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ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

ISSN 0790-6560 | VOLUME 44: NUMBER 4: SEPTEMBER 2026

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Published on behalf of ASTI by Think Media

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

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

A new school year

Firstly, I want to wish you well as you embark on a new school year. A special welcome to our new teachers. If you haven't already joined a union, I urge you to do so now. The ASTI is the only union in Ireland that works exclusively for second-level teachers. You can read about the benefits of membership in this edition of *ASTIR*.

Workload

There is an old proverb: all lay loads on a willing horse. Despite the under-resourcing of our education system, schools and teachers have risen to all kinds of challenges over the past decade. Social, cultural, environmental, economic, technological and political shifts have resulted in the rapid and continuous introduction of new initiatives and policies in schools, without time to embed, integrate, or process. While outwardly it appears that schools have coped well during this tumultuous period, research tells us that teachers plugging gaps has led to unprecedented levels of stress and burnout.

It is time to say 'no' to the unsustainable workload of teaching. I will be representing the ASTI on the new Workload Working Group, which has been established as a result of teacher unions highlighting the consequences of excessive workload.

My objective as your representative on the Workload Working Group is to tackle:

- initiative churn,
- Croke Park Hours,
- the staffing and resourcing of our second-level schools,
- class size and its impact on teacher workload and well-being,
- the lack of adequate post structures in schools,
- the number of different school inspection models, and
- the need for effective in-school training for teachers implementing significant change programmes.

School stewards

School stewards play a vital role. They are the face of the ASTI in a school, and act as a conduit between members and their union. As this *ASTIR* goes to print, school stewards all over the country are helping to recruit new members, distributing publications, posting information on staffroom noticeboards, assisting the ASTI in running a democratic ballot on public sector pay, giving advice, or directing members where to seek advice, flagging issues with school management, and much more. I wish to thank every school steward for their invaluable service. Check out the school steward and online information training schedule. These sessions will help you in your role, connect you with your Industrial Relations Officer and other ASTI staff, and boost your confidence as a school steward. Remember, if in doubt about any issue, please do not hesitate to contact Head Office, where the staff are always happy to help.



Richie Bell

ASTI President

A final word

As I write my final editorial for *ASTIR*, I find myself reflecting less on the position I have held and more on the people with whom I have shared the journey. Serving as General Secretary of the ASTI has been the single greatest privilege of my professional life. For over a decade, I have had the opportunity to represent teachers, argue for what I believe in and work alongside people who care deeply about education, their profession and their union.

There have, of course, been difficult moments: disputes, negotiations and decisions that were not always easy. But looking back, I see much to be proud of. We restored the concept of equal pay for equal work when it was attacked. We secured one-year contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs), driving a stake through the heart of the casualisation that had plagued our profession for decades. We held firmly to the principle that teachers should not be required to assess their own students for certification. Our finances are strong. Our membership is at its highest level in the history of the ASTI. And, with the recent vote to accept the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures, we have plotted a way forward on one of the most significant challenges facing second-level education. These important achievements are not mine; they belong to the ASTI.

My greatest pride is in the friendships and solidarity I have encountered throughout the union. I have been fortunate to work with outstanding Standing Committees, Central Executive Councils and Conventions, and so many dedicated members. I could never name everyone who has contributed, but each of you has played your part in shaping the ASTI we have today. I also want to pay particular tribute to the staff of ASTI Head Office. I have been surrounded by an extraordinary team of people of immense commitment, talent and integrity. Leading that team has been an honour, and the friendships formed there I will carry with me always. Finally, I want to thank my wonderful wife and our three children. Over many years they have given me the space, support and patience to pursue a demanding, challenging and hugely rewarding role.

I leave with enormous confidence in the future of our union. There are people of conviction, experience and calm determination ready to lead us through the challenges ahead. I wish my successor Linda Kelly every success and happiness in the role. She takes on a great responsibility, but also a great privilege. I know that she will lead ASTI with integrity, determination and a deep commitment to our members.

To every ASTI member: thank you for your trust, your solidarity and your friendship. It has been an extraordinary journey. I am proud to have travelled it with you.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

ASTI training schedule 2026

The ASTI will be holding a series of training sessions for members, beginning in September, including:

- school steward training,
- school leadership training,
- health and safety representatives training, and
- board of management training.

The training will take place both in person and online.

For more information on the different types of training available and to register, please scan the QR code.



ASTI Rules Committee members elected at Annual Convention 2026

The following members were elected to the Rules Committee at ASTI Annual Convention in May: Louis Callaghan, Philip Irwin, Anne Loughnane, Michael McGrath, and Donal Cremin. The ASTI President and Vice President are ex-officio members of the Committee. The Rules Committee is elected biennially at Convention and is responsible for scrutinising the rules of the Association to ensure that the descriptions of the processes, procedures and practices of the Association are democratic, member-centred, relevant and effective.

Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award

To honour the memory of the late ASTI President Miriam Duggan, the ASTI established the Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award. The annual award is to the value of €5,000. This bursary is in addition to the current suite of awards of five bursaries to the value of €1,000 each.

The purpose of the Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award is to assist students who have a parent who is an ASTI member or an ASTI staff member. This award is confined to those undertaking a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education. Applications are invited from **September 1, 2026**, and entries will be open until **September 30, 2026**.

The Bursary draw will be in respect of any student whose:

1. parent(s) is a member or a staff member of the ASTI, and
2. who is commencing or has already commenced a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education.

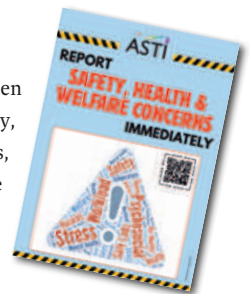
The successful applicant will be picked by lot, which means that all entries have an equal chance of winning.

For more information on the full suite of ASTI bursaries, and to download the application form, visit www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants. Applicants for this award will also be included in the draw for the other five bursaries.

ASTI safety, health and welfare posters for schools

ASTI safety, health and welfare posters have been distributed to schools. The poster highlights safety, health and welfare issues and hazards in schools, and links to a new safety, health, and welfare resource on the ASTI website.

Schools are encouraged to display the poster in a place of prominence.



For more information, please see: www.asti.ie/shw

Bursary for children of ASTI members attending undergraduate courses

The ASTI will award five bursaries to the value of €1,000 each to assist students who have a parent who is an ASTI member or an ASTI staff member in undertaking an undergraduate course in third-level education. Applications are invited for children of ASTI members or ASTI staff members currently attending or commencing full-time undergraduate third-level courses. The successful applicants will be chosen by lot, which means that all entries have an equal chance of winning.

The draw is open to any student who:

- has a parent/guardian who is a member of the ASTI or a staff member of the ASTI, and
- is commencing or has already commenced a full-time undergraduate third-level course – proof of acceptance will be required.

How do I apply?

Entries for the bursary will open in September 2026. An application form can be downloaded from the ASTI website.

Closing date

Entries for the bursary will remain open until **September 30, 2026**. It shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the completed application is received by the due date.

For more information on the ASTI bursary, and to download the application form, visit: www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants

ASTI appoints new General Secretary

Linda Kelly has been appointed ASTI General Secretary. Linda is due to take up the position at the end of September. Previously, Linda was the National Secretary for Health and Social Care Professionals, Pharmacy and Statutory Regulation at Fórsa, where she co-led the union's largest division (Health and Welfare), representing 34,000 union members across 33 branches nationwide. In her role with Fórsa, Linda led major national negotiations and disputes – including the HSE Pay and Numbers Strategy dispute. She has extensive experience in collective bargaining, national agreements, and complex casework. Linda holds a Master's in Leadership and Strategy from the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) and a BSc in Speech and Language Therapy from University College Cork (UCC). She is a former pupil of St Aloysius' College, Carrigtwohill. In 2022, Linda was named among the *Irish Examiner's* '100 Women Changing Ireland' for her contribution as a women's health activist. General Secretary Kieran Christie is resigning with effect from the end of September.



New ASTI official appointed



Liz Martin has been appointed ASTI Executive Officer: Industrial Relations. In her previous role at the Citizens Information Board, Liz was also an active shop steward with Fórsa. Prior to that, she was a steward for Unite the Union.

Liz worked with teachers, principals, and the Department of Education and Youth as School Manager and Regional Development Officer for the Educate Together national office.

Liz is a founding member of the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU), an initiative that aims to unite people in their communities.

Liz has a degree in law and a master's in equality studies from University College Dublin (UCD). As part of her role, Liz assists the ASTI Equality Committee.

Liz is replacing Breda Lynch, who has been appointed ASTI Deputy General Secretary.

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World Teachers' Day 2026: celebrating the teaching profession



The ASTI celebrates World Teachers' Day, which recognises and celebrates the vital contribution of teachers to education and society, on **Monday, October 5, 2026**. This

year marks the 60th anniversary of the International Labour Organization/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, which established international standards around teachers' rights, responsibilities, and working conditions.

The 2026 theme will focus on protecting and advancing the status of the teaching profession in a rapidly changing world. As teachers face new challenges including digital technologies, climate change and sustainability, inclusion, migration, and increasing pressures on working conditions, the day will highlight the importance of recognising, supporting, and valuing teachers.

For the ASTI and second-level teachers in Ireland, World Teachers' Day provides an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of teachers to students, schools, and the wider community.

