

# Printout

into 

Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

January 2024



**SUPPORT FAIR PAY  
IN EDUCATION**  
#SupportFairPayInEducation

# Pay Campaign Continues

The beginning of any new year should be a time of renewal and hope. And yet for the INTO members in the north there remains no end in sight to our campaign for a long-awaited cost of living pay increase that truly reflects the worth of teachers, an award that properly remunerates them for everything they do in developing the young people of our country.

We are now at the point where every political party, and indeed the Secretary of State has confirmed that teachers deserve better pay. The disparity in pay, that has led to the situation where teachers in the north receive far less than any teacher across these islands is unsustainable and must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The point is constantly made that, because of the low pay for teachers and school leaders here, we are sleepwalking into a recruitment and retention crisis. This is evident every time a school has to find a supply teacher to cover an absence, whether it be short or long term.

The lack of teachers in particular subjects at post primary level also reflects this on-going crisis.

We hear reports of private companies recruiting students at teacher education colleges to go into other industries, or teachers leaving the north to teach elsewhere, meaning that our colleges and universities are training teachers for export. This is a situation that can not be allowed to continue, and which will only be addressed by giving all teachers and school leaders a significant pay increase.

On the 18th of December 2023, in response to the continued lack of progress around teachers' pay, all five

of the teachers' unions that make up the Northern Ireland Teachers Council informed their members of a day of strike action on Thursday 18 January 2024.

At the time of writing, the ongoing discussions around finance indicate that a figure of approximately £600 million is to be allocated to solve the public sector pay disputes. INTO continues to demand that the decision makers detach themselves from the notion that this funding is subject to the restart of the Stormont Institutions and to immediately release this money to resolve the issues of public sector pay. A just public sector pay solution cannot be dependent on the action or inaction of any politician or political party.

The only people who can prevent teachers taking this action are those who control these funds, and in the absence of a Stormont Executive it is incumbent on the British Secretary of State to stop acting as an absentee landlord, step up to the plate and get the issue of teachers pay resolved.

To this point, no such move has been made.

Looking further afield no one can help but to be moved by the images of devastation that has been visited on the people of Gaza. While no one can defend the actions of Hamas on the 7th of October, the barbarity and attempt at genocide witnessed in Gaza, and in the West Bank by the illegal settlers must be condemned. INTO has from the outset been among the loudest of the union voices across this island calling for a permanent ceasefire to protect children and civilians and for adherence to international humanitarian law.

We stand with colleagues in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Trade Union Friends of Palestine in demanding the right of every child, where ever they live, to an education that is free from the threat of violence and war.

The violence that was visited on the streets of Dublin, and the brutal attack on three children and their teacher shocked everyone. The INTO stands united with the broader trade union movement in condemning the violence and is up to the task of challenging the actions of the far right who seek to divide workers and young people in our society. As trade unionists we must do everything in our power to ensure that racism and the glorification of violence are no longer tolerated whether on social media channels or elsewhere.

As we enter 2024, I would like to thank and congratulate our members for their steadfast adherence to our action short of strike and for their turnout on our picket lines and at rallies on 21 February, 26 April and 29 November 2023. I know that no teacher wants to strike, and the hardship it can cause to lose pay. We must now redouble our efforts, and continue to stand firmly with our fellow teachers and school leaders from the other teacher unions in a united campaign to end this impasse. We must continue to demand that those charged with providing the children and young people of the north access to the opportunity to fulfill their potential, are rewarded in a manner that reflects teachers' true value to society.

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**Mark McTaggart**, Northern Secretary

## NORTHERN COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Area/Region	Branches		Mobile	INTO Email
BFC		Patrick McAllister	BFC Rep 07828769034	<a href="mailto:pmcallister@into.ie">pmcallister@into.ie</a>
CEC	District 1	Seamus Hanna	CEC Rep 07720 775425	<a href="mailto:shanna@into.ie">shanna@into.ie</a>
NE Primary	North Antrim, South Antrim, Carrick/N'abbey/Larne, South Derry	Michelle McCrystal	INTO N.Cttee 07851460682	<a href="mailto:mmcrystal@into.ie">mmcrystal@into.ie</a>
NE Post-Primary	North Antrim, South Antrim, Carrick/N'abbey/Larne, South Derry	Siobhan McElhinney	INTO N.Cttee 07915091871	<a href="mailto:smcelhinney@into.ie">smcelhinney@into.ie</a>
SE Primary	Down & Lisburn	Rachel Poland	INTO N.Cttee 07743427483	<a href="mailto:rpoland@into.ie">rpoland@into.ie</a>
SE Post-Primary	Down & Lisburn	John Kelly	INTO N.Cttee 07809694954	<a href="mailto:jkelly@into.ie">jkelly@into.ie</a>
Belfast Primary A	Belfast West	Caroline McCarthy	INTO N.Cttee 07977935988	<a href="mailto:cmccarthy@into.ie">cmccarthy@into.ie</a>
Belfast Primary B	Belfast	Geraldine McGowan	INTO N.Cttee 07717277565	<a href="mailto:gmcgowan@into.ie">gmcgowan@into.ie</a>
Belfast Post-Primary	Belfast & Belfast West	Caoimhin MacColaim	INTO N.Cttee 07710234126	<a href="mailto:cmacolaim@into.ie">cmacolaim@into.ie</a>
CEC	District 2	Annmarie Conway	CEC Rep 07701049789	<a href="mailto:amconway@into.ie">amconway@into.ie</a>
S Primary A	Cookstown, South Tyrone, North Armagh & Dungannon	Marty Lavery	INTO N.Cttee 07733207887	<a href="mailto:mlavery@into.ie">mlavery@into.ie</a>
S Primary B	South Armagh, Armagh & Newry	Noreen Kelly	INTO N.Cttee 07846392235	<a href="mailto:nkelly@into.ie">nkelly@into.ie</a>
S Post-Primary	Cookstown, North Armagh, Armagh, South Armagh, Newry & Dungannon, South Tyrone	David Nolan	INTO N.Cttee 07714322013	<a href="mailto:dnolan@into.ie">dnolan@into.ie</a>
W Primary A	Lisnaskea, Enniskillen, Tyrone Central & Strabane	Clare Kearney-Kirwan		<a href="mailto:ckkirwan@into.ie">ckkirwan@into.ie</a>
W Primary B	Derry City, Limavady/Dungiven,	Moirá O'Kane	INTO N.Cttee 07522937888	<a href="mailto:mokane@into.ie">mokane@into.ie</a>
W Post-Primary	South Tyrone, Lisnaskea, Enniskillen, Tyrone Central, Strabane, Derry City, Limavady/Dungiven	Dermot Gallagher	INTO N.Cttee 07746323288	<a href="mailto:dgalagher@into.ie">dgalagher@into.ie</a>

# Artificial Intelligence – Boomers or Doomers?

Society is now asking, are we Boomers, that is, are we in support of the developing use of Artificial Intelligence or Doomers, focused on the questions of ethics and safety, fearful when it comes to the rise of Artificial Intelligence. No matter whatever side of the debate you fall on we cannot deny that the use of Artificial Intelligence is growing exponentially. The economic reward that the education sector can generate has attracted both startups and the multinational IT giants to design specific AI services. By one global estimate, more than one billion students are potential edtech consumers.

