensure that the timeframes are balanced and achievable. In all cases, all assessments should be completed and marked before 29 May 2020.

Providing the report to students

Students and their parents should receive a written report of the assessment of the student's learning in each subject, short course and/or priority learning unit.

This report may include the provision of grades or descriptors. It may also detail separately the descriptors awarded to classroom-based assessments (CBAs) and/or priority learning units.

The report should also provide an opportunity for schools to report on other areas of learning including the wellbeing programme completed by students.

Schools may use a reporting template available from the NCCA but schools are free to devise their own report format.

The report should be provided to students and their parents as soon as feasible following the completion of the school year 2019/20.

Providing State Certification

The Department of Education and Skills will provide each student with a certificate indicating the completion of the Junior Cycle programme of study, including the list of subjects, short courses and/or priority learning units studied and the level at which the subject was studied.

This data will be drawn from the Department's Post-primary Online Database (PPOD) and will not exceed the 10-subject limit on subjects for certification set out in Circular Letter 0055/2019 (or lower where the student has studied short courses).

This certificate will be provided early in the school year 2020/21.

Adult learners

The SEC will put in place specific arrangements for adult learners who have the flexibility to study a subject or subjects at Junior Cycle level within one academic year.

These arrangements will ensure that these adult learners will be provided with an opportunity to take the final examination in the subject(s) for which they are entered. These examinations will take place in autumn 2020 and the specific timing will be determined as soon as possible.

These examinations will only be available to students who meet the specific qualifying criteria.

Circular Letter 0076/2020

Circular Letter 0076/2020 sets out the key changes for school year 2020/2021.

In July 2020, the Department published curriculum and assessment guidance for post-primary school leaders and teachers in respect of the return to school in 2020/21. In addition, specific guidance on assessment arrangements for the Certificate Examinations 2021 was published in August 2020. These arrangements are adapted to take account of the disrupted learning experienced by these students during the 2019/20 school year and include the decision that the Assessment Task (AT) in subjects with this element will not be examined in 2021. Guidance in relation to revised arrangements for 3rd year students following Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L1LPs and L2LPs) in 2020/21 was also issued.

Classroom-Based Assessment Arrangements and Assessment Tasks in 2020/21.

The arrangements for Classroom-Based Assessment Arrangements and Assessment Tasks in 2020/21 include the following:

- Extension of the deadline for completion of CBA 1s into the school year 2020/21, while also allowing for the possibility that some teachers and schools may have been able to complete them before the end of 2019/20. Removal of the requirement for students entering third year of Junior Cycle in 2020/21 to complete two CBAs in each subject, to a requirement to complete just one CBA in each subject.
- The school management and its teachers, in discussion where feasible with students, will choose which CBA to complete for each subject. However, there are some exceptions to this choice: - To ensure assessment of oral communications skills, students must complete CBA 2: Communicative Task in Irish, and CBA 1: Oral Communication in Modern Foreign Languages. - As they are linked in each case with the final examination in the subject, students studying Visual Art, Home Economics, and Music must complete CBA 2. The design of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) for 2021 will be adjusted to take account of the revised arrangements for CBAs. Schools and non-school settings were advised in August 2020 that students entering third year in September 2020 would not be required to complete Assessment Tasks for the relevant subjects and that grade descriptors in these subjects will be based on the examination only. In Music and Home Economics students complete a practical examination and do not complete an AT. For Visual Art, the final assessment is based on the completion of students' visual art workbook and artefacts and students do not complete an AT. In these three subjects, CBA2 is linked with the practical examination / Visual Art

examination and modified arrangements will be put in place in relation to these linked examination requirements.

Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meetings

As mentioned earlier, Circular Letter 17/2020, Guidance on the Junior Cycle Subject Learning and Assessment Review Process, which was issued on 27 February 2020, required schools to choose from one of four options for the organisation of SLAR meetings. If any school were to choose the fourth option, this would allow for SLAR meetings to be held entirely during normal school tuition hours, with a corresponding reduction in the teacher allocation for professional time. No school chose this option.

Unfortunately, the Department of Education and Skills have continued to maintain that SLAR meetings should be held in accordance with the three options set out in the Circular. (The fourth option has been withdrawn.)

ASTI members are required to adhere to the ASTI directive on this matter.

SENIOR CYCLE

NCCA Senior Cycle Review

NCCA has been undertaking a review of Senior Cycle education in recent years.

The Senior Cycle review involved two phases: scoping and school review followed by national seminars.

Phase 1: A scoping review which spanned 2016-2017; which was intended to identify themes for exploration and establish a process for conducting the review.

Phase 2: A school-based review and national seminars which spanned 2018-2019. The school-based review involved 41 schools nationwide. This review took place over two cycles. Cycle one looked at the purpose of senior cycle education. Cycle two focused on pathways, programmes and flexibility. The feedback from schools in each cycle was analysed by the ESRI and presented at National Seminars for further discussion.

The ESRI's report can be accessed at the following: www.ncca.ie/media/4025/senior-cycle-review-interim-report-july-2019.pdf

The Senior Cycle review entered a third of phase of public consultation in July 2019. There were a number of ways to participate in the consultation process;

These included an online survey, attendance at regional focus groups or making a written submission.

ASTI participated in all of these cycles of consultation in order to ensure that the voice of teachers would be heard. We ensured that we were well represented at all stakeholder events to which we have been invited.

We repeatedly brought the fact that NCCA were inviting feedback on the areas of development from the review to date, contained in the interim report and the accompanying consultation document

to the attention of our members'. As individuals could provide feedback through an online survey or by making a written submission, we encouraged our members to do so.

In addition, ASTI was pro-active in a number of areas.

ASTI met NCCA unilaterally and appraised them of our views.

A large section of the ASTI annual meetings of NCCA subject representatives in recent years has been devoted to discussion of this topic.

ASTI also commissioned a piece of research by Dr Brian Fleming on the approach so far by NCCA to the consultation process. It can be accessed on our website asti.ie by searching for "Making Education Policy Work".

In particular, it identified that issues such as initiative overload, increasing workload and lack of capacity at school level must be addressed before major change at Senior Cycle can take place.

Key findings from the research were as follows:

Transformative change in teaching and learning takes time and is dependent on contextual factors.

Successful curriculum policy requires:

- principles of change must be clearly articulated, shared and understood by all involved
- buy-in from the teaching profession
- capacity building in schools prior to implementation of change
- acknowledgement that the meaning of change needs to be regularly revised, and
- acknowledgement that change processes in education must be incremental rather than radical.

Consideration of implementation issues, including professional resources, has been absent in education policy, most notably in the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

Curriculum policy and implementation policy must reflect, rather than marginalise or reduce, the primary role of teacher agency in implementing change in the classroom.

Teachers' work is becoming increasingly intensified in conditions that are at best stable and at worst deteriorating.

Key recommendations

There is a need to consider an appropriate timeframe for introducing change at Senior Cycle.

According to the author, "schools are in need of a breather from the current pattern of ongoing innovation and additional workload".

There is a need to evaluate the impact of the Framework for Junior Cycle on the learning that is taking place in classrooms. There is also a need to examine implementation issues that are problematic.

Dr Fleming's research also threw up some interesting perspectives. Dr Fleming observed that, without waiting to see how current Junior Cycle reform is working out, the NCCA initiated a review of Senior Cycle. (Conducted by ESRI on behalf of NCCA) He provided valuable insight into their consultative process. Reflecting on how useful the process was to date he considered it to be of

doubtful value. He noted that in most schools that took part in the consultative process (41 schools in Cycle 1) the fact that not all teachers were involved drew much criticism. In his research, he found that 60% of his respondents were negative regarding how worthwhile the experience proved to be. He found that respondents to his survey were even more critical of the Cycle 2 process. (Regional Seminars) They felt that a particular agenda was being pushed and the teacher voice was largely ignored.

He noted that "engagement with some people in less than 6% of post-primary schools is highly unlikely to capture the contextual differences across the system to any significant extent." He wondered if those who had chosen to opt out were suffering from "innovation overload". He questioned why only one of a total of eleven questions posed to participants in the consultative process referenced the Junior Cycle reform experience. Tellingly, he argued that the "most striking and fundamental feature" of the list of questions posed was the total absence of any reference to implementation issues.

In that context, we also made a detailed submission on our issues to NCCA.

ASTI Submission

to

NCCA Senior Cycle Review Consultation Document

October 2019

Introduction

The ASTI is the largest second-level teachers union. Its members teach in all types of second-level schools, including voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive schools and colleges, community colleges, Gaelscoileanna, Educate Together schools and in special school settings. The union has a distinguished tradition of contributing to the development of education policy at all levels and represents the professional voice of second-level teachers.

The literature on curriculum change is unanimous on the centrality of the teaching profession to the process of curriculum change. Transformative curriculum change takes place in the classroom and, ultimately, the teacher is the mediator of this change. However, the latter is predicated on teachers' support for the rationale for change, their engagement in the change process from the beginning and their willingness to effect pedagogical and other professional practices in their day-to-day classroom teaching. These factors are absolutely intrinsic to transformative educational change. Without them, the latter cannot happen.

The ASTI must put on record the enduring negative perception among second-level teachers that they were marginalised in the junior cycle reform process. The 2015 Travers report, 'Junior Cycle Reform: A Way Forward', highlighted the deep sense of alienation among teachers created by the 'top-down' change process. While the austerity measures implemented during this period were deeply resented by teachers, the depth of alienation experienced by teachers in the process cannot be solely attributed to the former. Rather, teachers felt that their collective knowledge, expertise and professional values were disregarded in change process, in particular by the decision of the then Minister for Education to sidestep the advice of the NCCA and issue the Department's own version of A Framework for Junior Cycle. The report on teachers' reaction to this Ministerial decision was well described in the ASTI report, 'Teachers' Voice', which stated that the former demonstrated the huge

gap between the rhetoric of educational change and realities of school life. Teachers will not engage with a reform agenda at senior cycle which does not place teachers at the centre of the process.

Further meaningful consultation will be required at all stages of development, if only to avoid the kind of scenario that developed and led to the ministerial decision on the status of History in the Junior Cycle curriculum.

Change at senior cycle must be evidence-based

The ASTI, as the professional voice of teachers, supports the premise of evidence-based change in education. Too often, change initiatives in education are introduced in compliance with broader social, economic and political agenda rather than emerging from indigenous school-based research and analysis. The perception by teachers that the change agenda is often set elsewhere leads to mistrust and disengagement. Teachers are also aware of the influence of global economic paradigms on Irish education policy and are instinctively concerned that such agendas have the potential to undermine much of what is good and valued in Irish education. In this context, there is deep concern within the ASTI at the failure of the Department of Education and Skills to commence an external, independent longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the Framework for Junior Cycle on teaching and learning in schools. The Department committed to this exercise in 2016. There is a pressing need for such a study in advance of changes to the senior cycle curriculum at both a policy and political level. The former requires evidence in order to avoid unintended consequences of change and to protect educational standards: the latter requires trust and reciprocity.

Furthermore, ASTI believes that there must be an integrated approach to any new curricular reform whereby design and implementation are considered in parallel to avoid the problems that have emerged at Junior Cycle where the process has been largely sequential.

The ASTI submission is structured under the headings presented in the NCCA consultation paper.

Purpose

The ASTI believes that it is important to develop and agree a distinct vision or purpose for senior cycle education. Such a vision should be based on core values such as equality and inclusion; justice and fairness; respect for human dignity and identity; and freedom and democracy. Senior cycle education should aim to enable every student to fulfil their potential. Achieving this aim requires a holistic approach based on the above values. Irish second-level schools are ethos-oriented and curriculum change must support the realisation of ethos in its multiple articulations.

Knowledge, skills and qualities

The ASTI fully endorses the centrality accorded to disciplinary knowledge in the senior cycle curriculum in the paper. Moreover, such knowledge must be of sufficient depth and breadth to ensure that students are adequately challenged. A balance must be articulated in subject specifications between content/knowledge, learning outcomes and skills. For the majority of teachers, their experience of the junior cycle specifications has caused them to be concerned about the erosion of the knowledge content inherent in each subject discipline. It is simply unacceptable that teachers have to 'unpick' the junior cycle specifications in order to have a clear sense of the subject's disciplinary content. The proliferation and perceived lack of coherence of learning outcomes in specifications is deeply problematic: in many instances teachers feel that the latter undermines rather than enhances their professional judgement in the classroom. Curriculum change should reinforce – and not reduce – teachers' professional autonomy. The ASTI believes that an independent external evaluation must focus on these issues in its analysis of the impact of curriculum change on teaching and learning.

Moreover, the ASTI is extremely concerned by the conclusions of the critique of the Leaving Certificate Science syllabi conducted by Professor Áine Hyland in 2014. The latter stated that it is not sufficient to describe a high-stakes examination programme in terms of topics and learning outcomes alone. Rather, more detailed information about the depth of treatment of subjects and the requirements for examination must be provided to bring the syllabi into line with international best practice. At the same time, the ASTI acknowledges that the content of individual subject syllabi can be heavy and recommends that a common and transparent approach is utilised in NCCA Subject Development Groups to address this issue.

Pathways and programmes

The ASTI supports the statement that the senior cycle curriculum must be capable of responding to the learning needs of all students. There is a need to evaluate the 'ring-fencing' that currently exists between the three Leaving Certificate programmes so as to broaden learning opportunities of students. Transition Year must remain a stand-alone programme based on the current principle of supporting students' transition to a Leaving Certificate programme based on local needs and contexts. Transition Year should be available and accessible to all students. Vocational and other modular learning experiences, including work experience, are best provided for in the Transition Year programme. There is a need to rethink how such modules are developed to ensure equity for all students. The senior cycle curriculum should have sufficient options to enable students to combine academic, vocational and other forms of learning in a manner which best meets their needs.

Enhanced career guidance and counselling is critical in this regard. The current staffing schedule for this service is completely inadequate and over-stretched. The Department of Education and Skills has received a commissioned report on service the recommendations in which must be implemented to support any future process of curriculum change at senior cycle. The ambition for more pathways in the curriculum will fail to be achieved if students do not have access to appropriate guidance and counselling.

Students who have taken Level 1 and 2 Learning Programmes at junior cycle need to have a dedicated senior cycle programme to which they can transition to. Such programmes are, by definition, resource intensive both in terms of teaching staff and material resources. The ASTI has already submitted a statement of requirements for integrating SEN students into mainstream education. They include a national training programme for all teachers, dedicated SEN co-ordinator posts and the restoration of the training allowance to SEN teachers.

