

ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

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**Ireland is failing to
prioritise investment
in education**

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CONTENTS

- 4 From the President's desk
Why are teachers leaving?
- 4 General Secretary's update
Budget 2026 shortchanges workers
- 5 News
- 9 News features
 - 9 Senior Cycle update
 - 12 Ireland is failing to prioritise investment in education
- 14 Features
 - 14 Helping students navigate the online world
 - 16 ASTI celebrates outstanding contributions
- 18 Committee profile
The ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee
- 20 Features
 - 20 *Acmhainní nua agus imeachtaí COGG*
 - 21 *ASTI Annual Convention 2026*
 - 22 *Fitness to practise: understanding the Teaching Council's complaints process*
 - 24 *Seeing the whole learner*
- 26 ASTI in the media
Budget 2026 ignores education
- 28 RSTA news
- 29 Noticeboard
- 29 Obituary
- 30 Crossword



World Teachers' Day 2025

7



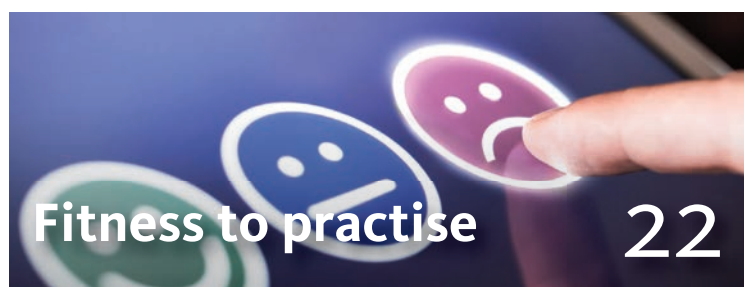
Ireland is failing to prioritise investment in education

12



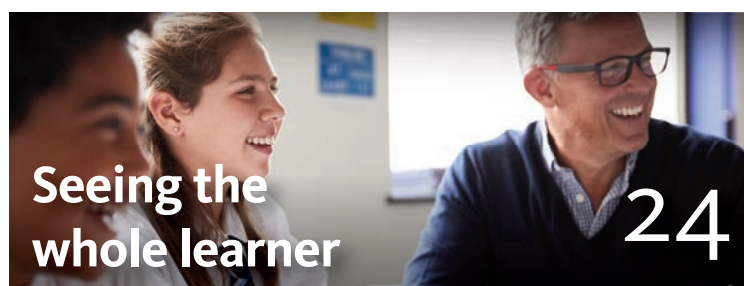
Tips for teachers online

14



Fitness to practise

22



Seeing the whole learner

24

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Editorial: Caoimhe Coolican, Ann-Marie Hardiman and Paul O'Grady
Design: Rebecca Bohan and Tony Byrne
Advertising: Paul O'Grady

ASTI

Thomas MacDonagh House,
Winetavern Street,
Dublin 8,
Do8 P9V6
Tel: 01-604 0160 Fax: 01-897 2760
astir@asti.ie

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The ASTI reserves the right to edit all material submitted for publication.

The ASTIR Editorial Board is interested in receiving feedback on ASTIR.

Members can email astirfeedback@asti.ie or text 087 934 9956.

Why are teachers leaving?

One of the privileges I enjoy as President is meeting members from all over the country who chose teaching as their career. What I take from our conversations is that they care deeply for their students, are passionate about their subjects, and want to make a difference. No matter where I go, members identify the same concerns:

- relentless change in education,
- lack of supports, resources, and promotional prospects for teachers,
- Senior Cycle Redevelopment (SCR) and the Additional Assessment Components (AACs),
- workload, and
- conditions for new teachers.

In this context, it came as no surprise that *Education at a Glance*, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), put Ireland last out of 37 countries for government expenditure on second-level education as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). In 2022, Ireland invested 0.8% of GDP in second-level education, compared to OECD and EU averages of 1.7%. This under-resourcing of schools has consequences. Classes are too large, and schools are challenged by resource deficits. Schools must cope with incessant change, with new legislative and regulatory procedures, new programmes and curricula, and new guidelines and protocols.

This is the pressure zone in which schools must now also grapple with Senior Cycle Redevelopment. I've heard of schools that lack adequate laboratory space to conduct the practical component of the revised Biology, Chemistry, and Physics specifications introduced last September. I've heard of teachers facing difficulties getting equipment for certain Tranche 1 (T1) subjects in time for the start of the school year. Teachers are concerned about the lack of clear guidance on AI and its effect on SCR assessment, particularly the AACs. Coupled with this is the exposure of teachers in terms of liability if they have a concern as to whether coursework is truly the student's own work. Indemnity is required to protect teachers. Training is lacking, especially for T1 subjects, and must be improved. Despite this, the Department has taken a full-steam-ahead approach to Senior Cycle Redevelopment. We are actively engaged relaying these concerns to the Department. In October, Minister McEntee announced that the Teaching Council revised its registration rules for teachers who qualify outside of Ireland. Eligible teachers may apply to register and complete their teacher induction within a specified timeframe. While this will be useful for some teachers, it will not address the teacher supply crisis. The Minister would do well to do a road trip around the schools of Ireland and ask "Why are people leaving teaching in Ireland?" On a positive note, ASTI members are eligible for a Contract of Indefinite Duration (CID) after one year in teaching, provided they continue into a second year in the same school. I sincerely hope this translated to secure, full-hours contracts for our members. Please seek expert advice from your industrial relations official if you need information on this, or indeed, any issue.



Padraig Curley

ASTI President

Budget 2026 shortchanges workers

Budget 2026 was a missed opportunity on many levels. It does nothing to implement the change needed to secure the economic future of the country. The €700m corporate handout to the hospitality sector leaves any pretence to fiscal prudence by Government in tatters.

Without any credible evidential basis, the measure is estimated to cost every taxpayer in this country €250 a year. Workers struggling with the cost of living are being forced to transfer further wealth to some large and highly profitable corporations.

On the personal taxation front, there was neither full nor partial indexation of the income tax bands, with effective tax rates for most workers increasing by 0.1% next year. Accordingly, with once-off payments removed, the overall budgetary package will reduce incomes for most workers.

The only positive that one can point to within the announcement is the **planned increase** in investment in infrastructure. Ireland is suffering from significant infrastructure deficits, including in the energy grid, the water grid, transport, and housing. All of this is having a hugely detrimental impact on workers, including teachers.

And of course, Budget 2026 fails to tackle the key issues impacting second-level schools and students. There is no commitment to end the chronic shortage of second-level teachers, too-large class sizes, and the glaring lack of resources in schools.

While we must acknowledge the announcement of additional teaching posts, the majority of these are special educational needs posts. These will likely be spread very thinly across primary and second-level schools, and may be partially accounted for by rising demographics.

Budget 2026 fails to address the fact that second-level class sizes are bigger than they were 17 years ago, prior to the 2008 economic crash, even though classrooms today are significantly more complex teaching and learning environments.

I have heard minister after minister state that their objective is to deliver a world-class education system. Yet an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, announced back in 2008 in response to Ireland's worst ever economic crash, has still not been reversed.

The ASTI is tired of trotting out the fact that published OECD *Education at a Glance* reports, over many years, have found that Ireland invests a lot less of its GDP in second-level education compared to the OECD and EU averages.

Additional negative factors include an excessively long salary scale for teachers, and cost-of-living issues that are exacerbating Ireland's teacher supply crisis and leave one far from optimistic about the future. With a different Government policy perspective, things could be very different.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

ASTI Student Bursaries awarded

The ASTI has awarded five bursaries to the value of €1,000 each to assist students who have a parent or guardian who is an ASTI member or staff member, in undertaking an undergraduate course in third-level education. The successful applicants were picked by lot at a live draw on October 1, 2025. Congratulations to all of this year's recipients.

The winners of the 2025 bursaries are:



Shaun Crawford,
*Bachelor of Law
with French Law,
University College Dublin,*



Róisín Barry,
*Bachelor and Master's
of Pharmacy,
University College Cork,*



Ciarán Garvey,
*Bachelor and Master's of
Engineering (Mechanical),
University of Galway,*



Siobhán McCann,
*Bachelor of Engineering,
University College Dublin,
and*



Pat Murphy,
*Bachelor of Science
(Occupational Health and
Safety Management),
University of Galway.*

For more information on the ASTI Annual Student Bursary, please see: www.asti.ie/memberbenefits/awardsgrants

Global Solidarity Seminar 2026



The ASTI will hold its first ever Global Solidarity Seminar in Dublin in spring 2026. The theme of the seminar will be the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The Seminar will engage members in discussion on global education and solidarity issues, including the challenges faced by teachers and teacher unions worldwide, the promotion of equality and human rights in education, and the defence of trade union rights. It will also highlight the importance of international co-operation in addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and the climate crisis.

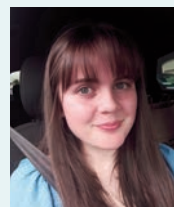
Further details, including the date of the Seminar and how to register, will be published on the ASTI website.



Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary awarded

The ASTI has awarded one bursary to the value of €5,000 to assist one student who has a parent or guardian who is an ASTI member or staff member in undertaking a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education.

The winner of the 2025 Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary is:



Sarah McAnespie,
*Bachelor of Education (Honours) in
Art and Design & Communication Graphics,
Atlantic Technological University.*

The successful applicant was picked by lot at a live draw on October 1, 2025.