As in previous years, ASTI school staff are invited to organise staffroom cakes to celebrate during the week of World Teachers' Day, and recoup the cost by submitting receipts directly to their branch treasurer.

Information on World Teachers' Day events organised by UNESCO can be found at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/days/teachers>



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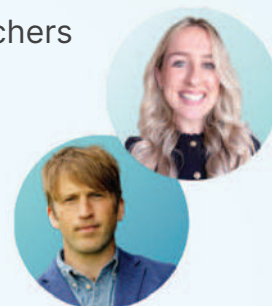
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SENIOR CYCLE REDEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Following negotiations between the ASTI and the Department of Education and Youth, enhanced provisions for Senior Cycle implementation have been agreed.

In June of this year, ASTI members voted by 84% to 16% to accept the document 'Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures – Addendum'. ASTI members had previously rejected a package of support measures in 2025. Negotiations on enhanced measures and clarifications took place between the ASTI and the Department of Education and Youth in 2026. Importantly, ASTI members did not vote on the Senior Cycle Redevelopment (SCR) curriculum, but on a package of measures to support curriculum implementation. Curriculum is the remit of the Minister for Education and Youth. For information on how to have an input into upcoming public consultations on SCR subject specifications, scan the QR code at the end of this article.

Negotiations on enhanced measures and clarifications took place between the ASTI and the Department of Education and Youth in 2026.

Monitoring Senior Cycle implementation measures

The ASTI will be monitoring the rollout of all measures included in 'Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures – Addendum'.

Ballot on pay

As this *ASTIR* goes to print, ASTI members are being balloted on industrial action over the Government's failure to table a meaningful offer on public sector pay, following the expiry of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.

It is vital that members participate in this ballot. The ASTI is recommending that members vote 'Yes' to industrial action. Full information is available on the ASTI website.

ASTI webpage on the Senior Cycle Redevelopment curriculum:



ASTI webpage on the Senior Cycle Redevelopment campaign, for updates on the rollout of 'Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures and Addendum':



Enhanced provisions as a result of ASTI negotiations include:

- an additional €2 million implementation grant for schools,
- defined legal protection for teachers/principals regarding authentication of work for Additional Assessment Components (AACs),
- a laboratory and digital support assistants pilot scheme, and
- additional targeted training for Leaving Cert science teachers.

Other measures that form part of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures, and which now apply to the ASTI and its members, include:

- a Post-Primary Implementation Group, which includes ASTI representation, to deal with Junior Cycle and SCR implementation issues,
- the appointment of L1, L2 and SCR co-ordinators in schools, which are posts of responsibility and include ex quota time alleviation,
- a Workload Working Group, which includes ASTI representation, with the objective of bringing forward mitigating measures to tackle excessive workload in teaching,
- a taskforce on AI that will examine teachers' concerns regarding AI and education, including its use for AACs and its impact on the Leaving Cert, and
- the rebalancing of the Croke Park Hours to include 14 teacher-led high-trust hours.

Senior Cycle Mathematics Draft Specification: why your voice matters

As part of the ongoing Senior Cycle Redevelopment, Mathematics is currently undergoing a comprehensive review. Over the past two years, a National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Development Group has met for 22 days to draft new specifications across Foundation, Ordinary, and Higher levels, alongside proposed arrangements for an Additional Assessment Component (AAC). The Draft Specification is now open for public consultation. This consultation period provides a crucial window for Mathematics teachers to review the draft, evaluate its practical classroom

implications, and submit detailed feedback before the final specification is completed. Due to the inherent complexities of the subject, the process has taken longer than originally planned, and the delay means that full implementation is now expected in September 2028, as part of tranche 4.

Key considerations in the Draft Specification

The Development Group has had to navigate several complex issues during the drafting process:

- **Course length and time allocation:** the current 'Project Maths' course is widely recognised as being too long. In addition, the new specification must be deliverable in 180 hours (163 minutes/week), which is significantly lower than the current school average allocation of 252 hours (228 minutes/week).
- **Third-level requirements:** third-level institutions have raised concerns that incoming students currently lack the necessary mix and level of mathematical skills and knowledge.
- **Specification detail:** compared to other subjects, Mathematics requires a significantly deeper level of detail, clarity, and correct terminology within its specification.
- **Technology and Central Applications Office (CAO) bonus points:** incorporating new technologies into the specification or assessment was ruled out due to a lack of Department financial support. Additionally, the impact of the CAO Higher Level Maths bonus points remains a key concern that authorities have yet to address.

Assessment

The proposed assessment structure consists of **one** terminal written paper (60%) and an AAC (40%). The AAC cannot be set at lower than 40% and is intended to take place at the end of fifth year, requiring substantial classroom preparation time. Designing suitable AAC arrangements has proven particularly challenging, due to:

- **Task suitability:** identifying meaningful tasks that equate to 40% of the overall grade for fifth year students who have not yet reached full subject proficiency or maturity.
- **Multi-level accessibility:** creating a common task accessible across Foundation, Ordinary, and Higher levels, especially given the common movement of students between levels during sixth year.
- **Equity and artificial intelligence (AI):** ensuring equal access to resources across all schools while future-proofing tasks against AI and outside influences.
- **Teacher workload:** ensuring that the assessment format does not create undue pressure, conflicts, or administrative burdens for classroom teachers.

The AAC draft proposal involves an assessment event at the end of fifth year, in a controlled environment, whereby students complete a statistical investigation plus a further, smaller patterns investigation. Note that statistics would not then be examined in the final written paper.

Have your say

Following the consultation period, the Development Group will review all submissions to make any necessary revisions. It is vital that practising Maths teachers thoroughly engage with the Draft Specification and submit feedback to ensure that the final curriculum is practical, fair, fit for purpose, and appropriate for delivery in the classroom. The consultation is open now, and will remain open until November 18, 2026, for submissions via an online form or by emailing your observations directly.

The NCCA is also running consultation events in Athlone on Wednesday, October 14, and in Dublin on Monday, October 19, that you can sign up to. Applications close at 5.00pm on Wednesday, October 7, and places are limited.

Go to the NCCA website, and click on 'Have Your Say' at the top of the page to find further details, including all relevant documentation.

researchED event in Ireland

researchED, a grassroots teacher-led organisation started in 2013, is hosting its third event in Ireland on Saturday, September 19, in Bandon Grammar School, Co. Cork.

The event brings together educators who are passionate about evidence-informed practice, offering a day full of engaging talks, practical insights, and meaningful discussions that teachers can take back to their classrooms.

For more information and to see the full list of speakers for the event, please see: <https://researched.org.uk/event/researched-cork/>

To purchase tickets for the event, please see: www.eventbrite.com/e/researched-returns-to-ireland-tickets-1984970259480

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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, their home address – to ensure that they receive the most up-to-date correspondence from the ASTI. You can do this by scanning the QR code.



Free online courses on consent and sexual violence



The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre has launched three free online courses open to everyone over 18: Introduction to Consent; Misconceptions About Sexual Violence; and, Let's Chat: Your Child's Life Online (for parents and guardians). Each course takes 30 to 45 minutes, can be completed at your own pace, and includes a certificate.

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Dublin Rape Crisis Centre operates a national 24-hour helpline, at 1800 77 8888, which is free and confidential.



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MEET THE NEW ASTI PRESIDENT

Newly elected President Richie Bell answers questions on his career, personal interests, and aims for the year ahead.

Where do you teach?

That's a bit of a story! I graduated in 1993 with a bachelor's degree in Religious Science and History from Mater Dei Institute of Education in Drumcondra, Dublin. Interestingly, although my school has changed beyond recognition over the years, I have been fortunate enough to teach in the very same building throughout my entire career.

When I began teaching in 1993, I joined the staff of St Mary's College, Galway, an all-boys diocesan boarding and day school. In 2002, the boarding section closed and we became an all-boys day school under the auspices of the Diocese. Then, in 2020, we amalgamated with a local girls' school, Our Lady's College, Newtownsmith, to form Coláiste Muire Máthair. Today, we are a co-educational CEIST (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust) school with partial DEIS status.

I qualified as a teacher of Religion and History, but like many teachers, I've worn a few different hats over the years. I've also taught Mathematics, Computer Studies, English, SPHE and Drama. That's one of the joys of teaching – you never quite know where the journey will take you.

Where did you attend second-level school?

I was fortunate enough to attend St Jarlath's College in Tuam. There, I was blessed to be taught by some of the finest and most generous teachers ever to grace a classroom. They consistently went above and

beyond the call of duty, not only to help us achieve academically but to ensure we received a truly holistic education that prepared us for life as well as for examinations.

What would you say to teachers starting their career this September?

I would advise them that teaching is a funny career. At the beginning, it feels as though it will last forever, but somehow it absolutely flies by. At the start of every school year, we would take and mount a staff photograph. On one of my very first days, a senior colleague walked me along the bare walls and pointed to roughly where my last staff photograph would end up before I retired. It seemed impossibly far away – a lifetime, a mile down the corridor. Yet now I find myself approaching the end of that journey, and, to be honest, it's a little scary.