Assessment and reporting

The strengths of the current model of external assessment of the Leaving Certificate examination has been strongly endorsed in the consultation paper. The former include a high level of public trust; its capacity to serve as a valid and objective statement of students' academic achievement; its fairness, impartiality and transparency. At the same time, it is acknowledged that there is a need to broaden the range of assessment to ensure that all aspects of students' learning is both validated and recorded. The proposal to explore the role of second-component assessment for all subjects should be considered: the question of the weighting of such components needs to be addressed. The ASTI does not support the introduction of Profiles of Achievement or CBAs at senior cycle education.

Reporting on student learning as they conclude their second-level education has quite different functions compared to that at junior cycle. Moreover, given that reporting in the junior cycle is as yet a new and emerging practice, the State Examinations Commission should continue to serve as the external statement of student achievement.

Priorities and supports

Curriculum change should be incremental rather than radical. Research commissioned by the ASTI, 'Making Education Policy Work', referenced the NCCA in stating that achieving educational change that is deep and lasting, takes time. Moreover, there is probably inadequate appreciation of the time required to sustain change. Teachers' experience of curriculum change at junior cycle has left them wary and concerned. There is a widespread perception that subject specifications are inadequate and that the proliferation of learning outcomes and focus on key skills inadequately prepares students for the senior cycle curriculum. There is absolutely no support among teachers for radical change at senior cycle. The current range of subjects should be maintained of which students should undertake a minimum of six. ASTI further believes that subjects should be offered at both Higher and Ordinary levels. Teachers will engage with change which they believe will work, will maintain and enhance students' learning and achievement, and which sustains their professional autonomy.

The 2018 OECD Education at a Glance report once again demonstrated that Ireland was at the bottom of the global ranking for investment in education: Ireland ranked last out of 34 countries for investment in education as a percentage of GDP: 1.2% of GDP compared to the OECD average of 2% and the EU average of 1.9%. Schools need additional supports in advance of the introduction of any revised curriculum. The former include agreement on professional time; additional in-school management posts for curriculum co-ordination; career guidance and counselling; reduced class size; measures to address teacher supply; CPD and ongoing opportunities for teacher learning.

In the context of any forthcoming proposals, it will be imperative that an extensive and fit for purpose programme of CPD is provided for teachers augmented by a model whereby sufficient professional time is provided to properly implement such proposals.

This appalling record of under-investment has had a cumulative impact on teachers' working conditions. The aforementioned ASTI research underlines the growing problem of teachers' work is becoming increasingly intensified, with teachers expected to respond to greater pressures and comply with multiplying innovations in conditions that are at best stable and at worst deteriorating. ASTI research, 'Teachers' Work: Work Demands and Intensity of Work, 2019', on teacher workload demonstrates that teachers' working week averages at 40 hours, indicating that in addition to the class-contact time of 21 hours and 20 minutes, teachers were spending a further 20 hours working outside of the school day. Of that additional out-of-school time, 60% of it was spent on preparation for classroom teaching and marking students' work. This workload is unsustainable and teachers are not positively disposed to any curriculum change which would add to workload.

Conclusion

The ASTI will continue to engage with the NCCA, the Department of Education and Skills and the stakeholders in education to review the senior cycle curriculum. The Association is deeply concerned that any change proposals would be put forward in the absence of a comprehensive external review of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. It must also put on record its critique of many aspects of the initial consultation process with the Network Schools and attendant regional seminars. The ASTI will engage in a comprehensive consultation with its members, the classroom teachers, in the coming months to ensure that the professional voice of teachers is central to any future change in the senior cycle curriculum.

At time of writing ASTI understands that the next stage of the NCCA review of Senior Cycle is the generation of an advisory

report. The report will comprise of the priority areas, longer-term goals and a proposed timeline and advice on the pace and scale for developments in senior cycle. This report will issue to the Minister for Education and Skills for consideration. ASTI has every intention of ensuring that the mistakes of the past regarding curricular reform will not be repeated.

Leaving Certificate Examinations 2020

On 10th April, 2020, Minister Joe McHugh TD announced that the 2020 Leaving Certificate Examinations were being postponed. This government decision was taken on the advice of the appropriate health authorities in the context of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. The prospect of holding them as normal was adjudged not to be a realistic possibility.

He announced that it was intended to hold the Leaving Certificate examinations in late July/early August. The timetable for the examinations would be published in June. The timetable will be predicated on the medical advice at the time.

For two weeks prior to the examinations, it was hoped that face to face contact would be arranged in schools with Leaving Certificate Students.

The DES also hoped that teachers would maintain contact with their Leaving Certificate Students in the period prior to the two weeks referred above. This is because the DES were worried about maintenance of motivation and engagement of Students.

They Department of Education and Skills gave a commitment to engagement with ASTI on a viable plan for putting these arrangements in place. The discussions took place together with discussions with all the other stakeholders in second-level education.

An outline of the proposed arrangements was as follows:

Practicals: E.g. LC Construction Studies, Engineering, Art
 These to be rearranged to take place in the late July/ August period of examinations.

Project work: Several subjects including Agricultural Science, Constructions Studies, etc

The date for completion of this work was being set for just prior to the commencement of the late July/ August period of examinations.

Three Terminal Examinations in May: Link Modules, ICT, Computer Science

These were to be rearranged to take place in the late July/ August period of examinations.

Leaving Certificate Applied: Orals and Practicals

These were to be rearranged to take place in the late July/ August period of examinations.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme Link Modules

The LCVP Link modules written examination were to take place in the late July/August period of examinations.

ASTI welcomed in principle that the Leaving Cert exams will go ahead.

Standing Committee met in the immediate aftermath of the Minister's announcement and again some days later.

It confirmed its support for the Minister's Leaving Cert exams announcement, notwithstanding a number of serious concerns raised by teachers all over the country.

The decision was taken in the context that ASTI members were wholly committed to supporting their students at the time, as has been evidenced by their enormous efforts since the closure of schools for normal tuition.

ASTI was conscious of the enormous efforts that our members have already made since the commencement of the Public Health Emergency to maintain teaching and learning in our school communities. Members expressed a worry that the situation would be exploited as a precedent when normal work recommences and in future industrial relations negotiations. Following representations, the Department of Education and Skills confirmed the following in writing:

"It is accepted that such temporary measures are being operated by staff on a without prejudice basis and will not be used in any way by the Department as a precedent in any subsequent industrial relations discussions."

ASTI representatives attended meetings of a working group that was set up by the Department of Education and Skills for contingency planning for State Examinations 2020. The group was a forum where the second-level education stakeholders could contribute their views and concerns regarding the implementation of the Minister's decision for the running of the Examinations.

ASTI pursued the many issues and concerns that were raised by members.

Calculated Grades

However, on Friday 8th May, the Minister for Education and Skills announced that his previous plan to hold the Leaving Certificate Examinations in late July/August could not now go ahead. This was because the health advice available from the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) was such that the plan to do so was no longer viable. Leaving Certificate 2020 is postponed until it is safe to hold the Examinations.

He further announced that his intention was to proceed with a calculated grades model of assessment for Leaving Certificate candidates.

Standing Committee met urgently to consider this development.

ASTI has a long-standing policy of teachers not assessing their students for the purpose of State Certification. This ensures the integrity of the State Exams process, the value of which is infinitely superior to any other process.

The process involving calculated grades was at variance with that position.

In the context of the current global pandemic, the ASTI recognized that for this year it was necessary to engage with the new process. However, ASTI remains firmly of the view that nothing can measure up as a replacement for the normal examinations held annually. The ASTI secured confirmation from the Department of Education and Skills that these measures were being implemented on an emergency basis and would not be regarded as a precedent or an agreement to operate this process in future years.

The ASTI advised members to engage with the *Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020* process in order that students can progress to the next stage of their lives.

Arising from this position, tuition for the Leaving Certificate classes of 2020 ceased.

At this point ASTI pursued a number of objectives.

No Precedent

Firstly, we pursued the DES for a written statement to assure members that cooperation with this measure would have no precedential value. The DES provided us with the following statement.

"The Department of Education and Skills recognises the extraordinary circumstances which have been caused by the Covid-19 crisis for Irish students and the education system. In that regard, the Department recognises that exceptional measures will be required in 2020 for the assessment and certification of students' learning but that implementation of these measures will not be regarded as a precedent or as agreement to operate such measures in future years"

No Appeal of Teachers Judgement

We also fully secured our objective that there could be no appeal of the teacher's judgement in this process. This was a major hurdle and was a strong red line. ASTI couldn't countenance a teacher being required to attend in Court proceedings to defend their judgement regarding their estimated marks for a student.

Indemnity for Teachers

ASTI was not in a position to advise members to engage and proceed with their work on the Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020 model when the Minister for Education and Skills released guidelines for the process on Thursday 21st May.

Those concerns were related to the potential for teachers to have to bear legal costs should civil proceedings be taken against them arising from discharge of their functions under the calculated grades model, notwithstanding that a state indemnity has been put in place.

As part of that process, ASTI sought full indemnity for teachers while they undertook this work in good faith. The necessary clear assurances and clarifications that allow for teachers to proceed with this work without fear of negative financial consequences were successfully negotiated the following day.

Crucially, the Department of Education and Skills gave an undertaking that in all cases where the indemnity applied, the Chief State Solicitors Office would take over the running of the litigation.

This strengthening of the indemnity ensured that a teacher would not have to employ their own legal team to defend themselves and run the risk of incurring large irrecoverable costs and expenses.

ASTI was then in a position to advise its members to engage with the Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020 model.

Calculated Grades - Main Elements

In providing the rankings and estimated markings, there were **four main school-based steps**:

1. The teacher's estimation of student marks and rankings
2. School alignment of marks for a subject through a subject alignment group comprising teachers who are teaching the subject to Leaving Certificate students this year
3. Oversight of the alignment of the marks/ranking process by the school principal
4. Transmission of the marks/rankings for national standardisation.

Each of these steps were set out in detail in the guidance provided.

What were Calculated Grades?

Calculated Grades were based on available data.

There are two sources for the necessary data.

Phase 1 - Data generated within the school (School-based phase)

Phase 2 - Data within and available to the State Examinations Commission. (National standardisation phase)

The standardisation process combined all this data leading to a calculated grade for each student.

The State Examinations Commission data would include available grade data from the Junior and Leaving Certificates of previous years both nationally and of the school. The data relating to the Junior Cycle performances of the current cohort of Leaving Certificate Students is also available. This provided an expected Grade distribution over time at national and school level.

What did a school have to provide to the Department of Education and Skills prior to the national standardisation phase of the process?

- An estimated percentage mark in each subject for each candidate that they would have achieved if they had sat the Leaving Certificate examination as normal.
- A class ranking for each student in each subject.

Was the mark and ranking of students, that was submitted to the national standardisation process, to be regarded as a mark of an individual teacher?

No. The marks and rankings for students that were submitted to the national standardisation process were on behalf of the school. It could not be regarded as the estimated mark of an individual teacher. This is because the judgement of an individual teacher is subject to a school-based alignment process prior to finalisation.

Outcome of Calculated Grades Process

Teachers engaged with the process nationwide. It is abundantly clear that the process was dealt with in a very professional manner in every school.

The Department of Education and Skills issued provisional results in Autumn 2020. Some difficulties and controversies arose with regard to outcomes for some students. A particular controversy regarding the standardisation process emerged with some students receiving revised Calculated Grades weeks later. Litigation is on-going in the Courts at time of writing.

What happens where a candidate remained unhappy with the outcome of the calculated grade awarded?

Such students had the opportunity to sit a normal Leaving Certificate examination in the subject(s) when the holding of conventional examinations becomes possible in November 2020. If a candidate secured a higher grade in that examination the certification provided to the candidate will be amended.

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE STRUCTURES

ASTI CURRICULUM REPRESENTATIVES

Accounting	Noelle Moran, Eamon Scully
Agricultural Science	Peter Keaney, Mairead White
Applied Mathematics	Christy Maginn, Tony McGennis
Art	Jean Bourke, Gerard Lane
Architectural & Construction Studies	James Howley, Peter Masterson
Business Studies	Eamon Scully, Padraig Murphy
Business	Margo McGann, Mary Killilea
Biology	Lily Cronin, Siobhan Devaney
Chemistry	Pauline Nagle, Mary Mullaghy
Civic, Social & Personal Education	Dermot Brennan, Jeanne Barrett
Classics/Classical	Jim O'Dea, Aryn Penn
Computer Science	Mark Walshe, Geraldine O'Brien
Drama	Pat Deery, Kate Barry
English	Kate Barry, Seamus Keane
Economics	Aoife Noctor, Seamus Meskill
Engineering	Eamon Dennehy, Donal Cremin
French	Jane O'Dwyer, Siobhan O'Donovan
Gaeilge	Eithne Coyne, Anne Loughnane
Geography	Margaret Fitzpatrick, John Byrne
German	Ann McKiernan, Pamela Conway
Guidance & Counselling	Joan Colbert, Paul O'Reilly
History	Gerard Hanlon, Philip Irwin
Home Economics	Margaret Kent, Margaret Kinsella
ICT	Geraldine O'Brien, Fergal Canton
Italian	Mairead Ni Droisceil, Vacant
LCA	Anne Loughnane, John Sheedy
LCVP	Kevin Dunphy, Shane Slattery
Learning Support	Pat Knightly, Thomas Kiely
Material Technology	
Wood	Patrick Curley, Vacant
Mathematics	Elaine Devlin, Christina Kennedy
Metalwork	Donal Cremin, Kenny Donagher
Modern Languages	Paul O'Reilly, Ruth O'Connor
Music	Mary McFadden, Jennifer Hiney
Physical Education	Andrew Phelan, Fergal Lyons
Physics	Kevin Dunphy, John Conneely
Politics & Society	Patrick O'Driscoll, Jeanne Barrett
Religious Education	Michael Purcell, Roisin Dignam
Science	Niall Duddy, Michael McGrath
Special Education	Marina Cusack, Helen McKeown
Spanish	Mark Walshe, David McArdle
Social, Personal & Health Education	Deirdre Mac Donald, Karen Ryan
Technical Graphics	Padraig Curley, Liam Quinn
Technology	Eoin OhAodha, Adrian Guinan
Transition Year	Noel Buckley, Pauline Nagle

SUBJECT REPRESENTATIVES HANDBOOK REPORTS

SUBJECT: Visual Art
REPS: Jean Bourke & Gerard Lane

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: Business
REPS: Mary Killilea & Margo McGann

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: Mathematics
REPS: Elaine Devlin & Christina Kennedy

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: French
REPS: Jane O'Dwyer & Siobhan O'Donovan

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: Geography
REPS: Margaret Fitzpatrick & John Byrne

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: English
REPS: Kate Barry & Seamus Keane

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

PROGRAMME: ICT
REPS: Geraldine O'Brien & Fergal Canton

No changes since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: Accounting
REPS: Noelle Moran & Eamon Scully

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: German
REPS: Ann McKiernan & Pamela Conway

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: Technology
REPS: Eoin OhAodha & Adrian Guinan

No changes to syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: History
REPS: Gerard Hanlon & Philip Irwin

No changes to History syllabus since Convention 2020.

