

Joint Union Senior Cycle Campaign



Message from ASTI President

The ASTI and TUI are jointly campaigning for a postponement of the implementation of the Senior Cycle redevelopment programme.

The mainstay of this campaign during the period of the General Election is a lunchtime protest outside all our schools on November 19th. This is because the “accelerated” process that the Minister for Education is adopting is exposing major problems in several vital areas.

These include:

- Inappropriate assessment arrangements for additional assessment components (AACs) in some subjects,
- Hurriedly-devised subject specifications with a lack of access to submissions, made during the public consultation process, for the NCCA Subject Development Groups charged with writing the specifications,
- Inadequate lead-in period for meaningful preparation of subject guidelines and sample examination materials in advance of the introduction of new subject specifications,
- Concerns about equality and equity of access to facilities and resources that need to be addressed, and
- Inadequate timelines to enable full and proper training of teachers prior to the introduction of subject specifications.

Together the ASTI and TUI represent upwards of 30,000 second-level teachers working in schools in every electoral constituency in Ireland. It is vital that all ASTI members in these schools protest outside their school on November 19th, so as to ensure the voice of the teacher is amplified and a postponement of the Senior Cycle redevelopment programme is achieved.

Make Senior Cycle an Election issue

Donal Cremin, ASTI President



[See page 8 for
November 19th
lunchtime protest
details](#)

[See inside for ASTI’s
General Election 2024
essentials](#)

[Ask your local
politicians](#)

[See pages 6-7 for a
list of questions to ask
your local politicians](#)

PROTEST TO POSTPONE SENIOR CYCLE REDEVELOPMENT

Subject content and modes of assessment

Curricular reform has been a fraught experience for decades. In the context of the current process of Senior Cycle redevelopment, it appears that little has been learnt and the mistakes of the past are being repeated. In particular, the voice of teachers is not being heard.

At our respective Annual Conventions in 2023, ASTI and TUI adopted the following joint motion:

That the ASTI/TUI demand, that for all future Leaving Certificate syllabi (specifications), the Department of Education, the NCCA and SEC publish the full range of syllabus documentation concurrently and not less than 12 months prior to implementation of the syllabus. The syllabus documentation to include: a detailed syllabus which embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi.

It is clear that the sensible demands set out in this motion are not being met and the “accelerated” implementation of the Senior Cycle redevelopment programme is being rushed and will be foisted on a system that is not adequately prepared to cope.

The ASTI has made detailed submissions to the Department of Education and the NCCA to set out our concerns. Fundamentally, there is a need to ensure that:

- The implementation of the Senior Cycle redevelopment programme (from September 2025) is postponed,
- Depth of treatment of subject content is reflected in the subject specifications,
- An appropriate weighting is accorded to additional assessment components in each subject. In particular, the rigid requirement for a 40% weighting for additional assessment components in all subjects must be rescinded,
- A schedule for release of subject guidelines and sample examination materials, that ensures an appropriate lead-in period for meaningful preparation and CPD in advance of the introduction of new subjects is published,
- Concerns relating to equality and equity of access to facilities and resources are addressed, including the delivery of comprehensive and subject-specific facilities and equipment,
- Significant professional time for teachers is allocated, and
- Quality and timely continuous professional development is made available for all teachers.

Lunchtime protest

Join ASTI/TUI members

protesting for a

postponement of

Senior Cycle

redevelopment

- Protect education standards
- Fairness & equity for all Leaving Cert students
- Subject-appropriate additional assessment components
- Resources and CPD for teachers



MAKE EDUCATION AN ELECTION 2024 ISSUE

ASTI'S EDUCATION ESSENTIALS

Investment in Second-Level Education

Education is vital to an individual's development and the country's economic progress. Our young people deserve the best equipped, best resourced schools that can be provided. There can be no more excuses.

The 2024 *OECD Education at a Glance* report shows Ireland languishing in last place out of 34 countries when it comes to the proportion of GDP invested in education.

In 2021, the year examined in the report, Ireland invested 0.9 percent of its GDP in second-level education compared to OECD and EU averages of 1.9 percent. This means an annual funding gap of almost €1,000 per second-level student between Ireland and the OECD average.