I think the reason the years pass so quickly is the wonderfully punctuated and busy nature of the school calendar. You're always looking ahead to the next milestone. You're preparing a group for the musical, then it's mock exams, then straight into the oral examinations, and before you know it there are only six weeks until the Leaving Certificate. Suddenly the school year is over, September arrives again, and the whole cycle begins anew. Rinse and repeat until one day you realise that what felt like an endless journey has come to an end. I would tell them that though teaching can be demanding and stressful, it is a wonderful career that gives you the

opportunity to change the world, one mind at a time. That is both the extraordinary gift and the profound responsibility you accept every time you walk into a classroom.

I would advise them to join their union. Everyone is at home in one, including your school management. A union protects you as an individual, but, more importantly, it gives us collective strength. Together, we have a far more powerful voice than any one of us could ever have alone. But don't just join the union, be an active member of it. Get involved. Contribute. Help shape its direction, because the union should never be something that happens to you; it should be something that happens because of you. You are the union, and it should speak with your voice.

I think the reason the years pass so quickly is the wonderfully punctuated and busy nature of the school calendar.

What are your priorities as President?

1. **Continue to develop the Senior Cycle responsibly through the structures that exist.**
 - Teachers are the classroom experts and their voices must be central.
2. **Reduce work overload.**
 - Excessive administrative burdens and new initiatives are pushing teachers beyond their limits.
3. **Reduce Croke Park Hours.**
 - Eliminate unnecessary, unproductive hours.
4. **Restore promotional opportunities.**
 - In 2008, 58% of teachers held posts of responsibility; in 2024, only 38% did. This must be reversed.
5. **Renew and reinvigorate the branch structure.**
 - Strengthen grassroots participation.
6. **Halt initiative overload.**
 - Teachers cannot solve all societal problems without adequate training and resources.

What advice would you give school stewards?

I would say that being elected school steward is both a privilege and an honour. When your colleagues choose you as the person they trust to represent and support them, it feels like a tremendous privilege. It tells you that they respect your judgement, your integrity and your willingness to stand up for others.

My advice is simple: don't sweat it. You are never expected to have all the answers. In our union, the right advice is only a phone call away. We are incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated and knowledgeable staff in Head Office. They are always willing to help, to guide and to answer members' questions. I say that from experience. Even as a seasoned activist, I make countless phone calls every year seeking advice and clarification. Nobody knows everything, and nobody is expected to. You were not chosen because you have all the answers. You were chosen because you are a respected leader among your colleagues, someone they trust to stand with them,

In our union, the right advice is only a phone call away. We are incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated and knowledgeable staff in Head Office. They are always willing to help, to guide and to answer members' questions.

support them and help them find the answers when they are needed.

Finally, I would encourage every school steward to invite non-union colleagues to join. By doing so, you are doing them a real service. Many people are simply waiting to be asked by someone they know, admire and respect. Remember, every new member strengthens not only our union but also the profession we all care so deeply about.

What is your proudest moment to date as an ASTI member?

There are two moments that stand out. Firstly, the day I was invited to join. I still remember ringing my mother to tell her I was a member of the ASTI and her delight at hearing it. But I suppose nothing will ever compare to the massive privilege of being presented to Convention by the General Secretary as the President Elect of the ASTI and the warm welcome and encouragement I received. I will do everything in my power to live up to this great honour.

What are your interests outside teaching?

I am married to Katie, and together we are blessed with two wonderful boys. Family is at the heart of everything I do, and it is through that lens that I approach both my work as a teacher and my service to the ASTI. It has taught me the importance of balance, compassion, and building strong relationships. Outside of school and union life, I enjoy keeping busy. I am a keen amateur actor and singer, and have been fortunate to perform in numerous productions with local musical and drama societies. I also play the guitar – mind you, The Edge has no cause for concern!

I have a lifelong love of theatre, cinema and sport, whether it's GAA, soccer or rugby. I am a struggling golfer and I have recently taken up woodturning, a hobby that I find both challenging and relaxing. When I get the chance, I enjoy walking, gardening and listening to audiobooks, particularly historical fiction and thrillers.

School stewards are chosen because they are respected leaders among their colleagues, someone they trust to stand with them and help them find the answers when they are needed.

NEW TO TEACHING: WHY YOU'RE BETTER IN A TRADE UNION

For new entrants to teaching this year, joining a union has never been more important.

Welcome to the teaching profession! As you begin your teaching career, the ASTI is here to support you. For your first year of teaching, ASTI membership is free. This means you make no payment whatsoever!

What the ASTI does

The ASTI is a registered trade union with over 21,000 members that promotes the interests of second-level teachers, seeks to improve their salaries and conditions of employment, and regulates relations between members, their employers, and the Department of Education and Youth. As a member, you will have access to the ASTI's professional information and advice service. If you need representation or legal advice now or in the future, you can contact your designated industrial relations official.

What are the benefits of joining the ASTI?

Joining the ASTI means that you are part of the biggest support network of second-level teachers in Ireland. As you navigate your career, you have the collective experience and strength of 21,000 teacher colleagues behind you.

Professional information and advice

Members can contact ASTI Head Office, located on Winetavern Street in Dublin, for information and expert advice from industrial relations specialists with understanding and experience of the second-level education sector. These specialists can offer professional representation if necessary.

Representation and negotiation

The ASTI represents its members on a range of bodies, and negotiates on their behalf at national, regional, and school level.

Training and seminars

The ASTI holds regular training courses and seminars to support its members. Regular seminars on topics such as starting out in teaching, navigating social media, leadership, special education needs, and retirement assist members at all stages of their careers. Regular trade union training supports ASTI representatives, including school stewards, board of management representatives, health and safety representatives, and branch officers.



**Welcome to the teaching profession!
Your first year of ASTI membership is
completely free.**

Financial benefits

You can access a range of exclusive financial benefits as an ASTI member:

- ASTI Rewards for new members — 12 months' free access to MyDoc, free financial health checks, and much more,*
- teachers' car insurance scheme,*
- discounted loans, home insurance, etc. *
- access to the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme,*
- you can apply for a range of grants for optical, dental or sickness benefit, and
- you can apply for the ASTI Bursary for further studies.

For more information, see: www.asti.ie/member-benefits/financial-benefits/

*The ASTI has no responsibility for these schemes or their administration. All enquiries about them should be made directly to Cornmarket.

Make sure your voice is heard

ASTI members decide on the policies of the union through its democratic structures, which begin at branch level. You can express your opinions by being active at branch level. Each ASTI member is a member of a branch operating in the area in which they work or live. Members are encouraged to attend branch meetings to discuss professional, educational, and trade union issues.

What contract are you being offered?

It is vital that new teachers are aware of the type of contract that is being offered. If you have any questions about your contract, or a contract you are being offered, the ASTI can advise and support you.

Contracts

Before signing a contract, teachers are advised to carefully examine the contract and consult with their school steward and/or ASTI Head Office and ensure it states:

- contract type,
- number of hours,
- subjects,
- duration of contract, and
- objective grounds for a fixed-term contract.

Full-time teachers are contracted to teach up to 22 hours per week. There are many different types of teaching contracts, and it is important that you understand the type of contract you have.

Non-permanent/part-time teacher

As a non-permanent or part-time teacher, you may be a casual part-time teacher, a non-casual part-time teacher, a regular part-time teacher, or a fixed-term whole-time teacher.

Contract of indefinite duration

A contract of indefinite duration (CID) gives a teacher the same job security as other permanent teachers. However, a CID holder's salary is based on the number of hours spent teaching (which can be fewer than full hours).

School-paid teachers

Some schools are in a position to employ teachers privately.

For more information about the types of contract, scan the QR code here:



Salary scales

Teachers are paid according to an incremental salary scale and may be entitled to extra allowances. Since 2011, two salary scales have been operating for teachers in second-level schools in Ireland. Through our equal pay for equal work campaign, the ASTI has vigorously sought to reinstate parity for lesser-paid teachers and has reduced the disparity considerably.

For more information on teachers' salary scales, scan the QR code here:



Employee Assistance Service

Teachers paid by the Department of Education and Youth have access to a free, confidential service that provides telephone and direct one-to-one counselling on a nationwide basis. The service can also be used by teachers'

spouses, civil partners, or dependents, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 16 and residing at the family home. The telephone number is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, at 1800 411 057. Alternatively, you can WhatsApp 'Hi' to 087-369 0010, or text 'Hi' to 087-145 2056 for SMS support.

For more information on this service, go to the ASTI website, at www.asti.ie/your-employment/terms-and-conditions/employee-assistance-service-helpline-for-teachers/

Contacting the ASTI

The most immediate point of contact for ASTI members is your elected ASTI representative in your school: the school steward. Make sure to approach your school steward in the first instance if you want any advice or have any concerns. If you need to contact your industrial relations official in ASTI Head Office, you can call 01-604 0160/1800 418 400, or email info@asti.ie

MyUnion

ASTI members have access to a section of the ASTI website called MyUnion. This area gives you convenient access to information about your individual ASTI membership, including contact details for your local and national elected representatives and Head Office staff. You can also edit your personal information and choose to receive key ASTI publications digitally.

How to join the ASTI online

To join the ASTI online, go to www.asti.ie/join/

Department of Education and Youth-paid teachers, ETBI-paid teachers and school-paid teachers

Before you begin the 'join online' process, make sure you have the following to hand:

- payroll number,
- Teaching Council registration number,
- names of ASTI proposer and seconder (ideally your proposer and seconder will be from your local branch, e.g., school colleagues), and
- membership numbers of proposer and seconder (this is not essential, but having these numbers helps to process your application more quickly).