SUBJECT: Biology
REPS: Lily Cronin

The NCCA subject development meetings for Biology are ongoing, work is progressing on content.

SUBJECT: Classics & Classical Studies
REPS: Jim O'Dea & Aryn Penn

Junior Cycle Classics

The new Classics course incorporating Classical Studies, Greek and Latin is up and running and is due to be examined for the first time at Junior Cert level in 2022.

Leaving Cert Classical Studies As soon as the new Junior Cert curriculum was agreed work began at NCCA level on the revision of Leaving Certificate Classical Studies. This is the first revision of the course since it was introduced in the 1980s and led to its complete overhaul. The process has been completed and has been approved by the Board of the NCCA and is scheduled to be examined for the first time in 2024.

The new course will consist of the following topics:

- A. The World of Heroes
- B. Drama & Spectacle
- C. Power & Identity
- D. Gods and Humans
- E. Assessment component (research study as in other subjects carrying 20% of the overall marks).

Leaving Cert Latin & Greek

A review of the Classical languages began in October 2021. This review is essential as pupils studying Latin or Greek as part of the new Junior Cert Classics course would not have the same standard of Latin or Greek as pupils who had done those subjects previously for the Junior Cert. The review is ongoing with the stated aim of reaching agreement by summer 2021, which will hopefully then be approved by the Board of the NCCA and teachers will begin teaching it in 2022 for examination in 2024.

SUBJECT: Computer Science
REPS: Mark Walshe & Geraldine O'Brien

At the time of writing last year, it was anticipated that by Convention 2020 the first cohort of Leaving Cert Computer Science students would have completed their coursework project. However, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of schools in March led to the cancellation of the coursework project and, subsequently, the final exam. In June, schools offered students predicted grades with the option to sit the Leaving Cert in November/December. In December, a small number of students opted to take the Higher Level paper in what became the first official Leaving Cert Computer Science exam (minus the coursework project). As no student opted for Ordinary Level, the SEC did not produce any Ordinary Level papers.

As a result of the resurgence of the virus into 2021, the consequent loss of in-person tuition time, and the uncertainty around whether the Leaving Cert exams can go ahead in June (even though a timetable has been published), students have now been offered a choice of the 'traditional' Leaving Cert, 'accredited grades' or both. At the time of writing this year, it is anticipated that Leaving Cert students will return to in-person tuition from 1st March with the deadline for the project work being extended by the number of weeks that schools have been closed.

In spite of the serious disruption caused by the pandemic, the national rollout of Computer Science continues apace. The 40 schools in 'Phase 1' were joined by another 52 'Phase 2' schools in September 2020 and expressions of interest for 'Phase 3' are being sought for September 2021. The Department of Education has launched a new 'Leaving Cert Computer Science Support Framework' in collaboration with the Computers in Education

Society of Ireland (CESI), the PDST, the Irish Universities Association (IUA), Higher Education Institutions, IBEC, Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) and SOLAS. The intention of the Framework is to develop and implement a “range of measures designed to allow the subject to develop and prosper.” The Teaching Council has now published the criteria for registration as a post-primary teacher of Computer Science. Further details are included in the new Leaving Cert Computer Science Bulletin (Bulletin 1, December 2020).

SUBJECT: Science
REPS: Niall Duddy & Michael McGrath

There have been no further developments since Convention 2020 however the following report should have featured in the 2020 Convention handbook.

June 2019 was the first time that the new Junior Cycle science course was examined, now at a common level. With questions on topics such as electrical energy, sustainability, global warming and the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, it certainly was a topical paper.

The content of the paper was lop-sided, with it being light on biology and a disproportionate emphasis on space. The few calculations that students were asked to do were far too straightforward. Some students did express surprise at how little biology was asked and also that no question to fully describe an experiment came up. There was disappointment at the absence of rates of reaction, a topic on which students would have spent a lot of time studying over the last three years.

The universally-positive reception the paper got from students is in itself a cause of concern. The abolition of levels to suit students of all abilities will only hurt the more able students long-term, especially when it comes to studying the sciences at Leaving Cert level.

Overall, the paper was light on the examination of candidates' scientific knowledge; it is very clear that a student need not have completed three years of study in order to do well in this examination. Indeed, some questions were nothing more than glorified reading comprehensions while more were multiple choice and tick-the-box questions that reward students for guessing answers. How suitable such exercises are for a science examination is questionable.

This new course rewards the less-able student to the detriment of those with more ability. If the standard of this examination paper is the metric by which students will now be assessed, it is clear that a race to the bottom has commenced.

SUBJECT: Spanish
REPS: David McArdle & Mark Walshe

Syllabi Report:

There are no changes to the Junior and Senior Cycle Syllabi since Convention 2020.

However, there have been changes to the written papers which are outlined below.

Report on Exam Paper Changes:

LEAVING CERTIFICATE SPANISH - HIGHER LEVEL

Oral Exam

- No adjustment to General Conversation
- Study 3 out of 5 Roleplays

Aural Exam

- No adjustment

Written Exam

- **Section B: Q5:** Choice of 3 Opinion Pieces
- **Section C: 1 a) Dialogue:** 6 shortened turns (instead of traditional 5) and answer any 5.
- **Section C: 1 b) Formal Letter:** Choose any 5 out of a possible 8 points.
- **Section C: 2 a) Diary Entry:** Choose between any 4 of 5 points.
- **Section C: 2 b) Note:** Choose between any 4 of 5 points.

LEAVING CERTIFICATE SPANISH - ORDINARY LEVEL

Oral Exam

- No adjustment to General Conversation
- Study 3 out of 5 Roleplays

Aural Exam

- No adjustment

Written Exam

- **Section B: Q1 Letter:** Choose any 5 out of a possible 8 points.
- **Section B: 2 a) Diary Entry:** Choose between any 4 of 5 points.
- **Section B: 2 b) Note:** Choose between any 4 of 5 points

JUNIOR CYCLE SPANISH – COMMON LEVEL

Junior Cycle exam is cancelled for 2021.

SUBJECT: Physics
REPS: John Conneely & Kevin Dunphy

No change in the syllabus.

However we have concerns as ASTI reps on the physics development group that a syllabus which is vague and in parts neither understood by students or teachers will be forced upon us. We believe this could lead to a drop in the number of students taking physics.

We have asked the NCCA to allow the physics development group have the opportunity to discuss the syllabus design template that the NCCA wish to adopt. They have refused to allow this discussion to take place and have refused to give any rationale for using the template.

PROGRAMME: Social, Personal & Health Education
REPS: Deirdre Mac Donald & Karen Ryan

The RSE working group only got up and running in late autumn. Its work is to review the current materials, collaborate on the development of new materials in the area of RSE and SPHE within which the RSE lies and the development of a new course for RSE. The work is to review and develop RSE across all the year groups in post primary education. The group encompasses all the stakeholders in education. The work has been greatly hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic and in fact the January meeting had to be cancelled.

So far it has been general discussion about the work in this subject area to date and review of materials. The dearth of materials needs to be addressed to support teachers in this area. This work is being prioritised. The issue of teachers being assigned to SPHE/RSE without consultation and not having had training in the area has been put forward as a grave and common difficulty across the system. The approach by management to use SPHE and indeed CSPE as "fillers" on timetables needs to be addressed, this message needs to be taken on board by school management, and this has led to a down grading of the status of the subject in a hierarchy of subjects.

The ASTI has always and will continue to advocate for small groups in SPHE/RSE, it is essential to the building of true confidentiality in the group and therefore to the effectiveness of the RSE programme at school level. Best practice in the area in line with international practice would advocate maximum group size of 16, optimal group size of 12. We operate in groups of 24-30 students. Group size, alongside proper training and consultation on assignment/allocation of this subject to teachers are the most important criteria to an effective and progressive implementation of this subject in schools. These issues have not been addressed yet at the subject group though have been flagged by the ASTI representative.

SUBJECT: Chemistry
REPS: Mary Mullaghy & Pauline Nagle

We wish to voice our concerns and frustrations at the manner in which the specifications for Leaving Certificate Chemistry is being developed. The problem areas may be summarised as follows:

1. Template being used for designing the new specifications

The current Leaving Certificate syllabus in Chemistry is a clear, detailed document. It has stood the test of time and the content to be taught and laboratory practical work to be carried out by students are clearly specified and are easily interpreted by science teachers. All three Leaving Certificate syllabi for the Senior Sciences are designed using a common template of four columns: *Content*, *Depth of Treatment*, *Laboratory Practical Activities* and *Science, Technology and Society (STS)* applications.

Unfortunately, the NCCA insists on forcing the new specifications into a template which had been proven to be fundamentally flawed. Evidence for the fundamental flaws in the template being used by the NCCA for designing specifications are:

The Hyland Report (2014). Professor Hyland points out very clearly that *"more detailed information about the depth of treatment of subjects and the requirements for examination must be provided at national level in Ireland to bring the syllabi into line with international*

good practice." (p. 5 Hyland Report). The full report may be found at: www.ista.ie/the-hyland-report-2/

Listening to the Voice of Science Teachers (2019). This report is based on the results of a survey carried out by the Irish Science Teachers' Association and was completed by 762 science teachers. Analysis of the results of the survey showed that 85% of science teachers were dissatisfied with the template used to design the Junior Cycle science specification. This report may be found at: www.ista.ie/jc-science-report/

Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science specification. The Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science specification will be examined for the first time in June 2021. Major problems in interpreting the specification have been highlighted by the Irish Agricultural Science Teachers Association (IASTA). This organisation has sent a detailed submission to the Minister for Education (2019) and also an IASTA Report (2021) based on a survey of its members. Details of the submission may be found at: www.iasta.ie/2020/10/31/open-letter-of-minister-norma-foley-agricultural-science-teacher-guidelines-sample-papers/

Details of the IASTA report that is based on a survey of its members may be found at: www.iasta.ie/2021/01/29/iasta-members-survey-reveals-significant-issues-with-new-specification-the-individual-investigative-study/

It is extremely frustrating for us as teacher representatives to see the current excellent Leaving Certificate Chemistry syllabus being destroyed and replaced with a flawed and vague document which we know teachers will struggle to interpret and teach. We feel that the proposed draft specifications will damage the subject and undermine teachers' confidence in teaching it.

Despite our concerns being voiced at subject development group meetings, we are not being heard. The NCCA has provided no justification or documentary evidence for its insistence on using the flawed template of specification design. Indeed, it is worth noting that the NCCA has not responded to any of the three items of documentary evidence listed above.

2. Mandatory Student Experiments

The current Leaving Certificate Chemistry syllabus has a clearly specified list of mandatory student experiments. These experiments ensure that all students acquire fundamental laboratory skills. In the draft specifications these mandatory experiments are embedded within learning outcomes using vague terminology such as "design, plan and conduct" and "investigate using primary data". These vague terms will further undermine teachers' confidence in interpreting the specifications. We need a clear list of mandatory experiments as provided in the current syllabus to provide clarity to both teachers and students.

3. Removal of Science, Technology and Society

One of the main aims of science education is that students should be able to relate the science they learn in school to science in our everyday lives. International best practice in curriculum design involves STS as an integral part of curriculum specifications. The removal of the STS column and references to STS in the proposed new specifications will result in the Leaving Certificate Chemistry specification that will resemble the syllabus that was taught in the 1980s. The introduction of STS into the current Leaving Certificate Chemistry syllabus led to a reversal in the decline in the number of students studying Chemistry and was one of the key

recommendations of the Task Force of the Physical Sciences (2002) set up by the Irish Government. Its removal makes no sense and will result in specifications that will be dry and boring.

4. Rushed pace of work

We are very concerned that the current incomplete draft specifications will be taken out of our hands before we have time to ensure that they are finished. At the time of writing, we have online meetings of only two hours duration. Given that there is still a huge amount of work to be done, we cannot understand why everything is being rushed.

Conclusion

All teachers are under enormous levels of stress at the moment. We cannot allow increased levels of stress to be placed on teachers by asking them to teach a vague and poorly designed Leaving Certificate Chemistry specification.

COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE

REPORT OF COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO CONVENTION 2020

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Vacant	Area 1
Sandra Fay	Area 2
Ian McColgan	Area 3
Mary Lyndon	Area 4
Anne Taylor	Area 5
Dermot Brennan	Area 6 (Vice Chairperson)
Geraldine O'Brien	Area 7 (Chairperson)
Roisin Doyle	Area 8
Vacant	Area 9
Liam McHugh	Area 10

Ann Piggott (President), Eamon Dennehy (Vice-President) and Michael McGrath (Honorary National Organiser) also attend meetings of this Committee and Ann Marie Ryan, Executive Officer: IR provides professional support to the Committee.

The Advisory Committee has met on two occasions since last Convention.

For information, the role of the area representative is as follows:

- 1 Advise School Stewards and members in individual schools how to deal with problems;
- 2 Prior to all meetings of the Advisory Committee gather reports from schools with particular reference to implementation of ASTI policies, unresolved issues, grievances and matters which, in the view of the area representatives, require consideration by the Committee;
- 3 Make reports on the basis of 2. above to all meetings of the Committee;
- 4 Visit all schools in their area once a year, if possible;
- 5 Maintain regular contact with the school stewards in the schools in their area.

COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE: A LINK BETWEEN ASTI HEAD OFFICE AND THE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee notes that members working in the Community and Comprehensive sector are required to deal with extra layers of management, including the Chief Executive Officer and the ETBI.

The Committee Area Representatives have regular contact with members in their areas and they then report back to this Committee. Committee members keep teachers in their areas updated on all developments, especially those affecting teachers working in the Community and Comprehensive sector. It should be noted that in the Community and Comprehensive sector that there is continued competition with the TUI for trade union membership and that this Committee is a method of monitoring ASTI membership numbers versus TUI numbers.

ONGOING WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

One of the predominant themes at the Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee meetings throughout the year was the dilemma in which ASTI members, in predominately dual-union Community and Comprehensive Schools and College, find themselves. School Stewards are asking for increased support from Head Office and members in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Colleges are experiencing extreme difficulty in finding a teacher willing to act as School Steward particularly as a result of the additional layers of school management.

Recruitment:

Recruitment in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Colleges is very challenging. Concern was raised at our meetings regarding the fact that many teachers are refusing to join either union. This is concerning for the teachers involved as they have no protection in the event of a spurious complaint against the teacher/s by a student or parent/guardian of a student.

