ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

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- Largest ever public service strike
- Education at a Glance
- Meet the new ASTI General Secretary

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Unity was the message

Firstly, I want to thank each and every one of you for your show of strength on October 14 – the largest strike day by public service workers in Irish history.

The significance of that day went well beyond the fact that more than 20,000 ASTI members, and more than 300,000 public service workers overall, took strike action over pay. Visiting picket lines throughout the day, and watching the news and social media, the sense of solidarity and collective purpose was undeniable. Right across the country, unity was the message.

A major objective was achieved on October 14: the Government conceded to talks about pay first and foremost. Its previous tactic of looking for productivity before pay negotiations was abandoned.

As this *ASTIR* goes to print, talks on pay are ongoing and there is uncertainty about how things may unfold. Your elected representatives will assess developments as quickly as possible and keep you informed about the next steps. Whatever the outcome, we must continue to stand together and ensure that the voice of teachers is heard.

A word about productivity

Throughout this campaign for better public service pay, I have been conscious of a narrative that productivity is somehow only ever extracted from the teaching profession when formal pay negotiations take place.

This is simply not true.

As teachers, we know that every significant social, technological, economic and cultural change – whether positive or negative – finds its way into our schools. Teachers' roles have evolved continuously to respond to, adapt to, counteract, stabilise and integrate much of this change, while continuing to deliver core education services to students. The pace of change is accelerating significantly.

Exacerbating this reality is the initiative overload in second-level education, whereby schools are obliged to implement new Department/Government policies, circulars and arrangements, one after another, many of which seem to be more about being seen to have done something, rather than actually empowering teachers and schools to meet all students' needs.

The recently published OECD report *Education at a Glance 2026* found that Government expenditure per second-level student in Ireland in 2023 was below the average spend of the 38 OECD countries featured in the report, as well as the 25 EU countries featured. Too-large classes, understaffed schools, inadequate buildings and equipment, and high burnout among teachers are just some of the consequences.

The best initiative the Government could undertake is not another initiative for schools to implement. It is to significantly increase investment in our schools. This would make a real difference.



Richie Bell

ASTI President

Teachers need a pay rise

I don't think that's a radical statement. In fact, I think most of you who have picked up *ASTIR* in your staffroom will agree. But it seems that for a lot of people in the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, Government and the private sector, the idea of a pay increase for teachers is a step too far!

What has been seen as even more radical is that teachers would take industrial and strike action in pursuit of that goal. It's as if some quarters have forgotten the *raison d'être* of trade unions.

The recent industrial action and the strike action of October 14 will cast a long shadow. We cannot yet understand the long-term impact of the strike. But you could feel it on the day, at every picket line. This was different, significantly different.

The last time there was an Irish Congress of Trade Unions co-ordinated strike, it was a defensive action against austerity in 2009. This was a proactive strike day to send a clear message – Government has to do a better pay deal for public servants. It cannot continue to take public servants for granted and it cannot continue to drag blood from the so-called productivity stone. I heard it over and over again – there is nothing left to give.

What was also different about this strike was the level of public support. My ears hurt by the end of the day with all the cars, buses and trucks beeping! For a lot of ASTI members, the sheer level of support was a new experience. So often teachers have ploughed a lonely furrow while trying to protect Irish education standards. The solidarity across towns, across villages, across sectors showcased the best of the public service and made visible just how embedded the public service is in our communities. It highlighted the fallacy of so much commentary that tries to stir a 'them versus us' mentality. My hope is that the solidarity shown on the 14th fuels a new generation of trade union activism.

At the time of writing this editorial, the talks are ongoing. It remains to be seen whether a set of proposals will emerge from the talks for you and your colleagues to consider or if that consideration will revert to further strike action and an escalation of industrial action.

As General Secretary, you have my absolute commitment that I will never make apology for pursuing pay increases and improvements for teachers. I will always challenge the lazy narrative around teacher holidays as if that somehow negates the increased class sizes, initiative overload, and the decline in purchasing power of teacher pay. Finally, my North Star will be building a strong union that gives you the leverage to achieve your aims.



Linda Kelly

ASTI General Secretary

Local bargaining increase, sectoral bargaining arrears to be paid



An outstanding 1% local bargaining salary increase due to ASTI members will be implemented in November/December. The increase applies from September 1, 2025.

Department Circular 74/2026 (published on October 2), which authorises the increase, follows intensive engagement between the ASTI and Department representatives after the ASTI's acceptance of Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures and Addendum in June 2026.

Pay increases totalling 3% will be made to second-level teachers, in respect of implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme, under the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, as follows:

- 1% from September 2025, to be implemented in November/December 2026, and
- 2% to be implemented under the next public service pay agreement.

Pension parity applies to these increases.

Sectoral bargaining lump sum arrears

Separately, the ASTI has secured the implementation of a lump sum arrears payment due from a previous pay agreement – Building Momentum Public Service Agreement (2021-2023).

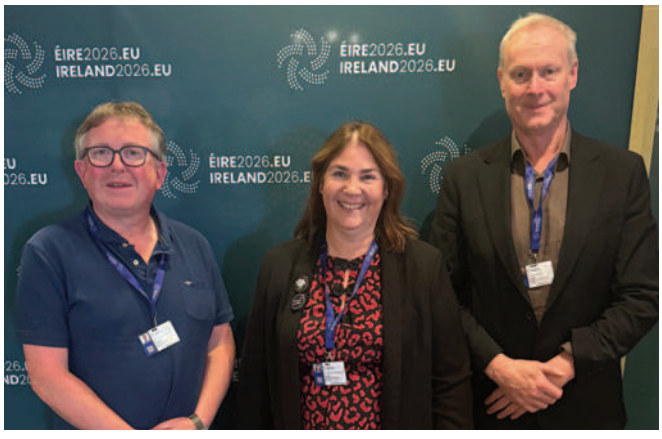
As part of Building Momentum sectoral bargaining negotiations, the ASTI chose to forgo a 1% pay increase to all members, in order that post-2011 entrants to teaching could receive a salary increase equivalent in value to the PME Allowance (this qualification allowance was abolished for new entrants from February 2012). Following the payment of this increase to post-2011 entrants to teaching, one-third (0.35%) of the 1% sectoral bargaining fund remained to be implemented as a general pay increase. While this was paid to second-level teachers from August 2025, an arrears payment for the period February 1, 2022, to July 31, 2025, was outstanding. Following extensive negotiations by the ASTI with the Department, this lump sum arrears payment will now be implemented in November/December. Serving teachers will receive a pre-tax figure of €571.65. Pension parity has been secured for this arrears payment, and retired teachers will receive €285.83.

ASTI school steward training



ASTI school steward duo Aoiffe and Greg O'Reilly from Ardgillan Community College and Swords Community College are pictured at the school steward training held in the Maldron Hotel Dublin Airport in October. The training was delivered by Desmond O'Toole, ASTI Executive Officer: Development and Organisation (left), and was also attended by ASTI President Richie Bell (right).

Education in the Age of AI



ASTI members and representatives on the Department of Education and Youth's AI Taskforce Working Groups 1 and 2 (Teaching and Learning) Patrick Hickey and Natalie Doyle Bradley attended the Education in the Age of AI: Building Europe's Future conference in Galway at the end of October, alongside ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research, John Conneely (right).

Teaching Council update

Droichead applications 2026/2027

Droichead is the induction process for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) or teachers who have not previously completed the required period of professional practice after they qualified as a teacher.

Applications to register to commence Droichead in the 2026/2027 school year are currently open and will close in early March 2027.

All NQTs are now required to attend two cluster meetings, which include one in-person meeting at an education centre and one online meeting. The meetings are categorised as 'General' and 'Focused'.

Attendance at the introductory webinar is mandatory before attending your first cluster meeting.

For more information on Droichead, please see: www.teachingcouncil.ie/i-am-a-registered-teacher/registration-with-conditions/

Expiring conditions on Teaching Council registration

Teachers whose Teaching Council registration conditions are expiring must submit official evidence that they have met their condition(s). Teachers who have not been in a position to meet their condition(s) before the deadline must apply for an extension. Teachers can apply for an extension by logging onto the 'My Registration' portal and selecting 'My Conditions'. Teachers can submit their extension request along with all supporting documentation. **Teachers who do not engage or fulfill their condition(s) will put their registration at risk, impacting their eligibility for State-funded salaries.**

To log in to the 'My Registration' portal, please see: https://my-tc.teachingcouncil.ie/Site-Login?returnurl=%2f

For more information on the Teaching Council, please see: https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/

Digital education and equity to be explored at ASTI education conference in November



The ASTI will host an education conference in November titled 'Digital Education and Equity: Ensuring Fair Access in a Changing Senior Cycle', which will examine the implications of increasing digitalisation in post-primary education, with a particular focus on equality of access, and the challenges facing students and schools.