Student teachers – for PME students or students in a teacher training college/university

Before you begin your 'join online' process, make sure you have the following to hand:

- name of degree qualification,
- name of third-level institution and year of graduation, and
- teaching practice – school name (if known).

Speak to your school steward or scan this QR code to join the ASTI.



ADVICE FOR NEW TEACHERS

Teachers share their insights and advice. Article compiled by BREEDA SLEVIN.



Adrienne Healy,
ASTI Vice President,
Dublin North West Branch

Join the ASTI and get involved in school meetings and with your local branch. Check the ASTI website regularly to stay informed. Organise your finances from day one. Sort out your pension early. Don't put it off until 'tomorrow'. Professional advice through the ASTI can help, and saving regularly will stand to you over time.

Get to know your colleagues and make friends where you can. The people around you will be a great source of support, help and advice as you learn your trade.

Plan your lessons for every class and keep working on your timing. Make learning your students' names a priority. A seating plan for each class can make a big difference, and it is useful to review it each term. Professionalism matters. You are there to teach, guide and support students, not to be their friend. Set clear boundaries early on. It is also wise to ease off social media. If you get the opportunity, become involved with State Examinations Commission work, especially correcting. It will really help your teaching.

Finally, remember that your quality of life matters too. Don't be afraid to change schools if a move would suit you better, and try to work as close to home as you can.



Fiona Hyde,
Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch

As a new teacher starting this September myself, my first piece of advice and the one that I believe to be most valuable is to lean on other members of staff for support and advice when you're starting out. During my Professional Master of Education (PME) teaching experience, I found that no one expects new teachers to know everything, but you cannot be given

help or advice unless you ask for it. Your subject departments, year heads, class tutors, special needs assistants (SNAs), and the senior management team can offer valuable insights and support in your first year.

I also think it's important to get involved in the life of the school, especially in extra-curricular activities, as these greatly assist in creating good relationships with students both in and outside of the classroom.

Finally, I'd encourage all new teachers to make sure they are members of the ASTI and to get involved in the union by attending local branch meetings and Convention. Not only will you receive a warm welcome, but it's a great way to keep informed about current issues in education and to get to know other ASTI members in different schools.

I feel I have chosen a wonderful profession, but, like my students, I know that I have a lot to learn in the years to come!

Best of luck to all for the year ahead!



Odhran O'Donovan,
Galway Branch

My main piece of advice to you, and probably the most beneficial thing a new teacher can do, is to join a union, and I am privileged to recommend the ASTI.

The ASTI is dedicated to improving pay and conditions for teachers, and to upholding educational standards at a time when all of these are under threat. I feel strongly that a united teaching

workforce is the best way to ensure a successful future for Irish education, and everyone who joins plays a part in contributing to that shared future.

Your school will most likely have its own ASTI rep, called the school steward – or an ASTI school steward committee. These ASTI members can provide invaluable support and guidance to new teachers. The union also offers great opportunities to network with other teachers: you can meet others at branch meetings or events organised by Head Office.



David Wall,
Bray Branch

Starting out in teaching can feel like a daunting prospect. However, you are surrounded by people who want you to succeed. The support, skills and strength of a staffroom are vital. So, be part of the staffroom, engage in it, share knowledge, wisdom and experiences. The staffroom is where lasting bonds are made.

Get involved in your union too. Nothing about this profession is individual. We engage with students, parents, agencies, and colleagues every minute of every day. Engaging with your union allows you to do this with confidence. It is your union!

Remember, school life is much more than just the classroom and lesson plans. It's the sports fields, the debates, the musicals. Try to get involved in something beyond your subject area. The students will appreciate your time and effort, and this will make your professional life easier. Teaching can be a struggle, but it is also so enriching. The first week, month and term can be tough, but the vital part is: it won't always be.

You've got this!

ASTI

ONLINE INFORMATION SEMINARS



2026 - 2027



5.30 PM - 6.30 PM



ZOOM



TRAINING@ASTI.IE

The seminars are open to all members - join us for these helpful information sessions hosted by ASTI industrial relations officials and other staff.

Email the address above specifying the session/s you want to attend.

While every effort will be made to adhere to the advertised dates, ASTI reserves the right to reschedule any of the events if the necessity arises. Please check the ASTI website for more information.

THU 10TH SEP

Contracts/ Your First Year Teaching/ Eligibility for a CID

We will cover contracts, CIDs, your rights, working hours, workload, CID pathways & key circulars 59/2016 and 49/2017.

TUE 6TH OCT

Supervision & Substitution

This seminar will examine all aspects of the operation of the S&S scheme in schools such as time commitment, duties and rotas.

TUE 20TH OCT

Preparing for Annual Convention/ Branch Guidelines

Learn how to draft effective motions and amendments for Convention, and understand branch officers' roles to ensure smooth running of ASTI branches. All members welcome.

TUE 3RD NOV

Job Sharing/ Career Break

Overview of the schemes, including eligibility, application procedures, how they operate, and impact on pay, PRSI and pension.

TUE 10TH NOV

Branch Treasurer Training and Q&A

A comprehensive role overview and insight-sharing opportunity for both new and experienced Branch Treasurers, featuring an interactive Q&A with the Honorary Treasurer.

TUE 17TH NOV

Sick Leave

A guide to sick leave for second-level teachers including illness benefit requirements and Medmark referrals.

TUE 1ST DEC

Fitness to Practice/ Disciplinary Procedures

We will go through the steps of disciplinary procedures, how the Teaching Council deals with complaints, and the advice and representation the ASTI provides to its members.

TUE 19TH JAN

Posts of Responsibility

An overview of how the PoR structure works - the appointment procedure, appeals and the circular governing posts. Plus, our view on the posts structure and how it can be improved.

TUE 2ND FEB

Health & Safety

Learn about psychosocial risks, key safety laws, your duties as a safety rep, and how to complete safety statements and risk assessments for your school.

TUE 23RD FEB

Leave Entitlements

We will advise you on Maternity Leave, Paid and Unpaid Leave, Parent's Leave, Parental Leave, Paternity Leave and Adoptive Leave.

TUE 2ND MAR

Grievance Procedures

We will explore the issues that can be dealt with through the Grievance Procedure, the steps involved, and the support available to members through the process from the ASTI.

TUE 9TH MAR

Croke Park Hours

This seminar will examine all aspects of the Croke Park hours including timetabling of the hours and the use of discretionary hours.



HOW STUDENT TEACHERS ARE PROPPING UP A SYSTEM IN CRISIS

As Ireland's teacher shortage deepens, pre-service teachers are increasingly relied upon to supervise classes, cover absences, and keep schools running. A new study reveals that while these extra duties offer valuable experience and vital income, they also erode student teachers' autonomy, well-being and long-term professional development, raising urgent questions about how the next generation of educators is being shaped. Article by DR HELEN LOWE and DR PATRICK DUNDON, University of Limerick.

The landscape of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland is currently being reshaped by the collision of two systemic crises: a staggering cost of living increase and a chronic teacher supply shortage.

While pre-service teachers (PSTs) have traditionally viewed school placement as a formative period of pedagogical growth, a new study suggests that the "teacher supply crisis" is fundamentally altering this experience.

Pre-service teachers are increasingly being called upon to fill the gaps through supervision and substitution (S&S), raising urgent questions about the balance between professional workload and student well-being.

The context: a system under pressure

The rationale for this study stems from a growing body of anecdotal evidence suggesting that PSTs, who are unpaid during their placement, are being asked to perform excessive amounts of S&S to keep schools operational.

With 1,847 vacant teaching posts reported in early 2025, school management teams are under immense pressure. Simultaneously, 61% of PSTs are forced to work part-time jobs alongside their placement just to survive financially. This "double burden" creates a precarious environment for those entering the profession.

The theoretical lens: self-determination theory

To understand the impact of this workload, the study utilises self-determination theory (SDT). SDT posits that for an individual to experience high-quality growth, performance, and well-being, three basic psychological needs must be met: autonomy (feeling in control), competence (feeling effective), and relatedness (feeling connected to others). When these needs are supported, motivation is "intrinsic", i.e., the PST teaches because they find it inherently rewarding. However, when these needs are frustrated by excessive external demands like S&S, motivation becomes "extrinsic" or controlled, leading to burnout and diminished performance.

1,847 vacant teaching posts were reported in 2025, while pre-service teachers (PSTs) were called upon to fill gaps, raising questions about workload and PSTs' well-being.

If we want to address the teacher supply crisis, we must ensure that the very people we are trying to recruit are not burned out before they even qualify.