Subject Learning and Review (SLAR) Meeting:

Subject Learning and Review meeting are very problematic in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Colleges. ASTI teachers are doing the SLAR meetings as per the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation Agreement. However, their TUI colleagues are willing to do the SLAR Meetings fully outside of the normal tuition time. In addition, the SLAR Coordinators are not getting the assigned two hours preparation time to do their work before the meeting in some schools.

ASTI MEMBERSHIP IN COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Community and Comprehensive Schools

Overall membership in this sector has grown from 2,305 in 1997 to 3,363 in 2020. Membership growth in this sector reduced from 2016 to 2017, but has improved at an increasing rate to 2020.

Total Membership in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Colleges (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	3,511	3,079	3,095	3,182	3,363
Full members ¹	2,640	2,343	2,294	2,289	2,285
Job Sharers	116	118	115	104	103
CID non-full	139	118	115	121	137
Associate pro-rata	520	432	493	563	699
Associate non-pro rata	58	35	43	49	86
Members on leave	23	26	21	29	31
Student members	15	7	14	27	22

¹ Includes CIDs 18hrs+

Membership in Comprehensive Schools (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	346	314	324	321	326
Full members ¹	277	259	260	255	250
Job Sharers	9	9	8	7	7
CID non-full	13	12	13	12	15
Associate pro-rata	28	25	40	36	47
Associate non-pro rata	8	3	0	1	3
Members on leave	4	3	3	4	1
Student members	7	3	0	6	3

¹ Includes CIDs 18hrs+

Membership in Community Schools (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	2,417	2,118	2,125	2,172	2,310
Full members ¹	1,916	1,688	1,643	1,631	1,627
Job Sharers	89	91	90	79	78
CID non-full	107	89	84	88	96
Associate pro-rata	243	203	252	306	412
Associate non-pro rata	40	25	34	34	60
Members on leave	14	18	13	19	22
Student members	8	4	9	15	15

¹ Includes CIDs 18hrs+

Membership in Community Colleges (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	748	647	646	689	727
Full members ¹	447	396	391	403	408
Job Sharers	18	18	17	18	18
CID non-full	19	17	18	21	26
Associate pro-rata	249	204	201	221	240
Associate non-pro rata	10	7	9	14	23
Members on leave	5	5	5	6	8
Student members	-	-	5	6	4

¹ Includes CIDs 18hrs+

EQUALITY

REPORT OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE TO CONVENTION 2021

The Equal Opportunities Committee advises Standing Committee on such equality matters as are remitted to it by Standing Committee and on such other equality issues as the Committee itself wishes to investigate.

The Committee shall consist of the President, President-elect, where applicable and Vice-President for the time being and nine members duly elected at Annual Convention every second year.

The members of the Committee are:

Maura Greaney	Chairperson
Adrienne Healy	
Eimear Holly	
Bill Lonergan	
Mary Lyndon	
Tony McKernon	
Sinéad Moore	
Helen O'Reilly	
Seamus Meskill	

The Deputy General Secretary provides professional support to the Committee.

The Committee has met on 6 occasions since Easter 2020.

The work of the Committee was as follows:

- 1. PROMOTION OF EQUAL TREATMENT**
- 2. COLLABORATING WITH THE WORK OF NGOS AND STATE BODIES IN PROMOTING EQUALITY**
- 3. EQUALITY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS**
- 4. REFUGEES**
- 5. HOMELESSNESS/POVERTY**
- 6. COVID-19**
- 7. AGE/GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN PROMOTIONAL POSTS**
- 8. BREASTFEEDING**
- 9. ADMISSIONS POLICIES**
- 10. SCHOOLS' PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS**

I. PROMOTION OF EQUAL TREATMENT

I.1 Promotion of Equal Treatment on Gender Ground

I.1.1 within the ASTI

I.1.2 within the workplace

I.1.3 within the teaching profession

I.2 Promotion of Equal Treatment on Disability Ground

I.3 Promotion of Equality on Membership of the Traveller Community Ground

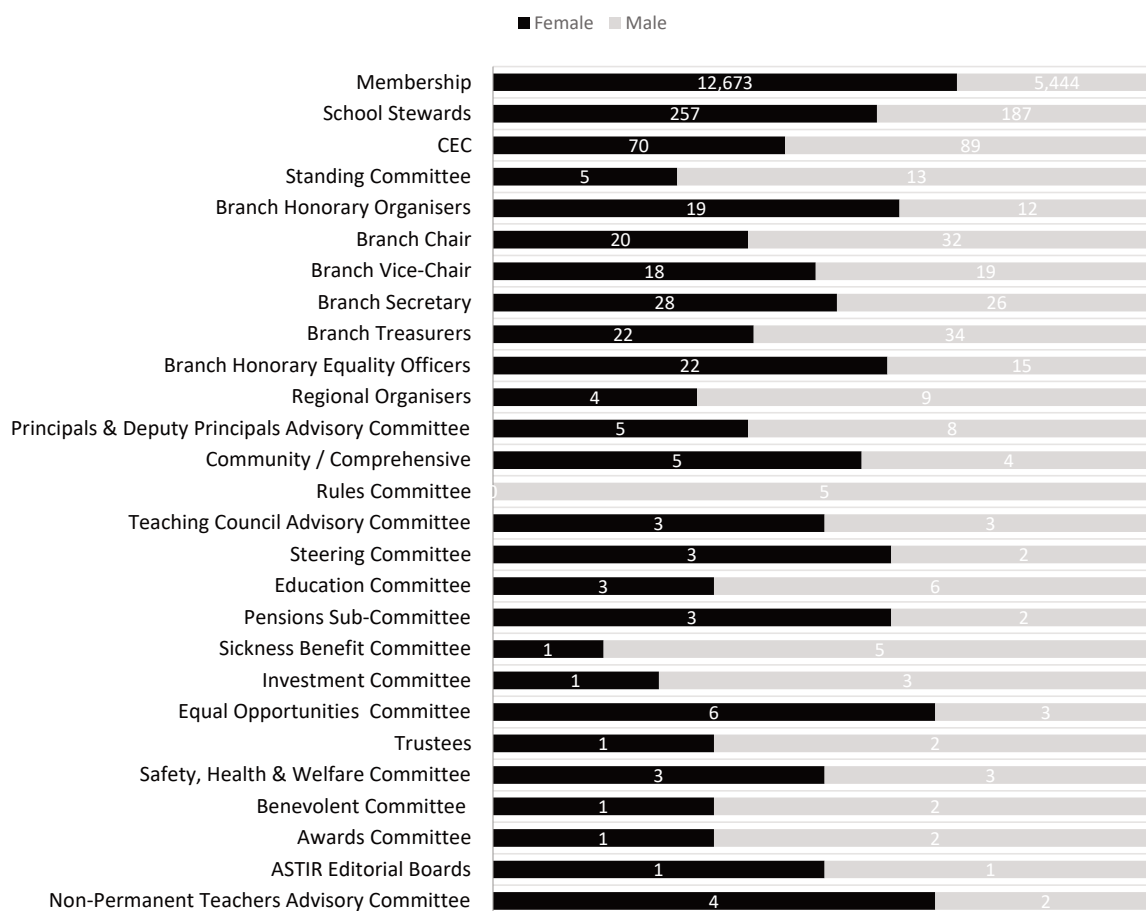
I.4 Promotion of Equal Treatment on Age Ground

I.1.1 Within the ASTI.

The committee continues to gender profile the occupancy of offices, committees and engagement of members within the union.

It should be noted that nearly 71% of the members are female. We are aware that there may be ASTI members who do not identify as either male or female and we are examining an inclusive approach towards this issue.

GENDER PROFILE WITHIN ASTI



**Ex Officio members of committees have been omitted from this list.*

The Gender occupancy of committees and offices reveals a consistent pattern of under- representation of females in key positions of influence within the union:

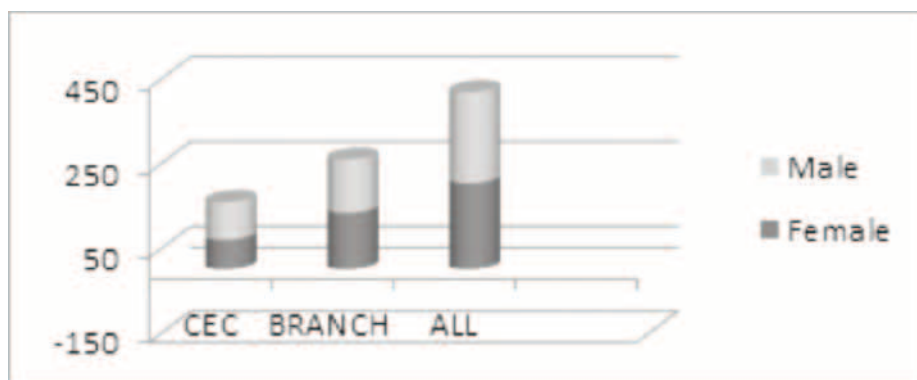
- Standing Committee
- Branch Chairs
- Other Branch Officerships

This under-representation is also reflected in the gender breakdown of delegates attending ASTI Convention. While there are 7 more female Branch Delegates to Convention 2021 than male, this is offset by the 19 more male CEC Members. While this leaves us with a situation of near parity in the delegates, these figures must be read in the context where 71% of ASTI members are women.

Gender Profile of Delegates to ASTI Convention 2021

	Female	Male
CEC	70	89
Branch Delegates	133	126
All Delegates	203	215

CONVENTION 2021



These observations are not new. The measures adopted by the ASTI to seek a more balanced representation between males and females have not closed the gap.

The Equal Opportunities Committee has recommended the following at several conventions and Convention has consistently adopted the reports containing these recommendations.

- Standing Committee consider submitting a rule change to Convention, which would oblige the ASTI to have as one of its objects the promotion of equality.
- The adoption of an equality proofing policy which would examine structures, rules, policies, procedures and outcomes of negotiations to ensure that they disadvantage no group within the ASTI.
- Training courses in leadership roles within the union.
- Consultation with branches about quotas and thresholds for CEC and Standing Committee.

At its meeting of 16th/17th November 2017 Standing Committee agreed to refer the recommendations contained in the committee's convention report back to the Equal Opportunities Committee for development. The committee engaged Equality Specialist, Derek McDonnell of *Big Picture Consultancy*, to assist in this work. Mr McDonnell ran four sessions with the Committee which were extremely challenging and very helpful. Members of the Committee now feel that they each have a better understanding of equality issues and of their own unconscious biases in relation to equality. The Committee is of the belief that some training for Branch Equality Officers would be very useful.

The Equal Opportunities Committee has drafted proposed rule changes which are due to be considered at this Convention.

1.1.2 Within the teaching profession.

a) Efforts to reverse the withdrawal by the DES of compensatory leave for teachers whose maternity leave overlaps with holiday periods.

The ASTI lodged claims on behalf of members who lost out on the compensatory leave formerly allowable and withdrawn in 2013.

The claims were lodged under the Maternity Protection of Employment Act, 1998-2004, where it was argued that the failure to distinguish between a statutory entitlement to maternity leave and an entitlement to holiday leave infringes members' statutory rights.

Similarly, the same complaint has been lodged under the Employment Equality Acts 1998- 2004, arguing again, that the withdrawal of such leave facilities indirectly discriminates against female teachers – as only women could benefit from this leave provision.

In December 2018, the INTO lost several similar claims (under the Employment Equality Acts) which it had lodged on behalf of its members. On 18th April, 2019, the WRC issued its decision on the ASTI Employment Equality cases. It ruled against the ASTI. On advice, neither union decided to appeal. However, the INTO won an appeal at the Labour Court on their claim under Maternity Protection Act. The Department of Education and Skills appealed this matter to the High Court. The High Court ruled against the INTO but it referred the matter back to the WRC. The ASTI is now keeping a watching brief to see the outcome of this case and will act in response to the court's decision.

b) Actions to try and overturn the imposition of pay cuts to Job-sharing teachers on less than €65,000.

The ASTI lodged claims under the Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2004 and under the Protection of Employees (part-time work), Act 2001, challenging the imposition of higher-pay cuts under the FEMPI legislation to job-sharing teachers. On legal advice, these claims were withdrawn. However, the ASTI has lodged a challenge in the High Court to the imposition of these as breach of contract. This claim has been lodged and we are awaiting developments.

1.1.3 Within the workplace.

Maternity Leave and Miscarriage.

The Committee continues to seek amendment to the provision governing the application of maternity leave in the case of miscarriage. Currently a woman who miscarries after 24 weeks is entitled to full maternity leave, whereas a woman who miscarries before this date is entitled to no maternity leave whatsoever. The ASTI has raised this issue at the Teachers' Conciliation Council and together with the other teacher unions has raised the issue at the Public Services Committee of the ICTU.

1.2. Promotion of Equal Treatment on Disability Ground

The Committee continues to support measures to address the issues of stress and mental health in schools which are being developed by the Safety Health and Welfare Committee.

1.3 Promotion of Equality on Membership of the Traveller Community Ground:

ASTI contributes to the workings of the Yellow Flag Programme – an

award for schools which promotes opportunities for students from a Traveller background.

ASTI has met with Pavee Point to discuss how best to address issues facing Traveller students in the Irish education system.

1.4 Promotion of Equal Treatment on Age Ground.

a) Pay cuts for new entrant teachers since 2010.

The Committee continues to demand a full restoration of a single incremental scale, together with payment of allowances to all teachers, in order to correct the iniquitous situation created by pay cuts imposed on such teachers.

b) Pensions

The Committee continues to emphasise the importance of maintaining parity between pensions and salaries.

c) Posts of Responsibility

The Committee has asked the ASTI to obtain survey data on possible age and gender discrimination in appointments to posts in Irish second-level schools. (See below)

2. COLLABORATING WITH THE WORK OF NGOS AND STATE BODIES IN PROMOTING EQUALITY

2.1 National Women's Council of Ireland.

The ASTI is represented on the NWCI by Sheila Flynn and Gloria Helen.

2.2 ICTU

The ASTI is represented on the Women's Committee of the ICTU by Breda Lynch and by the Assistant General Secretary. It is represented on the ICTU Disability Committee by Paul O'Reilly and by the Deputy General Secretary.

2.3 ETUCE

The ASTI is represented on the Standing Committee for Equality of the European Trade Union Committee for Education by the Deputy General Secretary.

2.3 Violence Against Women

The General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary have represented the ASTI at the annual launch of White Ribbon Ireland (the national movement of the world's largest male-led campaign to end men's violence against women) for the past few years. The Committee continues to work with the campaign which acknowledges the importance of schools in promoting a culture which does not tolerate any violence against women.