Congratulations to this year's recipient.

For more information on the Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award, please see: www.asti.ie/memberbenefits/awardsgrants

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 at: www.asti.ie/my-union/

Members can access *ASTIR* and *Nuacht* online by scanning the QR code.



Do we have your correct details?

The ASTI regularly communicates with members to keep them informed and involved. This includes sending the Members' Update via email, inviting members to take part in REDC/ASTI surveys, and providing members with access to important information and updates.

To ensure that you don't miss out, members are encouraged to review and update their contact details in MyUnion, the members-only area of the ASTI website.

Keeping your details up to date ensures that you:

- receive ASTI news, updates, and digital publications such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht* straight to your inbox,
- have your say by participating in REDC/ASTI surveys and questionnaires, and
- stay informed about key developments in education.

Members can update their details at any time via MyUnion at www.asti.ie/my-union/



This is Art! 2025

This is Nature!

Calling all primary and secondary teachers!

RTÉ This Is Art! 2025 is now open for entries.

This year's theme is This Is Nature!

Students can draw, paint, sculpt, design, photograph, film or create digitally. Every form of art is welcome. They can enter individually or as a class through our Group Category.

Empower your students to celebrate nature through art.

€10,000 prize fund for art materials, experiences and more.

Scan the QR code to download your Teacher's Pack and get started



Teaching Council update

Droichead applications 2025/2026

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 for Droichead for the 2025/2026 academic year opened on September 2, 2025, and will remain open until early March 2026. NQTs must apply for Droichead online via their 'My Registration' portal account on the Teaching Council website. NQTs must discuss participation in Droichead in advance with their school, and ensure that they have all the correct information for application.

On completion of the process, NQTs must ensure that they double check that they have all required information and documentation before they submit their online Form D via their 'My Registration' accounts.

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

Enhanced vetting measures to strengthen child protection and safeguarding

On July 7, 2025, the National Vetting Bureau (NVB), in line with EU Directive 2011/93/EU, introduced additional child protection checks with the other 26 EU member states and the UK, to strengthen the protection of children. These additional checks will **only** affect those who have resided

in another EU state or the UK. While these additional checks strengthen child protection in the public interest, they have increased vetting application turnaround timelines for those who have resided in another EU state or the UK.

Further information can be found on the Teaching Council website at:
www.teachingcouncil.ie/news/enhanced-vetting-measures-to-strengthen-safeguarding-and-protection-of-children/

FREE access to an online library

The Teaching Council provides all registered teachers with free access to an online library of research journals and articles, and to a collection of ebooks. The online library offers teachers access to a wealth of materials in order to enhance education research, thereby supporting teachers' professional learning.

The Teaching Council recently upgraded to an enhanced repository, gaining even greater access to extensive journals, ebooks and articles to support teachers' professional learning journey.

Registered teachers can access the online library by logging into their 'My Registration' account via the Teaching Council website.

Teachers can log into the online library via their 'My Registration' accounts at: <https://my-tc.teachingcouncil.ie/Site-Login>

Guidance on AI launched for schools

The Department of Education and Youth has published its *Guidance on Artificial Intelligence in Schools*. Developed with input from Oide Technology in Education, the guidance draws on international best practice from UNESCO and the European Union, providing practical advice, resources, and examples to help teachers integrate the use of artificial intelligence (AI) into teaching and learning. This new guidance is designed to support teachers and school leaders in reflecting on and planning for the potential use of AI in teaching and learning. The document provides examples of current uses of AI in schools. The guidelines also outline a number of challenges, including the need for human agency and oversight in any deployment of AI technologies in schools, as well as ethical considerations such as privacy and inclusion.

The ASTI notes that the guidelines focus on general information and advice, and will be of minimal practical help to teachers managing Additional Assessment Components (AACs). The ASTI awaits the completion of Government-commissioned research on the impact of AI on education, including AACs.

Find the guidance here: www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/digital-strategy-for-schools-to-2027/#guidance-on-artificial-intelligence-in-schools

Contract of Indefinite Duration (CID) qualification period reduced to one year

The Minister for Education and Youth announced an initiative last April regarding the award of Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CIDs). The measure will reduce the qualification period for granting a CID from a *period of continuous employment in excess of two years with the same employer* to a *period of continuous employment in excess of one year with the same employer*. The ASTI had agitated for several years for this measure to be implemented. At the time of going to print, the ASTI is in discussions with the Department of Education and Youth on framing the circular letter to give effect to this decision.

ASTI members who took up their first contract in a viable teaching post in September 2025 will become eligible for a CID in September 2026. This eligibility is contingent upon successful reappointment following a competitive recruitment process. Some confusion arose regarding ASTI members' eligibility for these CIDs as the initiative was included in the terms of the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures*, which ASTI members rejected in May 2025.

For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions in the forthcoming circular, providing for the eligibility of teachers for a CID, will apply to ASTI members.

World Teachers' Day 2025

As in previous years, ASTI school staff were invited to organise staffroom cakes to celebrate during the week of World Teachers' Day in October, and recoup the cost by submitting receipts directly to their branch treasurer. This offered staff an opportunity to welcome new members to the union.



ASTI Vice President Richard Bell and Industrial Relations Official Breda Lynch marked World Teachers' Day with members at a school steward training day with a slice of cake. In attendance on the day were: Aoife Broderick, Catherine Horan, Claire Reilly, David Doyle, Declan Burke, Denise Murphy, John McCann, Lynda Ní Cheallacháin, Martin McMullan, Mary Hande, Sean Lonergan, Seán Wilhare, Shane McNerney, Siobhán Corcoran, Siobhán O'Carroll, Suzanne Hyland, Thomas McCarthy, Yvonne Sheridan, Damien Burke, Elissa Reilly, Louise Benton, Anthony Friel, Paul Graham, and Jim Fox.

World Teachers' Day takes place on October 5 each year. For more information on World Teachers' Day events organised by UNESCO, see: www.unesco.org/en/days/teachers



Teachers in Coláiste Mhuire Máthair Gaillimh marked World Teachers' Day with a slice of cake. Pictured (from left): Teresa Redmond, Louise O'Shaughnessy, Eoin Kelly, Ciara O'Loughlin, Niamh Doran, Róisín Donnellan, and Mary McKearne.



Teachers in Gaelcholáiste Chill Dara marked World Teachers' Day with cakes. From left: Kerrie Ní Dhuinn, Brenda Bermingham, Claire de Brún, Jillian Ní Bhroin, Edel Myles, Kevin Forde, Séamus Ó Conaill, Cathal Ó Murchú (seasamh), Trish Ní Fhoghlú, Claire Ní Shuilleabháin, Ger Ní Fhlatharta (seasamh), Siobhain Grogan, Louise Ní Cheallaigh, Róisín Ní Fhallaing, agus Helena Ní Bhrollacháin.

DCU launches part-time graduate SPHE/RSE diploma for teachers

A new part-time graduate diploma for SPHE teachers has been launched by Dublin City University (DCU). The course, which is due to commence in January 2026, is specifically designed to upskill post-primary SPHE teachers, and enable them to develop and advance their core competencies in the teaching of SPHE/RSE at Junior and Senior Cycle levels.

The closing date for applications is Friday, November 21, 2025, at 5.00pm.

For more information and to apply, please scan the QR code.



Lorraine Ní Fhinn, Comhalta Boird COGG



Is í Lorraine Ní Fhinn ionadaí an ASTI do COGG. Múinteoir meánscoile is ea í ar feadh 23 bliana.

Tá taithí aici ag múineadh na Gaeilge ag gach leibhéal. Chomh maith leis sin, is ball í den Mheitheal Forbartha do Ghaeilge na hArdteistiméireachta.

Téigh chuig leathanach 20 le haghaidh tuilleadh eolais ar COGG agus cad a dhéantar.

Senior Cycle update

In May of this year, ASTI members voted to reject the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* by 68% to 32% (turnout 73%).



ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie presented teachers' key concerns on Senior Cycle Redevelopment to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Youth in October.

In May of this year, ASTI members voted to reject the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* by 68% to 32% (turnout 73%). In a separate ballot, ASTI members voted by 67% to 33% in favour of industrial action, up to and including strike action, in the event that the ASTI rejected the provisions set out in the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures*.

ASTI Standing Committee decided, in the first instance, to seek resolution of the issues of concern to teachers by invoking the dispute resolution mechanisms set out in the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, which the ASTI is party to. The Public Service Agreement also provides that where dispute resolution fails to end in agreement, either side can refer the dispute to the Scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration for Teachers.

Dispute referred to conciliation

The ASTI took part in engagement with the Department of Education and Youth from June to October 2025. However, despite progress, no agreement was reached. In October 2025, the ASTI referred the dispute regarding *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* to the Teachers' Conciliation Council (part of the Scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration for Teachers). As this edition of *ASTIR* goes to print, the ASTI is embarking on the conciliation process.