Key findings: the paradox of S&S

The study found that S&S acts as a “double-edged sword” for student teachers:

1. Autonomy versus financial necessity: financially, S&S is often a lifeline because since 2021 PSTs have been permitted to be paid for subbing under specific conditions (Route 3 registration). For many, this provides vital income. However, this comes at a high cost to their autonomy. Participants report feeling “guilt-tripped” into subbing or finding it impossible to say no to management, which severely limits their control over their own time and lesson planning.
2. Competence versus quality of learning: on the one hand, subbing can build “classroom mileage” and confidence in behaviour management. On the other hand, the study reveals that it significantly hinders quality planning. When PSTs are required to use designated preparation periods for classroom cover, the rigorous planning required for their own lessons is often compromised. This continuous demand for classroom presence can hinder their development of professional competence, as the focus shifts from pedagogical mastery to maintaining basic classroom continuity.
3. Relatedness versus isolation: while S&S can foster connections with the wider student body and some colleagues, it often leads to a sense of isolation. Constant duty means missing out on the “staffroom culture”, such as the informal mentoring and professional dialogue that happen during breaks. Rather than experiencing full integration into a professional community of practice, many PSTs report feeling that their role is reduced to providing basic classroom supervision, serving as a functional stopgap within a system managing a teacher supply crisis.

The policy gap

Perhaps the most concerning finding is the lack of clear systemic guidance. While current Teaching Council guidelines specify that PSTs should not serve as replacements for permanent staff, the study found that 55% of these students were frequently required to cover classes where no pre-set work was available. This highlights a structural challenge where schools, operating under significant pressure, lack the administrative support to ensure consistent pedagogical continuity during staff absences. When the researchers engaged with the Teaching Council, the response indicated no immediate plans to update guidelines until a broader review in 2026. This leaves PSTs in a vulnerable “grey area”, where school needs often override educational requirements.

Conclusions: towards a sustainable future

The study concludes that the current reliance on PSTs for S&S is a “paradoxical” practice.

While it offers short-term extrinsic rewards, it risks frustrating core psychological needs and compromising the sustainable professional growth of Ireland's future teachers.

If we want to address the teacher supply crisis, we must ensure that the very people we are trying to recruit are not burned out before they even qualify. Preserving the “protected time” of school placement is not just about following rules – it is about respecting the psychological needs of the learner and ensuring the long-term health of the teaching profession. As the review of Céim continues, policymakers must move beyond anecdotal evidence and address the lived reality of the modern pre-service teacher.



ASTI CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

This year's ASTI awards evening celebrated the contributions of ASTI members to the union and to fellow members.



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Ed Byrne (ASTI Fingal Branch and Honorary Life Membership recipient), and Padraig Curley (then ASTI President).

From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Philip Irwin (ASTI Dublin South 1 Branch and Honorary Life Membership recipient), and Padraig Curley (then ASTI President).

Teachers from all over the country were honoured by the ASTI in May for their outstanding contributions both inside and outside the classroom. This edition of *ASTIR* profiles the 2026 Honorary Life Membership Award recipients.

Honorary Life Membership is awarded to members who have given exceptional service to the ASTI, displayed outstanding leadership, and served as an inspirational role model. The recipients this year were Ed Byrne and Philip Irwin.

Ed Byrne

An ASTI activist since 2001 and a proud member of the Fingal Branch, Ed Byrne spent most of his teaching career in Coláiste Choilm CBS, Swords, Co. Dublin, where he was an inspirational and popular teacher of Geography and Business Studies. Ed entered the teaching profession as a mature student, bringing a trade union background as a former member of the Marine, Port and General Workers' Union (MPGWU) into his teaching career.

Ed has often given credit to the influential ASTI colleagues he worked with in the early days of his teaching career in Marian College, Dublin, including Bernard Lynch, Robbie Cronin, and school steward Dave Kelly. When he moved to Coláiste Choilm CBS, Ed met his friend and mentor Larry McGuinness, and members Sheila Parsons, Eddie McCarthy and Kathlyn Hennelly, at Fingal Branch meetings. Ed has honourably served the ASTI for many years at school and branch level, including as Branch Vice-Chairperson and Chairperson, as well as Branch Treasurer. In these roles, and later on Central Executive Council (CEC) and Standing Committee, he served with exemplary commitment and dedication. His outstanding leadership qualities led to his election as President of the ASTI in 2016.

In his role as President, Ed made equal pay for post-2011 entrants a central priority. He was a fierce opponent of the freezing of ASTI members' pay increments in 2016 for their repudiation of the Lansdowne Road Agreement. As President, Ed engaged very successfully with national media, consistently championing reinvestment in school resources, the value of teaching, and the protection of the most vulnerable members. Ed was an ASTI nominee on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) until recently. He is

a member of the ASTI Sickness Benefit Committee, and the ASTI Posts of Responsibility Appeals Board.

Philip Irwin

A teacher of History, Geography and CSPE at The High School in Rathgar, Dublin, Philip Irwin's distinguished service to the ASTI spans four decades. Philip has been a committed member of the ASTI and a loyal member of the Dublin South 1 Branch throughout his career.

Philip's achievements extend to almost every sector of the union. He has been a member of the Benevolent Committee, Rules Committee, Finance Subcommittee, Standing Committee, CEC, and a Regional Organiser for Region 18. He is a subject representative for History and has served on the NCCA. He served as school steward in The High School for 30 years, and as Chairperson of the Dublin South 1 Branch for over 20 years. Philip followed in the footsteps of his father Joe, who was Chair of the Tipperary Branch of the ASTI in the 1960s and 1970s. Philip continued the tradition with his dedicated service and leadership, culminating in his election as President in 2014.

Philip's year as President was dominated by one of the most significant industrial disputes in the ASTI's history: a sustained campaign against aspects of Junior Cycle reform. Philip led the joint ASTI/TUI campaign that was successful in retaining the role of teachers as advocates for their students. His strong leadership, steadiness, and negotiating skills came into play in this campaign. Philip has been an exceptional mentor for many within his school and his Branch, providing support and guidance, particularly to new members. He places huge value on the history and legacy of the ASTI, while also displaying the strong and progressive leadership that steered the ASTI through challenging periods.

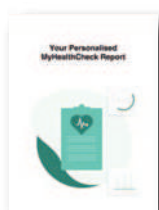
For more information on the ASTI awards, see www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/

Further awards, including the ASTI Bursary Award, Thomas MacDonagh Medal, and the PJ Kennedy Awards, will be featured in future issues of *ASTIR*.

MY HEALTH CHECK

– A POSITIVE HEALTH INITIATIVE

Following a health assessment appointment, 97% of participants felt they had a better understanding of their health.



Earlier this year, teachers who are members of the ASTI Cornmarket Salary Protection Scheme had the opportunity to take part in My Health Check, a comprehensive health assessment provided by Cornmarket. The initiative was designed to give participants valuable insights into their current health, helping them to identify potential risks early, and make informed lifestyle changes to improve their health and well-being.

The initiative included a 20-minute health assessment appointment with a nurse or medical technician in one of 28 clinics around Ireland. Following their appointment, teachers received a report of 24+ pages on their health, along with advice and recommendations. The assessment included:

- an extensive range of blood tests,
- a health questionnaire, and
- measurements.

Strong uptake

In September 2025, 7,871 members of the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme received their invitation to take part in the initiative by email. In October of the same year, 2,305 participants booked their appointments in one of 28 clinics nationwide.

In January of this year, 1,913 teachers attended their appointment and received their health report with recommendations. Out of 1,913 teachers who took part in the initiative, 1,293 were female and 620 were male.

A total of 29% of teachers who are members of the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme booked a health assessment appointment, and 97% of participants reported that they now know what areas to focus on to improve their health.

Personalised health insights and recommendations

Each member's results were reviewed by a doctor, who provided personalised recommendations for improving their health.

The results and recommendations were compiled into a report of 24+ pages, providing insights into a member's current health status as well as identifying any early indicators of certain health risks, such as stroke, diabetes, heart attack, liver damage, and other life-threatening conditions. Using a flag system of green, amber and red, each member's report showed their results, along with a recommendation of what to do next.

Main findings

- 88% of participants had high cholesterol, i.e., high low-density lipoprotein (LDL),

- 22% of participants had low levels of Vitamin D,
- 19% of participants had abnormal blood pressure,
- 12% of participants had an increased waist circumference,
- 6% of participants had a moderate or high risk of cardiovascular disease,
- 5% of participants had a 'severe' score on at least one of the measured scales for depression, anxiety, or stress,
- 2% of members had significantly abnormal liver function and were referred to their GP for further investigation, and
- 0.5% of members' haemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) levels indicated a potential new diabetes diagnosis.

Positive feedback from participants

Following their health assessment appointment, 97% of participants felt that they had a better understanding of their health, and 93% felt inspired to make positive changes in their health and well-being.

For further information about the My Health Check programme, please see: www.cornmarket.ie/myhealthcheck/

Exclusive Cornmarket webinars for members of the ASTI

Cornmarket is hosting a series of free, one-hour mortgage and health webinars for ASTI members.

Mortgage webinars

- First-time buyers/movers – Tuesday, September 29, 7.00pm
- Switchers – Wednesday, September 30, 7.00pm

Health webinar

Health insurance information – Wednesday, October 7, 7.00pm

To sign up for the webinars, please scan the QR codes.



For more information on the webinars, please go to page 2. These seminars are for ASTI members only.



STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES UNDERPIN GENDER GAP IN TEACHERS' PENSIONS, REPORT FINDS

A report commissioned by the ASTI has highlighted gender inequalities and challenges in the pension system for secondary teachers in Ireland. Article written by BREDA LYNCH, ASTI Deputy General Secretary, and OISÍN GILMORE, Senior Economist at TASC.

