

Talks between unions, government side underway

The ASTI is attending the talks between the public service unions and the management side which are expected to continue into February. The other 26 public service unions are also represented at the talks.

The Government side proposal is to cut €1 billion off the public service pay and pensions bill over 2013, 2014, and 2015.

At its meeting on January 10, Standing Committee decided to enter the talks. At a meeting of the ASTI Central Executive Council on January 12th, a proposal not to enter the talks was overwhelmingly rejected. Standing Committee and CEC are of the view that outside the talks the ASTI would have no influence on the final outcome and that the final outcome could be imposed on the ASTI anyway. Inside the talks the ASTI along with other unions, particularly the teacher unions, can seek to influence the outcome.

Standing Committee has made it clear that the ASTI will be prioritising the pay and conditions of teachers, including new entrants to teaching, in the talks. ASTI members will be balloted on any outcome that impacts negatively on teachers' pay or conditions of employment.

For more information see www.asti.ie.

Day of action against austerity

The ASTI is asking all members to participate in a day of action on Saturday, February 9th to demand an end to the pointless programme of austerity forced on Ireland by the EU/ ECB/ IMF "Troika".

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is organising demonstrations in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford. The world media will be invited to cover the event and hear about the impact of "Troika" imposed austerity on ordinary Irish people. It is vital the voices of second-level teachers are heard.

The overwhelming burden of Banking Debt is the core cause of draconian budgetary austerity. It is because of it that our Government is unable to borrow the money to run the country in the world financial markets. Therefore we have to rely on the "Troika" to fund us. Their cash comes with a heavy price tag – endless austerity.

Debt is causing a vicious spiral of decline for Ireland. About one-third of our national debt of €192 billion approximately is directly attributable to the banks. While the guarantee of September 2008 has been disastrous for Ireland, it probably headed off a banking collapse in Europe. We must insist on a restructuring deal in return. It is not enough simply to leave it to the Government to negotiate it. We must all get out and demonstrate the demand for it.

For full information visit www.asti.ie.

Day of Action

**Saturday
February 9th**

Be heard

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**Support the Fair Shop
Campaign**

The ASTI supports The Fair Shop Campaign, which promotes quality employment in the retail sector by encouraging trade union members, their families, and supporting organisations to make informed choices to use Fair Shop designated retail outlets.

Fair Shop encourages you to use unionised shops rather than non-unionised shops. Fair shop will also help to reward retailers that recognise and do business with Mandate Trade Union by increasing their business and market share.

**Find out more at
www.fairshop.ie**

New teaching posts

450 new second level posts will be created in the 2013/14 school year as a result of growing pupil numbers.

The second-level school population is expected to grow by approximately 10,000 pupils next year. The 450 new second-level teaching posts takes into account the loss of approximately 100 teaching posts due to the Budget 2013 decision to increase the pupil teacher ratio in fee-charging schools from 21:1 to 23:1.

However, it is important to state that the new posts will not lead to smaller classes or better subject choice for students as the posts are merely a result of demographic changes. The fact remains that second-level schools have lost approximately 2,000 teaching posts since 2009.

Budget 2013

- Five years of cutbacks despite growth in pupil numbers

Education cuts amounting to €90 million in 2013 will begin to impact on teachers and schools from this month.

While the pupil-teacher ratio has been maintained at 19:1 for schools in the free education scheme (18.25:1 in DEIS schools), it will rise by two points in fee-charging schools (from 21:1 to 23:1) this September. This means teachers in these schools will be redeployed and fixed-term teachers will lose their jobs.

The main measures affecting second-level schools in Budget 2013 are:

- a two-point increase in the pupil teacher for fee-paying schools from 21:1 to 23:1;
- capitation grant will be reduced by 2%;
- a change in maternity leave and adoptive leave arrangements; and,
- the pupil-teacher ratio for PLC programmes will be increased from 17:1 to 19:1.

Changes to maternity leave

Under new maternity and adoptive leave arrangements announced in Budget 2013, teachers will not be entitled to accrue days in lieu for planned school closures that occur after 1st May, 2013 and overlap with maternity or adoptive leave.

The changes were unilaterally imposed without consultation. The ASTI immediately raised the issue with the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills.

The ASTI is continuing to make representations in relation to the issue. In addition, the union has sought legal advice on the equality implications of the new arrangements and will take equality cases on behalf of women affected. Keep up to date at www.asti.ie.

Arrangements prior to budget changes

Teachers are entitled to take 26 weeks of statutory paid maternity leave and up to 16 weeks of statutory unpaid maternity leave. As well as this, teachers could take up to 30 days leave in lieu for time when their maternity leave overlapped with planned school closures (Christmas, Easter, mid-term, summer break, public holidays and, where appropriate, religious holidays).

Teachers are entitled to take 24 weeks paid adoptive leave and up to 16 weeks unpaid adoptive leave. As well as this, teachers could take up to 27 days leave in lieu where adoptive leave overlapped with planned school closures.

New arrangements

Teachers maintain their entitlement to 26 weeks of statutory paid maternity leave and 24 weeks statutory paid adoptive leave. They also maintain entitlement to take up to 16 weeks unpaid maternity and adoptive leave.

Until May 1st 2013 any part of the statutory 26 weeks maternity leave or 24 weeks adoptive leave which overlaps with any planned school closures until that date, will entitle a teacher to leave in lieu for all such days, subject to a maximum of 30 working days in the case of maternity leave and 27 days in the case of adoptive leave.