Expanding evidence shows that high-quality edtech, when used in the right environment, can improve outcomes for students through better support for teachers, earlier diagnosis of learning needs and greater access to personalised learning. However, three key conditions must be met for optimum impact:

1. The quality of the tools;
2. Their effective use and integration into teacher-led instruction;
3. The network of policies, institutions and incentives that shape this fast-growing market. (Paul Ramsay: Shaping AI and Edtech to Tackle Australia's Learning Divide)

Whether or not we support the developing use of AI in education we must remember that teaching expertise and an excellent curriculum drive positive learning outcomes.

The three categories of advanced AI Technology with the most promise and supporting evidence are:

**Student-oriented technology** (such as adaptive and personalised learning tools and intelligent tutoring systems); Today, Intelligent Tutoring Systems

creators have a sizable and growing global user base. For instance, more than 25 million students use the United States-based adaptive maths platform ALEKS (McGraw Hill 2022), 64 million users are registered with India's BYJU's Learning App (Mishra 2021), and there are 400 million users of the apps created by Chinese AI education company Yuanfudao (Mascarenhas 2020). Khanmigo is one of a growing number of AIs offering personalised tuition services to students.

**Teacher-oriented technology** (such as teaching support platforms and curriculum tools to deliver 'proven in practice' resources to teachers for lesson planning; diagnostic tools for early detection and remediation of additional needs; and adaptive assessment systems that respond to individual student learning). Many teachers have begun to use such programmes including Conch, Perplexity, Boom, Claude 2, Bard, Task Aide and of course ChatGPT. MagicSchool and Teachermatic can produce teacher resources including lesson plan generation and class assessments. Nolej AI promises to create e-learning in minutes and will automatically generate interactive content. Jasper and Education Copilot offer teachers the ability to provide curriculum planning.

**System-oriented technology** such as early warning diagnostic systems informed by machine learning to identify and direct support to students at risk of disengagement; and applications that generate insights and analyse trends to improve program and policy design.

The biannual meeting of the OECD Trade Union Advisory Committee on Education and Skills (TUAC) met in Paris on the 2nd and 3rd of November. A focus of the meeting examined the risks, opportunities and policy priorities in relation to artificial intelligence (AI). It was noted that AI applications have made rapid progress over the past year, now being able to perform a wide range of cognitive

tasks previously considered to be within the exclusive capacity of humans.

A presentation to the group focused on AI's capabilities in skill domains considered to be of key importance for education. A second research paper demonstrated how ChatGPT, now outperforms average student performance in reading, maths, and science, showing rapid improvements between versions 3.5 and 4. Results show that both GPT versions outperform average student performance in reading

and science. GPT-4 scores at 85% and 84%, respectively. On the same set of questions, students could solve 57% of reading questions and 53% of science questions. As AI continues to develop, education systems may need to upskill sizable segments of the population to help them keep up with AI's improving capabilities. (Putting AI to the Test, OECD EDUCATION SPOTLIGHTS 2003) The ability to download GhatGPT 4 for free as part

of the Bing App has made this rapid evolving AI accessible to all teachers.

Whether or not we support the developing use of AI in education we must remember that teaching expertise and an excellent curriculum drive positive learning outcomes. Being able to access and use high-quality curriculum support materials makes a significant difference to teaching outcomes. Smart curricula tools can thus provide important support for teachers by making it easier to access quality resources, potential lessons, tasks and assessments, and data-based insights into student progress.

Teacher professional development in using these tools in the classroom will be a key factor in their success or failure. Knowing that they exist is not enough, we need to know how to use these services and how to maximise their benefits. A self-discovery model of professional development is not sufficient, nor should teachers be left to pay the recurring fees for these services.

We can choose to be doomers or boomers but AI has most definitely arrived.



**SEAMUS HANNA,**  
District 1 CEC Representative

# INTO Northern Conference

1-2 March 2024 – The Europa Hotel, Belfast

## Fáilte

A chairde agus a chomhghleacaithe...

Ba mhaith liom fearadh na fáilte chur romhaibh go léir go dtí Comhdháil Thuaidh Chumann na Múinteoirí Éireann atá le bheith ar siúl in Ostán Europa i mBéal Feirste ón Aoine 1 go dtí Satharn, an 2 Márta 2024.

## Debate and set policy

Delegates from across the north will converge on this conference to debate, set policy, and express their antipathy to the slash and burn policies our government have held towards teachers, public education and our young people.

In these challenging times for teachers and society, our collective decision-making bodies have never been more important in ensuring the cohesion and strategic direction of our collective membership.

## Progress through unity

Our Northern Conference ensures that all teachers in the north are speaking of one voice. It ensures that the aspirations and concerns of all our members are heard. As a union, we move forward in unison, guided by contemplation and deliberation in

this democratic process. INTO's agenda for the coming year will reflect the resolutions passed at conference.

## Become a delegate

If you wish to attend the Northern Conference, I encourage you to attend your local branch meeting and put yourself forward as a delegate – every member has the right to do this. Each branch can send a set number of delegates which reflects the membership in that area. The election of said delegates should reflect the contribution each one can bring to debate.

A healthy union is one where there is a high participation in the decision-making process. Don't be afraid to express an opinion, all views bring us closer to achieving a proper, considered, representation of the views of teachers.

## A message to the decision makers

This conference should send a clear and direct message to the decision makers in government that the real terms cuts to teachers' wages are unfair and incompatible with a first-class education system.

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CAOIMHÍN MAC COLAIM, Northern Committee Chairperson

## Get Motion Ready for Northern Conference!

### What is a Motion?

A motion is a proposition submitted to Northern Conference for discussion and vote. It must be positive in its wording and declare an opinion or call for a course of action – or both. Technically, a motion:

1. Must ask Conference to declare an opinion or call for a course of action or both;
2. Should deal with one topic only;
3. Must be clear from whom the action, if any, is being demanded;
4. Must be clear and unambiguous in meaning and intention and must be worded accordingly;
5. Must be capable of implementation;
6. Should be brief and concise and should not contain argument;
7. Must be factually correct;
8. Should not lead to a deterioration of conditions to other members;
9. Must promote the aims and objectives of the INTO as set out in Rule 3 of the INTO Rules and Constitution, and
10. Motions should not name people but should instead refer to the office they hold.