The conference will explore the opportunities and challenges created by the growing use of digital devices in Irish post-primary education, including costs to families, access to digital infrastructure, and the increasing emphasis on digital access in project work associated with Additional Assessment Components (AACs) under Senior Cycle Redevelopment.

The conference will be chaired by **Ingrid Miley**, barrister and former Industry and Employment Correspondent for RTÉ News. Guest speakers will include **Prof. Selina McCoy** (pictured, right) from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), who will present on the hidden costs of digital education, and the role and impact of digital devices under Senior Cycle Redevelopment. **Prof. Anne Mangen** from the University of Stavanger will discuss the Stavanger Declaration on the Future of Reading and its research on how the medium of reading, digital or paper, can affect learning and comprehension. **Dr Ryan Gallagher** from the School of Education at University College Cork will present on the role of digital devices in carrying out the AAC research investigation at Leaving Certificate level. **Robin Smith**, first vice president of the Swedish Teachers' Union, will speak on Swedish teachers' experiences of the introduction and use of digital technologies in schools.

A Q&A session with the speakers and an ASTI teacher on digital devices in schools, educational equity, affordability, access to resources, and the implications for teaching, learning and assessment will give attendees the opportunity to ask questions and share their views.

The conference will take place on **Saturday, November 28**, in Hotel Riu Plaza The Gresham Dublin, and will run from 10.30am-2.00pm. Teachers interested in attending the conference should email eileen@asti.ie

Climate change, human security and global solidarity

Prof. John Morrissey, University of Galway, recently gave a superb presentation on 'Climate Change, Human Security and Global Solidarity' to the ASTI Global Solidarity Committee. His passion, depth of knowledge and engaging delivery made it a fantastic and thought-provoking presentation.



Pictured are (from left): John Conneely (ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research), Conall Ó Dufaigh (Global Solidarity Committee Chairperson), Prof. John Morrissey (University of Galway), Noelle Moran (ASTI Honorary Treasurer), and Adrieanne Healy (ASTI Vice President).



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YOUR ACTION MADE A DIFFERENCE

20,000-plus ASTI members took to picket lines along with 300,000 public servants. Following this, the Taoiseach intervened. At the time of going to print, talks continue. Your action made a difference.



Teachers from Patrician Secondary School in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, took to the picket line during the recent strike action.



Teachers from Trinity Comprehensive School in Ballymun, Dublin 9, were joined on the picket line by a four-legged supporter.



ASTI members in Rice College, Ennis, in Co. Clare, are pictured on the picket line on October 14.



Staff at St Michael's College in Listowel, Co. Kerry, took to the picket line as part of the public service-wide strike on October 14.



ASTI members were joined by their Fórsa colleagues and a four-legged supporter at Eureka Secondary School in Kells, Co. Meath.



Teachers from St Louis Secondary School in Co. Monaghan took to the picket line during the recent strike action.



Members of ASTI, TUI and Fórsa in St Clare's Comprehensive School in Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim, are pictured on the picket line on October 14.



Teachers from St Brendan's Community School in Birr, Co. Offaly, took to the picket line during the recent public service-wide strike.



ASTI President Richie Bell and ASTI General Secretary Linda Kelly were joined on the picket line outside Hartstown Community School in Dublin by INTO President Brendan Horan, TUI General Secretary Michael Gillespie, and TUI Vice President Laura Conheady. Photo: Tommy Clancy.



ASTI Immediate Past President Padraig Curley and colleagues at Loreto Community School in Milford, Co. Donegal, receive a show of support from a passing motorist as they take to the picket line during the strike action. Photo: Clive Wasson.



Striking teachers are pictured outside their school, Ardgillan College in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, during the recent strike action.



Teachers from Mohill Community College in Co. Leitrim took to the picket line during the recent public service-wide strike.



Members of the ASTI and Fórsa are pictured picketing their school, CBS Roscommon.



Picketing teachers are pictured outside their school, St Vincent's Secondary School in Cork.



Picketing teachers are pictured outside their school, Mary Immaculate Secondary School in Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare.



Teachers from Coláiste Chiaráin in Summerhill, Co. Roscommon, are pictured outside their school during the recent strike action.



ASTI members and ASTI Standing Committee Representative Region 5 Siobhán O'Donovan are pictured picketing their school, Patrician Academy, in Mallow, Co. Cork. Photo: Clare Keogh.



ASTI members and ASTI Standing Committee Representative Region 7 Margo McGann are pictured picketing their school, St Augustine's College in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. Photo: John Power.



ASTI members and ASTI Standing Committee Representative Region 12 Louis Callaghan are pictured picketing their school, Ardee Community School in Co. Louth. Photo: Ken Finegan.



Teachers from Coláiste Muire Máthair in Co. Galway are pictured outside during the recent strike action. Photo: Melissa Mannion.



Teachers from St Mary's Secondary School in Newport, Co. Tipperary, took to the picket line during the recent strike action.



Members of the ASTI and INTO are pictured picketing St Joseph's Secondary School, Stanhope Street, Dublin 7.



Picketing teachers are pictured outside their school, Coláiste Íosagáin in Portarlington, Co. Laois.



ASTI members in Meán Scoil Mhuire, Co. Longford, are pictured on the picket line on October 14.

The ASTI Achievement Awards

recognise the outstanding contribution teachers make to schools, students and society.

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

The ASTI Achievement Awards recognise teachers in three categories:

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

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

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

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

The closing date for applications is
Friday, February 5th, 2027

Take a bow





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ASTI
A century of service

VALUING TEACHERS = VALUING EDUCATION

ASTI members and representatives shared their views on the cost of living crisis, and why industrial action on October 14 was necessary.



Linda Kelly, ASTI General Secretary, being interviewed outside Hartstown Community School.



Richie Bell, ASTI President, being interviewed by Mairéad Cleary from Virgin Media News.

"There needs to be a move away from the austerity mindset. That is very much there within the Department of Public Expenditure, and in the very short term, there needs to be a reckoning from Government that public service pay this year alone is behind inflation, and any deal has to be predicated on that issue being addressed. Part of the reason that we are not in talks is that the Government refused to give a commitment that would be addressed."

Linda Kelly, ASTI General Secretary
***Irish Examiner*, October 5, 2026**

"Let's be realistic here. Things are rising well above 3.5% in all facets of life. Shopping is growing significantly, grocery shopping in particular. Going into the shop, and it's €7 for the Tesco value mince. It's not a steak. I felt like I had more money when I started teaching than I do now in 2026."

Dylan Cleary, ASTI member
***Irish Independent*, October 5, 2026**

"Teachers are talking to me about the very real struggles they're having because of the increase in inflation, because of how much everything is going up and their pay is falling behind that this year, and they feel that in effect they've had a pay cut. I don't think that Jack Chambers has really thought through the depth of feeling that is there among union members in relation to pay. The union is not looking for preconditions on talks – it is looking for a meaningful discussion around pay. And if the Government can't give that commitment, I think it just shows we're on different pages altogether at this juncture."

Linda Kelly, ASTI General Secretary
***The Claire Byrne Show*, Newstalk, October 5, 2026**

The union is not looking for preconditions on talks – it is looking for a meaningful discussion around pay.

"Let's be clear: we all knew that the previous pay agreement ended on June 30, so where was the olive branch in December, January or February? Where was the goodwill then? Something could have been done. Industrial action is not something we jump to. We've pulled on the green jersey over the years and sat down around the table but that effort really had to be made prior to June and it really wasn't. We're now here the day before the strike and I'm looking at the Minister's press release and it's very late in the day at this point and nothing has really changed."

Richie Bell, ASTI President
***Drivetime*, RTÉ Radio 1, October 13, 2026**

"I think there's a lack of trust from members on the ground about the Government's bona fides and they're going to have to show that they mean action because actions speak louder than words. I think members really want a clear commitment on their pay for 2026. Their pay has fallen behind inflation at a rate of 2.6% and I think people want a clear message from Government that that is going to be addressed. That was what officials in June failed to give a commitment to. That's why we have this impasse and I think the Government really needs to reflect on that and give some certainty to our members."

Linda Kelly, ASTI General Secretary
***Morning Ireland*, RTÉ Radio 1, October 14, 2026**



Adrieanne Healy, ASTI Vice President, being interviewed by Mairéad Cleary from Virgin Media News outside Hartstown Community School.



Linda Kelly, ASTI General Secretary, being interviewed by Emma O'Kelly from RTÉ.

"My partner had a baby recently so it's hit us financially. Teachers want to be back in the classroom. They don't want to be out picketing today but we want the Government to listen to us."

David Murphy, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 13

***Morning Ireland*, RTÉ Radio 1, October 14, 2026**

"Personally, I would much rather be in my classroom teaching and preparing my students for the Leaving Cert. With inflation and the cost of living I am really struggling. I am living and working in Dublin City centre and I am struggling financially at the moment."

Sinéad Corkery, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 18

***Morning Ireland*, RTÉ Radio 1, October 14, 2026**

"There's a lot of disappointment with the laissez-faire approach from Government over the last couple of months. There has been ample time to solve this issue but Government has sat on its hands."