Key concerns

The ASTI's key concerns are:

- the lack of clarity regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Leaving Certificate Additional Assessment Components (AACs) and related authentication issues,
- recently published guidelines on the use of AI in schools will be of minimal practical help to teachers managing AACs,
- the inappropriateness of the allocation of 40% for the AACs in some subjects,
- the inadequacy of the present Science Laboratory Health and Safety Guidance (1998 – amended 2001),
- the reported lack of adequate laboratory storage space for AAC

projects/laboratory equipment, and lack of access to laboratories and information and communications technology (ICT) in many schools,

- the lack of adequate and timely training for teachers,
- concerns about the exacerbation of inequities for students,
- workload issues and lack of professional time, and
- the capacity of schools to cope with rushed Senior Cycle Redevelopment.

The Teachers' Conciliation Council (TCC) forms part of the Scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration for Teachers, the purpose of which is to provide a forum for claims and proposals relating to salary, and other terms and conditions of service for teachers. The TCC is composed of representatives from the teacher unions, school management bodies, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, and the Department of Education and Youth. The TCC is independently chaired by an official of the Workplace Relations Commission. The terms and conditions of teachers' employment in State-funded teaching posts are formulated at the TCC.

Roll-out of Tranche 1 subjects

Tranche 1 subjects

Teachers of Tranche 1 subjects have now received:

- AAC Guidelines,
- a sample brief for the AAC,
- four sample examination papers (two Higher Level, two Ordinary Level), and
- State Examinations Commission Coursework Rules and Procedures are due in 2025.

Tranche 1 AAC briefs (for the 2027 Leaving Certificate cohort) will be available in January 2026.

Ongoing revision of LC subjects

Tranche 2 subjects

Specifications for Tranche 2 subjects are now approved. The links below provide the latest National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) update for each Tranche 2 subject. Tranche 2 subject specifications that will be introduced for fifth years in September 2026 are:

■ **Construction Studies** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/construction-studies/>,

■ **Engineering** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/engineering/>,

■ **Geography** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/geography/>,

■ **LCVP link modules:** these are now called Curriculum Specification for Leaving Certificate Life, Community and Work. A new Leaving Certificate Life, Community and Work specification will be introduced for fifth year students in September 2026. This will replace the current Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/httpsnccaimediaurdx5onconsultation-report-on-the-draft-lc-life-community-and-work-specification-enpdf/>, and

■ **PE** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/leaving-certificate-physical-education-lcpe/>.

Tranche 2 subject specifications for English (<https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/english/>) and Accounting (<https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/accounting/>) have been postponed until at least September 2027, pending further examination (in consultation with schools) regarding planning, implementation, and enactment aspects of these subjects.

Tranche 3 subjects

At the time of going to print, work on Tranche 3 draft specifications is ongoing. The links below provide the latest NCCA update for each Tranche 3 subject. Tranche 3 subject specifications that will be introduced for fifth years in September 2027 are:

■ **Agricultural Science** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/agricultural-science/>,

■ **Computer Science** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/computer-science/>,

■ **Design and Communication Graphics** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/design-and-communication-graphics/>,

■ **History** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/history/>,

■ **Home Economics** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/home-economics/>,

■ **Maths** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/mathematics/>,

■ **Music** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/music/>, and

■ **Physics and chemistry** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/physics-and-chemistry/>.

Tranche 4 subjects

At the time of going to print, work on Tranche 4 subject background papers is ongoing. The links below provide the latest NCCA update for each Tranche 4 subject. Tranche 4 subject specifications that will be introduced for fifth years in September 2028 are:

■ **Art** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/art/>,

■ **Economics** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/economics/>,

■ **French** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/modern-foreign-languages/>,

■ **Gaeilge** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/gaeilge/>,

■ **German** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/modern-foreign-languages/>,

■ **Italian** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/modern-foreign-languages/>,

■ **Politics and Society** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/politics-and-society/>,

■ **Spanish** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/modern-foreign-languages/>, and

■ **Technology** – <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/technology/>.

Tranche 5 subjects

Work on Tranche 5 subject specifications, including the establishment of NCCA subject development groups, will begin in the 2026/2027 school year.

Tranche 5 subjects will be introduced to the curriculum for all schools in 2029. They are:

- Applied Mathematics,
- Classical Studies,
- Japanese,
- Lithuanian,
- Mandarin Chinese,
- Polish,
- Portuguese,
- Religious Education, and
- Russian.

Global Passport 2025-26

Apply for your passport for your Global Citizenship Education journey

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

- You will get the opportunity to record and reflect on your school's GCE practice.
- You will gain external recognition of the GCE work being done in your school and raise your school's profile.
- You can avail of personalised support for your school's GCE journey and continuous professional development opportunities.
- Your school can receive grant funding of **up to €800** to support your GCE activities and initiatives.

Some GCE themes you can explore:



Deadline for Applications: 6th May 2026

Info: global.passport@worldwiseschools.ie

Scan to register
your interest: ▶



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)

IRELAND IS FAILING TO PRIORITISE INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION



***Education at a Glance 2025* shows that Ireland's investment in second-level education still flounders at the bottom of the table.**

Ireland is at the bottom of the scale when it comes to investment in education as a proportion of the country's GDP, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report *Education at a Glance 2025*. In 2022, the year examined in the report, the Irish Government invested 2.3% of GDP on primary, second-level, and third-level institutions, compared to the OECD average of 4%. Expenditure on education institutions as a percentage of GDP illustrates investment in education relative to the size of a country's economy.

Second-level investment

Expenditure on second-level institutions in 2022 was 0.8% of GDP, compared to 1.8% in the UK, 2.2% in France, and an OECD average of 1.7%. This 0.8% figure is lower than the previous year's 0.9% (as reported in *Education at a Glance 2024*) and puts Ireland in last place out of 37 countries analysed. When it comes to the amount spent per second-level student in US dollars, the Irish Government's spend is \$13,013 per student, putting Ireland in 16th position out of 36, and just above the OECD average of \$12,750.

Progress through education

Across OECD countries, the vast majority of students enrolled in general upper secondary education attend programmes that lead to a full qualification and access to third-level education. In the context of the Irish education system, 'upper secondary' is the equivalent of Senior Cycle, and 'lower secondary' is equivalent to the Junior Cycle. In Ireland, over 90% of 15- to 19-year-olds are enrolled in education, compared to an OECD average of 84% (Ireland holds fifth place for this measure).

This year's report places a special focus on third-level education, finding that third-level attainment across OECD countries is at an all-time high.

Ireland is right at the top of the scale for third-level education completion, despite the low spending on education here. In Ireland, 21% of people aged 25-34 hold a master's or equivalent degree, which is well above the OECD average of 16%. Ireland also has the highest completion rate of students in bachelors degree courses in universities (68%). This is likely in part due to good choices by students at the point of entry to higher education (and the advice of their second-level teachers, guidance counsellors, etc). It also reflects the Leaving Certificate as a good indicator of academic success in higher education, and that students have been well prepared by their second-level education for their future studies.

Outcomes from education

Education at a Glance underlines the importance of upper secondary education completion for reducing an individual's risk of unemployment. The report points out that higher levels of education are "strongly associated with better employment opportunities and higher earnings". In Ireland, 14.8% of young adults without an upper secondary qualification are unemployed, compared to 7% of those with upper or post-secondary non-third-level attainment and 3.8% of those with third-level attainment.

In addition to this, the wage gap between those with upper secondary and third-level attainment in Ireland is larger than the OECD average, at 65%. This earnings premium for completing a third-level degree is 54% on average across OECD countries.

The report looks at how education attainment impacts health, income, working conditions, and civic engagement. On average across the OECD countries, third-level-educated adults (25-64 year-olds) reported better self-perceived health than those with lower levels of attainment, with 51% rating their health as very good or excellent, compared to just 26% of those with

Education at a Glance underlines the importance of upper secondary education completion for reducing an individual's risk of unemployment.

below upper secondary education. Higher educational attainment was linked to more positive mental health outcomes. On average, third-level-educated individuals report more favourable indicators of mental well-being on this measure than those with lower attainment. In short, individuals with greater educational attainment generally face a lower risk of unemployment, earn higher wages, and experience better well-being.

Access to education

In all countries, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are far less likely to reach higher levels of education than those from more advantaged backgrounds. However, intergenerational mobility is evident in some countries, including Ireland. For example, 56% of young adults whose parents completed second-level education as their highest level go on to third-level education. On average across the OECD, only 26% of young adults whose parents did not complete upper secondary education hold a third-level qualification. In Ireland, the proportion is 39%. This puts Ireland at the top of the scale for this measure, and is a positive sign: equitable access to third-level education is crucial for improving social mobility, as educational achievement strongly influences success in the job market.

Teachers: supply and salaries

The report emphasises the need for countries to tackle teacher shortages in order to strengthen education systems, and that highly qualified teachers are essential to this end. In the present teacher supply and retention crisis, the report notes that “teacher shortages make it harder to recruit and retain well-trained educators”. The ASTI has consistently argued for measures from the Government to address this crisis in Ireland.