The ASTI continues to seek amendments to the Assault Leave Circular 0061/2017. Teachers are only entitled to claim assault leave when they have suffered physically from the assault. Psychological effects are not eligible. While this omission affects all teachers it can have a particularly devastating effect on women teachers who have been sexually assaulted in schools.

3. EQUALITY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS

The Committee also devoted time to the discussion of equality issues as they affect schools and students; in particular issues facing LGBTQI+ students.

4. REFUGEES

The Committee has agreed that the issue of refugees, and particularly refugee students, should be a priority in its work.

5. HOMELESSNESS/POVERTY

The Committee has become increasingly alarmed at the effect of homelessness and poverty on many of the students attending our schools. They hope to prioritise this issue in the coming period. The Deputy General Secretary has met with Focus Ireland in relation to educational issues facing homeless students in secondary schools. It is hoped that resources to assist these students will be developed.

6. COVID-19

The Committee is acutely aware of the inequalities in Irish education that have been highlighted so dramatically by the Covid-19 crisis. The Committee continues to monitor the situation and to call for resources to reduce these inequalities.

7. AGE/GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN POSTS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Following anecdotal evidence that there may be a pattern of discrimination on the basis of age and/or gender in appointments to posts in schools, the annual survey prepared by the ASTI for Annual Convention, this year contains initial questions on this issue. A proposal for a more detailed survey is being prepared for consideration by Standing Committee.

8. BREASTFEEDING

In September 2018, following successful representations from the ASTI, the Department of Education and Skills amended its circular on breastfeeding breaks for teachers to allow such breaks up to 104 weeks after the birth of the child (this had previously been 26 weeks). The Committee is interested in how the implementation of this circular is playing out in schools and to this end asked that members would be asked (through the ASTI Website) to provide feedback.

9. SCHOOLS' ADMISSION POLICIES

During the year, it was brought to the Committee's notice that some schools have admission policies that contain questions of a discriminatory nature. Many of these questions, while appropriate to ask parents of students who have already been accepted into a school, are entirely inappropriate when asked before the student has been accepted. Indeed, in some cases, these questions are in breach of equality legislation. These instances have been dealt with by the ASTI and rectified. The Committee will continue to monitor this situation.

10. SCHOOLS' PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

During the year, it was brought to the Committee's notice that some schools have produced promotional material that contains content of a discriminatory nature. These instances have been dealt with by the ASTI and rectified. The Committee will continue to monitor this situation.

INTERNAL UNION MATTERS

FINANCE

END OF YEAR BRANCH BALANCES

In recent years, the Registrar of Friendly Societies, who grants the ASTI and other recognised trade unions their legal status and, thus, their protection under the industrial relations legislation, has sought increasingly detailed information about funds which unions allocate to branches. Each union is required to make a return to the Registrar for each financial year giving details of its finances. Failure to comply with this requirement could mean the withdrawal of legal recognition. The Registrar has insisted that unions provide a statement of their branches' bank balance at the end of the calendar year with each annual return. The end of year branch balances received from 22 branches in Head Office at time of going to print had a total of €150,846 in their various accounts at 31st December, 2020.

BRANCH AUDITS

Rule 49 states:

"All branch bank accounts shall be opened in the name of the branch and all monies lodged shall be in the name of the branch. Each branch shall, not later than November 1st hold an audit of the accounts of the branch, and a duly authenticated copy of the Balance Sheet shall be sent to the General Secretary, and shall be available for examination by members of the branch, within one month from the date of the audit. Such an audit shall be carried out by the Auditor to be appointed at a meeting of the branch. No Branch Officer shall be eligible to act as Auditor of the branch accounts."

It is a requirement under the Rules and Constitution that the branch audit be completed and forwarded to the General Secretary. At time of going to print, audits for 28 branches were submitted to the General Secretary in respect of the financial year ended 30th September, 2020.

BRANCH CENTRAL FUND

In accordance with Rule 154 Convention 1994 established a special Central Fund to be known as the Branch Central Fund. In the report adopted by CEC in January 1994 it was agreed that branches should not as a rule retain more than €2,539.48 at any one time in a branch current or deposit account. This limit was increased to €5,000 at Convention 2015. Any surpluses should be forwarded to the Branch Central Fund. Convention 2019 agreed that 0.72% per annum from each member's subscription should be allocated to the Branch Central Fund. Branches wishing to undertake a project which would promote the aims and objectives of the ASTI but where their funds are insufficient to finance such a project can apply to the Branch Central Fund for a grant.

The income to the fund in 2020 was €46,358 made up from a €35,917 allocation from members' subscriptions and €2,389 negative deposit interest. Surplus from Branches was €12,830. There were two grants totalling €3,494 paid out in 2020. The balance in the Branch Central Fund on 31st December, 2020 was €520,640.

TRUSTEES' REPORT 2021

This past year has been like none other in our lifetime and this is of course reflected in how we conducted our business this year. Like most of our committees we conducted most of our affairs online. We did attend Convention 2020 in ASTI headquarters to present our report to Convention. We met with the Treasurer and auditors online in early January to review the accounts up to 30/09/2020 and to set up a timetable for the 2020 audit. The auditors, HLB Sheehan Quinn, were represented by Patricia Lloyd and Sean Murray. Following the completion of the audit fieldwork a further meeting will be held with the auditors and the Treasurer in February. The trustees' report to Annual Convention will include details of the annual audit.

On examination of the accounts for the 9 months ending 30/09/2020, the following observations can be made from these accounts:

- 1 In the Summary of Balance sheets, Fixed Assets have increased by €84,993, Current Assets increased by €1,028,415, Current Liabilities have increased by €137,267, giving a net assets balance of €10,297,356.
- 2 In the General Fund there is a surplus of Income over Expenditure for the 9 months ending 30/09/2020 of €813,112 compared with €212,648 for the year ending 31/12/2019. There is a significant reduction in expenditure, mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions on committee meetings and on Annual Convention. For example, the figure for committees, convention, and deputations showed a decrease of approx. €600,000.
- 3 As at 30/09/2020, legal fees of €174,237 are well down on the previous year and there are no significant changes in the figure for the Fitness to Teach legal fee, at €11,250.
- 4 The figure for members subscriptions has increased, reflecting a welcome increase in members.
- 5 The increase in fixed assets is mainly due to additional expenditure on computer equipment, software and new furniture.
- 6 Last year it was decided to invest surplus funds in State savings rather than leaving funds in bank deposit accounts. €240,000 was transferred from both the Benevolent Fund and the Sickness Benefit Fund during 2020.

There are no significant changes in any of the other funds.

The Net Assets of the ASTI (as at 30/09/2020) stand at €10,297,356, an increase of €976,141 from 31/12/2019. This is a very healthy position for our Union.

We are now in a good financial position; however, we must remember we will have many struggles ahead and that it is important that we maintain this strength to enable us to represent and protect our membership now and in the future.

We wish to compliment the Honorary Treasurer Pádraig Murphy for his work in administering the funds of the ASTI. The trustees wish to thank our President Ann Piggott and our General Secretary Kieran Christie for their help and support throughout the year. To conclude, we would also like to thank Jacqueline Kearns, Executive Officer: Administration, for facilitating our meetings and especially to Elaine McLoughlin and Danielle Gillard for their support throughout the year.

Michael Barry
 Gerry Breslin
 Bernadine O'Sullivan

MEMBERS' BENEFIT SCHEMES

BENEVOLENT FUND

The five administrators of the Fund are Sinéad Corkery, Adrian Guinan and Peter Masterson, elected by CEC, and the President and Honorary Treasurer, both ex-officio.

The administrators met three times during the year to consider claims and sanctioned 12. Six were for exceptional circumstances and six for deceased members. The total amount of monies sanctioned for payment was €95,305 including Cornmarket Contribution of €10,000.

SICKNESS BENEFIT FUND

The Sickness Benefit Committee met three times during the year. Claims for benefit totalled 229. In six cases no award was made as the conditions set out in the Rules were not met.

For the year 2020, of the claims for which awards were made, nine were for illness, 62 for dental treatment, 157 for optical treatment and one for otological treatment. The total amount paid out in claims for 2020 was €36,363 compared with €52,232 in 2019.

The elected Committee members are:

Róisín Doyle, Tony Waldron, Gerard O'Donoghue, David Briscoe, Tony McKernan and PJ Sheehy.

SALARY PROTECTION SCHEME

The Salary Protection Scheme for ASTI members has been in operation since the 14th February 1977. It was last reviewed on 1st June 2018 and the terms and conditions will again be reviewed on 1st June 2024. The Scheme provides members with an income in the event that they are unable to work as a result of injury or illness.

During 2020 a total of 80 Disability claims were notified. (3 of these cases did not proceed to claim). 46 of these claims were admitted by the end of 2020. 29 claims are currently being processed. 1 claim was not paid on the basis of not satisfying the definition of disability in the insurer's opinion and is in appeal. Another claim was not paid due to non-disclosure of medical history. A further 11 claims, notified in 2019, were admitted in 2020, bringing to 1,301 the total

number of members admitted as claimants under the Disability element of the Scheme. Currently 110 members are in receipt of benefit amounting to €2,700,000 per annum. Since its introduction, a total in excess of €129,000,000 has been paid under the Disability element of the Scheme.

The total paid out under the Death Benefit element of the Scheme in 2020 was €432,438 in respect of 8 member's claims. A total of 8 member death claims were notified in 2020 and there are 8 death claims awaiting settlement with total benefit due of approximately €1,090,000. Since this element was introduced in 1981, a total of 315 claims have been admitted with payments to the families of deceased members amounting to €28,430,000.

A Specified Illness benefit was introduced at the 1st June 2014 Scheme review. In 2020 17 claims were settled with a total benefit of €315,201 paid. Four claims are awaiting settlement and two claims notified in 2020 were declined. Since the introduction of this benefit in June, 2014 a total of 113 claims have been paid with a total benefit paid of €1,829,457.

FOUR TEACHER UNIONS

The Presidents, General Secretaries and Deputy General Secretaries of the four teacher unions ASTI, INTO, TUI and IFUT hold regular meetings to discuss matters of common interest. Seven formal meetings have taken place in the past year. These meetings are intended to provide opportunities to share information and ensure that where possible there is a joint position on issues that affect teachers. In particular, they are very useful to ensure that the staff side are well prepared for Teacher Conciliation Council meetings. A very sizable portion of discussions this year related to COVID-19 matters.

Other issues discussed included the following:

- New entrant pay inequality
- Newly qualified teachers issues
- Public sector pay/pension talks
- Redeployment issue
- Pension issues
- Compulsory Retirement Age
- Special Educational Needs provision
- Integrated Workplace Health Management Initiative
- HSA Work Positive Process for Schools
- Maternity Leave
- Breastfeeding Circular implementation
- Teacher wind-down scheme
- Teaching Council/Registration issues
- Teacher disciplinary issues
- Supervision and Substitution
- Partial Absences

- EI/BIGTU/ETUCE
- Third level funding
- Second level funding
- Junior Cycle Implementation issues
- Posts of Responsibility
- Fixed Term Teachers and CIDs
- Teacher Secondment
- Sick Leave
- Assault Leave
- Occupational Injury
- Teachers' Holiday Pay
- Teachers' Flat Rate Expenses
- International union issues
- ICTU business
- Probation management
- Payroll issues
- International issues
- Global Schoolroom

STANDING COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

General Election 2021

The terms of office for regionally elected representatives for Standing Committee regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 expire at the conclusion of Annual Convention 2021. The General Secretary duly notified all branch secretaries in these regions and valid nominations for representatives to serve until Annual Convention 2023 had been received by the due date (7th January 2021) as follows:

Region 1	Pat Curley
Region 3	Richie Bell
Region 5	Donal Cremin
Region 7	Pat Knightly
Region 9	Donal Coughlan
Region 11	Peter Keaney
Region 13	Keith Cassidy and Chris Hind
Region 15	Adrienne Healy and Edward O'Byrne
Region 17	Seamus Keane

At the time of going to print, elections are scheduled in Regions 13 and 15. The formal announcement of elections to Standing Committee will be made at Annual Convention.

By-elections

At time of going to print, arrangements for a by-election in Region 12 are underway.

THE REPORT OF HONORARY NATIONAL ORGANISER

It is an honour for me to give my first annual report to convention as Honorary National Organiser. I am delighted to inform you that our total membership as of 31st December 2020 is back to our best. Our previous best was back in 2016, before the turbulent year of 2017 during which a sizeable number either resigned or defected to join the TUI during our industrial dispute.

In 2016 total membership was: 18,372

In 2017 membership dropped to: 16,440

In 2018 we achieved a modest increase to: 16,849

In 2019 we recruited a further 562 to reach: 17,411

In 2020 we made great progress to recruit 1,041 new members to reach a new high of: 18,452

Further good news is that we are still growing with a further 267 new members having joined up to Jan 19th 2021.

My sincere thanks to all of the dedicated School Stewards, aided by the Regional Organisers and Standing Committee members, for reaching this high number of members in the more than 500 secondary schools in which the ASTI very ably represents them. I want to assure each one of you that I, as HNO, am available to help you in any way possible to further increase our membership thereby ensuring that the ASTI remains, as it has always been, the predominant second level teacher's Union. Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions have prevented me from carrying out my promise to visit as many schools as possible this year to enhance recruitment. I will do that as soon as I am allowed in these very different circumstances. The message that we collectively must get out loud and clear to the many non-union members in our staffrooms is that the ASTI has always been and continues to be prepared to stand alone when necessary to defend the hard fought rights and working conditions within our schools.

I am concerned however that a more detailed analysis of these figures reveals that since 2017 the number of full members has not improved much at all.

In 2016 we had 12,765 full members. In 2017 that number dropped to 11,470 and now at 31st December 2020, it still remains very low at 11,697 out of a total of 18,452.

Correspondingly, the total combined number of Non-Full CID, Associate Pro Rata and Associate Non Pro Rata members in 2017 stood at 2,575 but has now increased to 3,975. This shows a worrying increase of almost 54% in the number of ASTI members that do not hold a full time contract. This indicates very clearly the increasing prevalence of low hour CIDs and part time teachers within the teaching profession in recent years. Furthermore, the number of Student members is also very low at a total of 109 when it should at the very least be between 400 and 500 based on the number of PME placements in our schools.

Working together we can ensure that the ASTI will continue to be a formidable force in the protection of our valued members.