Linda Kelly, ASTI General Secretary

***Six One News*, RTÉ, October 14, 2026**

Let's be clear: we all knew that the previous pay agreement ended on June 30, so where was the olive branch in December, January or February?

"It's incredible that the last public service agreement ended at the end of June and that there was no preparatory work done, as far as we know, by the Government to set up a new public service agreement. From our point of view this is long overdue already. And the fact that we are here four, five months later and heading into what will be a winter of discontent is incredible to us at this stage."

Adrieanne Healy, ASTI Vice President

***News*, Virgin Media, October 14, 2026**

"The atmosphere this morning is a mixture of pride but also frustration. We're very proud to stand in solidarity with over 300,000 public sector workers. What we're looking for is meaningful talks about pay, and pay must be front and centre to those talks. I hope that some middle ground can be found and that the talks can begin but I'm not so optimistic. I think the language coming from our political elite show that they are very disconnected from the ordinary worker on the ground who is really, really suffering."

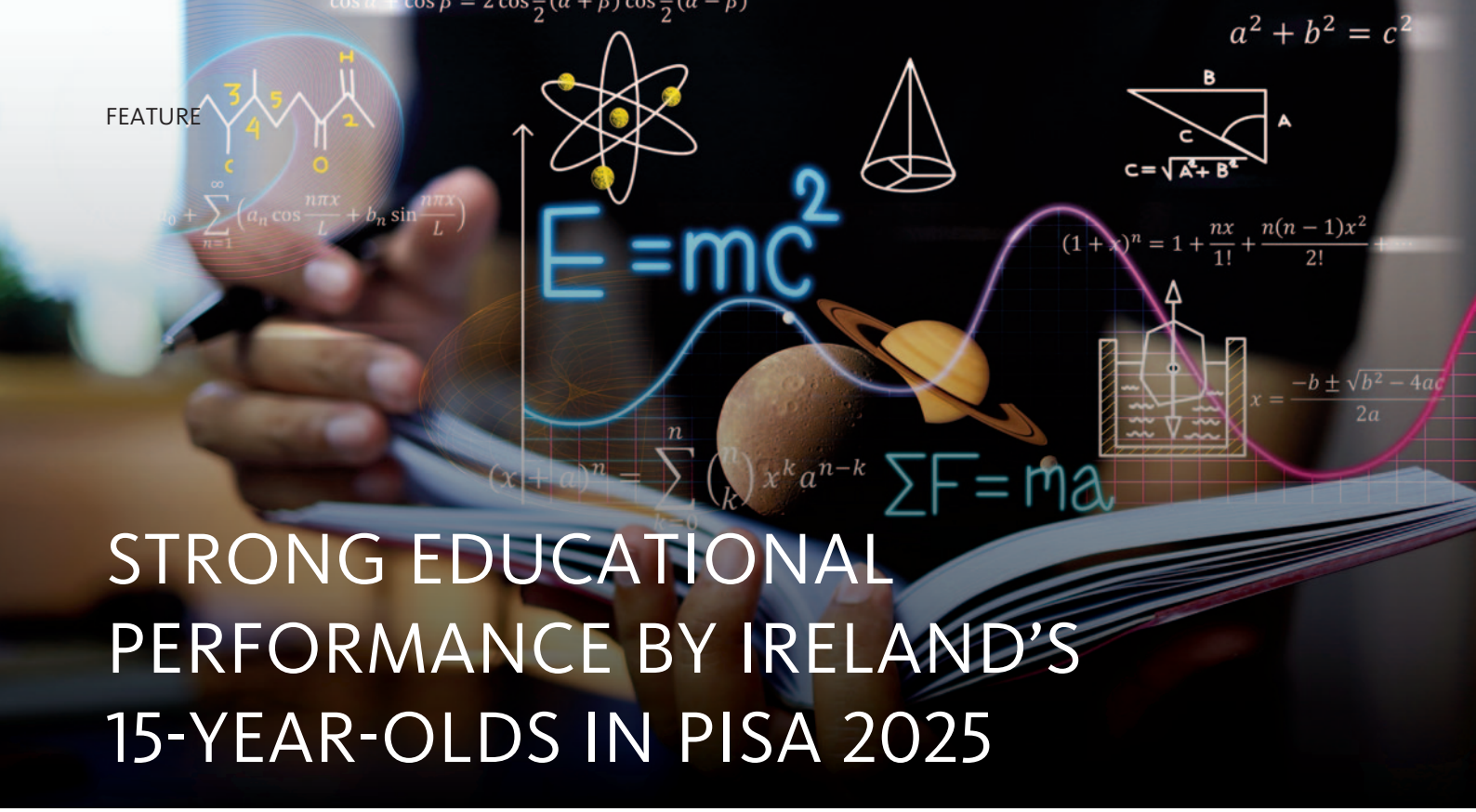
Siobhán O'Donovan, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 5

***Kerry Today*, Radio Kerry, October 14, 2026**

"Where was this when it was needed? Where was this when something could have been done about it? But instead, we find ourselves forced to go out on strike. But nobody was listening to us. And I would argue that nobody would be listening to us and no letter from the Minister would have come unless we were going out on strike this morning."

Richie Bell, ASTI President

***News at 5.30*, Virgin Media, October 14, 2026**



STRONG EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE BY IRELAND'S 15-YEAR-OLDS IN PISA 2025

The results of PISA 2025, published in September, demonstrate that Ireland's second-level students performed significantly above EU and OECD averages in science, maths and reading; however, the ASTI is concerned about declining scores across all three domains.

Irish performance remains strong

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses 15-year-olds across three competency areas: science, maths and reading. The 2025 study focused on science and found that Ireland is a strong performer, with students in Ireland performing well compared to students in most other participating countries.

As well as being one of the top performers in PISA 2025, Ireland is one of seven countries, and one of two European countries, highlighted in the report for successfully combining overall high academic performance with high socio-economic equity among students.

A strong and stable performance in science

PISA 2025 focused on science, with Irish students achieving a mean science score of 500 points, which is above both the OECD average of 482 points and the EU average of 476 points (**Table 1**). The report found that Ireland is a strong performer, ranking third out of the 27 EU states and 14th overall.

In Ireland, 82% of students attained Level 2 or higher in science, compared to the OECD average of 74%. At this level, students can recognise the correct explanation for familiar scientific phenomena and use such knowledge to identify, in simple cases, whether a conclusion on the data provided is valid. Furthermore, 7% of students in Ireland were top performers in science.

Compared to previous PISA cycles, Ireland's performance in science, as well as average science performances across OECD and EU countries, remained relatively stable. At EU level, a pattern of small declines was observed in science, where the average score in 2025 was lower than in 2015 and 2018.

Strong performance in reading and maths

Students in Ireland ranked first in terms of reading scores out of the 27 EU member states, and ranked seventh out of the 91 participating OECD countries. In reading, students in Ireland achieved a mean score of 500 points in PISA 2025, which is higher than both the OECD average of 461 points and the EU average of 451 points (**Table 2**).

In reading, 84% of students in Ireland attained Level 2 or higher, compared to the OECD average of 69%. At this level, students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit criteria, and reflect on the purpose and form of the text.

Some 8% of students scored at Level 5 or higher in reading, compared to the OECD average of 6%. At this level, students can comprehend lengthy texts, deal with concepts that are abstract or counterintuitive, and establish distinctions between fact and opinion.

Table 1: Mean performance in PISA 2025 by students in science (EU member states). Ireland ranks third out of 27 countries.

Rank	Country	Mean score
1	Estonia	527
2	Finland	504
3	Ireland	500
	OECD average	482
	EU average	476

Table 2: Mean performance in PISA 2025 by students in reading (EU member states). Ireland ranks first out of 27 countries.

Rank	Country	Mean score
1	Ireland	500
	OECD average	461
	EU average	451

As well as being one of the top performers in PISA 2025, Ireland is one of seven countries, and one of two European countries, highlighted in the report for successfully combining overall high academic performance with high socio-economic equity among students.

Irish students continued to perform strongly in maths in PISA 2025. Irish students achieved a mean maths score of 480 points, compared to the EU average of 460 points and the OECD average of 463 points (**Table 3**). Ireland ranked fourth in the EU and 14th out of the 91 participating states, placing Irish students firmly among the strong performers in maths.

In Ireland, 76% of students attained Level 2 or higher in Maths, compared to the OECD average of 65%. At this level, students can recognise and interpret, without direct instructions, how a simple situation can be represented mathematically. Some 6% of students in Ireland were top performers in maths, attaining Level 5 or 6 in the test. Students achieving this level have the ability to model complex situations mathematically, and select, compare, and evaluate appropriate problem-solving strategies for dealing with them.

Table 3: Mean performance in PISA 2025 by students in maths (EU member states). Ireland ranks fourth out of 27 countries.