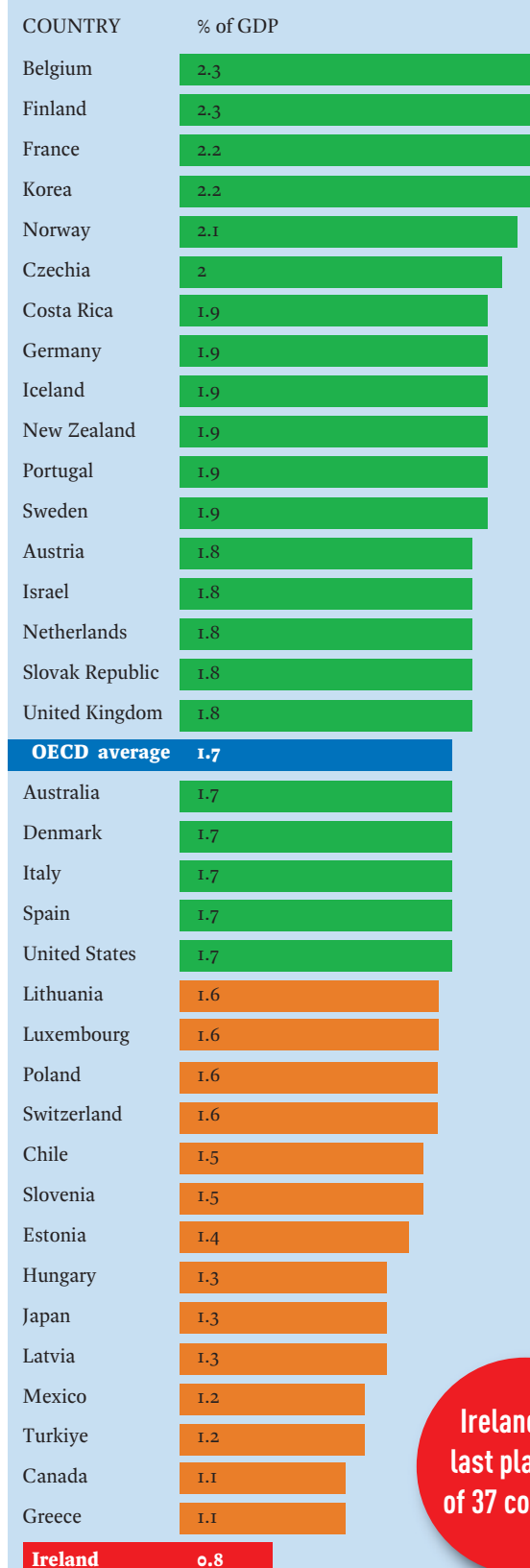
Also relevant is the report's assertion that pay and working conditions are important factors for attracting, developing and retaining skilled teachers. According to the report's authors, teachers' salaries “can have a direct impact on the attractiveness of teaching as a career”. Second-level teachers in Ireland can expect a starting salary of \$43,344, versus OECD averages of \$45,923 and \$47,339 for lower and upper secondary teachers, respectively (in Ireland all second-level teachers are qualified to teach lower and upper secondary, so there is only one pay scale here).

In primary and second-level education, socio-economic status continues to play a significant role in academic achievement. Persistent teacher shortages disproportionately affect disadvantaged learners and must be addressed. To prevent socio-economic disparities deepening, disadvantaged students and schools require support, through policy intervention and admission processes that recognise diverse learner profiles.

The high level of third-level education attainment in Ireland means that we produce graduates who enjoy high earnings, stable employment, good health and civic participation. Nonetheless, inequalities persist and those with the lowest levels of educational attainment face great disadvantages in the labour market and with their general well-being. The message is clear: education needs to be prioritised as a vital investment.

OECD, EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Expenditure on second-level education as a % of GDP



**Ireland is in
last place out
of 37 countries**



HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE ONLINE WORLD

Teachers in the classroom are faced with the challenge of helping students to navigate our digital world. Article written by MEDIA LITERACY IRELAND.

Digital technologies have radically altered how we engage with the world. Societies and democracies are still struggling with these changes. Many of us spend huge amounts of time on platforms where powerful algorithms can (often without sufficient safeguards) expose us to everything from our favourite songs and games to bullying, abuse, extremist influencers and harmful content. The rumours, conspiracy theories and social behaviours that increasingly animate communities and politics are impossible to avoid. These issues are global and systemic. They will not be resolved in a classroom, but it is often within the classroom that teachers face the real-world fallout from these online issues.

A range of policy and research reports call for better teacher training in media literacy and the allocation of classroom time to media literacy instruction, but questions remain about how exactly this could and should be delivered.

A complex problem

Too often, media literacy is portrayed as a simple skills-based solution to digital problems. This skills approach has benefits, but it has serious limitations too. First, it assumes that rumours, conspiracy theories and false information can be easily recognised. However, false information often rests on half-truths or complex distortions of facts.

There's a reason that fact-checking and verification is a professional job. It requires time, resources and expertise.

Second, technology is ever changing so verification skills date quickly. It's not realistic to expect teachers to be knowledgeable about all the platforms, influencers and manipulation techniques children may be exposed to.

Third, verification skills are quickly forgotten when we hear a story that triggers our emotions, especially emotions like anger or fear, or reinforces our prejudices.

Fostering a critical mindset

So what can teachers do right now to help students?

At the heart of media literacy is understanding that all media messages are created for a reason. To be able to make informed decisions about the media messages that we encounter online, we need to understand how and why we are receiving those messages in the first place, and how our own emotions and biases might be exploited to prompt a reaction to those media messages.

Fostering a critical mindset is the cornerstone of media literacy, not to mention being a useful skill for life. As simple as it may seem, it is helpful to explain to students that content is often created purely to gain attention or money, rather

A range of policy and research reports call for better teacher training in media literacy and the allocation of classroom time to media literacy instruction, but questions remain about how exactly this could and should be delivered.

than because of deeply held principles or beliefs. The more likes, shares and comments the content gets, the more attention or money the creator gets.

Remind students to ask themselves why they might be seeing this content and how it makes them feel. Is the content prompting them to take action and, if so, who will benefit from that action, and how? Encourage them to 'Stop, Think and Check' that the information they are getting is accurate and reliable before they help to amplify it.

The UK Association for Citizenship Teaching has a helpful guide for teachers dealing with this in the classroom. The overall advice is to avoid being overly dismissive (acknowledge that 'it's good to question things'), reinforce critical thinking ('there is a lot of information online but it isn't all credible'), and avoid detailed discussion ('we're going to move on; maybe we'll talk about it another time').

Regulation

It is also important to help students understand that not all media is the same and there are different regulatory obligations for different media types. For example, TV and radio journalists and broadcasters are bound by certain codes and rules, and are obliged to be fair and impartial in their broadcasting of news and current affairs. This is not the case for certain podcasters or social media influencers, or content that is generally published online.

In 2023, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland became Coimisiún na Meán, with an additional remit to regulate certain online platforms. This means that certain social media platforms based in Ireland can no longer regulate themselves. If it is found that they don't follow the rules, Coimisiún na Meán can now issue large fines. To check which platforms are regulated in Ireland, see www.cnam.ie/general-public/online-safety/online-safety-framework/.

Students' online awareness

For students, it's important that they know they have rights online. Under the Online Safety Framework, platforms are obliged to make changes in order to make their platforms safer by design. For example, if someone sees illegal or harmful content online, they have the right to report this. Under these rules, platforms must ensure that the means to report this content is easy to find and easy to use. If people can't find the reporting button, this should be reported to Coimisiún na Meán via this online form – www.cnam.ie/reporttous – with screenshots as evidence.

Ultimately, there is no magic formula for avoiding the risks that come with our use of digital technology. One of the most important things teachers can do is provide a space in which young people can talk, share and learn about the complex media world we live in.

Digital media literacy resources

A range of high-quality digital media literacy resources are available to support teachers, parents, and students:

- **Webwise connected – An Introduction to Digital Media Literacy** – is a programme for teachers of the Junior Cycle Digital Media Literacy short course. It explores online well-being, news and information, big data and the data economy, and online rights – <https://www.webwise.ie/connected/>
- **Webwise Prepare Protect Thrive Hub** – offers resources for parents, teachers, and young people to reflect on the role of influencers and algorithms in the lives of children and young people – <https://www.webwise.ie/prepareprotectthrive/>
- **My Online World**, developed by Webwise in partnership with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), supports first-year students and encourages reflection on online experiences, responsible sharing, and managing pressures such as sharing intimate images – <https://www.webwise.ie/myonlineworld/>
- **What is Digital Citizenship and How to Teach It?** from Oide Technology in Education, covers the 10 domains of digital citizenship with specific links to SPHE, CSPE, and the Digital Media Literacy short course - <https://www.oideotechnologyineducation.ie/onlinecourses/what-is-digital-citizenship-and-how-to-teach-it/>
- **AI for Schools**, from Oide Technology in Education, introduces teachers to AI, exploring benefits, limitations, and ethical considerations – <https://www.oideotechnologyineducation.ie/artificial-intelligence-in-schools/>
- **The Be Media Smart** campaign gives tips and advice on how to 'Stop, Think and Check' that content is accurate and reliable – www.bemediasmart.ie
- The Resources section of the **Media Literacy Ireland** website provides easy access to different types of resources addressing a wide range of media literacy topics – <https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/resources/> and <https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie>
- **Coimisiún na Meán** has created a series of educational resources to help introduce media regulation and explore young people's rights under the Online Safety Framework – www.cnam.ie/general-public/guides-resources/for-educators
- **The Knowledge Bank from The Journal's FactCheck unit** highlights suspect content online and provides the facts to dispute or clarify this content – www.factchecking.ie
- **The ADAPT Centre's AI Literacy in the Classroom** course builds AI literacy among post-primary teachers, addressing algorithmic bias, misinformation, and digital ethics - <https://ai-literacy-in-the-classroom.adaptcentre.ie>
- **The DCU Anti-Bullying Guide for Teachers on the Effect of Masculinity Influencers** offers practical strategies for teachers, schools, and parents to facilitate critical discussions with students about the impact of harmful online influencers – <https://www.dcu.ie/instituteofeducation/news/2024/dec/dcu-anti-bullying-centre-launches-guide-teachers-effect>

ASTI CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

The ASTI Awards evening celebrated the contributions of ASTI members both inside and outside the classroom.