"Ní neart go cur le chéile"

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir,

Michael McGrath

PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION

During the 2020 period the ASTI Communications Office was involved in the following activities:

- Writing and issuing news releases and statements to the media.
- Briefing the media / responding to media queries.
- Organising media interviews, for radio, television, newspapers, and online media.
- Promoting ASTI activities and policies.
- Developing campaigns on key issues such as the safe re-opening of schools.
- Undertaking research for publicity purposes.
- Monitoring media coverage of ASTI.
- Maintaining a network of regional ASTI spokespersons.
- Briefing media spokespersons.
- Writing, editing and producing ASTI publications including ASTIR and Nuacht.
- Designing publications/liasing with designers.
- Monitoring Dáil debates and political developments.
- Co-ordinating political lobbying.
- Placing advertisements in newspapers.
- Developing a new ASTI website with a join-online facility.
- Updating and maintaining ASTI website on a daily basis.
- Continued development of ASTI social media presence.
- Organising photo opportunities at ASTI events throughout the year.
- Producing online videos.

List of Press Statements 2020

Greater assurance on school safety needed - 4th January, 2020.

'Big questions for the next government' (Letter by Deirdre Mac Donald (ASTI President 2019/2020) - Printed in Irish Times - 21 January, 2020.

ASTI to ballot on industrial action over unequal pay - 25th January, 2020.

Political parties must commit to increased investment in education - 30th January, 2020.

ASTI to stage solidarity protest on Feb 4th - ASTI President and General Secretary to join teachers outside Department of Education and Skills - 3rd February, 2020 (*Photocall*)

Next government must end unequal pay in teaching - 4th February, 2020.

Department Circular at variance with agreed arrangements - 27th February, 2020.

ASTI responds to Exams announcement - 29th March, 2020.

Press statement – teacher conferences postponed - 29th March, 2020.

Unions urge Minister to protect substitute teachers – Letter from 3 Unions - 29th March, 2020.

ASTI calls on schools to release personal protective equipment - 31st March, 2020.

Lack of consultation unacceptable - 3rd April, 2020.

ASTI responds to Leaving Cert announcement - 10th April, 2020.

ASTI will work to support delayed Leaving Certificate - 14th April, 2020.

ASTI welcomes State Certification for students completing Junior Cycle - 29th April, 2020.

ASTI/ TUI statement – unions continue to engage on State Exams - 7th May, 2020.

ASTI Executive discusses Leaving Cert announcement - 8th May, 2020.

ASTI will strive to improve fairness, equity in Calculated Grades for Leaving Cert 2020 process - 9th May, 2020.

ASTI responds to Calculated Grades Guide - 21st May, 2020.

ASTI secures full indemnity, advises its members to engage with the Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020 model - 22nd May, 2020.

Physical distancing for schools must be in line with public health advice - 12th June, 2020.

ASTI notes Interim Health Advice for reopening of Schools - 1st July, 2020.

ASTI welcomes clarity laments lack of consultation over Leaving Certificate results - 17th July, 2020.

Plan must allow schools to sustain safe learning & teaching environment - 27th July, 2020.

ASTI requests Minister to seek review of medical advice for reopening of schools - 30th July, 2020.

'Equal pay is key to recruiting additional teachers required under safe schools plan' - ASTI President - 3rd August, 2020.

Students, teachers to wear face coverings following ASTI representations - 7th August, 2020.

ASTI requests meeting with Health Protection Surveillance Centre - 21st August, 2020.

'Pandemic has exposed serious under-investment in school buildings' – ASTI President - 26th August, 2020.

ASTI notes statement on Calculated Grades adjustment process - 1st September, 2020.

ASTI congratulates Leaving Cert students - 7th September, 2020.

Ireland bottom of global ranking for investment in education - 8th September, 2020.

ASTI to ballot on industrial action - 19th September, 2020.

Report underlines urgent need for investment in education - 29th September, 2020.

Leaving Cert grades errors 'deeply disappointing' - ASTI President - 30th September, 2020.

ASTI calls for review of school openings at Level Five - 5th October, 2020.

Budget 2021 fails to protect students' education during pandemic - 13th October, 2020.

'Key COVID issues in schools must be addressed': ASTI secures mandate for industrial action - 28th October, 2020.

Substantial progress needed to ensure schools are safe and can remain open - 30th October, 2020.

ASTI welcomes commitment to 'normal' State exams and calls for further clarity for students - 16th November, 2020.

Joint statement on pay equality – ASTI, INTO and TUI - 18th November, 2020.

Schools still facing significant obstacles to remaining open - 19th November, 2020.

Senior Cycle change must be underpinned by comprehensive consultation - 2nd December, 2020.

Greater clarity on school-to-community transmission needed - 11th December, 2020.

ASTI calls on Minister for Education to consult with NPHET on school safety - 23rd December, 2020.

Review of school safety measures essential in light of new developments - 30th December, 2020.

No credible level of assurance that schools will be safe next week - 6th January, 2021.

No confidence that schools are safe - 7th January, 2021.

Greater assurance on school safety needed - 4th January, 2020.

ASTI directs members to teach classes remotely - 7th January, 2021.

ASTI Executive recommends rejection of proposed public service agreement - 9th January, 2021.

ASTI Executive discusses COVID-19 and schools - 23rd January, 2021.

PUBLICATIONS

ASTIR

ASTIR - Knowledge Versus Outcomes - Where Is Education Going - January, 2020

ASTIR - ASTI Campaigns: SLARs and Equal Pay - March, 2020

ASTIR - Learning from a Crisis - May, 2020

ASTIR - We are Stronger Together - Your Voice, Your Union - September, 2020

ASTIR - ASTI Demands COVID-Secure Schools - November, 2020

ASTIR - Member's Tribute to the Blackbird Poet - January, 2021

Nuacht

Nuacht No.1 - January, 2020 - General Election

Nuacht No.2 - February, 2020 - Teaching Council Elections 2020

Nuacht No.3 - February, 2020 - Ballot Special

Nuacht No. 4 - March, 2020 - Convention Special

Nuacht No. 5 - August, 2020 - ASTI acts to protect members

Nuacht No. 6 - October, 2020 - Ballot Special

Nuacht No. 1 - January, 2021 - Ballot Special

Additional Publications

ASTI Planner 2020/2021

ASTI Diary 2021

ASTI Directive Poster on SLAR Meetings - January, 2020

ASTI Convention 2020 Preliminary Agenda

ASTI Convention Handbook 1, 2 and 3, 2020

ASTI/RedC Survey on Class size and the Physical environment in our schools: The Teachers' Perspective - March, 2020

ASTI Membership Application form

ASTI Change of Membership form

ASTI Poster: Why should you join the ASTI

Continuity of Teaching/ Learning: ASTI Advice - May, 2020

ASTI Survey on Remote Teaching – August, 2020

COVID 19 testing pathways for schools FAQ - October, 2020

ASTI Directive Poster – Changes to Work Practices - November, 2020

ASTI Guidelines on the Use of Information Technology by Teachers in a COVID-19 Context - January, 2021

Preliminary Agenda for Convention 2021 - January, 2021

ASTI ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

The ASTI website mirrors all areas of the ASTI's work including campaigns, industrial relations and legal issues, information and advice for teachers, education policy, and teachers' rights and entitlements, publications including Nuacht and ASTIR, and latest news.

The new and improved website was rolled out in 2020, allowing members to join online, access information about their membership and find out more about issues relevant to them, including ASTI campaigns and the terms and conditions of their employment. Key employment issues are covered by a dedicated section in which members can search by category or keyword. The ASTI website now features a newly configured Your Employment section, containing an A-Z of Rights and Conditions of employment. This covers all aspects of teachers' employment and includes relevant FAQs, Department Circulars and more.

Throughout the pandemic, the website FAQs page on the Re-opening of Schools has provided members with vital information and updates. Our FAQ pages relating to COVID-19 were amongst

the most frequently visited pages on the ASTI website in 2020, with over 32,000 views.

In 2021, a new section of the website – MyUnion – will be launched. Members will be able to log in with their email address and will be able to access information relating their membership, such as membership number, Branch and Standing Committee names and contact details. Members will also be able to update details such as their address and choose whether they wish to receive a hard copy of a digital copy of a range of ASTI publications.

Facebook and Twitter

The ASTI's presence on social media continued to grow over the course of the past year. In January 2020, the ASTI Facebook page had 6,142 page likes and a following of 6,367 subscribers. In January 2021, the ASTI Facebook page has 7,561 page likes and a following of 8,163 subscribers, an increase of over 1,700 subscribers overall.

In late January 2020, the ASTI Twitter page had 8,389 followers – this increased to over 11,000 by January 2021.

Social media tools are increasingly used by the ASTI to support activities and campaigns. In addition, teachers use Facebook and Twitter to receive news updates, access information on the ASTI website via links, and address questions to the ASTI and fellow ASTI members. ASTI members can also debate decisions taken and join in ongoing campaigns.

ASTI SUBSTITUTION SERVICE

The ASTI Substitute Placement Scheme has been in operation since 1994 and there are currently 250+ teachers registered with the scheme.

There is an average of 15 calls per week to the Substitute Scheme and approximately 10 of those are from schools looking for a substitute teacher.

Regulations: When registering, a teacher must complete a registration form containing the relevant details and including a commitment to abide by the rules of the scheme. The rules require a teacher to keep the register updated as to the teacher's current availability for employment. All members of the scheme are advised to keep their details up to date.

Operation of the Scheme: The service is provided by calling 01-6040170 or by e-mailing . Schools making enquiries will be advised of the names and details of teachers who are on the register and available to undertake substitute work within their area. Online registration is available on the ASTI Website. It is not necessary for an applicant to be a member of the ASTI.

How the Scheme works: When applicants have submitted their details they are stored on our Substitute Placement database and made available to school principals. According to employers' criteria, the ASTI releases a list of teacher's details subject to what is required. The ASTI is not a recruitment agency and only releases Substitute Placement teachers' details to Secondary Schools and upholds the Data Protection Act.

CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND MEETINGS

Since Annual Convention 2020 the ASTI has held the following online conferences, seminars and meetings on the Zoom platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

CEC

Two meetings were held on Saturday 19th September 2020 and on Saturday 23rd January 2021.

Special CEC

One meeting was held on Saturday 9th January 2021

NCCA Subject Representatives

One meeting was held on Saturday 5th December 2020.

Committees/Sub-committees

The following committees and sub-committees held a number of meetings as mandated by rule or demands of business in hand. Reports on these committees are contained in the appropriate sections of this handbook.

- Standing Committee / Special Standing Committee
- Steering Committee
- Education Committee
- Equal Opportunities Committee
- Principals' & Deputy Principals' Advisory Committee
- Safety, Health & Welfare Committee
- ASTIR Editorial Board Sub-Committee
- ASTI Awards Committee
- Community & Comprehensive Advisory Committee
- Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee
- Investment Committee
- Rules Committee
- Sickness Benefit Committee
- Benevolent Committee
- Business of CEC Sub-Committee
- Pension Sub-Committee

Board of Management Representative Training Courses

Four training courses were held as follows:

- Wednesday 4th November 2020
- Wednesday 11th November 2020
- Wednesday 18th November 2020
- Wednesday 25th November 2020

School Stewards Training Courses

Four training courses were held as follows:

- Tuesday 6th October 2020
- Tuesday 13th October 2020
- Tuesday 20th October 2020
- Thursday 5th November 2020

Retirement Seminars

Six Retirement Seminars were held by the ASTI as follows:

- Tuesday 10th November 2020
- Thursday 19th November 2020
- Tuesday 24th November 2020
- Tuesday 12th January 2021
- Tuesday 19th January 2021
- Tuesday 26th January 2021

One Retirement Seminar was held by Cornmarket as follows:

- Tuesday 2nd February 2021

Professional Development

Leadership training was held as follows:

- Saturday 28th November 2020
- Saturday 5th December 2020
- Saturday 16th January 2021
- Saturday 23rd January 2021

COVID-19 Lead Worker Representatives

Seminars were held as follows:

- Friday 6th November 2020
- Monday 1st February 2021

MEMBERSHIP

Overall membership has improved by 1,041 (562) to 18,452 (17,411) in 2020 (2019) from the point reached last year. This represents an increase of 6.0% (3.3%) over the 2019 (2018) figure and significantly ahead of last year's growth. This is the third consecutive year of accelerating membership growth in the union.

This membership growth is concentrated within the following categories of members: associate membership (pro rata and non-pro rata) +586 (+22%), full members +316 (+2.8%), CID non-full +46 (+7.2%), students +14 (+15%) and emeritus members +116 (6.6%). The remaining categories have shown slight decreases in the number of members on leave, honorary life members and job-sharing members.

A modest increase in emeritus members has marginally added to the trend identified in previous reports of retired members forming a growing proportion of union membership. Emeritus members now represent 10.2% of the union's total membership in 2020 (2019 10.1%; 2018 9.5%; 2017 9.3%; 2016 7.8%).

The figure for student membership has continued to grow over the last three years but also reflects the decisions of university and college education departments to schedule union recruitment into the second semester, i.e. after the ASTI's membership reporting date.

Membership Returns

The total membership of the ASTI in December 2019 was 17,411, comprising 12,094 women members and 5,317 men. A detailed presentation of membership figures is contained in the following tables:

Table 1: Total membership by category at December 2020 (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	18,372	16,440	16,849	17,411	18,452
Full members ¹	12,765	11,470	11,421	11,381	11,697
Job Sharers	663	625	595	572	553
CID non-full	741	636	636	643	689
Associate pro-rata	2,149	1,726	2,104	2,412	2,947
Associate non-pro rata	374	213	198	288	339
Members on leave	94	135	157	184	167
Student members	91	37	61	95	109
Emeritus members	1,429	1,531	1,606	1,764	1,880
Honorary life members	66	67	70	72	71

Table 2: Annual change in total membership on previous year (2011 to 2020)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Increase			531	466	
Decrease	602	503			227
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Increase	792		409	562	1,041
Decrease		1,932			

Table 3: Annual change in full membership on previous year, including full CIDs (2011 to 2020)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Increase		370		144	391
Decrease	738		192		
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Increase					316
Decrease	20	1,295	49	40	

Table 4: Total members other than full members (2011 to 2020)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Category Total	5,241	4,368	5,091	5,413	4,795
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Category Total	5,607	4,970	5,428	6,030	6,755

Table 5: Total Associate Pro rata Contract & Non-Pro rata Contract Members (2011 to 2020)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Category Total	2,971	2,112	2,479	2,696	1,840
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Category Total	2,523	1,939	2,302	2,700	3,286

Community and Comprehensive Schools

Tables 6 to 9 set out the growth in ASTI membership in the Community and Comprehensive Sector. Overall membership in this sector has grown from 2,305 in 1997 to 3,363 in 2020. Membership growth in this sector reduced from 2016 to 2017, but has improved at an increasing rate to 2020.

