INDUSTRIAL & STRIKE ACTION 2026: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STEWARDS STRIKE DAYS

THE CONTEXT

The ASTI Standing Committee has sanctioned two one-day strikes that will take place on **14th and 21st October 2026**. The strikes have been sanctioned in pursuit of a credible public service pay deal. **All ASTI members will withdraw their labour for a 24-hour period on October 14th and 21st 2026 and picket their place of employment.** ASTI members will be joined by other public service workers who are also striking on these days.

NEXT STEPS

School Stewards and School Steward teams are asked to focus on the following over the coming days:

1. MAKE SURE THAT MEMBERS UNDERSTAND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES ON STRIKE DAYS:

- **All ASTI members are required to picket their place of employment. This includes teachers who are currently on secondment as well as student teachers in membership. Teachers on approved leave (certified sick leave, maternity leave, parents leave etc.) are exempt from attending the picket.**

- Alternative activities e.g. in-service, extracurricular activities etc. are impacted by the strike and are prohibited on the strike days. Derogations have been granted for multi-day school tours and these are listed in **the FAQs**. ASTI members on these school tours are still considered on strike.

- It is not a day off and all ASTI members are expected to attend for picket duty. School Stewards must **keep a roll call of all ASTI members** and their attendance at the picket.

- Exemptions from picket duty can be sought for genuine reasons only e.g. medical. Even when deemed exempt from picket duty members are still on strike.

- There will be a loss of pay for each day – this is 1/30th of the monthly salary or for an hourly paid person the pay for the day.

- There will also be a loss of pension credit for the strike days only.

Please encourage teachers in your school who have not yet joined a union to join the ASTI. ASTI members can participate in this industrial action and enjoy the protections of industrial relations legislation. Non-union members cannot.

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2. MAKE A PLAN FOR THE PICKET LINE OUTSIDE YOUR SCHOOL:

- ☐ Placards have been distributed to all schools through the ASTI Branch network. **School Stewards should already be in contact with their branch to arrange delivery/collection of placards. Store these safely outside the school premises until the 14th.**
- ☐ Co-ordinate with other school stewards in your school if there is more than one union present. If your school is on a shared campus with a primary school, we advise liaising with the School Stewards on a campus wide basis.
- ☐ Assess the area in front of the entrance/s to your school to ensure there is enough room for ASTI members to picket safely.
- ☐ Picket duty must be organised by School Stewards. The guidance from Standing Committee is that schools can organise up to 3 time slots over the school day (3 for full day, 2 for half day). Each 'slot' needs to be a minimum of 2 hours. Picket duty should be equally shared across all ASTI members. **School Stewards must ensure a consistent picket throughout the school day.**
- ☐ For the duration of the strikes members must remain completely off the school premises – bathroom breaks must be taken elsewhere and School Stewards should try to identify alternative arrangements in advance of the 14th and 21st. School car parks should not be used and members should find alternative parking arrangements.

- Be aware that mass picketing is illegal. The size of a picket should be proportionate to the number of members in your workplace. The main entrance to the workplace should be covered and, if possible, other entrances for the duration of the strike days.
- Picket duty should commence 30 minutes before the normal school opening time and finish at normal school closing time.
- Picketing must be at the place of work – i.e. pickets must stay outside the gate and must not block the entrance or prevent people from entering.
- There are strict legal limits on picketing under the 1990 Industrial Relations Act. Picketing must be by members who are employees of the school in question and union officials. Others, not covered, by this definition cannot join the picket line.
- Keep in mind that Irish weather is unpredictable. Members should plan ahead for the forecast on the 14th and 21st and always wear comfortable flat shoes!

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What is the purpose of a picket?

The purpose of a picket is to:

- indicate to members of the ASTI that there is an official strike and that they should not go to work.
- advise other employees that there is an official dispute in the workplace.
- alert the general public to the fact that there is an official dispute and, more importantly, the reason for it.

Pickets are an important collective action within our dispute to secure a fair pay deal for teachers. It is essential that each ASTI member plays their part so we demonstrate the strength of our union to the employer.

My colleague now wants to join ASTI. At what point will they be considered a member?

For the purpose of taking Industrial Action, a person will be considered a member provided they have completed and returned an application form online via www.asti.ie or in hard copy to our head office.

There are members of other unions in my workplace. How does this affect the strike?

Staff in the school who are members of other unions are allowed to pass a picket if they are not on strike. This may include school secretaries and caretakers who are not considered public servants. Other Union members who are part of the public service pay campaign must follow the guidance from their own union. Stewards should coordinate as much as possible with other union reps at school level.

There are non-union teachers in my school. How does this affect the strike?

Staff in the school who are not in a union may pass a picket. Anyone who is not in a union may be deemed to be in breach of their contract if they do not present for work on the strike days and their employer may take disciplinary action against them or deem the day to have been a break in service.

All non-union teachers should be advised of the dispute. If they ask ASTI members for guidance as to what to do on the day of the strikes they should be referred to their employer. If eligible for membership of the ASTI, they should be offered an application form for membership or advised to join via the ASTI website www.asti.ie

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I am a Principal/Deputy Principal and ASTI member. Do I have an obligation to open the school to receive students?

No. You are on strike and, like all members of the ASTI, you are protected under the Industrial Relations Act, 1990. Being on strike requires you not to engage in any aspect of your work. Queries in relation to the opening of the school should be referred to your employer – BOM/ETB.

I have no timetabled hours on the strike days. Am I required to attend for picket duty?

You are required to attend for picket duty if, in normal circumstances, you would be in attendance at the school on that day. If you would not normally be in attendance at the school on this day, you are encouraged to attend for picket duty in any case. If this proves difficult due to personal circumstances, please consult with your School Steward.

Can I picket at an alternative school closer to my home?

No. You can only picket at your own workplace. An elected Branch Officer may join any picket line within their own branch and a member of the Standing Committee or union official may join any picket line.

I am a retired ASTI member/member of the Retired Secondary Teachers' Association (RSTA). Can I join the picket?

No. Picketing must be by members who are employees of the school in question and union officials/elected representatives (see above). You may, however, show your support for your colleagues who are on strike by visiting and supporting them, but you may not join the picket line. The ASTI would welcome the support of retired members during the strike.

STRIKE BREAKING

Breaking a strike is the most serious offence for a member of the union. It will result in disciplinary charges against the member. Picketing members are obliged to report any member passing a picket or going into the work place. Failure to do so is itself a serious offence and is also liable to disciplinary charges. Union rules provide for a member found guilty of conduct injurious to the union to be reprimanded, fined, suspended or expelled from the union.

Reports of strike breaking should be notified to the ASTI General Secretary Linda Kelly via email at gensec@asti.ie

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