### Key Issues for Motions

When developing the motions from branch you need to consider:

- What is being discussed in staff rooms?
- What have members highlighted as issues at branch meetings?
- Are there any sector specific issues causing problems for members?
- Have you got something you need fixed, and you need the union to act on behalf of members regarding this? This is where you start to form ideas for motions from.

### Key Dates for Northern Conference 2024

- January 2024 **Branch AGMs – Finalise motions**
- Fri 26 January 2024 **Motions to be submitted online by 1.00pm**
- Mon 29 January 2024 **SOC Meeting 1**
- Week of 29 Jan 2024 **Preliminary Agenda Issued**
- Fri 2 February 2024 **Hotel accommodation released for booking**
- Wed 7 February 2024 **Amendments to motions, Motions prioritisations and Northern Conference Delegates/Honorary Guests to be submitted online by 5.00pm**
- Fri 9 February 2024 **SOC Meeting 2**

## What happens to Motions?

### Submit a motion to your branch AGM

At the branch AGM, all motions are debated and either approved or rejected. Once a motion has been developed by the branch or committee it must be adopted at the Branch AGM meeting, in January, and then submitted online to the Standing Orders Committee (SOC). Each motion is categorised which is why motions should only deal with one topic.

It's important that if your branch wishes to put forward motions, that your branch has identified delegates who are prepared to propose and second the motion. This should be agreed at the AGM. While another branch can second the motion, it must be proposed by the branch that submitted it.

Once a motion has been received by the Standing Orders Committee, they discuss it and decide if it is in order or is not in order. Where the motion is deemed to be in order it is placed on the Preliminary Agenda and this is sent to branches for amendment, addendum, and for prioritisation.

Prioritisation is an important part of the process and guides the SOC when they work to produce a final agenda. They will consider the consensus of the general membership in relation to the priority issues in any particular area.

### Amendments and Addendum

Branch delegates meet to discuss

the Preliminary Agenda. At this stage amendments can be made to motions included in the Preliminary Agenda or an addendum can be added.

An amendment is a proposition to change the words of the motion as a whole, or to change certain words, or to add or delete words anywhere in the motion. An addendum is a proposition to add words at the end of the motion.

At this stage, the branch must prioritise eight motions on the Preliminary Agenda – this prioritisation allows the Standing Orders Committee to identify the most pressing issues for discussion at Conference.

The same rule that covers motions also covers amendments and addenda. In addition, the amendment must not:

- Change the sense of the whole motion
- Be a direct negative
- Be identical to a motion or part of a motion
- Come from the branch that proposed the original motion

### Emergency Motions

Urgent matters not on the agenda may be introduced or discussed at Conference, only when permission, in the first instance, is sought from the SOC.

An 'urgent matter' shall be deemed to be a matter of vital importance, arising in the interval between the submission of motions (26th Jan in this year's case) and the time during

Conference, at which permission to introduce it is sought.

### The Standing Orders Committee

Congress Standing Orders Committee (SOC) are elected from members of the district committees in the 16 districts. Northern Conference SOC is made up of three members from District 1 and three members from District 2. The SOC prepares the agenda for Northern Conference from motions submitted by branches, district committees, CEC, BFC, and NC.

The Standing Orders Committee compiles the Final Agenda which consists of all motions, including amendments and addenda. The Committee also analyses all the motions that have been prioritised by branch delegates and draws up the Conference Order Papers – motions included on the Order Papers are scheduled to be debated at Congress/Northern Conference.

### Northern Conference

When a motion comes up for debate at Conference it must be proposed and seconded to allow debate to commence on it. Delegates may speak in favour or against a motion before it is put to a vote. If the motion is passed by Conference, then Northern Committee will seek to achieve the action demanded in the motion which is now a resolution. They will make a report on their work on the resolution to the following year's conference.

## #WomenEd: Disruptions Global Unconference

Siobhan McElhinney, Northern Committee area representative, was invited to lead a session at the September WomenEd Unconference in the University of Ulster Belfast Campus. The WomenEd movement has grown throughout the world since its birth in 2015, a movement of likeminded people encouraging and supporting each other to be 10% braver. The mission of WomenEd is for women in education to have the choice to progress on their leadership journey and the values of the movement reflect this mission. It has become very apparent that



although women are the dominant gender within the teaching profession, this is not the case within leadership roles. The movement encourages members to grow in confidence by supporting each other in their professional journey.

Siobhan's presentation was entitled, "Know your rights." As an INTO activist, Siobhan realised that so many women in schools are not aware of their entitlements. Females are at times balancing family commitments with a hectic work schedule and the opportunity of a temporary variation may

help them balance their roles or to know how a directed time budget may benefit them addressing their ever-increasing workload. Siobhan acknowledged, "It is not always easy to raise concerns during a staff meeting but with encouragement we can help and support each other." As educators, we encourage our students to question and yet, we as adults are sometimes afraid to question decisions made that impact us directly. Siobhan's presentation ended with the quote, "The only way to find your voice is to use it".

The next WomenEd Unconference will be held in the Edmund Rice College on 2nd March 2024, we hope to see many other INTO members participating at future events.

# Mediation as conflict resolution

## *It can be good to talk*

The two TNC procedures for teachers wishing to address detrimental, negative, unwanted and unwelcome conduct at work are the Grievance Procedures for Teachers, Including Principals and Vice Principals in Grant Aided Schools TNC 2014/6 and the Policy and Procedure to Combat Bullying and Harassment of Teachers Including Principals and Vice Principals in Grant Aided Schools TNC 2009/11.

In each of these procedures there is reference to the possibility of mediation as a potential avenue through which to seek to resolve dispute.

### **What is mediation?**

The mediation suggested in Annex 2014/6 of the Grievance Procedure sets out the general principles, roles and responsibilities and an agreed procedure for mediation.

Mediation is a 'non-prejudicial' process which remains confidential and, if unsuccessful in resolving a dispute, leaves open the option of pursuing claims through the other agreed procedures or the statutory and legal routes that may be available in some circumstances.

There is evidence to suggest that mediation is increasingly being used in legal disputes and it should not be seen as a 'soft option' or 'letting someone off the

hook.' A good mediation process should be honest, open and robust and can lead to written agreements being reached without the need for prolonged and often very taxing grievance procedures.

Mediation cannot be forced and must be entered into with the agreement of all parties. Participants can also withdraw from mediation if they feel it is not working for them.

### **The Importance of Independence**

Mediation is NOT to be conducted 'in house'. Principals, vice principals, governors, teachers in charge of wellbeing and so on are not expected to mediate between colleagues in dispute. This does not preclude informal attempts to resolve minor issues at an early stage, but this is not the same as mediation.

According to the agreed procedures mediation should be carried out by the Labour Relations Agency (LRA), resources internal to the employing authorities or, in exceptional circumstances, an external

provider. INTO's preference is for the involvement of the LRA although exceptions will be made where circumstances dictate, and agreement is reached with the union.