Table 6: Total Membership in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Colleges (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	3,511	3,079	3,095	3,182	3,363
Full members ¹	2,640	2,343	2,294	2,289	2,285
Job Sharers	116	118	115	104	103
CID non-full	139	118	115	121	137
Associate pro-rata	520	432	493	563	699
Associate non-pro rata	58	35	43	49	86
Members on leave	23	26	21	29	31
Student members	15	7	14	27	22

Table 7: Membership in Community Schools (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	2,417	2,118	2,125	2,172	2,310
Full members ¹	1,916	1,688	1,643	1,631	1,627
Job Sharers	89	91	90	79	78
CID non-full	107	89	84	88	96
Associate pro-rata	243	203	252	306	412
Associate non-pro rata	40	25	34	34	60
Members on leave	14	18	13	19	22
Student members	8	4	9	15	15

Table 8: Membership in Comprehensive Schools (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	346	314	324	321	326
Full members ¹	277	259	260	255	250
Job Sharers	9	9	8	7	7
CID non-full	13	12	13	12	15
Associate pro-rata	28	25	40	36	47
Associate non-pro rata	8	3	0	1	3
Members on leave	4	3	3	4	1
Student members	7	3	0	6	3

Table 9: Membership in Community Colleges (2016 to 2020)

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total membership	748	647	646	689	727
Full members ¹	447	396	391	403	408
Job Sharers	18	18	17	18	18
CID non-full	19	17	18	21	26
Associate pro-rata	249	204	201	221	240
Associate non-pro rata	10	7	9	14	23
Members on leave	5	5	5	6	8
Student members	-	-	5	6	4

Branch Membership

Branch	2019	2020	Branch	2019	2020
Athlone	226	234	Fermoy	115	127
Bray	209	224	Fingal	418	431
Carberry	331	347	Galway	745	780
Carlow	326	345	Iar Thuaisceart TC	67	66
Carrick-on-Shannon	131	138	Kerry	602	629
Cavan	214	213	Kildare	640	689
Clare	387	404	Kilkenny	341	364
Cork North	549	574	Laois	291	304
Cork South	754	790	Limerick North	339	362
Desmond	226	252	Limerick South	371	401
Donegal	347	367	Longford	167	178
Drogheda Sean Higgins	262	282	Monaghan	246	261
Dublin North 1	464	481	Mullingar	216	223
Dublin North Ctrl	292	294	Navan	394	417
Dublin North East	467	499	Nenagh	118	124
Dublin North West	747	836	New Ross	188	197
Dublin South 1	493	538	Roscrea	92	92
Dublin South 2	548	614	Sligo	289	301
Dublin South Ctrl	313	311	Stillorgan	352	383
Dublin South Cnty	182	211	Tipperary	452	473
Dublin South West	394	427	Tuam	145	145
Dún Laoghaire	133	144	Tullamore	198	211
Dundalk	233	257	Waterford	448	453
Dungarvan	161	169	West Limerick	101	107
East Cork	250	273	West Mayo	488	499
East Galway	156	168	West Waterford	57	59
East Mayo	91	99	Wexford Tony Boland	242	247
Enniscorthy	226	239	Wicklow	177	199

AWARDS TO MEMBERS

Membership of the ASTI Awards Committee is as follows:

Ger Curtin, Padraig MacCraith, Crena Shevlin, President, Vice-President and General Secretary. Jacqueline Kearns, Executive Officer provides technical advice to the committee.

The committee held an on-line meeting on the Zoom platform on Thursday 14th January 2021 to consider applications for the following awards:

- Honorary Life Membership
- Thomas MacDonagh Medal
- PJ Kennedy Award

In the context of a strict application of the Procedure for ASTI Awards and the information supplied by the branches, the committee made the following recommendations.

Honorary Life Membership

The committee considered the nomination received for this award and decided to recommend that no award be conferred for Honorary Life Membership on this occasion.

Thomas MacDonagh Medal

The committee recommended that the Thomas MacDonagh medal be awarded to seven members, six of which recipients are outgoing and former Standing Committee members, and one of which was a branch nomination.

PJ Kennedy Award

The committee recommended that the PJ Kennedy award be awarded to five members. Four recipients were nominated by their branch for the Thomas MacDonagh medal but met the criteria for the PJ Kennedy award.

TRAINING 2020

ASTI Training Analysis 2020

School Steward Training

Date	Oct 6th	Oct 13th	Oct 20th	Nov 5th
Attendees	27	36	35	33

Q1 Rate the degree to which your overall understanding of the role of the School Steward has changed after today

- No: 6%
 Some change: 45%
 Significant change: 49%

Q2 Indicate the degree to which you had the opportunity to actively participate today

- No opportunities: 0%
 Some opportunities: 10%
 Lots of opportunities: 90%

Q3. What content areas/topics do you feel you need more guidance on?

- School ballots
- Communication with members in the school
- Knowing when to refer queries on to IR officials
- COVID-19 leave, contact tracing, etc.
- Grievance - how to communicate with members in such situations

Q4. What content areas/topics were most useful for you?

- Ballots
- Role of school steward/organising in the school
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Guidance at parent: teacher meetings
- Knowing who to contact in HO if need arises
- Information on new ASTI website
- Information on Posts of Responsibility
- ASTI Directives

Q5. What content areas/topics were least useful for you?

- Being asked to watch videos in advance and then having to re-watch them at the training – waste of time
- Leave information – each leave query is so individual: best handled by HO
- Information on pensions – each pension query is so individual
- Contracts: queries too complex for SS – need to be handled by IR Officials
- Information on SLAR meetings

Q6. Other areas you feel ASTI could provide advice on

- How members can engage with branches
- Running online branch meetings and how to get list of members' contact details
- Supporting union committee structure – some schools have 2 staff rooms so don't necessarily even know all staff by sight
- ASTI needs to give more prominence to SS in media so that members understand that the union is school-based and has a school structure
- ASTI should email documentation to members. Needs to examine if diary is used. Paper material increasingly not used by teachers.

Board of Management Training

Date	Oct 11th	Oct 18th	Oct 25th	Nov 14th
Attendees	23	12	22	12

Q1. Please rate the degree to which your overall understanding of the role of the ASTI Rep has changed after the training

- No change: 6%
- Some change: 42%
- Significant change: 52%

Q2. Please indicate the degree to which you had opportunities to actively participate in the training session

- No opportunities: 3%
- Some opportunities: 21%
- Lots of opportunities 76%

Q3. What aspect of the training was most useful for you in your school?

- Clarification on role of Board members
- How to serve in collective governance capacity as distinct from being teachers' representatives
- How Board responds to complaints against teachers
- Procedures used at Board level
- Real-life examples very helpful

Q4. Was anything missing from the training that you feel should have been included?

- More problem-solving break out rooms
- More real-life examples of how Boards responded to complex issues

Q5. Level of satisfaction with training overall

- Not satisfactory: 0%
- Satisfactory: 18%
- Very satisfactory: 82%

ASTI STAFF

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Ann Marie Ryan, Executive Officer/Industrial Relations was granted a one-year career break commencing on Monday 18th January 2021. She was replaced by Breda Lynch.

ASTI STAFF GRADES AND SALARIES

Apart from the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary ASTI staff members' salaries are linked to the appropriate Civil Service grades. The levels of remuneration are comparable with those paid in the other teachers' unions and in other unions of similar size.

The General Secretary's salary was fixed by CEC in April 2005 at 2.1846 of the maximum of the secondary teacher's salary scale plus pass primary degree allowance plus pass H Dip in Education allowance. The Deputy General Secretary's salary scale was fixed in January 2006 at a maximum of 1.73493 of the maximum of the secondary teacher's scale plus primary pass degree allowance plus pass H. Dip in Education allowance.

The General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary are provided with the use of ASTI motorcars. The ASTI pays all costs in relation to these cars, excluding personal mileage. These provisions are subject to "Benefit in Kind" taxation. Other officials are paid Civil Service mileage rates or the actual fares when travelling on ASTI business. Details of these expenses are published annually in the Financial Report to Convention.

The method of reimbursement of staff members' costs incurred in the conduct of their duties is a system linked to Civil Service subsistence allowances. Claims in respect of such costs are circulated to Standing Committee at each ordinary meeting and checked by scrutineers before being reimbursed.

Head office is open from 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. each day with a luncheon period closure of one hour from 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. The office is open for 242 normal working days in each year. Much of the work of officials and, in particular, of the industrial relations officials, is confidential to the members directly involved. It is, therefore, unlikely to be reported or referred to at branch or other meetings.

An outline of the duties undertaken by officials is set out below. The duties are assigned by the General Secretary and vary from time to time in accordance with the priorities established by Convention, CEC and Standing Committee.

Outline of Duties:

The duties of officials set out below may vary depending on circumstances.

General Secretary - Kieran Christie

The General Secretary represents and promotes the interests of the union and its members in relation to salary and conditions of employment and the wellbeing of the education service at a

national and international level. He is entrusted with managing the daily business of the Association, including the organization of Head Office and the execution of Association policy.

Deputy General Secretary - Diarmaid de Paor

The Deputy General Secretary supports the General Secretary in his national role. He deputises for the General Secretary and has specific responsibility in the area of communication and education policy, relations with parents, aspects of C&A and issues arising for Principals and Deputy Principals. He presents the Board of Management training for ASTI. He also services the ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee and the Principals' and Deputy Principals' Advisory Committee.

Assistant General Secretary/Education Research - Moira Leydon

The Assistant General Secretary acts as Education and Research Officer and monitors progress in the education area. She services the ASTI Education Committee in furthering the education aims of the Association. She is responsible for coordinating a number of ASTI training programmes and coordinator of the ASTI network of subject representatives.

Executive Officer: Administration - Jacqueline Kearns

The Executive Officer has responsibility for the general administration of ASTI head office and the organisation and co-ordination of conferences and seminars. She is responsible for recruitment of administrative staff, staff training and monitoring the work of administrative staff. She also has specific responsibility for the ASTI Awards Sub-Committee.

Executive Officer: Media & Communications - Gemma Tuffy

The Executive Officer has responsibility to develop and maintain a positive public profile for the ASTI and its members. She is involved in media liaison, public relations, political campaigning, policy development, coordination of ASTI media representative network, publications and communications, and assisting members in dealing with the media. She acts as coordinator for media training for ASTI. She also has specific responsibility for the ASTI Editorial Board.

Executive Officer: Industrial Relations - Bernard Moynihan

The Executive Officer has responsibility for industrial relations. He is involved in assisting and representing teachers on industrial relations matters and promoting the welfare of members on an individual and school basis. He is a member of the school stewards training team. He also has specific responsibility for the Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee.

Executive Officer: Industrial Relations - Maire Collins

The Executive Officer has responsibility for industrial relations. She is involved in assisting and representing teachers on industrial relations matters and promoting the welfare of members on an individual and school basis. She is a member of the school stewards training team. She also may have specific responsibility for sub-committee work as it arises.

Executive Officer: Industrial Relations - Ann Marie Ryan (Career Break commencing Jan 2021)

The Executive Officer has responsibility for industrial relations. She is involved in assisting and representing teachers on industrial relations matters and promoting the welfare of members on an individual or school basis. She is assigned duties in relation to retirement. She is a member of the school stewards training team. She also has specific responsibility for the Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee.

Executive Officer: Development & Organisation - Desmond O'Toole

The EO/Development & Organisation is involved in assisting and representing teachers on industrial relations matters and promoting the welfare of members on an individual or school basis. He is assigned duties in relation to recruitment, retirement, elections, social welfare, Occupational Health Service, Employee Assurances Scheme. He is a member of the school stewards training and retirement training teams. He also has specific responsibility for the Rules Committee and Pensions Sub-Committee.

Executive Officer: Industrial Relations - Conor McDonald

The Executive Officer has responsibility for industrial relations. He is involved in assisting and representing teachers on industrial relations matters and promoting the welfare of members on an individual or school basis. He is a member of the school stewards training team. He also has specific responsibility for the Safety, Health and Welfare Sub-Committee.

CASEWORK

ASTI Head Office Officials work on a wide range of issues in support of members. This work includes making representations to school authorities, schools management bodies, the Department of Education and Skills and other stakeholders in Irish education. Assistance regarding complaints relating to members, made to the Teaching Council, is also provided. Such representation can often be on behalf of individual members, groups of members or the ASTI as a whole, depending on the forum. Under a number of legislative provisions, ASTI has taken cases to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court. On occasion it has been necessary to pursue matters through the legal system up to and including the superior courts.

Matters on which representations were made this year include:

- Redeployment
- Dismissal
- Internal school difficulties
- Leave of absence
- School closures
- Pension entitlements
- Part-time and fixed-term teachers' conditions
- Timetable issues

- Supervision and substitution
- Junior Cycle
- Posts of Responsibility
- Special needs provision issues
- Salary matters
- Difficulties with revenue and social welfare authorities
- Complaints about appointment procedures
- Maternity leave
- Sick Leave
- Breastfeeding breaks
- Job-sharing
- Career break scheme
- Incremental credit
- Harassment of teachers
- School discipline
- School amalgamations
- Complaints against teachers
- Queries about Department Circulars
- Retirement
- Qualification allowances
- Teaching Council issues
- Examinations / State Examinations Commission

professional duties” may be paid from the General Fund in accordance with the provisions of Rules 179 to 182.

These Rules provide that, before a member takes any steps (other than entering a notice of appeal), a member must submit the request for a grant in writing to the General Secretary. Standing Committee (or CEC) may refuse a grant or allow portion of a grant or state the maximum sum which will be made available. Each application for a grant for legal aid will be assessed on its own merits and in its own circumstances. The increasing number of applications for grants for legal aid, however, requires that there must be some measure of standardised response which also takes into account the broader interests of the Association. Guidelines are issued to members to help to ensure that there is consistency of approach and clarity with regard to the degree of support which may be available to individual members.

The following general principles apply:

1. Insofar as possible, the advice and assistance will be provided through the ASTI solicitors.
2. In principle, Standing Committee will follow the advice of the ASTI legal advisors in deciding whether or not to support an action or to continue to support an action.
3. A grant will not normally be approved by Standing Committee where the issue could be addressed through the agreed industrial relations procedures and the provisions of the procedures have not been exhausted.
4. An initial grant for legal aid will cover the cost of a consultation with the solicitors and any consequent correspondence. The member concerned will be accompanied and assisted by an ASTI representative. The initial grant may also cover the cost of a Barrister’s advice, if required.
5. A further application for a grant will be required for legal representation in a court or other quasi legal forum.
6. Such legal aid grant is provided to cover the legal costs of the member who made the application only.
7. A further application will be required if a grant is required to cover the legal costs of a third party.
8. In the case of legal proceedings, a specific cash limit will be set on the grant to be paid. This limit may not cover the member’s full costs in the proceedings but will not exceed, except in exceptional circumstances, the member’s costs in the proceedings, based on estimates provided by the legal advisors. The limit may only be exceeded by obtaining further specific approval.
9. The ASTI will not pay a grant to cover the costs of any damages awarded against a member.
10. The ASTI may only pay the legal costs involved in an agreed settlement of a case.
11. That, as a matter of principle, a grant for legal aid to a maximum of €5,000 will be made to members on receipt of a request submitted in accordance with the Rules, who is accused of behaviour which may lead to a criminal investigation in order to pay legal costs which arise in relation to the protection of their continued employment.
12. Except in cases of emergency, requests for legal grants should be forwarded to the General Secretary at least 5 days prior to the meeting of Standing Committee for which it is relevant.