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Hannah Tyrrell (ASTI Achievement Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (then ASTI President).

ASTI Achievement Awards

The ASTI Achievement Awards acknowledge the outstanding contributions of second-level teachers to their students, schools, communities, and society. The winners are exceptional people who have often made a big impact as role models, and as advocates for their students. This *ASTIR* profiles two 2025 Achievement Award winners: Hannah Tyrrell and Humphrey Jones.

Hannah Tyrrell

Hannah Tyrrell, a teacher of geography, history and PE at St. Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School in Dublin and a member of Dublin South Central Branch, was awarded a 2025 Achievement Award in May in recognition of her exceptional sporting achievements and for being a role model to her students.

Hannah is a multi-talented sportswoman, having excelled in rugby, Gaelic football, and soccer. In rugby, Hannah's achievements include playing for Ireland in the 2015 Women's Six Nations Championship, where the team won both the Championship title and the Triple Crown title. In Gaelic football, her achievements include winning an All-Ireland Championship medal in 2023 with the Dublin Senior Ladies Gaelic Football team and being named Player of the Match. Earlier this year, Hannah and her team claimed victory again in the 2025 All Ireland Championship final. In soccer, Hannah's achievements include winning a Women's Football Association of Ireland (FAI) Cup medal in 2011 while playing for St. Catherine's. Hannah is also a mental health advocate, and has previously served as an advocate for the Tackle Your Feelings campaign led by Rugby Players Ireland. She is also an ambassador for Pieta House, working tirelessly to support those in difficult situations, empowering and encouraging them to seek help. Hannah credits sport with helping her to look after her own mental health and hopes that other young girls can see its benefits too. In addition to teaching her three subjects, Hannah also coaches the boys' basketball team in her school. Described by her colleagues at St. Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School as "a role model for all of her students", she always encourages her students to participate in extra-curricular activities, as well as working hard at their academic studies.



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Humphrey Jones (ASTI Achievement Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (then ASTI President).

Humphrey Jones

A teacher of science, biology, and agricultural science, as well as a career guidance counsellor at St. Columba's College in Dublin, and a member of Dublin South 2 Branch, Humphrey Jones was awarded a 2025 Achievement Award for his commitment to education and its development.

With over two decades of teaching experience, Humphrey has spent the majority of his career at St. Columba's College, where he has dedicated himself to the advancement of teaching and learning. His passion for education and learning environments was highlighted in a 2023 interview with the Royal Society of Chemistry, where he discussed how he and his colleagues contributed to the redesign of the school's science laboratories – focusing on the needs of both students and teachers.

Humphrey is the current chairperson of the Irish Science Teachers' Association (ISTA), one of the largest voluntary subject associations in the country. Here Humphrey has demonstrated great leadership, particularly in relation to encouraging science teachers to get involved in the advancement of science learning in Ireland. Humphrey has established an extensive professional learning community for science teachers using WhatsApp. This enables fellow teachers to come together and share best practice, and to support each other's professional growth. This has been very successful and the initiative now has a membership of over 1,000 contributing to over 30 groups.

In addition to this, Humphrey is one of the main organisers of ResearchEd Ireland. ResearchEd conferences are organised all over the world by practising teachers. Ireland has held two ResearchEd conferences, both hosted by Humphrey's own school. These have attracted high-quality speakers from all over the world, providing opportunities for teachers in Ireland to update themselves on international best practice.

For more information on the ASTI Awards, see:
www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/
 Information on the Thomas MacDonagh Medal and the PJ Kennedy Awards will be published in the next edition of *ASTIR*.

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 6th, 2026

Take a bow



www.asti.ie
x.com/astionion
facebook.com/astiteachers
bsky.app/profile/astionion.bsky.social

ASTI SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

The ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee focuses on addressing workplace hazards in schools. Article written by BREEDA SLEVIN.



The ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee. Back row (from left): Michael McGrath, Sinéad Moore, Ian Mc Colgan, and Conor McDonald (ASTI Industrial Relations Official). Front row (from left): Paul Glynn, Helena Cunniffe, Éoin ÓhAodha and Barry Hazel.

The members of the ASTI Safety, Health and Welfare Committee are Keith Cassidy, Helena Cunniffe (Deputy Chair), Paul Glynn, Barry Hazel, Ian Mc Colgan, Michael McGrath, Sinéad Moore, Orla O'Callaghan, Éoin ÓhAodha (Chair), Padraig Curley (ASTI President), Richard Bell (ASTI Vice President). Conor McDonald, ASTI Industrial Relations Officer, supports the Committee.

Focus on legislation

The work of the Safety, Health and Welfare Committee focuses on addressing workplace hazards in schools, with a strong emphasis on psychosocial factors.

These include managing risks associated with digital technology and risks arising from the workplace environment within schools. Additionally, improving indoor air quality is a key priority, and a comprehensive clean

Also on the committee:



Padraig Curley



Richard Bell



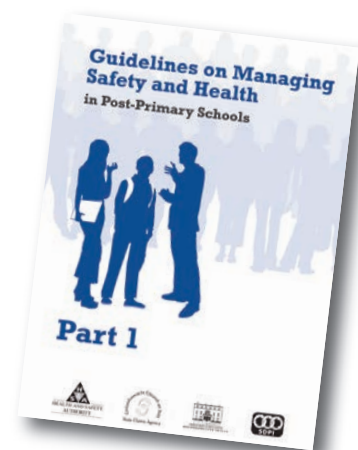
Keith Cassidy



Orla O'Callaghan

air guide for schools is in development. The first meeting of the present Committee took place in May 2025. The Committee met in September and October, and is due to meet again in November 2025. The Committee works to raise awareness of the obligations of the Safety, Health and

The Committee promotes the *Guidelines on Managing Safety, Health and Welfare in Post-Primary Schools*, issued by the HSA in collaboration with the Department of Education and Youth, the State Claims Agency and the School Development Planning Initiative.



Welfare at Work Act 2005, which states that all employees are entitled to select safety representatives to advocate for their health and safety.

Employers must allow suitable time off for representatives to gain the necessary knowledge and training for their role. The Safety, Health and Welfare Committee organises training for School Safety Representatives.

Training and guidelines

In the past year, the Committee has held in-person training sessions with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), focusing on managing safety, health and welfare in schools. Each session was oversubscribed, indicating a clear demand for future training, which the Committee will arrange. Members will be notified of upcoming training dates.

These sessions help to strengthen the network of School Safety Representatives and clarify their role, which is one of consultation and representation.

Safety Representatives are not required to act as safety advisors, and taking on the role does not impose legal duties. The Committee promotes the *Guidelines on Managing Safety, Health and Welfare in Post-Primary Schools*, issued by the HSA in collaboration with the Department of Education and Youth, the State Claims Agency and the School Development Planning Initiative. The Guidelines include a three-step risk-assessment process:

1. Identify the hazard.
2. Assess the risk in proportion to the hazard.
3. Identify and implement appropriate control measures to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Hazards are grouped into five categories:

1. Physical hazards.
2. Health hazards.
3. Chemical hazards.
4. Biological hazards.
5. Human factor hazards.

Addressing psychosocial hazards

Following a motion from ASTI Annual Convention 2024, the Committee initiated a survey to analyse stressors and psychosocial hazards affecting teachers, and findings were reported at Convention 2025.

The issue of permanent connectivity was highlighted as a stressor. Digital technology has changed the work environment, with teachers often receiving communications outside of working hours. This negatively impacts their work–life balance and health. It was found that despite efforts to promote psychosocial risk management, compliance remains below the necessary standards. Schools must conduct a risk assessment of psychosocial risks for inclusion in their Safety Statement.

Schools must conduct a risk assessment of psychosocial risks for inclusion in their Safety Statement.

This should be done biennially. The Safety, Health and Welfare Committee continues to advocate that Whole School Evaluations (WSE) should include inspection of an up-to-date Safety Statement that includes an assessment of psychosocial risk. The ASTI has also engaged with other unions through the European Trade Union Confederation, seeking legislative change to prioritise the identification of psychosocial health hazards in schools.

Clean air

The Committee is also developing a guide for clean air for schools. The 2023 Code of Practice for Indoor Air Quality provides practical guidance for compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Regulations 2007. A consistent CO₂ value below 1,000ppm indicates adequate ventilation. The guide is expected to be completed and circulated to schools during the 2025/2026 school year.

Committee Chair Eóin ÓhAodha says: “We are very proud that the ASTI’s Safety, Health and Welfare Committee is to the fore nationally in promoting good indoor air quality, awareness of mental health, and identification of psychosocial hazards in schools, and we are optimistic that the working environment within Irish education can become less stressful and more collaborative”.

For further information on the work of the Safety, Health and Welfare Committee, please visit <https://www.asti.ie/about->

ACMHAINNÍ NUA AGUS IMEACHTAÍ COGG

Is foinse ríthábhachtach tacaíochta do scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge í COGG.