Rank	Country	Mean score
1	Estonia	508
2	Poland	484
3	Netherlands	483
4	Ireland	480
	OECD average	463
	EU average	460

Cause for concern

Despite Ireland's strong performance in PISA 2025, there is still cause for concern. The report sounds an alarm for many OECD countries that have seen student scores decline across science, maths and reading over the past number of years.

PISA 2025 reports the lowest OECD-average performance ever by students across science, maths and reading. Despite a strong performance in PISA 2025, Ireland has also experienced declining mean scores across the three domains examined. At EU level, a pattern of small declines was observed in science, where the average score in 2025 was lower than in 2015 and 2018.

Teacher and resource shortages

PISA 2025 found that 62% of students in Ireland were in schools whose principals reported that instruction was hindered, at least to some extent, by a perceived lack of teaching staff. This was well above the OECD average of 39%.

In addition to teacher shortages, the report highlighted a shortage of resources across countries and economies. In Ireland, 22% of students attended schools whose principals reported a lack of educational material, including textbooks, IT equipment, and library or lab materials, which hindered instruction to some extent. Some 46% of students were reported to be in schools where a lack of physical infrastructure, such as buildings, grounds, heating/cooling systems, lighting, and acoustic systems, was perceived to hinder instruction. In 2022, the shares of students attending these schools were 8% and 26%, respectively.

The findings provide further evidence of the impact of teacher shortages on the education system, and echo concerns already raised by the ASTI surrounding the recruitment and retention of teachers.

Investment in education is key to quality education

The PISA 2025 results provide considerable cause for recognition, as Ireland's performance in this cycle remains strong by international standards, with students in Ireland ranking among the top-performing countries in science, reading and maths, and achieving scores above both EU and OECD averages. The results demonstrate the strength of the Irish education system, but also a need for sustained investment in education if that performance is to be maintained.

Strong performance should not be mistaken for a reason to stop investing in education. The declines in reading and maths, combined with the pressures identified around teacher shortages, educational materials, and school infrastructure demonstrate a need for sustained investment in education. Ireland must ensure that schools have the necessary resources in order to maintain its position as a high-performing education system.

What is PISA?

The Programme for International Student Assessment is an international study conducted by the OECD. It assesses 15-year-olds across the world in science, reading, maths and an innovative domain that changes with each cycle. The OECD's PISA study is carried out every three years, with a particular emphasis on one domain in each cycle. In Ireland, a representative sample of 6,356 15-year-olds from 172 schools took part between March and April 2025.

To download the PISA 2025 results, please scan the QR code.

PISA 2025

To download the PISA 2025 Ireland report, please scan the QR code.

PISA Ireland report



IRELAND'S SPEND PER SECOND-LEVEL STUDENT DECLINES

Education at a Glance 2026 reveals how severely out of step Ireland is when it comes to investment in education and teacher salaries.

Ireland is investing significantly less in second-level students' education than countries with comparable economies, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report *Education at a Glance 2026*, which was published in September.

Expenditure on education

According to the study, Ireland sits in last place out of the 38 OECD countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). In 2023, Ireland's Government invested 0.9% of GDP in second-level education, below both the OECD and EU averages (1.7%). When OECD partner and accession countries are included, only Croatia sits lower than Ireland. Government expenditure on education as a share of GDP shows how much of a country's overall economic resources are allocated to education.

Education at a Glance also analyses Government expenditure per student (in US dollars) in educational institutions. On average, governments in OECD countries spent $13,555 per full-time equivalent student on second-level institutions in 2023. The Irish Government's spend per second-level student was less than this, at just $12,731. This also falls short of the $13,331 spent on average in the 25 EU countries featured, and represents a drop from the $13,013 spent per Irish student in 2022 (as reported in *Education at a Glance 2025*).

Stark differences become apparent when Irish expenditure is studied alongside that of countries with comparable economies. Austria, Belgium, Iceland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Portugal all invest significantly more per second-level student than Ireland, with Austria's spend amounting to $19,935. The average expenditure of these eight comparable economies is $16,802 – surpassing the sum spent here by 32%. Government investment in education serves to advance broad economic and social objectives, such as promoting equal opportunities and strengthening skills, productivity and social cohesion.

Working lives of teachers

The report acknowledges that pay and working conditions are important for attracting, developing and retaining skilled teachers. To understand how teacher compensation compares across the OECD, the researchers examined trends in statutory salaries between 2015 and 2025. While some countries saw large increases (e.g., salaries grew by over 30% in Lithuania and Poland), others reported declines since 2015. The largest decrease observed in the OECD was in Ireland, where salaries of lower secondary teachers fell by almost 13% in real terms. Teachers' salaries relative to other occupations with similar education requirements may influence individuals considering teaching as a career. Therefore, the study compared teachers' actual salaries with the average earnings of other tertiary-educated professionals. The starting salary for second-level teachers in Ireland is €47,886. This is lower than both the OECD and the EU average starting salary for teachers. If average teachers' pay is compared to the average pay of those with a third-level qualification, teachers earn 91% of average workers' pay. The length of the teachers' salary scale means it takes two and a half decades to reach the top of the scale. This 25-year-long scale suppresses teachers' career-long earnings in comparison with other comparable professions. When starting out, second-level teachers in the Irish system earn less than the OECD averages of $49,712 and $51,155 for lower and upper secondary teachers, respectively. (The OECD distinguishes between upper and lower levels of secondary education, which correspond to the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle

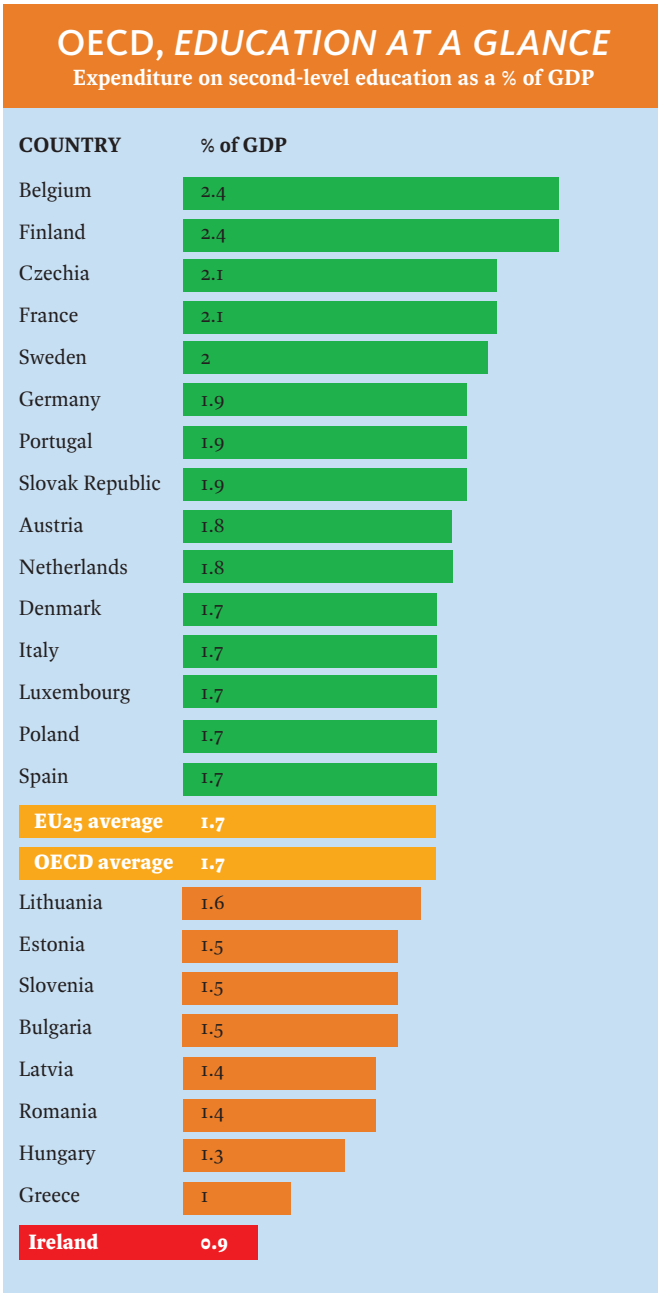
Ireland sits in last place out of the 38 countries in the OECD for investment in second-level education as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Table 1: Government expenditure on second-level educational institutions per full-time student (Ireland and comparable countries).

Rank	Country	Expenditure per student in USD
1	Austria	19,935
2	Belgium	19,665
3	Iceland	17,720
4	Netherlands	16,657
5	Sweden	16,201
6	Denmark	15,496
7	Finland	15,229
	OECD average	**13,555**
8	Portugal	13,519
9	**Ireland**	**12,731**

Education at a Glance 2026 reports that educational attainment across the OECD was at a record high in 2025. Ireland is among the countries with the highest rates of timely upper secondary completion.

Table 2: Government expenditure on second-level educational institutions as a % of GDP (EU25 countries only).



in Ireland; because all second-level teachers in Ireland are qualified to teach lower and upper secondary, there is only one pay scale here.)