The ASTI Pensions Sub-Committee has been dealing with issues raised in Convention motions. The following research on gender-based pension disparity arose from a motion debated and passed at Annual Convention 2024:

That the ASTI investigate the impact on pensions of female members of the teaching profession given that pensions are now based on career average earnings. A report on this investigation will be presented to Convention 2025. (Tipperary Branch)

Oisín Gilmore of TASC produced a report on the ASTI's behalf entitled 'Gender and Teachers' Pensions in Ireland', and presented a summary of his findings at the May meeting of the ASTI Central Executive Council (CEC).

The report examines the development of teachers' pensions in Ireland, the nature and causes of the gender pension gap at a national level, the specific dynamics of pay and pension inequality within the teaching profession, and the potential strategic responses available to the ASTI.

Transformation in pension provision

The report first demonstrates that teachers' pensions in Ireland have undergone profound transformation over the past century. From the absence of any pension provision in the early 20th century, teachers, through sustained collective organisation, secured a State-supported system that was gradually expanded and improved. The achievement of pension parity in the early 1970s marked a high point in this trajectory. However, the reforms introduced from the mid-1990s onwards, and in particular those associated with austerity and the introduction of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme, represent a decisive break with this earlier pattern. The shift from a final salary scheme to a career-average scheme, combined with Consumer Price Index (CPI) changes and higher retirement ages, has resulted in significantly reduced pension entitlements for those entering the profession after 2013, and has created a clear two-tier system within the teaching profession. Next, the report places these developments within the broader context of the gender pension gap in Ireland. It shows that women in retirement have substantially lower incomes than men, primarily due to differences in occupational and private pension income. Crucially, this gap is not driven by differences in behaviour or preferences around saving, but by structural inequalities in relation to the distribution of labour and income. Women earn less, spend fewer years in paid employment, and undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid caring work. These factors combine to produce significantly lower lifetime earnings and, in turn, lower pension incomes.

Inequality in the teaching profession

How these dynamics operate within the teaching profession is also outlined. While the headline gender pay gap in education appears relatively small when measured on an hourly basis, this obscures more significant differences in annual earnings. In particular, the finding that the median gender pay gap in education is higher than in the economy as a whole points to structural inequalities within the profession. The analysis suggests that these differences are not driven by outliers at the top of the distribution, but by differences at the centre, with male teachers more likely to be further advanced along the pay scale. Evidence on promotion and career breaks supports this interpretation. Male teachers are significantly more likely to hold principal positions, while female teachers have historically been more likely to take career breaks and job share, with implications for the accrual of years of service and progression through the pay scale.

According to this research, the move to a career-average pension scheme has had important gender implications. Under a final salary system, it was possible for individuals to 'make up' for earlier career interruptions by progressing to higher salary levels later in their careers. Under a career-average system, this is no longer the case. As a result, existing gender inequalities in career progression are likely to translate more directly into pension outcomes, potentially widening the gender pension gap among teachers.

Possible responses

Finally, the report examines how the ASTI and its members might respond to these challenges. It found that while there is significant concern about pensions among members, the issue is not currently a top priority, largely due to limited awareness and competing workplace pressures. However, there is a strong expectation that this will change as the cohort affected by the post-2013 Scheme

The findings of this report suggest that the pension system for teachers has been significantly weakened in recent decades, and gender inequalities in pension outcomes are likely to persist or deepen under current arrangements.

Male teachers are significantly more likely to hold principal positions, while female teachers have historically been more likely to take career breaks and job share, with implications for the accrual of years of service and progression through the pay scale.

ages. In terms of strategy, there were doubts about a return to pre-2004 arrangements as a viable objective. Instead, interviewees pointed towards two main avenues: pursuing reform of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme at a public service-wide level, and seeking mitigating changes within the teaching profession, particularly in relation to the length of the pay scale.

The importance of building awareness, strengthening co-ordination between teacher unions, and engaging at Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) level was repeatedly emphasised. A consistent theme across the report is a lack of data. There is no comprehensive data on the gender pay gap within the teaching profession at a sufficiently granular or general level, and there is no available data on the gender pension gap among retired teachers. Nor is

there sufficient information to quantitatively assess the impact of the 2013 pension reforms, either overall or by gender. This lack of data represents a significant barrier to analysis, policy development, and effective advocacy.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings of this report suggest that while the pension system for teachers has been significantly weakened in recent decades, and while gender inequalities in pension outcomes are likely to persist or deepen under current arrangements, there remains scope for strategic intervention. In conclusion, the challenges identified in this report are substantial. However, the historical context of teachers' pensions in Ireland demonstrates that significant change is possible. Addressing the issues identified here will require a combination of improved data, strategic co-ordination, and sustained collective action.

The recommendations of the report present challenges that the Pensions Sub-Committee will continue to explore and report on to Standing Committee.

To access the full report, please scan the QR code.



Heritage in Schools POST-PRIMARY PROGRAMME



Beginning in early 2027, Heritage in Schools will offer subsidised visits on our **natural, built and cultural heritage** to post-primary schools. Visits will be delivered by The Heritage Council's panel of heritage specialists and will serve the curriculum across Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle. The Heritage Council part-fund these visits, keeping them affordable for schools.

Learn more about **archaeology and material culture, history and archives** (oral, local, family, national, global), **language, literature, folklore, Irish traditional music, ecology, biodiversity, geology, natural, cultural and built heritage conservation, willow weaving and other traditional skills** (e.g. blacksmithing, thatching, stonemasonry).

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“The students were highly engaged... and thoroughly enjoyed the day”

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The ASTI Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee supports members in the community and comprehensive sector.



The ASTI Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee. Back row (from left): Anne-Marie O'Mahony, Lynda Ní Cheallacháin, Eoghan Ryan (ASTI Executive Officer: Industrial Relations), who provides support to the Committee, Peter Masterson, and Louis Callaghan. Front row: Ian Mc Colgan.

The role of the ASTI Community and Comprehensive Committee is to advise and make recommendations to ASTI Standing Committee on issues affecting members in community and comprehensive schools and community colleges. The Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee is composed of 10 members elected by the ASTI membership in the community and comprehensive sector. The Committee meets a maximum of five times a year. The ASTI President, Vice President and Honorary National Organiser also attend Committee meetings, and Eoghan Ryan, Executive Officer: Industrial Relations, provides professional support to the Committee. There are currently approximately 4,000 ASTI members teaching in community and comprehensive schools and community colleges.

The Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee was formed at a time when there were very few ASTI members outside of voluntary schools. The Committee was created to ensure that the concerns of members within the community and comprehensive sector were attended to by the ASTI, and to encourage recruitment of new ASTI members from within the growing community and comprehensive sector.

Differences in terms and conditions

When the Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee was first established, there were a number of differences between terms and conditions for teachers in community and comprehensive schools and community colleges and those for teachers in voluntary secondary schools.

These differences included differences in pay and sick leave allowances, and the Committee had an important role to play in highlighting these issues to ASTI Standing Committee.

Additionally, community colleges operate in a distinct industrial relations setting by dint of not having boards of management and rather being run by the relevant Education and Training Board, with the result that agreed processes can differ.

Dual-union schools

Current issues of importance to the Committee include the concerns of members teaching in dual-union schools and recruiting new members in these schools.

Schools in the community and comprehensive sector may have both teachers who are members of the ASTI and teachers who are members of the TUI (dual-union schools), and the Committee can highlight these challenges at executive level, which can help to bring about change.

Future priorities

The Committee will continue its efforts to grow its membership in this sector, focusing on recruiting non-union members through school visits. Preparation for the next Teaching Council elections in 2028 will also form part of the Committee's work, with a view to increasing ASTI representation.

The day-to-day issues facing members will always remain a priority, and if you have any matter you would like to bring to the Committee's attention, please do not hesitate to contact your area representative.

The Committee was created to ensure that the concerns of members within the community and comprehensive sector were attended to by the ASTI, and to encourage recruitment of new ASTI members from within the growing community and comprehensive sector.

Also on the Committee:



Richie Bell,
ASTI
President



Adrienne Healy,
ASTI
Vice President



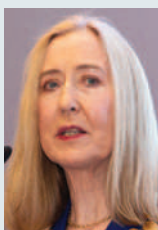
Pádraig Murphy,
ASTI Honorary
National
Organiser



Emer Brady



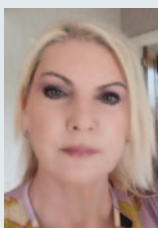
Conor Murphy



Geraldine O'Brien



Tony McGennis



Geraldine
O'Loughlin

Committee member name	Area	Standing Committee Region(s)	Branches
Emer Brady	1	Regions 15, 16, 17 and 18	• Fingal, • Dublin North 1 Miriam Duggan, • Dublin North Central, • Dublin North West, • Dublin North East, and • Dublin South 1.
Lynda Ní Cheallacháin	2	Regions 13 and 14	• Dublin South 2, • Dún Laoghaire, • Wicklow, • Stillorgan, • Dublin South County, and • Bray.
Ian Mc Colgan	3	Regions 10, 13 and 15	• Kildare, • Dublin North West, • Dublin South West John Woods, and • Dublin South 2.
Peter Masterson	4	Regions 3, 8, 9, 10 and 11	• Carlow, • Kilkenny, • Laois, • New Ross, • Roscrea, • Enniscorthy, • Tipperary, • Athlone, • Tullamore, • Waterford, and • East Galway.
Anne-Marie O'Mahony	5	Regions 5, 6, 7 and 13	• Kerry, • Cork South Paddy Mulcahy, • West Waterford, • East Cork, • Cork North, • Dublin South 2, and • Dungarvan.
Conor Murphy	6	Regions 5, 6 and 7	• Kerry, • Carbery, • Desmond, • Cork South Paddy Mulcahy, • Cork North, • West Limerick, and • Desmond.
Geraldine O'Brien	7	Regions 4 and 5	• Kerry, • Clare, • Limerick North, and • Limerick South.
Geraldine O'Loughlin	8	Regions 2 and 3	• Galway, • East Galway, • Tuam, • West Mayo, and • Carrick-on-Shannon.
Tony McGennis	9	Region 1	• Iarthuaisceart Thír Chonaill, • Donegal, and • Sligo.
Louis Callaghan	10	Regions 11 and 12	• Navan, • Cavan, • Longford, • Drogheda, • Athlone, • Monaghan, • Dundalk, and • Mullingar.