COGG: Cé muid?

Is faoi fhorálacha Alt 31 den Acht Oideachais 1998 a bunaíodh COGG i 2002. I measc na sainchúraimí atá againn is ea:

- téacsleabhair, acmhainní agus seirbhísí sainchúraimí taca a chur ar fáil do scoileanna trí Ghaeilge,
- taighde a mhaoiniú agus a éascú ar oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge agus ar mhúineadh na Gaeilge,
- comhairle agus faisnéis a chur ar fáil don Aire Oideachais agus don Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta (CNCM) ar oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge agus ar mhúineadh na Gaeilge, agus
- tacú le cur i bhfeidhm an Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta.

An nuacht is déanaí ó COGG

Dialann Phleanála an Mhúinteora: Seo acmhainn luachmhar nuálach atá forbartha ag COGG agus a bhronnfar saor in aisce ar mhúinteoirí iar-bhunscoile lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta chun tacú leo moltaí dea-chleachtais ar an gcur chuige Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga (FCÁT) a chur i bhfeidhm sa seomra ranga.

Saibhreas agus cruinneas: *Ní Ceart go Cruinn* agus *Ní Snasta go Blasta* Seo sraith acmhainní tacúla, tarraingteacha, nua atá forbartha ag COGG agus a dhíríonn ar chruinneas agus ar shaibhreas teanga chun cabhrú le scoláirí ag leibhéal na Sraithe Sóisearaí. Bronnfar na hacmhainní seo saor in aisce ar scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta má ordaitear iad tríd an gcóras ordaithe acmhainní.

Téacsleabhair nuafhoilsithe: Tá raon leathan díobh réidh trí Ghaeilge anois, agus ar fáil ó fhoilsitheoirí éagsúla don scoilbhliain 2025/26 i roinnt ábhar ag leibhéal na Sraithe Sóisearaí agus Sinsearaí: stair, tíreolaíocht, gnó agus innealtóireacht ina measc. Téigh chuig suíomh COGG chun iad a fhiosrú.

Fóram Feasa: Is tionscnamh ceannródaíoch líonraithe do phobal cleachtais é Fóram Feasa chun tacú le múinteoirí agus le ceannairí iar-bhunscoile in earnáil an Ghaeloideachais. Tá an tionscnamh seo á chur ar fáil ag COGG i gcomhpháirt leis an mBord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Éireann (BOOÉ/ETBI). Bíonn deis iontach ag múinteoirí iar-bhunscoile lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta freastal ar cheardlanna ábhar le sainmhúinteoir nó speisialtóir san ábhar sin, acmhainní nua don teagasc trí Ghaeilge a thriail, agus bualadh le múinteoirí eile a mhúineann na hábhair chéanna leo.

Club Leabhar COGG: Seo club atá dírithe ar spreagadh na scíthléitheoireachta i measc an aosa óig trí leabhair i seánraí éagsúla a léamh lena gcomrádaithe ar scoil le linn na bliana. Tá breis agus 80 scoil (bunscoileanna agus iar-bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta) páirteach sa scéim rathúil seo i mbliana.

Chun tuilleadh eolais a fháil, téigh chuig www.cogg.ie nó www.tairseachcogg.ie

ASTI ANNUAL CONVENTION 2026

The ASTI will return to Wexford next April for Annual Convention 2026.



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 2026 will take place in Whites Hotel, Co. Wexford, from April 7-9.

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 2026. Go to the Events section of the website, where you will find the Convention 2026 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 their branch. Branches must submit the names of their chosen branch 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 2026, 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. When attending Annual Convention, you must be either a delegate or an observer. Please note that only delegates are allowed to speak on and vote on Convention motions.

Costs

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

Where to stay

Convention 2026 is being held in Whites Hotel, Co. Wexford. Accommodation for delegates will be available at Whites Hotel. Delegates book their own accommodation. Please be advised that 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 on key debates throughout the conference.

Topics for debate

Topics for debate are dictated by motions, which are submitted and selected at ASTI branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated 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 the Steering Committee in early February, and a final agenda is drawn up.

Connect at Convention

The ASTI encourages the use of social media during open debates (some debates are closed sessions and delegates may not discuss these debates on social media). Social media platforms X, Bluesky and Facebook allow the ASTI and delegates attending Convention to spread the news to their colleagues who cannot attend, and to highlight important Convention issues to their followers.



FITNESS TO PRACTISE: UNDERSTANDING THE TEACHING COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The ASTI supports teachers who find themselves the subject of a complaint to the Teaching Council. Article written by DESMOND O'TOOLE, ASTI Executive Officer: Development & Organisation.

It's a weekday morning. You're at home, getting ready for school. An envelope drops through your letterbox. You pick it up and open it. There is a letter inside with an 'An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta – The Teaching Council' letterhead, informing you that a complaint regarding your fitness to practise as a teacher has been received by the Council and setting out what you are required to do next.

Forty-five ASTI members have experienced such a moment since July 25, 2016, when Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act 2001-2015 concerning fitness to practise inquiries came into force.

This is the kind of experience that elicits a mix of emotions in the teachers who receive such letters, such as panic, confusion, or fear. Receiving such a letter from the Teaching Council is indeed a deeply challenging experience for any teacher.

The first step for a teacher who receives such a letter is to call their union. Call the ASTI. We will walk this path together with any member who faces a complaint regarding their fitness to practise. Below is an outline of how the complaints process works.

The process

When a complaint is received by the Teaching Council, it passes through up to three key stages. It is initially reviewed by the Director's office to confirm whether the teacher is registered with the Council, and that the complaint is not frivolous, vexatious, or an abuse of process.

If the Director forms the opinion that a registered teacher represents an immediate risk to the health and welfare of students or other children, they may go to the Council's Executive Committee to apply to the High Court to immediately suspend a teacher from teaching. Such applications are not common, but they do happen.

Once through this screening stage, the complaint is considered by the Council's Investigating Committee, which has a majority of serving teachers

The first step for a teacher who receives such a letter is to call their union. Call the ASTI. We will walk this path together with any member who faces a complaint regarding their fitness to practise.

as members. It is important to note that no information about the complaint or the people involved is publicly shared during the investigation stage, and the teacher's identity is kept confidential. This stage involves the collection of evidence and the preparation of a written submission by the ASTI on behalf of the teacher. The Investigating Committee must then assess whether there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence to meet the balance of probability test for the allegations set out in the complaint. If there is, the complaint will be passed to the Council's Disciplinary Committee. By far the majority of complaints against ASTI members have failed this test and been rejected at this stage for not meeting the threshold of proof needed to investigate further. When a complaint is passed to the Disciplinary Committee, it will appoint a three-person panel, two of whom are serving teachers, to conduct the actual disciplinary process, including any hearing. This disciplinary hearing is typically held in public and its proceedings are often reported in the national media. ASTI members who are subject to such a hearing are represented by the ASTI and may also be represented by the union's solicitors. It is this disciplinary panel that determines whether the

charges are proven or not, and decides any sanction to be applied. A sanction that suspends or removes a teacher from the Teaching Council Register must be confirmed by the High Court. Formal removal from the Register means that the teacher may not be paid from public funds, and hence that their employment will cease.

The entire process has a statutory basis, and great care is taken both by the Council in the prosecution of any case against a teacher, and by the ASTI in defending a member who finds themselves the subject of such an inquiry.

ASTI support

The Teaching Council's Fitness to Teach process is outlined above, but members may wonder about the impact that receiving that Teaching Council envelope has on an individual teacher. In my experience, teachers are especially vulnerable to criticism and threats to their professional reputation, both individually and collectively. Teachers are rightly held in high public regard and to a high standard of professional practice. The experience for any teacher of being subject to an examination of their professional conduct must generate alarm and confusion for that teacher. The very first thing to remember is not to panic. The teacher should call ASTI Head Office and they will be put in contact with an Industrial Relations Officer who specialises in fitness to practise cases. The Officer will want to see the complaint immediately, and will make arrangements to visit

the teacher very quickly to review the complaint. The Officer will remain in close contact with the teacher while the complaint is being processed by the Teaching Council, and will be their primary point of contact throughout this process. No ASTI member is ever left to walk such a difficult path on their own, whatever the allegation and whatever the outcome.

Most complaints made against ASTI members are, however, rejected at the initial investigation stage. This can be because the complaint does not relate to a teacher's fitness to practise, is inappropriate as local procedures may not have been exhausted, or it is determined to be exaggerated or even untrue. It still takes several months for these complaints to get to the point where they are rejected by the Council. During this time, a teacher has the worry of being subject to unfair scrutiny and the possibility, however remote, that they may face some sanction.

When a complaint is rejected, that teacher continues to teach without a stain on their character or professional reputation. That teacher's professional status has been securely validated by their professional body. A difficult experience for sure, but ending in a definitive vindication.

So, from the moment that envelope drops through a teacher's letterbox to however the complaint is eventually resolved, the ASTI will be there for that member, providing advice, representation, and support. We don't leave anyone behind. We take the defence of our members very seriously, because every teacher matters.



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SEEING THE WHOLE LEARNER

Empathy matters for students with developmental co-ordination disorder. Article written by DR CAROL KENNEDY GARDINER, the winner of the 2024 ASTI Centenary Scholarship Award. This article is based on Carol's research.