The OECD notes that Irish salary scales for full-time teachers implicitly require them to prepare lessons, assess and correct students' work, communicate with parents, attend staff meetings, etc. These duties should be taken into account when considering the demands placed on teachers, and while no data on teaching hours is included for Ireland, it is reported that teachers spend most of their working time on non-teaching activities in many countries. In the 27 countries with data available, 42% of teachers' working time is spent teaching on average. This finding provides insight into the extent and complexity of teachers' roles, and the distinction between class contact time and total workload is important in the Irish context, as we grapple with teacher shortages.

Table 3: Starting salary for teachers in upper secondary education in USD.

Ireland average	48,589
OECD average	51,155
EU25 average	50,091

Senior Cycle: impact of learning

Education at a Glance 2026 reports that educational attainment across the OECD was at a record high in 2025. Ireland is among the countries with the highest rates of timely upper secondary completion. Ireland also bucks the trend that is widespread across participating countries, whereby women are more likely than men to complete upper secondary education on time. In Ireland, completion rates are identical for both genders (93%) and are extremely high compared to the OECD averages of 78% and 72% for female and male, respectively. In Ireland there is virtually no increase in completion between the expected end of the programme and one year later. The OECD links this to relatively linear educational pathways, where outcomes change little after the expected graduation date. Ireland's strong record in this measure is significant because leaving school without an upper secondary qualification is associated with poorer labour market outcomes. Across OECD countries, the employment rate among 25-34 year-olds is 59% for those without upper secondary attainment, compared to 79% for those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. Workers aged 25-64 who haven't completed upper secondary education earn, on average, 17% less than those who have. The authors underline that ensuring equitable access to upper secondary education is essential for supporting student well-being, educational outcomes, and successful labour-market integration.

To download the EDAG 2026 report please scan the QR code.

EDAG 2026

To download the EDAG 2026 Ireland report please scan the QR code.

EDAG Ireland report

What is Education at a Glance?

***Education at a Glance* is an annual report published by the OECD. It provides internationally comparable data on education systems across the world, covering attainment, enrolment, finance, and the organisation of education systems.**



MEET THE NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

ASTIR caught up with new ASTI General Secretary Linda Kelly to find out what brought her to the role, and her view on the future of the ASTI and the trade union movement.

Linda Kelly took up the position of ASTI General Secretary in September 2026. An experienced senior trade union official, Linda joined the ASTI from Fórsa, Ireland's largest public sector trade union, which represents workers across the civil and public service. Linda co-led Fórsa's health and welfare division of 34,000 members and a 36-staff team. In her role as National Secretary with Fórsa, Linda led major national negotiations and disputes, including the HSE Pay and Numbers Strategy dispute. She also oversaw professional and regulatory affairs for Fórsa members employed as health and social care professionals, working closely with the registration and regulatory body CORU. Linda began her role with Fórsa 14 years ago, when she started as a union organiser. She worked her way up through the organisation, and also experienced the merger of the Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT), Public Service Executive Union (PSEU) and Civil, Public and Services Union (CPSU) that formed Fórsa in that time.

Having attended St. Aloysius' College in Carrigtwohill, Cork, Linda's early introduction to trade unionism came as a student's union activist at University College Cork (UCC). Linda graduated with a BSc in Speech and Language Therapy from UCC, and later went on to complete a Master's in Leadership and Strategy at the Institute of Public Administration. In 2022, the *Irish Examiner* named her as one of its '100 Women Changing Ireland' for her contribution as a women's health campaigner.

Reflecting on taking up the role of ASTI General Secretary in the middle of an industrial relations dispute over pay, Linda says: "I have been really impressed by the team in Head Office and all the work they did ahead of, and during, the industrial and strike action. There was a huge team effort from everyone to ensure that members and school stewards were supported throughout. I've also been blown away by the democratic organising culture within the ASTI, and how members came together and did their part in ensuring the strike day and pickets were an enormous success. I hope everyone who stood on the picket line has a sense of pride for what was achieved that day".

Setting out her objectives as General Secretary, she says: "The priority right now has to be securing a pay deal for teachers that addresses the gap between inflation and pay. The ASTI does that through its membership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Public Services Committee – alongside 17 other unions. We're a very strong voice on that committee".

Teacher voice

As well as improvements in pay and pensions, the teachers' voice is central to Linda's overall vision for the ASTI: "In the medium term my goals are to build the strongest and most influential union possible by increasing recruitment, building alliances with those who share our goals, and amplifying the voice of teachers and their lived experiences in every space and every sphere. Related to this are a number of key objectives. As Ireland moves beyond its peak years of second-level enrolment, we must ensure that our teacher workforce is reinvested in the education system. Reducing class sizes and opening up opportunities for teachers in their roles are some of the steps needed to sustain and strengthen our education system and the teaching profession".



ASTI General Secretary Linda Kelly speaking with teachers Eimear O'Connor, Deirdre O'Leary and Stephen Ruddy at her former school, St Aloysius' College, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork.



On World Teachers' Day, ASTI General Secretary Linda Kelly returned to her former secondary school, St Aloysius' College, to celebrate teachers and the vital work they do. Photos: Clare Keogh.

Given her background in working across the health and education sectors, Linda is passionate about the centrality of teacher voice in the delivery of a truly inclusive education system: "A significant focus for me this year is ensuring that any proposed changes around inclusive education begin with genuine consultation with teachers and a recognition of the need to properly fund, resource and staff schools. Real inclusion requires much more than another tokenistic policy announcement by Government".

Teaching: vital for democracy

Linda also plans to focus on teaching as a vital public service, and creating greater awareness of the essential role that teachers play in society: "I do think there is work to do in highlighting that teaching is a foundational public service of the State and society; it is essential for a functioning democracy and society. There is a lot of complacency about the excellent outcomes of Irish schools in international studies and at the same time there's an increased focus on accountability metrics, which are of little relevance to teaching and human development".

She adds that: "Protecting education and educational standards in the current political climate is crucial. A key part of that is ensuring that teachers are central to decisions about education practice and policy". In challenging decades of underinvestment in education, Linda says that the ASTI will "hold Government to account for investment decisions and the consequences of these decisions".

Teaching is a foundational public service; it is essential for a functioning democracy and society.

A bright future for ASTI

Linda has a real sense of confidence for the future of the ASTI and the trade union movement: "The ASTI is in a strong position in the trade union movement in Ireland. Teachers have always been leaders in the Irish trade union movement, and I intend to carry that on. Overall, I think the October 14 strike demonstrated the breadth of public servants and the extent of the work that they do. If the public response is anything to go by, then the future is bright for the trade union movement".

When asked if younger workers perceive unions as less relevant, Linda responded: "The research from Professor John Geary and the UCD Working in Ireland Survey shows that young people in Ireland have a really strong predisposition towards joining unions. I think it's important for everyone within the ASTI leadership and across the union to ensure that we remain relevant to young teachers in the work that we do and the issues we pursue through our campaigns. I also think it's important to emphasise that the higher the membership of second-level teachers in the ASTI, the greater the mandate we have to pursue improvements for the teaching profession, whether that's better pay, better terms and conditions, or better involvement in policy decisions. The recent strike saw a huge growth in our membership and I think many young members experienced what it means to come together within their union and fight for something which really matters to them. Let's keep that going now to push on for even more improvements".

Education: transformative experience

And finally, we asked Linda what life experiences led her to the role of ASTI General Secretary: "My areas of interest have always been health and education, and I am really excited to be back in the education space. On a personal level, I found my own second-level education to be very transformative. It opened doors for me I never imagined I would be able to walk through, including this job. Not only am I hugely honoured to be appointed to the role, but I also feel a huge responsibility in this role to ensure that the transformative experience of second-level education is recognised for what it is, and that people understand it is only possible because of the teachers who make it so".

On a personal level, I found my own second-level education to be very transformative. It opened doors for me I never imagined I would be able to walk through, including this job.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

The ASTI industrial relations team is here to help all members seeking advice, information, guidance, or support on employment issues. Article written by BREEDA SLEVIN.



The ASTI Industrial Relations team. Back row (from left): Emer Hynes, Conor McDonald, Antoinette Cunningham, Caroline Mohan, Eileen O'Rourke, Geraldine Smith, and Danielle Gillard. Front row (from left): Bernard Moynihan, Liz Martin, Eoghan Ryan, and Sarah Cullington. Inset (left): Breda Lynch, Deputy General Secretary. Inset (right): Desmond O'Toole, Executive Officer: Development and Organisation.

ASTI members can draw on the ASTI industrial relations (IR) team's extensive professional experience and expert knowledge of the education sector for advice, and to receive support and representation in workplace matters.

Meet the Industrial Relations (IR) team

Deputy General Secretary Breda Lynch provides assistance to principals and deputy principals regarding IR issues.