It is important, for the sake of developing confidence in the process of mediation, that the mediator is

genuinely independent. Mediators do not make judgement on the issues raised, but rather, seek to find solutions and positive ways forward which contribute to restoring or building good working relationships.

In some cases, where the issue is not about working relationships, for example, issues with equitable distribution of work, minor pay issues and so on, mediation can be a way of resolving these without the need for further dispute.



**Kevin Daly**  
Trade Union Official

### **A Positive Conclusion**

At the conclusion of a successful mediation process, as indicated in the TNC 2014/6 agreement, the parties can be asked to sign up to a statement where they agree to abide by recommendations contained within it. This may be subject to review to check that it is effective. The mediator will write to the governors to indicate whether mediation has been successful or not and if parties agree, a copy of any agreement may be shared with the governors.

In short, mediation can be a robust and positive means by which to resolve disputes. It is not always the most appropriate means to address issues, but it should not be dismissed lightly.

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# Working Additional Days and Hours

On occasion, permanent part-time teachers have found themselves out of pocket or in dispute with their employer when they have taken on additional days at their own school to either provide necessary additional cover or to attend essential training. This comes about because many schools have been advised to use the additional hours TNC269 form to pay teachers for the additional days worked.

One reason cited for this was because if schools paid the teachers as an additional day through NISTR then the teacher would have to be registered with NISTR and would need to make an additional payment for the AccessNI check.

This anomaly was initially highlighted by the trade union side and acknowledged through the work of the substitute teacher review group.

The issue has now been fully addressed with the publication of the Department of Education Circular 2023/10. This circular supersedes the 1995 document and is effective from the 1 July 2023.

Essentially the new 2023/10 document sets out very clearly that any permanent part-time teacher working additional days, at their school, should be paid at the rate of 1/195th of the annual salary (pro rata) and additional hours should be paid at the rate of 1/1265th of the annual salary.

The NISTR system has been updated to provide functionality to facilitate permanent part-time teachers who wish

to provide additional cover at their own school during their non-contracted hours.

In theory this means that the requirement of having the normal registration pre-employment checks including the AccessNI check has been removed. And in practice it means that any additional days a part-time teacher agrees to work are properly remunerated.

This is coupled with the elimination of the costly expense of the additional vetting requirement.

However, this waiver is only relevant if the teacher limits their additional days to the school they are normally employed at. If they decide to use their non-contracted days to obtain supply teaching work in a different school, then they will have

to fulfil the full registration and checks required for enrolment on NISTR.

School managements have been advised that the use of NISTR for the

recording of additional hours/days for a permanent part-time teacher eliminates the requirement for the TR269 form and that the TR269 should no longer be used.

Additionally, the 2023/10 circular clarifies that there is no facility for Principals and Vice Principals to work additional hours therefore there should not be additional hours payments for these categories of staff and that a teacher's contract of employment in respect of working 1,265 hours per academic year must not be breached. The document

states quite clearly that full-time teachers should not be asked, directed or required to work additional hours.



**Tommy McGlone**  
INTO Senior Official

The NISTR system has been updated ... to facilitate permanent part-time teachers who wish to provide additional cover at their own school during their non-contracted hours.



# Three consultation documents issued

The Department of Education issued three consultation documents in the Autumn Term:

- **Consultation on the Integrated Education Act Action Plan**
- **Consultation on Relationships and Sexuality Education**
- **Consultation on Statutory Guidance On The Reduction And Management Of Restrictive Practices In Educational Settings In Northern Ireland**

INTO responded to the three consultations and published them on the INTO website following a meeting of the INTO NI Education Subcommittee.

Members were informed of the responses and encouraged to send individual or collective responses themselves.

A number of concerns were raised in response to each of the consultations. In particular that sufficient and appropriate resources are required to support and deliver any changes to the curriculum and education system in Northern Ireland.

## **Consultation on Statutory Guidance On The Reduction And Management Of Restrictive Practices In Educational Settings In Northern Ireland**

This consultation caused particular concern as it appeared to be centred on the premise of an individual child and the support that individual requires. Unfortunately, in schools today there are multiple children in every class with additional needs, sometimes with multiple classroom assistants. This has very different implications for the teacher in the class in getting to understand the behaviour of each child and what they are communicating. The guidance does not take account of these situations or the fact that teachers require the input from support services to understand many behaviours and what these are communicating. The guidance does not offer any support or reference to class teachers in these situations.

As stated in the INTO response, the guidance is NOT clear on what supportive practices can be used and

when. There is a lack of reality in the guidance. Schools do not have the time or resources to 'develop their own training' as proposed in the guidance, nor would that be appropriate on these issues. The supportive practices suggested require a significant amount of resources and a reduction in class sizes which are unlikely to be delivered in the foreseeable future.

It appears from the guidance that the responsibility and accountability will mainly lie with schools which are not equipped (financially or otherwise) to fulfil these responsibilities and accountabilities. Schools would need to be provided with sufficient finances and resources to be able to do so.

The aspirations which this guidance seeks to achieve are admirable but they fall down on the practicalities and unfortunately therefore they are likely to remain just that – aspirational.

[The INTO responses to all of these consultations are available on the INTO website, https://www.into.ie/ni/media-centre/publications/into-responses-policy-papers/assessment-2/](https://www.into.ie/ni/media-centre/publications/into-responses-policy-papers/assessment-2/)





# Fair Pay and Parity

“It was a privilege to see the positive feelings of hope and solidarity among teachers on picket lines. Our teachers value education, young people, and they value the work they do – that is why we are demanding fair pay and parity!”

“This government is ignoring teachers and education, so we have been left with no choice but to reassert our voices through action. Our collective presence on picket lines poses fundamental questions of this dysfunctional government. They can no longer overlook the people that sustain this society.”





“Encourage your colleagues that collective action is our only hope. Our solidarity on picket lines shows that we are prepared to stand united. If they continue to devalue and ignore us, our voice will only become louder and more coherent.”



“A strike is never an easy choice, but sometimes it is necessary. A teacher’s contribution to society matters and we shouldn’t feel that we have no voice or agency.”





“We can’t afford not to strike. Over the last number of years, inflation has dramatically eroded the value of our pay. The impact of this erosion over a teacher’s careers is enormous and will have a long-term effect on teachers in both their working lives and retirement.”



“We can’t afford not to strike. Over the last number of years, inflation has dramatically eroded the value of our pay. The impact of this erosion over a teacher’s careers is enormous and will have a long-term effect on teachers in both their working lives and retirement.”

“An education that undervalues its key asset is on a road to nowhere. While a long-term solution lies in the revision of the Barnett formula, teachers are struggling now. The Secretary of State has the power to pay teachers immediately – withholding our pay as part of a political game is unjust.”



