

Benchmarking fails to address salary

The ASTI has expressed its bitter disappointment with the Report of the Second Benchmarking Body, which has awarded no salary increase to teachers.

The gap which exists between the lifetime earnings of teachers and those working in comparable careers in the public and private sectors has not been addressed in the Report of the Second Benchmarking Body.

The Report recommends no increases be given to teachers, despite evidence that the longer one spends as a teacher, the more marked the disparity between teachers' lifetime salaries and those of benchmarked comparators.

This disparity is further exacerbated for second-level teachers because many of them spend up to eight years in part-time work before obtaining a permanent position.

In its Report, the Benchmarking Body stated that the pensions of public service groups are significantly more valuable than those of private sector groups and that the superior value of public service pensions should be quantified at 12 per cent. This was taken into account in examining grades in the education sector.

Responding to the Report, ASTI General Secretary John White said the ASTI will be looking to the next round of pay talks to address teachers' dismay with the Benchmarking Report. "Second-level teachers have delivered a good education service to the community; the Benchmarking Body has not delivered a good salary to teachers," said Mr White.

"Ireland's future economic and social well-being is dependent on a highly

educated, skilled and dynamic workforce. The most important determinant of this is the committed, well-paid teacher. International surveys have put the literacy standards reached by Ireland's second-level pupils right at the top, our science standards are significantly above average and our maths standards are at average. This has been achieved while expenditure on each second-level student in Ireland relative to our country's wealth is at the bottom of the OECD table."

Other public sector groups have also expressed disappointment with the Benchmarking Report. The vast majority of public servants received no increases. It is unlikely that public service unions will agree to enter another Benchmarking process, which would be reporting in 2012, if the terms of reference remain as in Benchmarking Two.

No parity for primary principals

Submissions to the Benchmarking Body on behalf of principals of primary schools sought that the Primary Principal's Allowance be brought in line with those applying in the second-level sector. The Benchmarking Body did not support parity between primary and second-level principals stating that the jobs of second-level principals were found to be more demanding than those at primary level. However, it did recommend an improvement in the allowances for primary principals, particularly in smaller schools where there were difficulties in recruiting principals.

Discussions on the next round of social partnership pay negotiations are expected to begin in February. ♦



Benchmarking Report
The Benchmarking Report is available on the ASTI website, www.asti.ie

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School issued with Safety Improvement Notice

A second level school in the Midlands has been issued with a formal Improvement Notice by the Health and Safety Authority (H.S.A). This arises from a visit and inspection of the school by a H.S.A. inspector.

The ASTI had expressed concerns to the school's Board of Management regarding the inappropriate treatment of asbestos at the school. Work involving the removal of asbestos had been undertaken at the school by unqualified persons, without due care for staff and students and without a proper method statement as is required by law. Following unsuccessful attempts by the ASTI to have this serious matter resolved at school level the matter was reported to the H.S.A. who sent in an inspector. ♦

Standardised school year

Arrangements for the standardisation of the school years 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 have been agreed at the Teachers' Conciliation Council.

The following dates apply to second-level schools for the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 school years. The Circular containing full details of arrangements for the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 school years is available on the ASTI website, www.asti.ie.

February 2008 mid-term break: February 11th - February 15th 2008 inclusive.

Easter 2008: All schools will close on March 14th 2008 which will be the final day of the school term. All schools will re-open on March 31st 2008.

October 2008 mid-term break: October 27th - October 31st 2008 inclusive.

Christmas 2008: All schools will close on December 23rd which will be the final day of the school term. All schools will re-open on January 7th 2009.

February 2009 mid-term break: February 16th - February 20th 2009 inclusive.

Easter 2009: All schools will close on April 3rd 2009 which will be the final day of the school term. All schools will re-open on April 20th, 2009. ♦

AVC scheme

The Annual Trustees Report for the ASTI AVC scheme is now available. Any member requiring a copy should contact Brigid Fitzgerald, ASTI Head Office. Tel: 01/6040172.

Interested in career break or jobsharing?

The deadline date for teachers wishing to apply for a career break or jobsharing in the 2008/09 school year is March 1st 2008. Interested teachers should apply in writing to the Board of Management stating the reason/s they wish to take a career break / jobshare.

Pictured at the launch of the Post Primary Education Forum are John White, ASTI General Secretary; Michael Moriarty, General Secretary, Irish Vocational Education Association; and Ferdia Kelly, General Secretary, Joint Managerial Body. See page 4



Towards 2016: second module

The four teaching unions have set forth the following position paper in relation to negotiations on the second module of the partnership agreement, Towards 2016.

- Pay increases must be significantly ahead of inflation and should comprise increases to reflect increases in the Consumer Price Index and growth in the economy.
- The pay agreement should not be more than two years duration.
- The pay pause for the public service should be removed.
- A review mechanism must be built into the pay agreement so as to prevent erosion of pay increases by inflation.
- The flexibility and change provisions should be those already agreed under Towards 2016.
- Consideration should be given to the mechanism through which the agreement is ratified.
- Additional resources will be sought to improve teaching and learning.
- A mechanism will be provided to process grade claims. ♦

Teacher swap

Permanent teacher of biology, science and maths in a Galway city school looking to swap with same in north Mayo. Phone 087-1246194

Teacher of geography and history in a Cork school looking to swap with same in Tipperary. Phone 025-32396 / 087-9983301

Request for photos for ASTI History

Do you or your branch have interesting photos of local ASTI events, activities or activists from times past?

