

Remain united – stand up for education and teaching

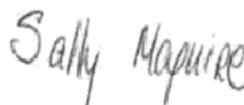
The recent ballots saw ASTI members voting 2:1 against the Haddington Road Agreement and 2:1 in favour of industrial action. This gave Standing Committee a strong mandate to begin a campaign of industrial action in order to demonstrate to the Government the seriousness of teachers' concerns and the urgent need to discuss these concerns with the ASTI.

While the industrial action is designed to minimise the impact on students' education, in order to be effective there must be some level of disruption to the normal operation of schools and to the work of the Department of Education and Skills. In this context, the directives on out-of-school meetings and on duties arising from vacated posts of responsibility will impact on the administration of schools while the directive on non co-operation with in-service for the new Junior Cycle Framework will impact directly on the Department of Education and Skills' preparations for the implementation of the Framework. The directive on posts of responsibility highlights the increasing workload burden on teachers and principals.

Industrial action is difficult but it is necessary if we are to take a stand against unilateral actions by the Government to worsen teachers' working conditions and to diminish the learning environment of our students. A 2:1 majority in favour of industrial action, up to and including strike action, indicates that there is a strong sense of solidarity in the ASTI and it is vital that we hold on to and grow this solidarity over the coming days and weeks. Regardless of what kind of retaliation we experience, regardless of the reactions of the commentariat, we must remain united in standing up for education and teaching.



Pat King, ASTI General Secretary



Sally Maguire, ASTI President

The Directives

Under ASTI Rules, members are required to adhere to directives issued by Standing Committee

Directive 1

ASTI members are directed not to attend meetings that take place outside normal school hours.

Directive 2

ASTI members are directed not to agree to alter existing post duties in any way which will increase the workload of individual posts of responsibility. Where a post of responsibility is vacated, members are directed not to undertake any duties thereby arising unless they are pensionably remunerated for this.

Directive 3

ASTI members are directed to withdraw co-operation with any in-service organised for the new Junior Cycle Framework.

ASTI position on timetable reassignment

ASTI members are no longer obliged to accept timetable reassignment as per The Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014.

Full details on ASTI directives including a Q&A are available at www.asti.ie.

ASTI President, Sally Maguire and General Secretary, Pat King wish to thank school stewards who are playing a vital role in maintaining communications between the ASTI and members during the current industrial action dispute

Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn spoke in the Dáil following ASTI members' rejection of the Haddington Road Agreement. He stated that ASTI members would lose protection against compulsory redundancies as a result of the rejection the Haddington Road agreement.

In response, ASTI General Secretary Pat King emphasised that ASTI members were made aware of the consequences prior to the ballots. "I am astounded that the Minister would raise the spectre of redundancies at this time instead of engaging in seeking a resolution. We call on the Minister or for his officials to meet with the ASTI, to listen to the concerns of teachers," he said.

S&S arrangements

ASTI members should continue to engage with current S&S Scheme arrangements. The current S&S scheme is voluntary and attracts payment.

Outcomes of the ballots

Ballot on Haddington Road Agreement:

“Are you in favour of accepting the Haddington Road Proposals for a Public Service Agreement as issued by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) in May 2013?”

Ballot papers issued: 16,867
 Ballot papers returned: 9,215
 Valid poll: 9,186
 Yes: 3,409
 No: 5,777
 Invalid: 29

Ballot on Industrial action:

“In the event that ASTI members vote to reject the proposed Haddington Road Agreement and in response to decisions taken by the Government in the Financial Emergency in the Public Interest Act 2013 (FEMPI Act) to cut teachers’ pay and worsen teachers working conditions, are you willing to take industrial action (e.g. work to rule, non-co-operation, withdrawal from various initiatives) up to and including strike action as directed by ASTI Standing Committee?”

Ballot papers issued: 15,739
 Ballot papers returned: 8,825
 Valid poll: 8,718
 Yes: 5,645
 No: 3,073
 Invalid: 107

Last month, ASTI members voted to reject the Haddington Road Agreement by a 63% majority. As a result, members remain subject to the full terms of the FEMPI Act, from July 1, 2013.

The ASTI considers the pay cuts imposed under FEMPI a breach of the Croke Park Agreement and ASTI members voted last month, by a 65% majority, to take industrial action in opposition to these cuts.

ASTI Standing Committee has the responsibility of implementing the decisions of members and of CEC. Standing Committee met on September 23rd and decided to issue 3 industrial action directives to members, in addition to taking a position on timetabling.

Timeline of events leading up to the industrial action

February

Following talks facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) between the Government and public sector unions, proposals on a public sector agreement (‘Croke Park II’) emerge. These proposals are put to a ballot of ASTI members.

April

April 16: ASTI members vote to reject the LRC proposals (‘Croke Park II’) by 84%.

April 19: Teacher unions decide to ballot members on industrial action in the event that Government imposes pay cuts.

May

The LRC communicates a formal message to teacher unions from the Government that if no agreement is reached, the Government will move to enact legislation to cut pay and stop incremental increases.

Further talks towards revised proposals are held between the public service unions and Government, facilitated by the LRC. On May 18: ASTI CEC votes to attend these talks

May 20: 87% of members vote for industrial action in the event that the Government acts unilaterally to cut the pay or worsen the working conditions of teachers.

May 21: revised LRC proposals emerge from talks in the form of the Haddington Road Agreement.

May 23: Government publishes the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Bill, 2013.

June

The Government indicates that the Haddington Road Agreement proposals represent a final offer and that the alternative is that those outside the agreement will be subject to the full terms of the FEMPI Act.

June 21: ASTI Standing Committee refers a decision to ballot members on the Haddington Road proposals to a meeting of CEC on August 15.

July

July 1: The terms of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act, 2013 come into force and applies in full to all ASTI members.

August

August 15: ASTI 180-member CEC decides to put the Haddington Road Agreement to a ballot of members, recommending that members reject the Agreement. A ballot on industrial action is also to be held.

September

September 20: ASTI members vote by 63% to reject the Haddington Road Agreement and by 65% for industrial action.

September 23: ASTI Standing Committee meets to decide on the form of industrial action to be pursued. ASTI Standing Committee issues three directives and takes a position on timetabling.

October

October 2: ASTI industrial action directives issued by ASTI Standing Committee come into force.

What next?

Standing Committee will meet to review the industrial action campaign and any Government response. The Minister and Officials from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have said that there will be no negotiation on the Haddington Road Agreement. However, the ASTI is insisting that this dispute will only be resolved as a result of talks between the ASTI and Government.

Be active, be engaged in your union

Keep up to date at www.asti.ie