# Developing Healthy Habits in 2024

We all have our own reasons for wanting to be fit and healthy. As teachers, it is important that we take care of ourselves so we can be there for our students when they need us. To be healthy, we must develop healthy habits, which can take a while to master.

Here you will find some tips on what it really requires to be considered healthy and how you can develop these healthy habits to be your best self.

## 1. Sleep

Of course, we all know it is important to get our "8 hours of sleep", but is that really possible as a teacher? It is, and you are going to want to start working harder to get that consistent 8 hours of sleep.

Lack of sleep, or irregularity of sleep, can lead to many health problems including diabetes, heart problems, stroke and obesity.

Each time you lose sleep, you are preventing your brain from re-energising

and preparing you for the day ahead. This can affect your ability to communicate with your students, focus during the day, and even your ability to drive home after work. No amount of coffee can replace the brainpower you lose with sleep deprivation.

### So how can you get more sleep?

- Go to bed at a specific time every night. Be consistent with your bedtime and wake up time to receive the optimal amount of sleep.
- Have a bedtime routine setup that will encourage relaxation (no iPhones playing games or checking your emails). Use this time to catch up on some light reading.
- Although it may sound enticing to take a nap when you get home from work, avoid it! Your body will not be ready to go to bed at your set bedtime if you have taken a nap, especially late in the afternoon.

- Get comfortable! Make sure you have on pyjamas that are allowing you to relax and breathe and a mattress that is not about to blind you with a protruding spring.

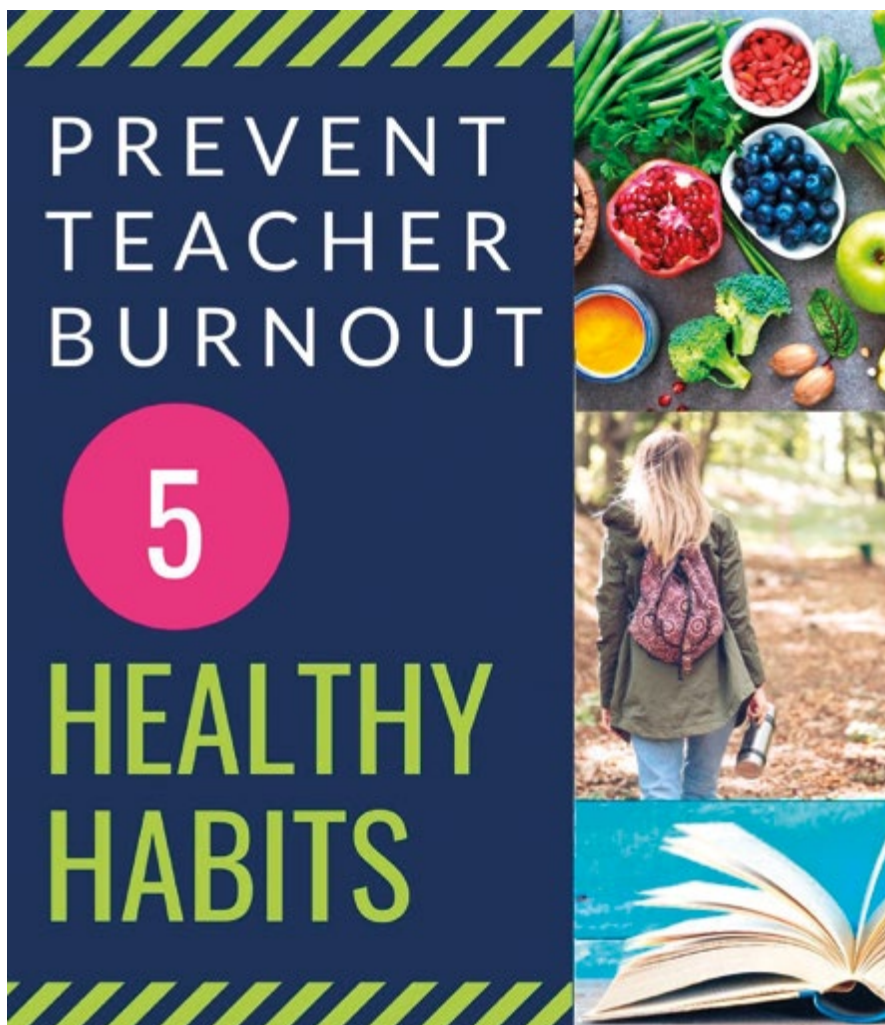
## 2. Hydration

The second health and wellness tip for teachers is to hydrate. This can be hard for teachers because it is sort of a Catch-22. We talk and talk all day long and need to keep drinking because of it, however, we need to avoid as many liquids as possible because we cannot just go to the bathroom whenever we want.

This one will take some preparation and a good teammate. There is usually someone that can come relieve you for a quick bathroom break so do not be afraid to ask! If you are not comfortable doing that, prepare your body ahead of time (say, summer) for going a few hours without the bathroom. Test out how much liquid your body can hold before you "just have to go." It may seem silly, but hydration is crucial to your overall health.

Here are some other tips to helping your body stay hydrated:

- Snack on fruits and vegetables is a fantastic way to get the hydration without the urgency to run to the bathroom. Items like celery or melons are great for this.
- Try a straw with your cup of water. You will find yourself sipping mindlessly and drinking more than you thought you would.
- Avoid foods that will have the opposite effect: dehydration. Sugary, sweet, salty foods are a staple in almost all teachers' desk drawers, but they can be making you thirstier and more dehydrated than you should be.
- Keep your reusable water bottle or cup with you in the classroom. If it is in your face, you will not forget to drink it!
- Not a big water drinker? Try infusing your water with sugar free drink mixers or with fresh fruit! This will kill your cravings for sweets and keep you hydrated which is a win-win situation!



### 3. Exercise

We all know that we are supposed to exercise and eat right to stay healthy, but do we always do it? No.

This, like everything else in this step, will require time and dedication for it to become a habit.

The benefits of exercise include sleeping better, lower weight, fewer health problems, and more energy. You can achieve all those things just by doing 30-60 minutes of exercise a day. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Chunk your workout time. It can be hard to find a set 30-60 minutes a day to spend working out, so space it out! Spend 10 minutes in the morning doing jumping jacks, push-ups, and sit-ups when you get out of bed. Power walk to the office instead of strolling down the halls to add in another few minutes to your routine. With how many trips you will walk to the office or photocopier in a day, it will add up! Dance around the living room with your kids while dinner is in the oven (this is a fun way to get your heart rate up and spend quality time together). End the day with some yoga stretching before bed and you will be on your way to a healthier life.
- Lift small weights while watching TV. Instead of lifting your hand between your box of crackers or cookies and your mouth, lift weights instead! Remember to start small though, so you do not overdo it.
- Walk everywhere you can! Park at the farthest spot away from the school or from the door to the store. Those extra steps add up quickly.
- Look into a device that tracks your steps or exercise. You can program it to synchronise to your phone and compete in step challenges with friends for “awards”. Exercise is always better when we can share it with friends.