Research carried out by the ASTI in 2020 found that the majority of Junior Cycle classes are above the EU and OECD average class sizes. Students are not getting the attention they deserve. Large class sizes impede the use of diverse teaching methodologies. Urgent investment is needed to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in our schools.

Overcrowded classes and under-resourced schools are no longer sustainable if we want quality second-level education for all our young people. Supports available for students with special educational needs are inadequate. Moreover, teachers cannot access appropriate and meaningful continuous professional development.

The next government must commit to closing the investment gap between Ireland and other OECD countries.

The message is simple: Ireland must invest more in education.

School Building Infrastructure

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the inadequacy of school building infrastructure in many cases. Key issues include:

- inadequate work spaces for teachers,
- poor ventilation systems,
- poor toilet/sanitary facilities for staff,
- inadequate canteen facilities for staff and students, and
- poor heating systems.

In an era of budgetary surpluses, the necessary investment must be made to upgrade school building infrastructure to modern standards.

See key questions for
your local politicians
on pages 6-7

Ireland must invest
more in second-level
education

See key questions for
your local politicians
on pages 6-7

Measures need to be
taken to make
teaching attractive
again

Curriculum Development

SUBJECT CONTENT AND MODES OF ASSESSMENT

Curricular reform has been a fraught experience for decades. In the context of the current process of Senior Cycle redevelopment, it appears that little has been learnt and the mistakes of the past are being repeated. In particular, the voice of teachers is not being heard. The ASTI has made detailed submissions to the Department of Education and the NCCA to set out our concerns. Fundamentally, there is a need to ensure:

- Depth of treatment of subject content is reflected in the subject specifications, and
- An appropriate weighting is accorded to additional assessment components in each subject. In particular, the rigid requirement for a 40% weighting for additional assessment components in all subjects must be rescinded.

RESOURCES

Senior Cycle redevelopment cannot be done without providing comprehensive and subject-specific facilities and equipment. It will also require the provision of significant professional time for teachers. The ASTI is also insisting that quality and timely continuous professional development is available for all teachers during school time.

Make Teaching Attractive

TEACHER WORKLOAD

There is a major recruitment and retention crisis in second-level schools. The crisis will undoubtedly grow in the years to come unless decisive action is taken by the Government. Increased investment in the teaching profession must happen. This means tackling the substantive issues. The onslaught on teachers' terms and conditions has been relentless. Increased workload has continued unabated. Initiative overload has exacted an enormous price. Job satisfaction amongst second-level teachers has dropped and teachers are at breaking point. This is a problem that must be tackled. A proper and realistic promotional structure will have to be put in place. The number of posts of responsibility in schools must be dramatically increased.

COST OF LIVING

Teachers, in line with other members of society, have suffered the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. It is imperative that the recent easing of annual inflation is used as a basis to restore living standards for teachers. The recently published OECD report *Education at a Glance 2024* found that, in real terms, teachers' salaries decreased by 6% between 2015 and 2023, at a time when they increased by 4% in most other developed countries.

There must be a restoration of allowances that were abolished in 2012. Many ASTI members still suffer from the adjustments made to their incremental progression during the industrial dispute of 2016/2017. The two-year Professional Master of Education (PME) must be reduced to one-year duration. *Ab initio* permanent appointments must be introduced, subject to probation, rather than the current two-year wait-and-see approach to the awarding of contracts of indefinite

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duration (CIDs). The red tape that impedes teachers returning to Ireland to take up positions, including restrictions on the awarding of incremental credit for service abroad, must be eliminated. Teaching as a profession must be made attractive again.

HOUSING

Many teachers are locked out of homeownership and struggle to find and hold on to private rented accommodation and cover soaring rental costs. The next government must deliver housing that is genuinely affordable to teachers and other public sector workers and ensure a cost-rental model that provides stable, affordable tenure to renters.

Pension Parity

The principle that there should be pension parity between serving and retired teachers has long been defended by the ASTI. This is the concept that any increases in the pay of serving teachers are also applied to our retired members. Essentially, pensions should be index-linked to future public pay increases. The ASTI has succeeded in ensuring that pension parity will be maintained for the duration of the current Public Service Agreement. We are determined to ensure this position is rolled over into any successor agreement and beyond. Pension parity must be maintained.