Executive Officers: IR Bernard Moynihan, Conor McDonald, Eoghan Ryan, Liz Martin and Antoinette Cunningham assist and represent ASTI members on IR matters, and promote the welfare of members on both an individual and school-wide basis. Each Executive Officer: IR has a specific area of expertise and each is also involved in training ASTI representatives such as school stewards.

Executive Officer: Development and Organisation Desmond O'Toole assists members on IR matters and has other specific duties in relation to union organising, recruitment, student teachers, retirement and pensions, and union elections. He also assists members in relation to fitness to practise complaints.

Staff Officers: IR Emer Hynes and Caroline Mohan deal with leave-related queries, such as sick leave and maternity leave, as well as queries relating to salary, incremental credit, allowances, job sharing, and career breaks.

Administrative Officers: IR Eileen O'Rourke, Geraldine Smith, Sarah Cullington and Danielle Gillard are often the first point of contact for members and provide support to the Executive Officers: IR.

If you have a question about your employment rights or need advice about your job, you can contact ASTI Head Office for assistance. Your call or email will be put through to the Administrative Officer (IR) or Executive Officer (IR) responsible for your school. Many day-to-day issues arising for members in schools are resolved by the IR team through advice and guidance, help with the interpretation of circulars, or improving communication channels between teachers and management.

Of course, some employment issues need to be pursued further, for example where rights have been infringed or an issue is pursued under employment or equality legislation. An ASTI Executive Officer (IR) can represent members in meetings with school management, the Department of Education and Youth, or the Teaching Council. An Executive Officer: IR will provide advice and ongoing support if further steps are required. Where necessary, the Executive Officer (IR) will help to prepare cases and provide representation for members in cases taken under employment or equality legislation.

The IR team works closely with teachers throughout their careers, advising them on contracts and ensuring that they receive the Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CIDs) to which they are entitled. Significant time is also dedicated to the resolution of workplace conflicts that arise between members and management. These can be on a variety of issues, and are often related to interpretation of circulars on matters such as the Croke Park Hours, supervision and substitution, school policies on discipline, and many other matters.

What should you do if you need advice?

Contact ASTI Head Office if you have a question or concern about your employment rights. Your call or email will be directed to a member of the IR team with specialist knowledge in the area of your enquiry. In most cases, you will receive direct advice, and an indication of any next steps. Some queries will require further investigation, specialist expertise or representation, in which case you can arrange a meeting with your Executive Officer (IR) representative to discuss the matter further.

Scan the QR code for ASTI Head Office officials and support staff contact information.

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A COMMITTED ADVOCATE FOR TEACHERS

ASTIR pays tribute to Kieran Christie, who resigned as ASTI General Secretary at the end of September.





Kieran leading the joint ASTI–TUI Senior Cycle lunchtime protest outside Coolmine Community School in November 2024.



Kieran pictured with the Minister for Education and Youth, Hildegarde Naughton TD, at Annual Convention in April 2026.

Kieran Christie was appointed General Secretary of the ASTI at the beginning of 2016, following a 28-year teaching career in Co. Sligo. He taught Design and Communication Graphics, Materials Technology (Wood) and Construction Studies at St Attracta's Community School in Tubercurry, Co. Sligo, from 2002 to 2015, having previously taught at Banada Abbey Secondary School.

Before his appointment as General Secretary, Kieran, a well-known ASTI activist, previously served as a Standing Committee Representative, as Honorary National Organiser for five years from 2010 until 2015, and as Sligo Branch Chairperson. Kieran was also an elected member of the Teaching Council of Ireland.

A committed activist

In 2016 when Kieran took over as General Secretary, the union was involved in a dispute with the now Department of Education and Youth over the Lansdowne Road Agreement, which the ASTI had voted to reject as it failed to deliver pay equality for newly-qualified teachers (NQTs) who began teaching after 2010. Subsequently, the Government used Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation to freeze ASTI members' salary increments, stopped payments for supervision and substitution, and restricted members' access to permanent contracts. Kieran led the union in talks with the Department, which led the Government to reverse its decision and agree that ASTI members would receive equal treatment regarding pay increments. During this time, Kieran led the joint 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' campaign with the INTO and TUI, including protesting outside Dáil Éireann, to highlight the need for pay equality among teachers.

Kieran led the union in talks with the Department, which resulted in the Government reversing its decision and agreeing that ASTI members would receive equal treatment regarding pay increments.

Meeting challenges

During his tenure as General Secretary, Kieran guided the union through a period marked by significant challenges and disruptions, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and complex negotiations with the Department of Education and Youth around the redevelopment of the Senior Cycle.

In November 2024, Kieran led the ASTI during the joint ASTI–TUI Senior Cycle lunchtime protest. The protest saw 30,000 teachers – members of



Richie Bell (then ASTI Vice President) and Kieran Christie attending the caretakers' and secretaries' strike over pension parity in August 2025.



Kieran pictured with then ASTI President Deirdre Mac Donald at Annual Convention 2020, which was held remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Kieran pictured outside Leinster House with Head Office officials and ASTI members in July 2016 in protest over FEMPI measures and the Lansdowne Road Agreement.



Kieran pictured at an 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' protest with then ASTI Deputy General Secretary Diarmaid de Paor.

both the ASTI and TUI – take part in a lunchtime protest over the Department of Education's decision to accelerate the redevelopment of the Senior Cycle. The campaign reflected the concerns of teachers about protecting the standards and quality of second-level education.

The ASTI had initially rejected the SCRISM document (Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures) in 2025. The union subsequently accepted improved proposals following commitments from the Department to provide additional supports for teachers. The negotiated supports include: additional financial support for schools, a pilot lab support assistant programme for schools for the first time, further targeted health and safety training for teachers, and a separate opportunity for teachers to provide feedback on training.

Deep concern for teachers

During his time as General Secretary of the union, Kieran consistently advocated for improvements to teachers' pay and working conditions, and for greater investment in education to ensure that teaching remained an attractive and sustainable career. As an activist and later as General Secretary, Kieran was deeply concerned about new teachers, particularly those affected by casualisation in the profession. His efforts on behalf of the ASTI played a key role in the achievement of CIDs for teachers after one year in the same school (compared to two years under legislation).

Kieran attended meetings of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Public Services Committee on behalf of the ASTI, as well as the ICTU Executive Committee. Most recently, Kieran represented the ASTI on the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and was elected Treasurer of the ETUCE Committee at the end of 2024. ETUCE represents over 11 million members across Europe.

We thank Kieran for his work and his dedication to the union over the years, and wish him well in his future endeavours.

As an activist and later as General Secretary, Kieran was deeply concerned about new teachers, particularly those affected by casualisation in the profession.



SCHOOL COMPLAINT HANDLING: KEEPING CHILDREN'S BEST INTERESTS AT THE CENTRE

Article written by NUALA WARD, Director of Investigations, Ombudsman for Children's Office.

Out of the nearly 2,000 complaints about children's public services we receive at the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) every year, education always tops the pile and accounts for around one-third of all complaints. This is no great surprise given that children spend most of their time at school. The complaints vary and can include a range of concerns such as bullying, a lack of special educational support and, indeed, how a school managed a complaint.

The OCO is designed to be a 'last resort', which means that we expect parents/guardians to first engage with the school and give them an opportunity to resolve an issue. From our work reviewing hundreds of complaints about children's experiences at school over the years, we know that most schools are actually doing this very well. Every day, thousands of conversations are taking place between teachers, school leaders, parents and children, and the vast majority of these experiences are positive. School leaders are building relationships, solving problems, and supporting children to flourish.

Occasionally, however, concerns can and do arise. Sometimes they are resolved with a quick chat at the school gate or a phone call home. Sometimes they develop into formal complaints. And while every complaint is different, one thing is clear: it is rarely the original issue that determines whether trust is maintained. It is how the issue is handled.

Realities of school life

Schools are busy, complex places. Their responsibilities extend far beyond teaching and learning. Every day they balance the needs of individual children with those of the entire school community, often making difficult decisions with limited resources and competing demands. Likewise, parents and guardians are usually raising concerns because they care deeply about their child's well-being and education. They may be anxious, frustrated or worried that their child has not been heard.

The OCO's role is independent. We seek to understand all sides of a complaint and, wherever possible, encourage concerns to be resolved at the earliest opportunity in the best interest of the child. From this experience, there are a number of characteristics that consistently stand out in schools that handle complaints well.

1. Good communication

Good complaint handling does not mean that every complaint is upheld or that every parent receives the outcome they had hoped for. Instead, it demonstrates that a school is willing to listen, explain its decisions, and engage respectfully around those concerns. Schools that communicate openly about how issues will be considered, what the process involves, and what parents can expect often prevent misunderstandings before they arise.

2. Solutions driven

At the OCO we regularly come across concerns about bullying. These are usually emotionally charged situations where parents want to know that their child feels safe. We see good examples of complaint handling where schools recognise that the parent is not looking to blame the teacher for the actions of other children. Schools that respond well explain the actions already taken, acknowledge the parent's concerns, recognise the complexity of children's relationships and, importantly, explain what further steps will be taken to support the child.