### 4. Diet

The fourth health and wellness tip for teachers is to eat a healthy diet. The right, balanced diet can change your life. The benefits include a healthy weight, more energy, fewer health concerns, and sleeping better.

The key word in all this though, is balance. This does not mean you have to give up your Friday trip to the local chippy, but it does mean that you must make smarter choices about what food you put into your body regularly.

Here are some ways to make sure you are making smarter, healthier choices (especially at work):



- Eliminate that stockpile of sweet and salty goodness hiding in your desk drawer. If you need a sweet treat one day after school after you have eliminated your stash, you will have to work for it and walk to someone who has something to offer you.
- Stick with your meal plans. If you spent time planning out dinners for the week or have freezer meals ready to go, stick to the plan! Changes to meal plans often lead to impulse ordering/ purchasing which is detrimental to your diet plan.
- Keep healthy snacks with you. Prepare ahead of time for cravings that might hit and have a stash of go to health snacks in your desk drawer.
- Keep it balanced. Make sure your meals have a good balance of fruit, veggies, carbs, protein, and some fats (the healthy kind of course). If you feel deprived, you are likely to binge on something that you really should not.
- Remember that this is not about losing weight, this is about changing your life and becoming a healthier you!

### 5. Revamp Additional Health and Wellness Areas

Below are 3 areas you may want to consider revamping. These are not traditional health and wellness tips for teachers, but they are important.

#### Clothing

You may not think your clothing choices affect your health, but what you put on your body can be as important as what you put in your body.

We all have dress codes at work, and I am sure no school will allow us to show

up in PJs or yoga pants daily, so you need to choose clothing that works with your dress code that is also comfortable.

More importantly, choose shoes that are comfortable! We are on our feet all day and we need the comfort and support of a good pair of shoes. Splurge for those extra supportive memory foam shoes at the beginning of the year and you will be happy you did!

#### Teacher Bag

When I leave work (or head into work), I usually look like I am auditioning to be the next juggler at the circus. I am balancing a handbag, a lunch box, a teacher bag or two, my keys, my travel cup, and my water bottle. It is quite a spectacle.

However, having an oversized teacher bag filled to the brim with “to-dos” can be hurting your health. Think of all the weight you are throwing over your shoulder while you are trying to overcompensate for the unbalance by leaning to the side. That is hurting your back (and we all know everything is connected, so prepare for more pain elsewhere in return).

You are also setting yourself up for additional stress by bringing work home that should be staying at school. How often do you really attack that stack of papers that you lugged home? It will still be there tomorrow, so if you are not on a strict deadline, it can wait, and it can wait for you at school.

#### Technology Use

Studies have shown that social media like Facebook can make you feel more depressed about your life because of your constant need to compare your life to those who are posting about theirs.

Unplug more and enjoy better sleep, more family time, and exercise time.

In closing, we hope you found these health and wellness tips for teachers helpful. As with any habit, these will take time to become a part of your daily life. Keep an eye on the INTO social media platforms where we post positive wellbeing messages on a Friday.

Your health is worth the struggle and frustration that you will have in the beginning as you try to change some of your ways to develop these healthier habits.

Just like with everything else in life, we “keep moving forward” (Walt Disney).

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**MARIE O'SHEA, Assistant Northern Secretary**

# The Hands Up Project

Enhancing the “spirit of peace, equality and solidarity.”

“Today is the best day in my life because today I sent my message of hope to the world.”

These were the words of Rahaf, then aged 15 who, along with her friends from Gaza, Malak (14) and Yara (13) spent a week-long visit to Belfast in September 2022, organised jointly by the INTO Palestine Ambassadors group and The Hands Up Project, a British charity that connects Palestinian children with their peers and teachers globally. The pupils from Gaza were joined by Magdalena (12) and Julie (13) from the Czech Republic.

The girls had won the HUP Lockdown Theatre competition ‘Welcome to Earth’ and their prize was a life-changing trip to Belfast to turn the play into a face-to-face performance.

The group enjoyed a very warm welcome from their host families, as well as the staff and pupils at St Louise’s Comprehensive College, St Kevin’s Primary school, Coláiste Feirste, All Saints College and Glengormley High. Over the course of the week-long visit the pupils performed their play, took part in art classes, enjoyed a bit of Camogie training, and had a video call with an UNRWA school in Gaza. Founder of the Hands Up Project Nick Bilbrough said at the time that the whole trip had been ‘amazing’ and “meant so much to the children who had never left the Gaza Strip before.”

This trip had given Rahaf, Malak, and Yara a unique chance to develop long-lasting connections with their peers in Ireland. As Malak said at the time, “We all share dreams and hopes. We want to achieve a sustainable, peaceful, and better world. And we know that together



we can make a difference.”

Since October 7th however, the world of the teachers, Rinan & Rajaa who accompanied the girls, as well as the pupils themselves, has been turned upside down. Hostilities escalated after Hamas fighters killed around 1200 people and took 240 hostages in southern Israel. At the time of writing, December 14th, the Israeli bombardment of Gaza has killed almost 17,000 people including 7,000 children.

Text messages received from the teachers and pupils give harrowing accounts of their experiences to date. In mid-October the INTO Palestine Ambassadors group learned that Yara and Rahaf were missing while Malak’s home had been destroyed. After an



agonising silence, word was received at the end of November that the girls and teachers were alive but extremely fearful.

Rahaf texted “We are now trapped in the camp... please do anything, we will die.” At the same time, she was able to post a short video clip taken from inside a darkened room. Gunfire can be heard outside followed by an explosion and screams.

Yara, now aged 16, wrote “I did not have the internet to communicate with anyone ... “I am alive, but I am not well. They destroyed our house and destroyed all my dreams... I have be-come like a homeless person without a homeland... I just wish I could live like the rest of the children of the world... It’s truly a nightmare that I hope to wake up from.”

Another message from Malak read “I think it will be the end, maybe I will die. If I die don’t forget me and always remember me, please. Love you so.”

Teacher Rajaa spoke of what happened to her house in Gaza city, where she lived with her husband and five children. “On Thursday, November 23, I thought it was

nearly the end. My house was targeted by the Israeli tanks, and it was severely destroyed,” she said. “My father and I got injured. The bombing went on for five hours non-stop. My kids were horrified, and we started saying our last words to each other.

We said we loved each other, and we hoped that if we were going to die that we all die together holding each other. Luckily, we survived. But my husband’s family members weren’t lucky. His sister and all her family were killed. An entire family is now under the rubble of their house, and no one could get them out to be properly buried.”