CID RIGHTS: WHAT'S NEW?

**Access to CIDs is significantly improved by the revisions in the recent Circular.
Article written by EOGHAN RYAN, ASTI Executive Officer: Industrial Relations.**

The Department of Education and Youth Circular Letter 0021/2026 introduces significant improvements to the arrangements governing contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs) for teachers.

The most important change is the reduction in the qualifying period from more than two years of continuous service to more than one year of continuous Department/ETB-paid service with the same employer. Eligible teachers who are reappointed following their first fixed-term contract may therefore qualify for a CID one year earlier than under the previous procedures.

The Department of Education and Youth Circular Letter 0021/2026 introduces significant improvements to the arrangements governing contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs) for teachers.

The Circular applies from the 2026/2027 school year for teachers employed from September 2025 onwards, and also contains transitional arrangements for certain teachers already in service.

It clarifies when a post is considered viable for the award of a CID, and confirms that service covering certain types of long-term leave may count towards entitlement.

Who qualifies for a CID?

To qualify for a CID, a teacher must:

- be currently registered with the Teaching Council,
- be appropriately qualified for the sector in which they are employed,
- have completed more than one year of continuous employment in a qualifying Department/ETB-funded contract with the same employer,
- be reappointed following the first fixed-term contract,
- be employed in a viable post for which there is an ongoing requirement in the forthcoming school year, and
- not be subject to any objective ground that lawfully prevents the award of a CID.

Meeting the service requirement alone does not automatically create an entitlement. The employer must also be able to offer a viable post in the following school year.

What is a viable post?

The Circular provides greater clarity on what constitutes a viable post, which is as follows:

- arises from the school's approved staffing allocation for the forthcoming school year,
- is expected to exist for the full school year,
- represents an ongoing staffing requirement rather than temporary cover, and
- is not subject to objective grounds preventing the award of a CID.

The purpose of a CID is to provide security of employment where there is a continuing need for the work being performed. The Circular therefore distinguishes between ongoing staffing needs and posts that exist solely to provide temporary cover.

Overall, the Circular significantly enhances access to CIDs by reducing the qualifying period, clarifying eligible service and viable posts, and confirming the circumstances in which teachers covering various forms of leave may qualify for permanent employment.

Covering for teachers on leave

Whether service replacing an absent teacher can lead to a CID depends on the type of leave being covered and whether the post is viable. The Circular does not change the position for teachers covering colleagues on career break or secondment. Service in these posts may count towards a CID, provided all other qualifying conditions are met, including the existence of a viable post, which includes such cover for a second year. Where a teacher is employed solely to cover temporary leave, such as maternity, paternity, parental, or sick leave, the contract may include an objective ground limiting the appointment to the duration of that absence. In these circumstances, the post may not be considered viable for the purposes of awarding a CID.

What happens if the absent teacher returns?

The return of the teacher being replaced does not automatically prevent the award of a CID. The key question is whether suitable viable hours remain available in the school for the following school year. Staffing allocations, subject provision, retirements, or other changes may mean sufficient teaching hours continue to exist. Where viable hours are available and the qualifying criteria are met, a CID may still be awarded. Teachers awarded a CID remain subject to the redeployment scheme. If the teacher being replaced returns or the school's staffing requirements change, the CID holder may be redeployed in accordance with the applicable arrangements.

Recruitment after the first year

The Circular also requires every first-year fixed-term contract to end at the conclusion of the school year. If the school wishes to continue filling the post, it must advertise the position, hold a recruitment competition, interview applicants, and make a new appointment. Neither a second fixed-term contract nor a CID may be awarded automatically without this recruitment process. Teachers should therefore expect to compete for the post at the end of their first year. If successfully reappointed, they may then qualify for a CID, provided all conditions are satisfied.

Teachers covered by the Circular's transitional provisions may not be required to participate in a further interview where they have already completed the necessary recruitment process under the previous arrangements.

Additional hours for teachers who already hold a CID

Where a teacher with an existing CID is assigned additional teaching hours, those hours may themselves qualify for a further CID after more than one year of continuous service, provided the hours satisfy the viability requirements and no objective ground applies. This allows teachers to build greater employment security as their allocation of hours increases.

If you believe you qualify for a CID

Teachers who believe they satisfy the criteria for a CID but are offered another fixed-term contract should raise the matter with their employer and request that a CID be issued. If refused, they should ask for the reasons in writing, as this may be important if the matter proceeds to adjudication. The Circular continues the voluntary adjudication process for disputes concerning entitlement to a CID. Refusals may be referred to an independent adjudicator and must be submitted within four weeks of the employer's refusal.

Teachers who are unsure whether they satisfy the qualifying conditions, or who have questions about viable posts, objective grounds, redeployment or transitional arrangements, should seek advice from ASTI Head Office as early as possible.

Overall, the Circular significantly enhances access to CIDs by reducing the qualifying period, clarifying eligible service and viable posts, and confirming the circumstances in which teachers covering various forms of leave may qualify for permanent employment. Ultimately, entitlement depends on the circumstances of the appointment, the wording of the contract, the school's staffing allocation, and whether there is an ongoing requirement for the teaching hours.

To access Circular Letter 0021/2026 on the ASTI website, please scan the QR code.



If you are in doubt about whether or not CID criteria are met, contact ASTI Head Office. Scan the QR code for ASTI Head Office officials and support staff contact information.



TEACHER RECRUITMENT A SOCIETAL ISSUE

ASTI representatives talk about the consequences of the teacher recruitment and retention crisis, the union's priorities, and efforts to negotiate a public sector pay deal.

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] Every year, the universities claim they are inundated with applications and yet it is clear and will become very clear as we move towards September that schools will struggle to find teachers to fill posts. This has been an issue for the last three years and in 2025 the ASTI carried out a RED C survey and found that 77% of school leaders were unable to fill all of the posts in their schools. In fact, they didn't even have one applicant for some posts."

Richie Bell, ASTI President

The Hard Shoulder, Newstalk, August 4, 2026

I know that that's not a teacher issue, it's a societal issue in this country, but it has to be addressed. It has to be addressed if we are going to keep the best and brightest here.

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] ... I'm teaching since the 90s and when I started teaching, I saw teaching as a lifelong career – something I would start, and someday finish as a teacher. Young teachers today don't see that because the job isn't seen as attractive.

They see that the workload and remuneration just don't match for them, they see that if they do want to progress in their career, there are no options for them. In many instances, they cannot afford to teach in the cities and towns because of housing prices.

I know that that's not a teacher issue, it's a societal issue in this country, but it has to be addressed. It has to be addressed if we are going to keep the best and brightest here."

Richie Bell, ASTI President

The Joe Finnegan Show, Northern Sound, August 4, 2026

"[On the public sector pay deal] The value of the 1% pay increases paid to public servants in February and June this year has already been eroded by inflation, leaving teachers and other public servants working for less in real terms. The Government must come to the table with a serious position on pay, honour existing commitments, and negotiate a fair settlement. The ASTI stands ready to do that."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Irish Examiner, August 31, 2026

"[On the ASTI's priorities] The ASTI is constantly looking at the way schools are being run. During the Covid pandemic we were front and centre in ensuring students were safe and ensuring that teachers were safe. We were very much involved in ensuring that schools were safe places for teachers and students, and that the education system could continue. We were heavily involved in the new Junior Cycle and its implementation in schools and now our latest priority is the new Leaving Certificate.

The Leaving Certificate was changed after 25 years and a new-style Senior Cycle has been brought into schools, and we are in negotiations with the Department of Education and Youth ensuring that it is done well and continues to protect the reputation of the education system."

Richie Bell, ASTI President

Galway Talks, Galway Bay FM, August 4, 2026

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] There could be a student who wants to be a pharmacist but when they go into fifth year there's suddenly no Chemistry on the timetable.

It also often happens in languages, where a school might drop Spanish, French or German for the same reasons – so it can have huge consequences on students ... Sometimes principals are forced to hire unqualified teachers just to have a body in a classroom.

Qualified teachers are going into project management and other management roles because of the skills that they've learnt over their time in teaching.

The cost-of-living crisis has a part to play in this and a lot of these fee-paying schools are in areas where accommodation is more expensive."