Guidance and Counselling

There is an inadequate supply of guidance and counselling teachers in our schools. Their work within school communities in supporting student wellbeing, including adequate access to one-to-one counselling services within the school community, is vital. Additionally, enhanced provision of guidance counsellors is necessary to support students to make informed decisions and choices about their future learning and working lives in a rapidly changing global labour market.

Digital Technology

Digital learning facilities, particularly in the context of ongoing and planned curricular redevelopment, should ensure that students and teachers have full access to broadband and appropriate digital devices. A substantial additional investment will be required by the next government to bring schools up to standard.

For more information visit
www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/campaigns/

MAKE EDUCATION AN ELECTION ISSUE

See key questions for
your local politicians
on pages 6-7

Recruitment and
retention must be
addressed


ASTI
A century of service

KEY QUESTIONS FOR ELECTION 2024 CANDIDATES

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT/ SENIOR CYCLE

Q. If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring that in relation to Senior Cycle redevelopment:

- A postponement of the implementation phase takes place to enable the range of issues and concerns identified in the joint ASTI/TUI campaign to be addressed?

Q. If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring that in relation to Senior Cycle redevelopment:

- depth of treatment of subject content is reflected in the subject specifications, and
- the rigid requirement for a 40% weighting for additional assessment components in all subjects is rescinded?

Q. If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring that in relation to Senior Cycle redevelopment:

- comprehensive and subject-specific facilities and equipment will be delivered in schools,
- significant professional time for teachers is allocated, and
- quality and timely continuous professional development is made available for all teachers?

INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

Q. If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring that the level of funding for second-level schools, as a percentage of country GDP, will be raised to the OECD average during the next Dáil?

Q. If you are elected, what actions will you and/or your party take to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in post-primary schools?

SCHOOL BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

Q. If you are elected, what actions will you and/or your party take to increase investment in school buildings to make them safe, healthy and appropriate environments for pupils, teachers and other staff who work in them?

MAKE TEACHING ATTRACTIVE

Q. If you are elected, what actions will you and/or your party take to address the recruitment and retention crisis in second-level schools?

Q. If you are elected, are you and/or your party committed to achieving a significant reduction in teacher workload through:

- the abolition of Croke Park hours,
- a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio, and
- increased professional time (non-teaching time) for teachers?

- Q.** If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring:
- restoration of the real-terms value of teacher pay to pre-austerity levels,
 - access to genuinely affordable housing for teachers and other public sector workers, and
 - a cost-rental model that provides stable, affordable tenure to renters is introduced?
- Q.** What actions will you and/or your party take to ensure that the incremental dates for progression up the pay scales of ASTI members, that were adjusted during the industrial dispute of 2016/2017, are restored to their original dates?

- Q.** If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring that pension parity is maintained for the duration of the next Dáil and beyond?

- Q.** If you are elected, what actions will you and/or your party take to enhance the provision of guidance counsellors in post-primary schools?

- Q.** If you are elected, will you and/or your party commit to ensuring substantial additional investment to guarantee access to appropriate digital hardware and high-speed connectivity for all teachers and pupils on an equitable basis?

Make education an Election issue

We are asking you to raise the issues outlined in this edition of *Nuacht* with your local politicians.

Please use every opportunity you can to make the voice of the second-level teacher heard during Election 2024.

What you can do to make a difference

- Leave this edition of *Nuacht* somewhere handy and use it when your local politicians call to your door,
- Bring this edition of *Nuacht* with you when you visit your local politicians,
- Spread the word: Follow our Election 2024 campaign on Facebook / X.com, and
- Ask others to raise these issues with their local politicians.

MAKE EDUCATION AN ELECTION ISSUE

**MAKE TEACHING
ATTRACTIVE**

PENSION PARITY

**GUIDANCE AND
COUNSELLING**

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY


ASTI
A century of service

Support your
school's lunchtime
protest on Tuesday
19th November

ASTI/TUI JOINT LUNCHTIME PROTEST



SENIOR CYCLE PROTEST OUTSIDE SCHOOLS

- Demand postponement of Senior Cycle redevelopment
- Protect standards, equity and fairness in the Leaving Cert
- Insist on subject appropriate additional assessment components
- Demand resources and quality CPD for teachers

*Be part of the collective voice
of second-level teachers.*

For details visit www.asti.ie