Teacher Rinan, along with thousands of others, had originally taken refuge in Al Shifa hospital. She had to evacuate after it was destroyed by the Israeli military. In early December she texted, “I’m here at the UNWRA school in Rafah, thank God I could at least find a place to rest with my



own family ... I am now at Rafah prep B school near the border with Sinai... The situation ... is not good regarding the public toilets and electricity ... the south is calmer, but there are about 10,000 people in the school. Imagine the crowds, the noise, rubbish.”

The last message received from any of the girls or teachers was December 1st. As the Israeli bombardment shifted to southern Gaza and the death toll continued to rise, fears for the safety of the pupils and teachers has increased.

**PAUL WOODS, St Louise’s Comprehensive School, School Representative.**

## Caoimhin MacColaim, Chair of the Northern Committee commented ...

Pupils in an Irish medium post-primary school in Belfast, Coláiste Feirste, have expressed their fears for friends in Gaza whom they met last year when they took part in the Hands up Project. Teachers and young people from Gaza and Sweden visited the school and took part in Drama and Physical Education workshops. Other pupils in Gaza joined them on line for a video-conferencing session. The delegation spent a day enjoying the company of the children and staff in the school. While there, they immediately struck up friendships as young people do, and developed a shared cultural understanding.

When the conflict began in Palestine, the Coláiste Feirste pupils, from a wide variety of backgrounds, including Jewish and Muslim pupils at the school, gathered together to hold a “peaceful protest in solidarity with the people of Palestine”, and to express their deep concern for the welfare of their Gazan friends in the Hands up Project. One of the pupils explained:

“We have all been deeply affected by the horrors shown in the media and on social media recently. It is our hope that love that will prevail and the

laughter of the children will be heard once again.”

It is disheartening that some political representatives took the opportunity to discredit these young people openly in the media and Westminster and call their values into question.

We would like to remind our legislators that it is every child’s right to express their views and have them taken seriously, as enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We should also reflect on the importance in this

polarised world of listening to young people and engaging them in global affairs.

A call to investigate the conduct of teachers in the school, and the Department of Education’s acquiescence to these demands are disheartening. The use of inflammatory and hyperbolic language in reference to these teachers is condemned outright.

It should be an inspiration to us all that we have young people in our society with the courage to peacefully participate and question the actions of governments.



# Training Courses for INTO members and representatives, January – June 2024

The courses below are all in person and will be held in INTO Northern Office, 23/24 College Gardens, Belfast BT9 6BS.

Accredited School Representatives are entitled to one day per year out of school to attend Trade Union Training. Substitute Cover is not provided.

## New Reps

*Foundation Day Two – (representing members at school level) – Wednesday 24 January 2024*

This course is suitable for reps who have completed the induction training course. This is day one of a two-day course and covers how to represent members at school level, both collectively and individually.

*Foundation Day One – Wednesday 6 March 2024*

One Day Induction course, (in person) for NEW INTO/NEU/UTU School representatives.

*Foundation Day Three – member queries and casework – Wednesday 17 April 2024*

This course is suitable for reps who have completed the induction training course. This is day 2 of a two-day course and covers dealing with members' queries and representation, negotiation and casework skills.



**Nuala O'Donnell**  
INTO Senior Official

## Course for School Leaders

*Managing Difficult Conversations/ Building Good Staff Relations*

This is an accredited course for school leaders delivered by an ICTU tutor over 6 weeks, via a combination of Zoom and face-to-face, providing practical tips on how to build good staff relations and deal with difficult conversations/situations.

The topics covered in the course include:

- Effective communication
- Managing difficult situations

- Handling grievances and disciplinaries
- Mediation/LRA

There are 6 x3 hour sessions, the remaining 3 for those enrolled on the course will take place on:

**Week 4** – Tuesday 16th January 2024 – 1.30 – 4.30pm in INTO Northern Office

**Week 5** – Tuesday 23rd January 2024 – 1.30 – 4.30pm on ZOOM

**Week 6** – Tuesday 30th January 2024 – 1.30 – 4.30pm in INTO Northern Office

## Joint Webinars

These one hour online webinars are available to all members to inform/update them on important matters relating to their rights and responsibilities and Teachers' Terms and Conditions of Employment generally.

Wednesday 31 January 2024

**Advancing your career – applying for internal promotion**

DATE TBC – check INTO website

**Time off entitlements**

DATE TBC – check INTO website

**Directed Time Budgets**

DATE TBC – check INTO website

## Pre-retirement/Financial Review webinars with Platinum Financial

Joint INTO/UTU webinars/seminar Retirement Planning Seminars for members in partnership with Platinum Financial Planning Ltd, will run as webinars via Zoom. The webinars will provide members with the opportunity to ask questions and follow up individual consultations will be available.

Please note you should register using the link below for the webinars and a link will be sent to your email address for the Zoom meeting closer to the date of the actual webinar you are attending. They all start at 3.45 and last for around an hour.

*Phased Retirement 17 January 2024*

<https://ti.to/into-events/pre-retirement-planning-webinar-phased-retirement-january-2024>

*Mid-Career Review: 7 February 2024*

<https://ti.to/into-events/mid-career-review-february-2024>

*Pre-Retirement Planning: 20 February 2024*

<https://ti.to/into-events/pre-retirement-planning-webinar-february-2024>

*Joint Union Seminar: Pre-Retirement Planning: 28 March 2024: (UTU Offices)*

<https://ti.to/into-events/pre-retirement-planning-seminar-march-2024>

*This seminar will be held in The UTU Office, 94 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5HP on Thursday 28 March at 1.30pm, with lunch provided from 1.00pm.*

*Joint Union Webinar: Pre-Retirement Planning: 17 April 2024:*

<https://ti.to/into-events/pre-retirement-planning-webinar-april-2024>

*Joint Union Seminar: Phased Retirement: 21 May 2024:*

<https://ti.to/into-events/pre-retirement-planning-seminar-may-2024>



# Education Conference 2023

The annual Education Conference took place at the Tullamore Court Hotel on 17th and 18th of November, with almost 400 delegates in attendance. The theme of the conference was 'Play and Creativity' and the six workshops were very well received. These included 2 hands-on workshops: Samba drumming and Visual Arts presented by the Ark; a storytelling workshop by the very popular Liz Weir; workshop on Aistear and Play (NCCA); 'Fighting Words' – Maths Madness workshop and another delivered on Global Citizenship Education.

The keynote addresses were given by Aideen Howard, Director of the Ark Cultural Centre for Children and Dr. Glenda Walsh, Head of Early Years Education, Stranmillis. There was a great buzz about the hotel and the feedback received has all been positive.

The evaluation will be published in due course. The workshops, presentations,

videos and photographs are all available to view on the INTO website.