John Cunningham, the historian who is writing the History of the ASTI to mark our centenary year in 2009 is interested in accessing old photos.

Pictured right are Lucan teachers participating in the 1985 pay dispute.

For more information contact Brigid Fitzgerald at ASTI Head Office or send your photos (with return address) to Brigid Fitzgerald, ASTI Head Office, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8. ♦



A scene from the 1985 pay dispute.

Almost 1,000 avail of Employee Assistance Service

In the 12 months up to September 30th 2007, 916 individuals had been in contact with the new Employee Assistance Service. Approximately 85% of those who contacted the service were teachers, 7% were principals and up to 10% were family members of teachers. The majority of contacts (60%) were by primary teachers and 40% were by second-level teachers.

45% of callers received telephone support with calls lasting up to one hour. 50% of callers were provided with face to face counselling of up to six sessions. In a few cases counselling of 'couples' was provided and a number of teachers were referred on to other agencies or specialists.

Teachers contacted the service seeking advice on a range of personal issues including health, stress, addiction, bereavement and marital matters. One third of the contacts were specifically work related including interpersonal relationships, job anxiety, classroom management and work related stress.

The EAS service, which assists teachers and/or any of their family members, can be contacted at 1800 44 44 44; eas@vhics.ie. ♦

Staffing and funding campaign

ASTI membership increases

On December 1st, 2007 ASTI membership reached its highest level in seven years. There are now 17,031 members in the ASTI compared with 16,895 in 2006 and 16,580 in 2005. The number of Associate members of ASTI has increased since last year's by 296. There are now 3,162 members in community and comprehensive schools and colleges, up from 3,073 in 2006.

In the past 10 years, ASTI membership in these schools and colleges has increased by 37%.

The ASTI is continuing its campaign on staffing and funding into 2008.

Last year the union commissioned research on class size which found that 64% of Third Year students in Irish second-level schools experience classes of 25 students or more and 16% experience classes of 30 students or more. The ASTI conducted a lobbying campaign prior to the general election on the issues of staffing and funding of second-level schools. This resulted in a commitment in the Programme for Government negotiated after the last general election to give priority to a reduction in class sizes in English, Irish and maths.

Parents, teachers, schools campaign

Since late 2007, the ASTI has been engaged in working with the new Post-Primary Education Forum – a pressure group of parents, teacher unions and management authorities to improve the staffing and funding of schools. No extra teachers were given in the budget at either primary or post primary level. The ASTI continues to lobby the Government on this.

As part of its campaign on staffing and funding for second-level schools, the ASTI is monitoring the number of teaching posts in the second-level sector including permanent posts, contract of indefinite duration posts, and over quota posts.

A CID is a permanent contract

A Contract of Indefinite Duration of 18 hours and over in a voluntary secondary school is the same as a Contract of Continuous Employment (PWT) and the holder has the same terms and conditions of employment. A CID is a permanent contract. The only difference is the route through which it is obtained. The ASTI is making the strongest representations that teachers on CIDs of 18 hours and over in community and comprehensive schools should be entitled to the same rights.

In 05/06, the number of PWT + CIDs on 18-22 hours was 16,891. That represented an increase of permanent (CIDs and PWT) contracts of 1,084 over 04/05 though the number of pupils fell by 1,965. There were a further 177 part-time CIDs. This must have meant that a significant proportion of those CIDs were in over-quota posts who were appointed because of the Transitional Agreement which gave effect to the Fixed Term Work Act. This increase in over-quota posts was anticipated.

Because many schools had not satisfied the requirements of the Protection of Workers (Fixed-Term Work) legislation as agreed at the Conciliation Council and circulated in circular letter 14/05 as the Transitional Agreement, vacancies which would normally have fallen to be filled in 06/07 and 07/08 were already filled by the CID holders so there was a drop in the number of traditional contracts of continuous employment offered in 06/07 and in 07/08. The number of pupils in 07/08 is not yet available but it is unlikely to be significantly ahead of the 04/05 figure.

Appointment Ratio

The pupil/teacher appointment ratio has not changed. What has changed since 04/05 is the introduction of CIDs. CIDs are part of the quota so there is an inevitable decline in the number of the old contracts of continuous employment (PWTs).

Part-Time CIDs

Over 80% of CIDs are for over 18 hours. The fundamental issue for the ASTI centres on CIDs for less than 18 hours in voluntary secondary schools and less than 22 hours in community/comprehensive schools. A proportion of the total number (300) in this category is probably content to be permanent part-time because of lifestyle issues. However, there is a significant majority who would wish to be "wholetime" and in the fixed-term talks this is a primary goal of the ASTI. ♦