As teachers, we often speak of the importance of inclusion, differentiation, and student voice. But for learners deemed to have developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD), inclusion is more than a strategy – it is a daily experience of either being seen or being ignored. My doctoral research with post-primary learners who had been deemed to have DCD revealed a stark and powerful message: empathy – or the lack of it – shaped everything.

Exclusion

For many students diagnosed with DCD, school is not an inclusive space – it is a source of daily struggle. While their diagnosis affects physical co-ordination and planning, it does not diminish their intelligence or potential.

Yet the educational experiences of these young people are often marked by misunderstanding, exclusion, and a profound sense of invisibility. DCD, also known as dyspraxia, is a neurological condition that affects motor co-ordination.

Students may find tasks such as writing, using classroom equipment, or taking part in sports particularly challenging. Despite these obstacles, their greatest difficulty, as revealed through recent research, lies not in their condition but in how schools are structured to respond to it.

Learners in this research did not ask for perfect schools. They asked to be understood. For some of these learners, that understanding was absent. Reflecting on her time in post-primary school, Maya recalled a teacher who continuously belittled her, failing to recognise her needs and humiliating her in front of peers:

“I just got treated like so bad, like someone who was really not at the races ...”

My doctoral research with post-primary learners who had been deemed to have DCD revealed a stark and powerful message: empathy – or the lack of it – shaped everything.

Maya's story, sadly, was not unique. Alison also felt that empathy was unevenly distributed – that support and kindness were extended to some learners, but not to her when she needed it most:

“They're not really giving advice, not really listening ... I feel like they definitely could have looked out for people that actually needed it. It's not equal, it's not fair.”

Teachers matter

When we talk about learner voice in Irish education – enshrined in frameworks like 'Looking at Our School' (LAOS 2022) – we must ensure that we are not merely performing inclusion. As Foucault reminds us, power is not always loud or aggressive; it is often silent and invisible, embedded in everyday institutional practices. Tokenistic gestures toward 'voice' can conceal real marginalisation, especially when some learners are dismissed while others are heard. The emotional toll this dynamic creates was reflected again and again in learners' testimonies. Roger, for instance, spoke plainly:

“There was a lot of teachers I wouldn't bother ask for help.”



In these moments, what learners are asking for is not extraordinary intervention. They are asking for connection, for care, and for the professional capacity to stop, listen, and respond. They are asking for empathy. Empathy is not the same as sympathy or pity. It is not about lowering standards or making exceptions. It is about truly seeing the learner in front of you – understanding that behaviours may mask struggles, that silence might reflect exhaustion or shame, and that consistent kindness might be the only safe space in a school day.

Several learners described how parental advocacy became essential for survival in the post-primary system. As teachers we aim to empower our learners; however, some of those in this research spoke of feeling both powerless and voiceless.

Naoise shared that she learned self-advocacy from her mother. But not every child is equipped to ‘fight’, and not every family has the knowledge, energy, or resources to navigate complex systems of support. That is why teachers matter so much. Greater attentiveness to learners’ needs – and more open channels of communication – could ease the burden of advocacy on families and empower learners to speak for themselves.

Empathy is a core skill

Teachers are often overwhelmed. We know this. The demands of curriculum, behaviour management, and administration are substantial. But empathy does not require more hours in the day. It requires presence. It requires a willingness to hold back assumptions, to ask rather than assume, and to believe the learner’s experience. This research shows that when empathy is absent, learners

“I just got treated like so bad, like someone who was really not at the races ...”



Carol Kennedy Gardiner, the winner of the 2024 ASTI Centenary Scholarship Award is pictured with ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie at the 2024 Awards Evening.

They disengage. They learn that their struggles are theirs alone to bear. But when empathy is present – even in small moments – the entire trajectory of a learner’s experience can change.

withdraw. They disengage. They learn that their struggles are theirs alone to bear. But when empathy is present – even in small moments – the entire trajectory of a learner’s experience can change. We must also reconsider how we cultivate empathy as a professional standard. It is not a soft skill. It is a core skill. In teaching students with DCD – who may appear clumsy, distracted, disorganised, or withdrawn – we must remind ourselves that these surface behaviours are not character flaws. They are often the visible symptoms of an invisible struggle. If we are serious about inclusion, then we must centre empathy. Not as a buzzword or a poster on the wall, but as a practice. We must listen deeply, respond appropriately, and model the kind of adult conversation that prepares our learners for life beyond school. We must create schools where learners feel that their voice matters – and where teachers are equipped to hear it. As one learner put it:

“It’s not about building up a child to enter the real world. It’s about the school being able to say we have these high grades.”

Sadie’s words are a challenge to all of us. What kind of system are we building – and for whom?

Empathy cannot undo every barrier. But it is a powerful starting point. And for learners with DCD, it may be the difference between enduring school and truly belonging there.

BUDGET 2026 IGNORES EDUCATION



Following the announcement of the budget, concerns over lack of investment in education and support for teachers persist.

“[On the proposal to rejuvenate vacant properties for low-cost purposes for key workers] It is an enormous issue. Principals will ring me on a regular basis and tell me they advertise positions and that they are attracting no applicants for many positions.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

News, Virgin Media TV, October 1, 2025

“Education is basically being ignored in the budget ... Ireland consistently sits at the bottom of the tables in terms of investment in second-level education. The OECD *Education at a Glance* report this year puts us at the bottom again for investment in education, and less than half of the percentage of our GDP is spent on education than the average for the OECD or for the EU countries. In a wealthy country that is quite disgraceful and this budget does nothing for education. It has obviously done very little for teachers and for ordinary working people in general. It’s a great disappointment.”

Diarmaid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary

The Agenda, LMFM, October 2, 2025

“Budget 2026 is a missed opportunity for Ireland to halt its worsening teacher supply crisis ... What is most concerning about Budget 2026 is that it fails to address the fact that second-level class sizes are bigger than they were 17 years ago, prior to the 2008 economic crash.”

“There is no commitment to end the chronic shortage of second-level teachers, large class sizes and the glaring lack of resources in schools. Budget 2026 is a missed opportunity for Ireland to halt its worsening teacher supply crisis ... What is most concerning about Budget 2026 is that it fails to address the fact that second-level class sizes are bigger than they were 17 years ago, prior to the 2008 economic crash.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

The Irish Times, October 7, 2025

“I worry I’ll never own a home. In Ireland, there’s a focus on if you’re working hard, why don’t you get the things you deserve. We shouldn’t look at housing as a meritocracy for those who work hard. Housing should be a right and not a privilege ... If you increase teachers’ salaries, what will happen is the salaries will be eaten up by even higher rent. The government needs to announce a massive affordable housing programme and deliver on it rapidly to fix the housing crisis very soon because it’s having a catastrophic impact.”

Conall Ó Dufaigh, ASTI member

Irish Independent, October 7, 2025

“The government needs to announce a massive affordable housing programme and deliver on it rapidly”

“[On Budget 2026] A United Nations panel on the teaching profession recently advised governments that investment in education should be increased. At the moment, we are investing 0.8% of our gross domestic product on education. That is less than half of the EU average.”

John Byrne, ASTI member and Standing Committee

Representative Region 6

The Echo, October 8, 2025

“What is most concerning about Budget 2026 is that it fails to address the fact that second-level class sizes are bigger than they were 17 years ago, prior to the 2008 economic crash. This is despite the fact that classrooms are significantly more complex teaching and learning environments.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Irish Independent, October 8, 2025

“Tá an ráta caipitíochta i bhfad ró íseal, agus is méadú beag é fiche euro in aghaidh an dalta sa mheánscoil agus caoga euro an dalta sa bhunscoil. Ach fós, caithfidh tuistí a lámha a chur ina bpóca agus airgead a íoc chun an teas a choimeád ar siúl sna scoileanna. Tá sé seo go dona, agus cuimhnigh anois go bhfuilimid ina gcónaí i dtír shuibhir (ach fós caithfidh na tuistí airgead a íoc chun na scoileanna a choimeád oscailte). Tá sé seo dochreidte, agus is iad na daltaí atá thíos leis i gcónaí.”

Geraldine O’Loughlin, ASTI member and Standing Committee

Representative Region 2

Nuacht a hAon, RnaG, RTÉ, Deireadh Fómhair 10, 2025

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A warm welcome at Áras an Uachtaráin for retired teachers

As the President's term of office draws to a close, MARY FRANCES O'CONGHAILE shares her memories of a special day at the Áras with her RSTA Galway Branch colleagues.



RSTA Galway Branch members with President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina in the Main Reception Room.

I don't think I can remember a time when I didn't know Michael D. Higgins. I've known him through his ESB days, UCG (now University of Galway) and political life, and have followed his career with no small pride. So, when the suggestion was made at the AGM that members of the Galway Branch of the RSTA might visit the Áras, I was happy to check out the possibility. I had never lost contact with my old friend, and had made new friends with good people there, whom I contacted for advice on where to start.

Never was a door opened with greater welcome; never was a path more easily travelled!

We were met on the doorstep by the President's Secretary and his Aide de Camp, Sgt Tommy Martin. Coats came off and were hung, and we were ushered into the Main Reception Room, where seats were laid out. Some points of protocol were explained.