Aidan Gaughran EDC Chairperson, INTO President Dorothy McGinley, Lisa Magennis EDC District 1 Rep, EDC Vice Chairperson Alice O'Donnell, INTO Director of Education, Research & Learning Máirín Ni Chéileachair and John Boyle INTO General Secretary, attending the opening session of this year's Education Conference in Tullamore.



Lisa Magennis, District 1 Education Committee Representative and INTO NI Intern, presenting findings of the EDC research survey on Playful Pedagogy in Irish Schools.

## Student Recruitment

INTO, UTU and NEU worked jointly to recruit student members this year. We attended Recruitment Days in St Mary's QUB, Stranmillis, Queens' University Belfast and Ulster University, Coleraine. The joint union approach was well received as we had high volumes of students signing up. The students receive free membership for all three unions and can avail of support, information and training from all three unions.



St Mary's Student Union President Dara Mooney, Vice President Niall Burns and other members of the SU Executive, alongside Caoimhin MacColaim, Northern Committee Chairperson and Lisa Magennis, INTO Intern, proudly donning their new SU Executive hoodies, sponsored by the INTO.



Caoimhin MacColaim, Northern Committee Chairperson, Lynelle Fenton, UTU President, Edel McInerney, NEU President And Lisa Magennis, INTO Intern attending the recruitment day at UU, Coleraine



Left: Northern Committee Chairperson, Caoimhin MacColaim and INTO Intern, Lisa Magennis, recruiting student members at Stranmillis University.



Students from UU, Coleraine signing up to free membership for INTO, UTU and NEU.

**President's Dinner**



Caoimhín Mac Colaim Chairperson, Marie O'Shea Assistant Northern Secretary, Dorothy McGinley President and Mark McTaggart Northern Secretary celebrating at the President's Dinner in the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen.



Deirdre O'Connor, Assistant General Secretary and John Boyle, General Secretary with the President.



An tUachtarán Dorothy McGinley, Cathaoirleach Caoimhín Mac Colaim agus Ionadaí na scoile Pádraig Mag Riabhaigh le múinteoirí agus daltaí Choláiste Feirste



Left: President Dorothy McGinley attended Sacred Heart College, Omagh, Co. Tyrone to launch the college's new soccer kits sponsored by the INTO. The president is pictured alongside Sacred Heart College students, Leah Donaldson and Caden Harold, Mr Warner Mullen (PE dept.) and D2 CEC Rep, Annmarie Conway.

Right: Brendan McGlone (Retired Teachers Association) presenting Caoimhín Mac Colaim, Northern Committee Chairperson with a gift.



# Printout

PRINTOUT is the Organisation's full colour magazine distributed to all members in the north.

PRINTOUT is also distributed to our education partners and students in our teacher training colleges.

PRINTOUT has a readership of approximately 8,000 members and is available on the INTO website.

PRINTOUT provides up-to-date information on professional and trade union issues.

PRINTOUT is published 3 times a year – Autumn Term, Spring Term and Summer Term in line with the academic year.

Printout is published by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and distributed to members and educational institutions. Articles published in Printout are also available on our website [www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie).

The views expressed in this journal

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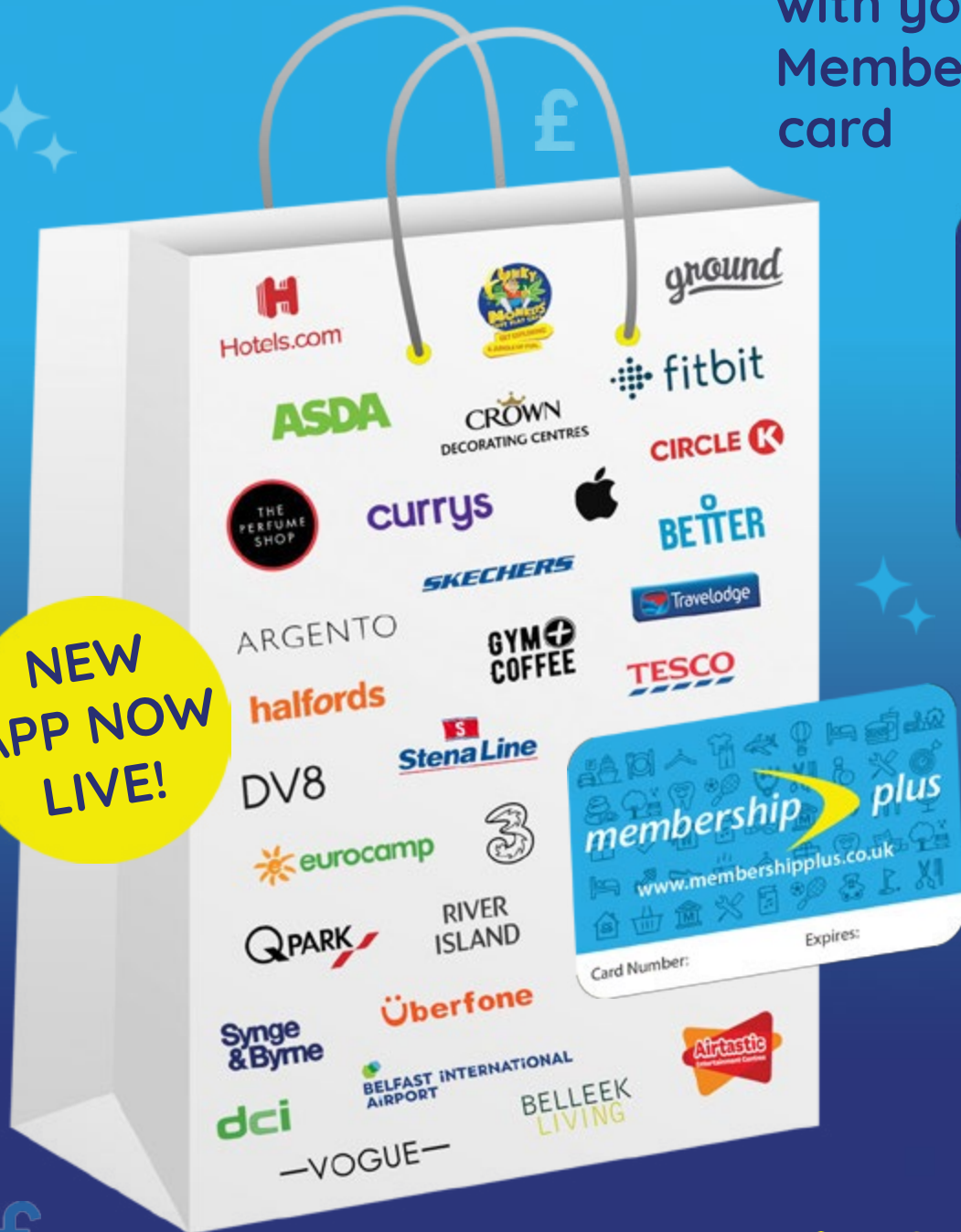
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