LEGAL AID

LEGAL AID APPLICATIONS

In 2020, there were 18 applications for legal aid of which 14 were approved. In 2019, there were 27 applications for legal aid of which 24 were approved.

The applications related *inter alia* to the following issues:

- Allegations/complaints against members
- Bullying/harassment issues
- Dismissals or threatened dismissals
- Contracts of indefinite duration
- Equality issues
- Redeployment
- Redundancies

GUIDELINES FOR GRANTS FOR LEGAL AID

The following are the guidelines for applications for grants for legal aid:

ASTI Rule 159(c) provides that “grants on account of legal expenses incurred by members arising out of or in connection with their

PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

One Principal and one Deputy Principal is elected in each of nine regions, based on Standing Committee Regions, to the ASTI Principals and Deputy Principals Committee. It is recommended that there should be gender balance and that the Principal and Deputy Principal should not be from the same school. The term of office is two years and members serve a maximum of three terms. The 2019-2021 Committee was elected at the Principals and Deputy Principals Seminar on the 6th November 2019.

The Committee members for the period 2019-2021 are listed below.

SC Region	Principal / Deputy	Name
1 and 2	Principal	Vacant
	Deputy Principal	Jimmy Staunton
3 and 4	Principal	Mary Kelly
	Deputy Principal	Vacant
5	Principal	John O'Donovan
	Deputy Principal	Liam Hassett
6 and 7	Principal	Aaron Wolfe
	Deputy Principal	Peter Hyde
8 and 9	Principal	Shane Hallinan
	Deputy Principal	Vacant
10 and 11	Principal	Rob Halford
	Deputy Principal	Kathleen Burke
12, 16 & 17	Principal	Vacant
	Deputy Principal	Jean Marie Ward
13 and 14	Principal	Vacant
	Deputy Principal	Robert Browne
15 and 18	Principal	Sarah Green
	Deputy Principal	Patricia MacManus

John O'Donovan is Chairperson of the Committee. The President and the Vice-President are also members of the Committee. The Deputy General Secretary provides the professional support to the Committee.

Meetings were held throughout the year at which many issues were discussed. However, COVID-19 and its repercussions for schools, teachers and students dominated the discussions throughout the year. Naturally, the Committee paid particular attention to the effect of the pandemic on the work of Principals and Deputy Principals.

The Committee raised many issues of concern for ASTI members who are in school leadership positions. These concerns were all been forwarded to the Department of Education and Skills through the General Secretary and the President.

CONCERNS ABOUT RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS:

The Committee discussed, at length, the issues arising from the re-opening of schools in September 2020. Many members expressed the extreme difficulty they would have in reconfiguring their schools and classrooms given the already inadequate space available to them.

Similar discussions are taking place at the time of writing about the gradual re-opening of schools from February 2021.

CONCERNS ABOUT STATE EXAMINATIONS:

The concerns and issues raised fall into 3 broad categories:

1. *Issues Affecting Teachers (Including Principals and Deputy Principals) As Employees.*

Many concerns were raised about the position that teachers might find themselves in both during and after this process. The Committee noted the ASTI's success in getting the DES to state that any attempt to influence teachers in relation to the process of Leaving Certificate Calculated Grades is considered to be entirely inappropriate and will be regarded as canvassing.

Another major concern was the possibility of teachers, principals and deputies being challenged in the courts as a result of a student being unhappy with their calculated grade(s). The indemnity provided by the Department of Education and Skills in this context was welcomed by the Committee and the fact that this was achieved by the ASTI was duly noted.

2. *Issues affecting students.*

These issues were many and so varied and it is not possible to list them all here. They include:

- Students studying a subject(s) outside school
- Issues around special accommodations for students with special needs
- Equality issues
- How second components are to be dealt with
- Guidance around students who have struggled to attend school and therefore have little data relating to their performance
- Changing Levels – although this issue has now been clarified by the DES
- Incomplete course – particularly for those students who wish to sit the exam

This does not by any means comprehend every issue that was raised.

3. *Practical Issues for Principals and Deputy Principals.*

Included in this category were concerns that schools would receive clear guidance on how returns of calculated grades are to be made to the Department. Would there be a standardised Excel sheet provided for making returns? Would there be clear guidance on how the process is to be reported? What records need to be kept?

The discussions noted above took place in the context of the first wave of COVID-19 and the preparations for the 2020 State Examinations. Many of the same issues are being discussed again by the Committee at the time of writing; this time in relation to the 2021 examinations.

WORKLOAD:

The workload for Principals and Deputy Principals has always been an issue for the Committee. In the year just gone this has become a matter of critical concern. The pandemic has led to a now intolerable situation. The demands placed on school leaders by the changes in the conduct of the State Examinations, the re-opening of schools, the ongoing fall-out from trying to run a school remotely, the fact that Principal Teachers can be contacted in relation to cases at any time and the fact that many school leaders have not had a break of more than a couple of days since July 2019 means that the health, safety and welfare of these ASTI members is being put increasingly in jeopardy. While supports that were put in place (such as the provision of an aide to assist with the logistics involved in re-opening) were welcome, the Committee feels that they were, and continue to be, wholly inadequate.

NEW ENTRANT TEACHERS:

The Committee reiterated their commitment to the restoration of all pay to New Entrant Teachers.

OTHER ISSUES:

Among other issues raised by the Committee were:

- The PSSA and its successor
- Redeployment (including voluntary redeployment)
- SLARs
- Step-Down Scheme for Principals and Deputy Principals
- Induction
- Restoration of the Allowance for Principals Serving as Secretary to a Board of Management.

REPRESENTATION OF PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS:

During the year, the ASTI represented a number of Principals and Deputies in relation to difficulties they were having with Boards of Management and/or Trustees.

INDEX

A.		
Accounting	97	
Additional Working Hours	9	
Admissions Policies	106	
Affiliations	73	
Age	106	
Agricultural Science	99	
Allowances	16	
Amnesty International	72	
Ancient Greek	77	
Arabic	77	
ASTI Staff	116	
ASTIR	111	
Awards Committee	115	
Awards to Members	115	
B.		
Ballots	8, 10	
Benevolent Fund	108	
Bereavement Leave	116	
BIGTU	55	
Biology	75, 97	
Blended Learnings	28	
Boards of Management	112	
Branch Audits	107	
Branch Central Fund	107	
Branches	107	
Breastfeeding	106	
British and Irish Group of Teacher Unions	55	
Budget	15	
Building Momentums	8	
Building Unit	3	
Bullying	32	
Business	97	
C.		
Calculated Grades	28, 95	
CAO	29	
Casework	117	
CEC	112	
CÉIM	54	
Chemistry	77, 99	
Child Protection	10	
Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíocht	81	
Class Size	19	
Classics and Classical Studies	97	
Close Contacts	11	
COGG	82	
Committees	112	
Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee	101	
Community and Comprehensive Schools	101	
Computer Science	97	
Conciliation and Arbitration	15	
Conferences	112	
Cosán	53	
COVID-19	2, 26, 40, 89, 106, 119	
Covid Testing	11	
CROÍ	73	
Croke Park Hours	5	
CPSE	77	
Curricular Reviews	74	
Curriculum Representatives	96	
D.		
Data Protection	6	
DEIS	78	
Department of Education and Skills	5	
Deputy Principals	119	
DES	5	
DES Statement of Strategy	34	
Digital Literacy	12	
Directives	28, 87	
Disability	44, 56	
Droichead	53	
E.		
EAS	5, 12	
Education	74	
Education Act (Section 28)	54	
Education Act (Admission to Schools) Act	79	
Education at a Glance	75	
Education Committee	74	
Education International	47	
Education for Sustainable Development	82	
Educational Consultative Structures	96	
Educational Disadvantage	35, 78	
EI/ETUCE	47	
Employee Assistance Service	5, 12	
English	103	
Equality	103	
Equal Opportunities Committee	103	
ETUCE	47	
Evaluation in Schools	17	
Examinations	19, 89, 94, 119	
External Relations	40	
F.		
Facebook	112	
FÉILTE	54	
Fitness to Teach	54	
Four Teacher Unions	108	
French	97	
G.		
Gaeltacht Education Policy	81	
Garda Vetting	53	
Gender Equality	103	
Gender Pay Gap	24	
Geography	97	
German	97	
Global Solidarity	66	
Greek	97	
Greek (Ancient)	77	

H.				N.	
Haddington Road Agreement	9			National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	76
Health and Safety	12, 13			National Council for Special Education.....	19, 80
History	41, 106			National Parents' Council Post Primary	18
Homelessness	41, 106			National Women's Council	106
Honorary Life Membership	115			NCCA	76
Honorary National Organiser	109			NCSE	19, 80
Housing	41			NCSE Department Council	19
				NERI	45
I.				Nevin Economic Research Institute	45
ICT	3, 97			New Entrant Teachers	9
ICTU.....	40			New Schools	21
ICTU Complaint	56			Non-Permanent Teachers	37
ICTU Disability Committee	56			Non-Permanent Teachers Advisory Committee	37
ICTU Disputes Committee	56			Non-School Students	29
ICTU Executive Council	40			NPCpp	18
ICTU Global Solidarity Committee	46			Nuacht	111
ICTU Health and Safety Committee	13			NWCI	106
ICTU Housing Campaign.....	41				
ICTU Retired Workers' Committee.....	24			O.	
ICTU Women's Committee	46			Occupational Health Service	12
IFUT	108			Occupational Injuries	15
Inclusive Education	79			OECD	74, 75
Industrial Peace	10			OHS	12
Industrial Relations	8			On-Line Communications.....	111
Inequality	4			Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	74, 75
Initiative Overload.....	27				
Inspection	17, 27			P.	
Insurance	6			PACCS	18
Internal Union Matters	107			Parents/Guardians	4, 18
International Virtual Summit of the Teaching Professione	49			Parents Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	18
INTO	108			Partial Absences.....	10
Investment in Education	35			Pay Equality/Inequality.....	8/11
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	40			PDST	2
Irish Federation of University Teachers	108			PE	77, 85
Irish National Teachers' Organisation	108			Pensions	10, 23, 106
				Pension Parity	10, 23
J.				Pensions Sub-Committee	23
Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	31			Physical Education.....	77, 85
Junior Cycle	77, 84			PISA	75
Junior Cycle Framework Implementation Committee.....	84			PJ Kennedy Award.....	115
				Political Lobbying.....	56
L.				Posts of Responsibility.....	18, 106
Latin	77, 97			Posts of Responsibility Appeals	15, 18
Lead Worker Representative	116			Poverty	106
Legal Aid	118			Pregnancy Related Leave	16
LVR	12			Press Statements	110
				Principals and Deputy Principals	119
M.				Principals and Deputy Principals Advisory Committee	119
Masks	11			Professional Development	113
Maternity Leave	105			Professional Development Service for Teachers	2
Mathematics	97			Programme for Governmentk	82
Meetings	112			Public Service Agreement	8
Members' Benefit Schemes.....	108			Publications.....	111
Membership	101, 109, 113			Publicity and Information	110
Mental Health.....	13				
Miscarriage	105			R.	
Modern Foreign Languages	72			Raise the Roof	4
				Rationalisation	21
				Recruitment	109
				Redeployment	17

Refugees	106
Registration.....	53
Remote Learning and Teaching.....	2, 19 28
Reproductive Health.....	16
Retired Secondary Teachers' Association	55
Retirement	25
Retirement Seminars	25
RSTA.....	55
Rules Committee	121
Ryan Report	10

S.

Safety Health and Welfare Committee.....	12
Salary Statement	12
Salary Protection Scheme	108
School Building.....	21
School Closures.....	23
School Stewards	112
School Transport	23
Science	98
SCoTENS	78
Sectoral Bargaining	9
Seminars	112
SEN	27, 79
Senior Cycle.....	77, 91
Serial Testing	11
Sexual Harassment	42
Sickness Benefit Fund.....	108
Single Public Service Pension Scheme	23
SLAR Meetings.....	85
Social Media	112
Spanish	98
Special Educational Needs	27, 79
Special Oireachtas Coimmittee on Covid-19 Response	26
Special Rapporteur on Child Protection	16
Spectrum Life	12
SPHE.....	99
Staff Meetings	5
Standing Committee.....	109
Standing Committee Elections.....	109
Standing Committee for Teacher Education	
North and South	78
Student and Parent Charter.....	13
Student Well-being	4, 27
Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meetings	88

Subject and Programme Representatives	96
Submissions.....	26
Substitution Service	112
Supervision and Substitution	15
Surveys.....	10
Sustainable Development Goals	44

T.

Tax Relief.....	6
TCC	15
Teacher Unions	108
Teacher Well-being	28
Teachers' Conciliation Council	15
Teachers' Union of Ireland	56, 108
Teaching Council	53
Testing	11
Technology	97
Thomas MacDonagh Medal	115
TIMSS	76
Trade Union Friends of Palestine	73
Training	112, 115
Traveller and Roma Community	105
Trustees.....	107
Trustees Report	107
TUI	56, 108
Twitter	112

V.

Vetting	53
Violence Against Women.....	106
Violence at Work	16
Visual Art.....	97
Voluntary Redeployment.....	16, 18
Voluntary Search and Rescue.....	16, 18

W.

Website	111
Well-being.....	77, 84
White Ribbon Campaign.....	106
Winding Down Scheme	16, 24
Workload	120
Workplace Passport Scheme	44

CONVENTION 2021

Compiled by Sinéad Farrelly and Jenny Dunne
Edited by Diarmaid de Paor, Deputy General Secretary

Printed by CRM Design and Print Limited, Unit 6, Bridgecourt Office Park, Walkinstown Avenue, Dublin

Thomas MacDonagh House,
Winetavern Street,
Dublin 8.

E-mail: info@asti.ie
Website: www.asti.ie

Áras Thomáis Mhic Dhonncha,
Sráid an Fhíona,
Baile Átha Cliath 8.

Tel: 01 6040160
Fax: 01 8972760