After May 1st 2013 teachers will not be entitled to accrue days in lieu for any planned school closures.

For more information on maternity and adoptive leave, and to keep updated on the potential ASTI legal challenge, see www.asti.ie.

Junior cycle consultation – update

The ASTI has had an unprecedented response to its junior cycle consultation initiated following the Minister for Education and Skills' announcement of his 'Framework for Junior Cycle' without consultation in October 2012.

More than 300 (out of 522) schools and 34 (out of 56) branches held meetings on the junior cycle and provided rich feedback on the outcomes to the ASTI.

The views of CEC representatives were heard at a special CEC meeting in Dublin on January 12.

The next steps

Later this month the ASTI Education Committee will consider the consultation process to date and will present the formal and considered views of the committee to Standing Committee.

Standing Committee will consider all views and submissions from schools, branches, CEC and the Education Committee. It will develop a number of proposals on Junior Cycle reform based on the consultation process. These proposals will be signed off and produced in document format in February. Copies will be sent to every school and ASTI branch for final consultation.

ASTI branches will receive a document with the findings of the ASTI Junior Cycle consultation process, and Standing Committee's recommendations in February

Finally, the proposals will be debated by Annual Convention on Tuesday, April 2nd. The decisions reached by Convention will form the basis of ASTI policy and strategy on Junior Cycle reform.

Since the Minister's junior cycle announcement the ASTI has met with representatives from the Department of Education and Skills and insisted that teachers voices must be heard. ASTI representatives have also discussed the implications of the Junior Cycle Framework for schools, students and teachers with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Department of Education and Skills, the Joint Managerial Body (JMB), The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) and the Inspectorate.

Sick leave referrals

As announced in Budget 2013, sick leave referral time for teachers is to be brought in line with the Civil Service. Teachers will be referred to the occupational health service (Medmark) after 4 weeks of sick leave. Previously teachers were referred after 12 weeks. This measure was part of a binding Labour Court decision recommending changes to teachers' sick leave entitlements issued in July 2012.

The new procedures will be phased in as follows:

- On or after February 1, 2013 any teacher **on sick leave** who has had **4 weeks continuous or 12 weeks cumulative** sick leave in a 12 month period must be referred to the occupational health service.
- From January 2014, any teacher **on sick leave** who has had **4 weeks continuous or cumulative sick leave** absence in a 12-month rolling period must be referred to the occupational health service.

For more information see the leave section of the ASTI website – www.asti.ie

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The number of schools that returned feedback as part of the ASTI junior cycle consultation

Pregnancy related sick leave referrals

The procedures for pregnancy related sick leave referral have also changed. A period of absence due to pregnancy related illness does not count towards a teachers' sick leave record. It had been the case that the occupational health service had to be consulted to confirm pregnancy related illness. However, teachers no longer need to be referred to the Occupational Health Service until such time as their entitlement to full salary is at issue.



Come to ASTI Convention 2013

Whites Hotel, Wexford Town, Monday 1st April – Thursday 4th April

Play an important role in deciding your union’s policy and have your voice heard on important education issues by attending ASTI Convention. New delegates are always welcome!

What’s involved?

Convention covers a range of topics relating to your profession, your union, and education. Many important debates will be held over the four days but you can prioritise the items that are most important to you and your branch.

What will it cost?

The cost of your travel to and from Convention is covered, and an overnight allowance is paid to cover your accommodation costs. There is a registration fee of €30 per person, which is paid by your branch.

Can I bring my family?

Play centre facilities for delegates’ children will be available each day during Convention hours. Places must be reserved in advance not later than Friday 1st March 2013. Make sure to check out the tours and day-trips we have organised at www.asti.ie.

Nighttime entertainment

There will be plenty of time to meet up with colleagues outside of Convention hours. One of the best opportunities is at the Convention Dinner, which will take place on Tuesday 2nd April in Whites Hotel. The cost of a Convention Dinner ticket is normally €45.00 but if your Branch reserves a table of ten before Friday 22nd March, it will cost only €350.

Your branch can join with another Branch and book a table under one name. Email info@asti.ie, reference “Annual Convention Dinner”. Payment for reserved tables must reach ASTI Accounts Department on or before 27th March 2013. Tickets will also be on sale from 2.30 - 3.30 pm in the Main Foyer, Whites Hotel, Wexford on Tuesday 2nd April at a cost of €45.00.

Any teacher who has been a member of the ASTI for one year or more can be nominated as a delegate.

Book your accommodation

Accommodation at Whites Hotel is on a “first come, first served” basis. Delegates are asked to book in pairs or to indicate the person with whom they will share; a limited number of single rooms are available. Family rooms (up to max 3 children) are charged at a double room rate. Children under 12 stay free when sharing with parents (meals not included); children over 12 are charged at full price.

Book by contacting Whites Hotel at 053-9122311 or info@whitesofwexford.ie. The hotel will provide you with a reservation number. Include this number on the form below and return to: ASTI Annual Convention Reservations, Whites Hotel, Wexford.

Reservation No. Arrival date Departure date

Please tick whichever room you require Single €90 per night Double/Twin €130 per night Family room See above

Please reserve one room for:

Name
Address
Tel. No.
Email

Name
Address
Tel. No.
Email

Child/children’s name(s) and age(s)

Credit card details

Cardholder’s name

Credit Card No. Expiry date:

Booking forms without a reservation number will not be guaranteed. A credit card number is essential to guarantee booking. Information on other hotels, guest houses and bed & breakfasts in the area can be found at www.asti.ie.