Richie Bell, ASTI President

The Sunday Times, August 15, 2026

"[On the public sector pay deal] We are balloting our members on industrial action in line with all of the other public sector unions who have found themselves in a situation whereby the Government and their employer [are] not engaging with them in order to put in place an agreement that exceeds the one that expired at the end of June.

Our negotiating team has approached, and is eager to conclude a deal with the Government but there has been no meaningful engagement."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Lunchtime Live, Newstalk, August 31, 2026



RSTA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

The RSTA National Conference took place in Athlone in April.



Pictured at the RSTA National Conference are (from left): Noelle Moran (ASTI Honorary Treasurer), Ann Walsh (Joint Secretary, Alliance of Retired Public Servants), Micheál O'Neill (RSTA President), Carmel Heneghan (Joint Secretary, Alliance of Retired Public Servants), Michael McNulty (Chairperson, Retired Members' Association of TUI), and Padraig Curley (then ASTI President).

The RSTA Athlone Branch hosted the 54th annual RSTA National Conference in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, in April. Members were welcomed by the Hosting Committee on Tuesday, April 28. The business of the Conference took place on Wednesday, April 29. The RSTA Officers elected at the National Conference are:

- Micheál O'Neill from Wexford Branch as President,
- Annette O'Carroll from Sligo Branch as Vice President,
- Eddie McCarthy from Dublin Branch as Treasurer, and
- John Sims from Clare Branch as Secretary.

The motions passed at the Conference included an emergency motion from the RSTA National Committee asking the President and Standing Committee of the ASTI to clarify that the 1% of the last Public Sector Agreement and the 2% Local Bargaining clause of the next agreement would be given as an all-round salary increase to include pensioners. A further motion called for the shingles and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines to be provided free of charge for older people. The following motion was also passed at the Conference:

That the RSTA welcomes the Budget 2026 submission of the ICTU Retired Workers Committee with particular attention to:

- (1) The extension of the Treatment Benefit Scheme to Class D contributors
- (2) That the shingles and RSV vaccination for older people be included in the Government Vaccination Scheme.

There was a comprehensive programme of entertainment provided by the RSTA Athlone Branch over the three days. On Tuesday night *The Six Marys*, written and performed by Jean Farrell and supported by actress and singer Catherine Gallagher, was attended by 50 RSTA members. On Wednesday afternoon, a



Pictured at the RSTA National Conference are (from left): Micheál O'Neill (President), Bernadine O'Sullivan (Recording Secretary), and Eddie McCarthy (Treasurer).

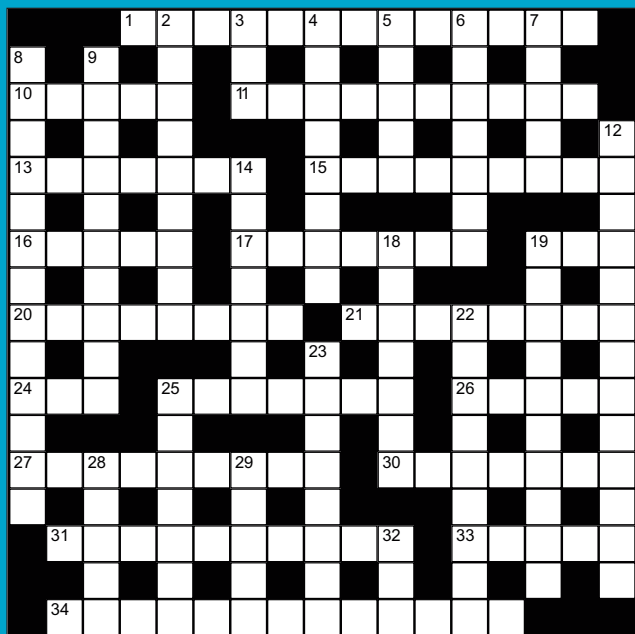
walking tour of Athlone was led by Gearóid O'Brien. The Gala Dinner was attended by 70 members on Wednesday night. On Thursday morning there was a cruise on the River Shannon, as far as the Hodson Bay Hotel and back. Special guests included then ASTI President Padraig Curley, ASTI Honorary Treasurer Noelle Moran, Joint Secretary of the Alliance of Retired Public Servants Ann Walsh, and Michael McNulty, Chairperson of the Retired Members' Association of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI). Unfortunately, ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie was unable to attend. The Acting President of the RSTA wished Kieran well in his new career, following his resignation from the ASTI. After a successful Conference in Athlone, the RSTA looks forward to 2027, when the Conference will take place in the Sligo Park Hotel on Tuesday, April 27, and Wednesday, April 28.

RSTA coffee morning



Pictured at the RSTA coffee morning hosted in ASTI Head Office in May were (from left): Eddie McCarthy (RSTA Treasurer), Mary Benson (RSTA Sligo Branch), Gráinne O'Neill (RSTA Sligo Branch), Annette O'Carroll (RSTA Vice President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), and Micheál O'Neill (RSTA President).

Win €250



ACROSS

1. Shocking resting place for criminal (8,5)
10. Irishman's daughter (5)
11. Bard cannot smuggle goods (10)
13. Maintains, asserts, contends (7)
15. Same ole same ole (9)
16. Type of camera used in extreme and adventure sports (5)
17. 2026 Honorary Life member (2,5)
19. Fuss, bother, trouble (3)
20. Type of well where water is forced to the surface under pressure (8)
21. He gets a buzz out of his job (8)
24. US federal tax collection agency (1,1,1)
25. Ivan Lendl essential for infinity (7)
26. Mantra depending on commerce (5)
27. Effortless departure could be leisurely and unhurried (9)
30. Large, bony, warm water creature of the deep (7)
31. Architectural style featuring rounded arches and vaulted ceilings (10)
33. Godless Togoland for pitch of sound (5)
34. Where drunks pass on brown envelopes (5,3,5)

DOWN

2. Underdogs, outsiders, remote possibility (9)
3. US health agency (1,1,1)
4. Currency of the People's Republic of China (8)
5. Strange cures for plague (5)
6. Person regularly found in a particular place (7)
7. Charged, as particles (5)
8. Where good ideas go to die! (6,7)
9. Disappears, disperses, dissolves (10)
12. Santa's little helper for books (3,2,3,5)
14. Immediate point of contact for ASTI members (7)
18. Commercial traveller sits in a state of tranquillity (7)
19. Nation aims for vitality and enthusiasm (10)
22. Care before baby is born (9)
23. Belgium in Paris (8)
25. Avenger might etch stone (7)
28. Contempt, disdain, derision (5)
29. Sounds like no sea in pectin could be clumsy (5)
32. Independent body monitoring air and water quality (1,1,1)

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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2604

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

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

Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2604,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, September 25, 2026.

Solutions to Crossword No. 2603

ACROSS

1. Wind generator
10. Reich
11. Vital organ
13. Enlarge
15. Actuarial
16. Emmet
17. Optimal
19. Pew
20. Hotpress
21. Lifespan
24. Orc
25. Suspect
26. Oomph
27. Germinate
30. Rainbow
31. Aggregated
33. Nylon
34. Stormy Daniels

DOWN

2. Inheritor
3. Dev
4. Extracts
5. Éclat
6. Airmail
7. Okapi
8. Breeze through
9. Diplomatic
12. Blow in the wind
14. Egoists
18. Moisturiser
19. Popemobile
22. Emotional
23. Dementia
25. Stirrer
28. Right
29. Angry
32. DUI

Did you miss?

Meet the new ASTI President
The gender-based pension gap

12
22

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner
of Crossword No. 2603:
Sarah Collins, St Clare's
College, Dublin Road,
Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan.
Cavan Branch member.

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AT MIC

EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
- Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)
- Master of Education (M Ed) with Specialisms (NEW)
- M Ed in Literacy Education
- M Ed in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education
- M Ed in Educational Leadership & Management
- M Ed in Education for Human Rights & Equality
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Inclusive Special Education
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Adult & Further Education
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/MA in Autism Studies
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Digital Leadership in Education
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Middle Leadership & Mentoring
- Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice
- Graduate Diploma / M Ed in Teaching English as an Additional Language
- Doctor of Education

PhD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

Learning; Society & Religious Education; Language & Literacy Education; Arts Education & Physical Education; Reflective Pedagogy & Early Childhood Studies; Educational Psychology; Inclusive & Special Education; STEM Education

LIBERAL ARTS POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Structured PhD in Applied Linguistics
- MA/M Sc in Environment, Society & Culture
- MA in Climate, Justice & Sustainability
- MA in Modern English Literature
- Graduate Diploma/MA in Applied Linguistics
- MA in History
- MA in Local History (with UL)
- MA in Media Studies
- Máistir sna Dána sa Ghaeilge (Ceannaireacht i dTeanga, Cultúr agus Pobal)
- Certificate/MA in Christian Leadership in Education

PhD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING LIBERAL ARTS DEPARTMENTS

Business Studies; Drama & Theatre Studies; English Language & Literature; French Studies; Gaeilge; German Studies; Geography; History; Mathematics & Computer Studies; Media & Communication Studies; Music; Philosophy; Psychology; Theology & Religious Studies

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WE PROVIDE TRAINING



WE ACHIEVED FAST-TRACKED CIDS



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