If the school's view on events differs from the parents', we see the benefit where schools explain their views but also their commitment to improving the child's experience of school, regardless of whether their policy determined the behaviour as bullying, or otherwise. The most effective responses always remain focused on improving the child's experience rather than simply defending previous decisions.

3. Transparency

Parents do not always know where a school's responsibilities begin and end. Some complaints involve matters that are outside a school's control or fall under the remit of another organisation. Good complaint handling explains these boundaries clearly and respectfully. As artificial intelligence (AI) makes it easier to produce lengthy and legally framed correspondence, the early clarification of issues may become even more important.

4. Accountability

Schools, like every organisation, will sometimes make mistakes or recognise that a decision has had unintended consequences. A timely acknowledgement, a sincere apology where appropriate, and a willingness to reflect can go a long way towards rebuilding trust and preventing concerns from escalating unnecessarily.

Many complaints also relate to areas that schools already review regularly, including anti-bullying policies, codes of behaviour, child safeguarding arrangements, and communication with families. Schools that confidently explain how a complaint has informed reflection or contributed to future improvements often provide reassurance that concerns have been listened to and valued.

5. Future planning

Some of the best complaint responses we see from schools are those that include a clear plan for the future. Even where a school concludes that it acted appropriately, it may still identify opportunities to improve communication, review procedures, or provide additional support to a child. Families value knowing that their experience is likely to lead to better outcomes for other children in the future.

At the heart of every complaint is a child, and while adults work through disagreements, children continue to attend school every day. They experience the atmosphere around them and are often affected by how adults communicate with one another. Effective complaint handling is not simply about following a procedure. It is about protecting relationships, maintaining trust, and ensuring that the child's well-being remains at the heart of every conversation.

Handled well, complaints don't have to damage relationships. They can, in fact, strengthen them. They provide opportunities to listen, to learn and, ultimately, to make school an even better place for every child.

For more information please see: https://www.oco.ie/

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ANNUAL CONVENTION 2027 – SAVE THE DATE

The ASTI will return to Wexford from March 30 to April 1, 2027, for Annual Convention 2027.



Every Easter, approximately 500 ASTI members attend Annual Convention to discuss and vote on the Association's policies for the year ahead. ASTI Annual Convention will take place in Whites Hotel, Co. Wexford, from March 30 to April 1, 2027.

Where can I get information about Convention?

The ASTI website – www.asti.ie – is where you will find all of the information you need about Convention 2027. Go to the 'Events' section of the website, where you will find the Convention 2027 page.

Attending Convention

Delegates to Convention are selected at branch meetings, usually in January. Each branch is entitled to send a number of delegates to Convention depending on the number of members in the branch. Branches must submit the names of their chosen delegates to ASTI Head Office not later than January 31. In addition to branch delegates, members of the ASTI Central Executive Council and Standing Committee also attend Convention as delegates.

If you wish to attend Convention 2027, you should go along to your next branch meeting. If you are unsure about when or where your branch meets, ask your school steward for your branch's meeting schedule. You can also log in to your MyUnion account at www.asti.ie/my-union/ for your branch contact details.

When attending Annual Convention you must be either a delegate or an observer. Please note that only delegates are allowed to speak and vote on Convention motions.

Do I have to pay to attend?

The cost of travel and an overnight allowance is paid to all delegates attending Convention. There is also a registration fee of €30, which is deducted from quarterly branch payments after Convention.

Where to stay

Convention 2027 is being held in Whites Hotel, Wexford. Accommodation for delegates to Convention 2027 will be available at Whites Hotel. Delegates book their own accommodation. Please be advised that Convention accommodation at Whites Hotel is limited and is allocated on a first come, first served basis.

There are several other accommodation options in Wexford. Details of other hotels and guesthouses located in the surrounding area are available on the ASTI website: www.asti.ie

Teachers in the spotlight

Key debates on education, teachers' terms and conditions, and the ASTI's role as a trade union take place during Convention. ASTI Annual Convention attracts significant media attention and provides opportunities to highlight some of the key issues for second-level teachers, for example, conditions for recently qualified teachers. Coverage focuses on key speeches made during Convention, including the President's address on Tuesday evening, and key debates throughout the conference.

Topics for debate

Topics for debate are dictated by motions that are submitted and selected at ASTI branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated at Annual Convention. Motions are presented to Convention and delegates speak to these motions. Branches normally decide on the topics they would like to see discussed at Annual Convention at their November branch meetings.

A Convention Steering Committee, which consists of classroom teachers elected by Annual Convention each year, prepares a list of motions received from branches. The list is circulated to all branches before January 7. Branches are asked to prioritise motions for inclusion on the Convention agenda not later than January 31. They can also propose amendments to any of the motions circulated. Motions and amendments are considered again by Steering Committee in early February, and a final agenda is drawn up.

Childcare at Convention

The ASTI Play Centre Wexford runs during Annual Convention 2027 sessions from Tuesday, March 30, to Thursday, April 1, 2027, inclusive. Childcare will be available during Convention hours. All staff working at the centre are fully qualified childcare workers. Places must be reserved in advance, no later than Wednesday, March 3, 2027.

It is important to note that the ASTI Play Centre is only available to children of delegates who have confirmed their child/children's place in advance.

For more information on Convention 2027, please scan the QR code.

CONVENTION 2027



Global Passport 2026-27

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The Global Passport is a tool to reflect on your school's current **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)** practice and build on your achievements.

REASONS TO APPLY

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Info: global.passport@worldwiseschools.ie

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Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is an approach to teaching and learning that links global and local justice issues and explores the root causes of these issues.

WorldWise Global Schools is Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education programme for Post-Primary settings in Ireland.

'You don't realise how much you have done until it is all down on paper.'
E.J., (Teacher)

rsta retired secondary teachers' association

MAIGH EO ABÚ!

As the RSTA Mayo Branch celebrates 25 years, its members maintain a strong tradition of campaigning.



RSTA President Micheál O'Neill with founder member of the Mayo Branch, Bernie Johnson.



From left: Ann Finlay, Gabrielle Swift, Carmel Heneghan (Mayo Branch Chairperson), Norrie Hennelly, Richie Bell (ASTI President), Peggy McGagh, Mary Hanley, Liam Sadler, and Carmel Hughes.

Mayo Branch members were still enjoying the excitement of that glorious All-Ireland victory as they gathered in Breaffy House Hotel, Castlebar, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Branch. Guests of the Branch for the celebration lunch were Micheál O'Neill, RSTA President, and Richie Bell, ASTI President – and a proud Mayo man!

Guest of honour Bernie Johnson was one of the five founding members who attended the inaugural meeting of the Branch in the historic Daly's Hotel, Castlebar, on October 8, 2001. It was at this site that Michael Davitt established the National Land League in 1879. The other founding members, sadly no longer with us, were Margaret Naughton, Bríd Concannon, Pádraic Filan and Kathleen Ryder, all of whom had made significant contributions not only to the RSTA, but also to the ASTI during their teaching careers.

Kathleen Ryder campaigned against the discriminatory marriage bar when her career came to an abrupt halt in 1958, as the Archbishop of Tuam had forbidden the employment of married women in Catholic schools in the archdiocese. Kathleen was supported by ASTI President Dónall Ó Conailláin, and "faithful members of the West Mayo ASTI Branch" in getting a motion passed at the 1961 ASTI Convention.

Although membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) finally brought an end to the marriage bar in the 1970s, the gender gap has not gone away! A recent report commissioned by the ASTI reveals that structural inequalities persist in the teaching profession, which, under the Single Public Service Pension Scheme, are likely to translate directly into pension outcomes (*ASTIR*, September 2026).

Representing retired teachers

Mayo Branch maintains its strong tradition of advocacy for retired teachers. Two Branch members currently serve on the RSTA National Committee. Branch Chairperson Carmel Heneghan serves as Joint Secretary on the Council of the Alliance of Retired Public Servants. Denis O'Boyle is an ASTI representative on the Retired Workers Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

Branch Chairperson Carmel Heneghan is a tireless recruiter for the RSTA. Branch members have enjoyed trips to locations from Belfast and the Boyne Valley to the WW1 battlefields, Madrid and the Camino de Santiago, as well as a variety of local events each year. The Branch is indebted to the generous commitment of the volunteer officers and others, who have served the interests of their retired colleagues down through the years. The high point in the Branch social calendar is the annual Christmas lunch in Ashford Castle.



The Branch's annual Christmas lunch in Ashford Castle is always a wonderful occasion.