Clutching a pot of honey from the bees in my garden, wrapped in a white napkin and pinned with two RSTA buttons, I was whooshed into the Council of State room to meet the President privately. I imagine that my chin was hitting the floor. I had thought perhaps we would be lucky if the President joined us briefly for a photo. I handed over my honey to him and Sabina, pointing out the old RSTA envelope that I'd used as gift wrapping (recycle, reduce, reuse!). After the chat, we rejoined my Galway Branch colleagues.

The President welcomed us, mentioning, among other things, his time in the ESB with my late, beloved father Jimmy. Sabina was interested in



President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina with Mary Francis O'Conghaile in the Council of State room.



Former Chair of the ASTI Equality Committee Maura Greaney, trying out the President's inauguration chair for size.

knowing where people had taught, particularly in Mayo, being a Mayo woman herself. After formal photos were taken, we were invited to have refreshments in the State Dining Room. The President and Mrs Higgins spent time with us, chatting and posing for photos. The photos, taken by the media team, were forwarded to me later that evening. The food was delicious, the atmosphere relaxed, and the setting superb.

Our tour of the Áras continued, guided by Sgt Martin. We heard its story through audiovisual and timeline historical presentations. We even visited the President's study. And finally, we walked in the gardens to see trees of all ages planted by famous visitors. As we were about to leave, an alarm sounded and the building was evacuated!

The two Aides de Camp, Commandant Brian Walsh and Sgt Tommy Martin, shifted gears like a shot and left us to attend to responsibilities of a higher nature. Our final treat came in the form of Office of Public Works (OPW) transport back to our train. We cherish the memory of our special day in the Áras and the warm and generous welcome from our President, Uachtarán na hÉireann, Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina.

*Míle buíochas libh go léir.
Go mba fada buan sibh.*

Irish Film Institute Schools Programme 2025/2026

The Irish Film Institute (IFI) has launched a new Schools Programme for the 2025/2026 academic year for students and teachers. The Programme includes film screening events, workshops and resources to support film across the new and existing Leaving Certificate subjects, Drama, Film and Theatre Studies (DFTS), Climate Action and Sustainable Development (CASD), and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL).

The prescribed films for DFTS include Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*, Colm Bairéad's Oscar-nominated *An Cailín Ciúin*, and Celine Song's *Past Lives*. Screenings of all three titles are available in the IFI, as well as nationwide via the new free streaming media service developed by the IFI for the Department of Education and Youth. The DFTS channel gives teachers in Phase One schools access to all materials on the curriculum, alongside learning resources. For CASD students, Sandra Winther's *Lowland Kids* offers a captivating insight into the human impact of the global climate crisis.

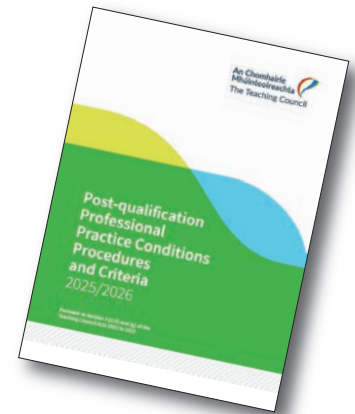
The Schools Programme includes screening of new films to support MFL subjects: Emmanuel Courcol's *The Marching Band* for Senior Cycle French; María Zanetti's *Germany* for Senior Cycle Spanish; Natja Brunckhorst's *Two To One* for Senior Cycle German; Claude Barras's *Savages* for Junior Cycle French; Olga Osorio's *Jump!* for Junior Cycle Spanish; and, the tale of an 11-year-old Syrian arriving in Berlin in Soleen Yusef's *Winners*.

The Programme will take place in the IFI as well as nationally across 18 partner venues, and online via the IFI@Schools platform. Tickets are €6.00 per student for regular Schools Programme screenings. For special events and workshops, tickets are €8.00 per student. Teachers go free and receive a free tea or coffee at the IFI on the day of the screening for all online bookings.

For more information and to book tickets, please see: ifi.ie/learn/booking

An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta The Teaching Council

Revised Teaching Council registration regulations



Following extensive engagement by teacher trade unions with the Department of Education and Youth, the Teaching Council has revised its registration regulations for teachers who have qualified outside of Ireland. Eligible teachers may apply to register and complete their teacher induction process, also known as Droichead, on a timebound process.

This timebound provision opened for applications on October 22, 2025, and will close on December 31, 2027.

For more information and to apply for Droichead, please see the Teaching Council website: www.teachingcouncil.ie/i-am-a-registered-teacher/registration-with-conditions/droichead/

OBITUARY

John (Sean) Woods



The members of Dublin South West Branch were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of our longstanding Chairperson John Woods.

John, an active trade unionist, was the beating heart of the branch – working tirelessly, often behind the scenes, for his teaching colleagues.

At his recent funeral, the genuine tears of a huge contingent of students from Marino College were a testament to the warmth and fondness these students had for John

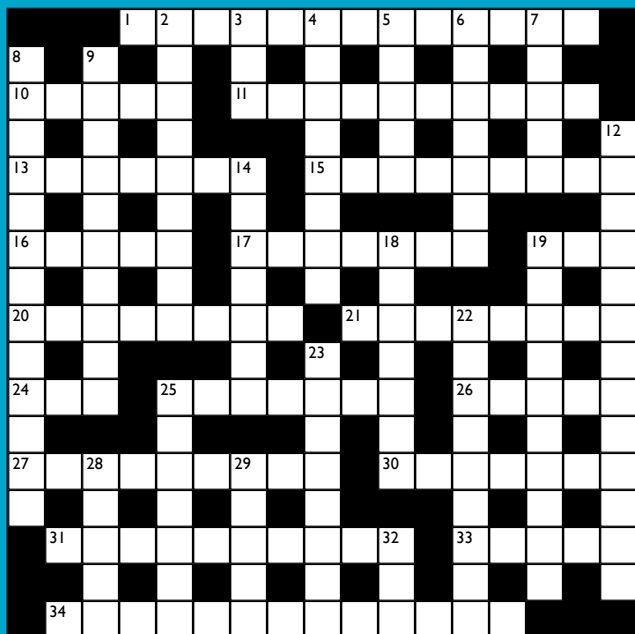
as a teacher. John started late into teaching, following a period working for the Irish Press. Stints in Crumlin CBS, Presentation School Warrenmount, St Paul's and, more recently, Marino College gave him a wealth of experience, which he passed on as a committed Irish and History teacher. He brought his love of the Irish language to each of these schools.

Our deepest sympathies are with John's partner Krongkan, sister Bridget, cousins Barry and Michael, and niece Susan.

Ní bheidh do leithéid arís ann.

ASTI members,
Dublin South West John Woods Branch.

Win €250



ACROSS

1. Baking ingredient from Dicken's dolmen (9,4)
10. Third-level institution, in short, might lead to 32 county aspiration (5)
11. Objectivity of a troop of soldiers (10)
13. Sounds like number on boring machine might come from plant (7)
15. Relating to dead skin at the base of a fingernail (9)
16. Religious and social movement associated with singer Bob Marley (5)
17. Carol Kennedy Gardiner regards this not as a soft skill, but as a core skill (7)
19. Describes combatants presumed captured or dead (1,1,1)
20. Conor McGregor, for example, or Michael D. Higgins (8)
21. Relating to weather or atmosphere (8)
24. Live musical performance (3)
25. Any type of sweet, fizzy drink (4,3)
26. Better rainbows might lead to the Earth (5)
27. Errors I've made could lead to deep water (9)
30. Tune protection device to prevent liquid flow (7)
31. Data input device that transfers information to computer (4,6)
33. Alabama terror begins change (5)
34. Classic comfort food with gooey filling (7,6)

DOWN

2. Exceed, infringe, go beyond (9)
3. Carol Kennedy Gardiner's research focus (1,1,1)
4. Computer company known for its Navigator browser, popular during the early nineties (8)
5. Disney Florida theme park (5)
6. Imitation, parody, impersonation (7)
7. Czech-American tennis player from the 80s (5)
8. Clumsy or unco-ordinated person (13)
9. Declaring something to be true or genuine (10)
12. Loony dairy biscuits (5,8)
14. Side sheltered from the wind (7)
18. African freshwater fish (7)
19. Windbag, chatterbox, blatherskite (10)
22. Buddy to Iranian currency could be fabrics (9)
23. Unstable picadors might be intermittent (8)
25. Rustled up Austrian pastry (7)
28. A step up from ASTIR! (5)
29. Overweight during microbe season (5)
32. Second of three major Shannon lakes (3)

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12
19

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Solutions to Crossword No. 2504

ACROSS

1. Great Yarmouth
10. Idled
11. Completing
13. Deigned
15. Marco Polo
16. Extra
17. Situate
19. ICE
20. Marathon
21. Ramallah
24. Red
25. Flexure
26. Tudor
27. Casserole
30. Reeling
31. Windjammer
33. Trevi
34. You make me sick

DOWN

2. Redundant
3. Arc
4. Yamamoto
5. Ruler
6. Outcome
7. Tango
8. Middle America
9. Cloistered
12. Together again
14. Dispose
18. Amateur
19. Ill advised
22. Authentic
23. Supermom
25. Freedom
28. Sligo
29. Ozark
32. Ras

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner
of Crossword No. 2504:
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Secondary School, Ballingarry,
Thurles, Co. Tipperary. Tipperary
Branch member.



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