Mol digiteach nua do thuismitheoirí forbartha ag Gaeloideachas

Le déanaí, sheol an tAire Oideachais mol digiteach nua do thuismitheoirí – Gaeilge do Thuismitheoirí (nó *Irish for Parents*) – a d'fhorbair Gaeloideachas le maoiniú ón Roinn Oideachais agus Óige agus tacaíocht ó Fhoras na Gaeilge. Is éard atá i gceist leis seo ná mol lárnach inar féidir le tuismitheoirí teacht ar acmhainní a bheadh úsáideach dóibh agus iad ag tacú lena bpáistí agus déagóirí atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Tá go leor acmhainní ar fáil ann ó fhoilsitheoirí éagsúla atá oiriúnach do gach leibhéal Gaeilge, tuismitheoirí nach bhfuil Gaeilge ar bith acu san áireamh.
Is féidir teacht ar an mol ag www.irishforparents.ie agus scagadh a dhéanamh ar acmhainní de réir aoisghrúpa, cineál acmhainne, leibhéal Gaeilge, agus eile. I measc na n-acmhainní a bheadh oiriúnach do thuismitheoirí a bhfuil daltaí meánscoile acu sa bhaile tá:

- uirlisí teanga ar nós Teanglann.ie, Foclóir.ie, agus Téarma.ie,
- podchraoltaí,
- acmhainní ó Fhoghlaim TG4,
- amhráin popcheoil agus traidisiúnta as Gaeilge, agus
- oidis ar féidir triail a bhaint astu le chéile.

Is fiú go mór an acmhainn úrnua seo a roinnt le tuismitheoirí i do phobal scoile, mar bhealach lena chinntiú go bhfuil siad ar an eolas faoi



thacaíochtaí agus acmhainní atá ar fáil dóibh. Cé nach mbíonn an oiread céanna tacaíochta leis an obair bhaile ag teastáil ó dhaltaí meánscoile, cuireann cur chuige dearfach agus spreagúil óna dtuismitheoirí agus caomhnóirí i leith na Gaeilge go mór lena n-aistir teanga.

Má tá aon eolas breise ag teastáil faoi Gaeilge do Thuismitheoirí/*Irish for Parents*, nó má tá aon cheisteanna nó moltaí agat, is féidir teagmháil a dhéanamh le eolas@gaeloideachas.ie

Irish Film Institute Schools Programme 2026/2027

The Irish Film Institute (IFI) Schools Programme 2026/2027 includes a new selection of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) titles for Junior and Senior Cycle, and films to support a broad range of subjects, including Gaeilge, English, History, Music, Physical Education, and more.
For Junior Cycle, *Juste une illusion* by Olivier Nakache is available for French, *Pioneras: Solo Querían Jugar* for Spanish, and *Zirkuskind* for German. Yann Samuell's *Compostelle* is available for Senior Cycle French, *La Cena* by Manuel Gómez Pereira for Spanish, and *Der Held vom Bahnhof Friedrichstraße* for German.
The prescribed films for Drama, Film and Theatre Studies include *An Cailín Ciúin*, *Jaws*, and *Past Lives*, with screenings available in the IFI, as well as via the free DFTS Channel developed by the IFI for the Department of Education and Youth. The DFTS Channel gives teachers in Strand 1 schools access to all materials on the curriculum, as well as learning resources.

Tickets are €6 per student for regular Schools Programme screenings. For special events and workshops, tickets are €8 per student. Teachers go free for all online bookings and receive free tea and coffee at the IFI on the day of the screening.

A downloadable film study guide is available to complement films as part of the Modern Foreign Languages curriculum at: https://ifi.ie/study-guides

To download the 2026/2027 Schools Programme brochure, please see: https://ifi.ie/ifi-schools-brochure-2026-2027

For more information on the Schools Programme and to book tickets, please see: ifi.ie/school-bookings

Requesting digital publications through MyUnion

MyUnion, the members' only area of the ASTI website, allows members to decide if they would like to receive our publications digitally.
Once you have created an account, you will have convenient access to information about your membership, and you will be able to request digital or hard copies of all of our publications, such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht*. Members can also update their personal details directly in the MyUnion area – for example, your home address – to ensure that you receive the most up-to-date correspondence from the ASTI.

You can do this by scanning the QR code.

SCAN ME

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ASTIR Crossword No. 2605

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

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

Name

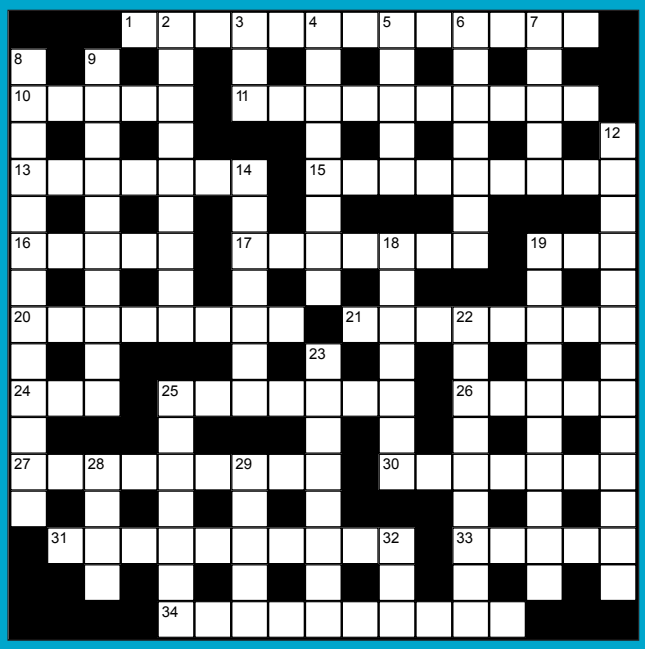
School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2605
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, December 4, 2026.



ACROSS

1. "The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side/The Curse is come Upon me/Cried the" ... (4,2,7)
10. Fly away from Flouncey, having little weight (5)
11. Organisation that manages Germany's monetary policy (10)
13. Fastidiously inspect south east (7)
15. Alastair all but surrounded Alice Springs (9)
16. Part of plant that contains female egg cell (5)
17. Unlikely advice to infant for being a whinger (7)
19. Give this for mouth off (3)
20. Respected, honoured, revered (8)
21. To attend Convention, you must be a delegate or an ... (8)
24. Sarah Mulligan O'Brien pursues this to enhance her skills (1.1.1)
25. Blockade, encircle, surround (7)
26. Animal living in Saipan dancehall (5)
27. Rear part of ship displaying no emotion (9)
30. Corporate battle for Bord na Móna? (4,3)
31. A bus opened to bring someone to court (10)
33. Thing of the dark (5)
34. Identical twins or sustenance for a pair of snails (4,2,1,3)

DOWN

2. Gas used for welding and cutting (9)
3. Boy reflected on thug (3)
4. Synthetic opioid used to treat severe pain (8)
5. Listens to (5)
6. At this, unrestrained and independent (7)
7. Finally, Brighton and Wirral for sound quality (5)
8. Patty condiment (6,7)
9. Besotted with crazy, daft auntie (10)
12. British comedian, starred in The Detectives (6,7)
14. Goes beyond, like former stones on the ear (7)
18. Could be music, temperature, or light (7)
19. Abiding remuneration providing for needs, not wants (6,4)
22. Language invented by Polish physician L. L. Zamenhof (9)
23. Second largest city in Libya (8)
25. Alternative rock sound from Oasis, Blur and Pulp (7)
28. Leave speechless with amazement (4)
29. World organisation devoted to renewable energy, founded in 2009 (5)
32. A God in Ireland (3)

Solutions to Crossword No. 2604

ACROSS	DOWN
1. Electric chair	2. Longshots
10. Iníon	3. CDC
11. Contraband	4. Renminbi
13. Insists	5. Curse
15. Identical	6. Habitué
16. GoPro	7. Ionic
17. Ed Byrne	8. Filing cabinet
19. Ado	9. Dissipates
20. Artesian	12. Elf on the shelf
21. Apiarist	14. Steward
24. IRS	18. Reposes
25. Endless	19. Animations
26. Trade	22. Antenatal
27. Easygoing	23. Belgique
30. Sunfish	25. Engrave
31. Romanesque	28. Scorn
33. Tonal	29. Inept
34. Under the table	32. EPA

Did you miss?

Ireland's spend per second-level student declines 16
A committed advocate for teachers 22

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 2604: Sinéad Connolly, St Vincent's Secondary School, St Mary's Road, Cork. Cork North Branch member.

féilte

An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council

The **Féilte Bursary Scheme** is designed to support collaboration between schools, enhance teachers' professional learning and promote teaching as a profession.

In 2025, **€126,000** was awarded to 27 schools nationwide who collaborated with a further 96 schools, bringing the total number of schools supported under the scheme to 123.

Read the full **Summary of Projects and Professional Learning** on the Teaching Council website to explore teacher-led initiatives from across Ireland.



Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed, Thurles: this project focused on developing a collaborative, student-led learning environment that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving.



Coláiste Cois Life, Lucan: this project promoted philosophical education using Philosophy4Children (P4C) pedagogy in the context of primary and post-primary Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí.



North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School: through structured training, Communities of Practice, and shared resources, teachers led school-based innovations tailored to their contexts.

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