

Engage, Recruit, Participate: Strategies for Staff Rep Success

Máirín Ní Cheileacháir, Assistant General Secretary
Maeve Mc Cafferty, Senior Official

12 November 2025
Tullamore Court Hotel

Engage: Build Awareness and Connection

Building Awareness



Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann



Engaging new recruits

- Explain who we are and what we do
- Make Union Activity Relevant – explain how union involvement directly impacts pay, conditions, equality, and job security.
- Highlight Wins - Share success stories of negotiations, campaigns, and improvements achieved through collective action.
- Highlight value of trade union membership and benefits

Primary and special education snapshot



€224
current 'per
pupil' grant
(the primary
capitation
grant is the
main source of
school funding)

22.5
is the average
class size in
Ireland¹

556,084
pupils¹

8,827
pupils in special
schools¹

3,229
primary schools¹

1,262
small schools
having four or
less mainstream
teachers²

963
DEIS schools¹

129
special schools³

11,647
pupils in special
classes in
mainstream
schools¹

2,630
special classes
in mainstream
primary schools⁴

1,517
primary schools
have three or
more special
education posts⁵

42,680
teachers

Education Indicators 2024, July 2025
*Figures provided by the Department of Education and Youth (Small Schools Project)
**Parliamentary Question, 12 June 2023 - Special Educational Needs - Thursday, 12 June
2023 - *Parliamentary Question, 14th July - House of the Oireachtas
***Figure provided by the NCE
****NTO analysis





Who's who and what's what



10 Reasons to Join Leaflet

** Tá an bhileog seo
le fáil as Gaeilge*

- Join INTO and let your voice be heard where it matters. Make your contribution to the improvement of teaching conditions and education standards.
- Be part of the Union which has secured every significant improvement for teachers over the years – from redeployment to ensuring that only qualified teachers work in schools.
- How to join? Ask your INTO School Representative for an INTO application form or visit www.into.ie to join online



Vere Foster House
35 Parnell Square
Dublin 1

Phone/Fón: 028 9038 1455
Fax: 028 9066 2803
Email: info@into.ie
Web: www.into.ie
Mobile Web: m.into.ie



10
Reasons
to be
part of
INTO





Have Your Voice Heard

INTO from ground up organises on democratic principles. Annual Congress is the governing body and our annual Northern Conference determines the work of the union in Northern Ireland. INTO ballots members on major decisions, holds elections for key roles, and runs a range of consultative events e.g. Youth Conference, Principals'/Vice-Principals' Conference and Education Conference

Pay and Conditions

INTO campaigns for professional salaries and conditions of service. Over challenging years since 2008 INTO has continued to negotiate with the DE and Management Side on securing fairer pay and better working conditions for all teachers and school leaders.

Advice and Financial Support in Hard Times

INTO's benevolent fund supports members or their families in cases of bereavement or financial hardship. Benefits Funds Committee (BFC) members are available to advise in these situations.

Advice, Support and Legal Backing

Handling thousands of queries and requests for support, we deal with the Department of Education, GTC(NI) and the Employing Authorities, providing legal advice/support as necessary. INTO has a strong reputation for representing members and is easy to contact by phone: 9038 1455, email: info@into.ie or via our website: www.into.ie

Up to date Information

You have access to accurate information via the INTO website, regular bulletins and E-bulletins, Printout and InTouch magazines and through local branches and representatives like INTO's elected Northern Committee and Central Executive Committee members – all of whom are practising teachers or school leaders.

Supporting you as a Professional

INTO supports members through CPD programmes, the Irish Teachers' Journal, annual National Education Conference and provision of study bursaries. INTO is at the forefront of negotiations and education policy making and submits the views of members on inspections, assessment, special education etc. NOT just a Trade Union – a progressive and professional organisation too!

INTO Networks

Support networks for LGBT teachers and for Separated Teachers are provided, and INTO has a Global Solidarity Network for teachers interested in global education/union issues.

Membership

INTO subscription rates are competitive and offer great value for money. As an INTO substitute member you only pay for the days you work and all Newly Qualified Teachers get their first school year of membership for free!

Better Together

Joining INTO means you are part of Ireland's largest and longest established teachers' union, with a local office in Belfast. INTO represents over 40,000 teachers across the island with over 7,000 members in the north across all levels and sectors

Financial Services

INTO members can access expertise on teachers' pensions from Platinum Financial Services and preferential rates on car and home insurance through Cornmarket Insurance Services along with a money-saving discount card from Membership Plus.





Benefits of INTO Membership

- INTO Learning webinars
- Attendance at Conferences
- Health and Wellbeing campaigns
- Salary Protection
- Membership Plus
- AIB Visa Card
- Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union
- Approved Financial Schemes
- INTO and Comhar Linn Academic Bursaries
- Benefit Fund Committee (BFC)
- INTO publications – Intouch, diary, wallplanner





Enhancing visibility at school

- Having an INTO notice board in the staff room.
- Share QR code for joining
- Having short INTO section at staff meeting or directly after staff meeting.
- Circulate INTO correspondence – ballots, Intouch
- Highlight opportunities at branch level (meetings, officer, delegate)

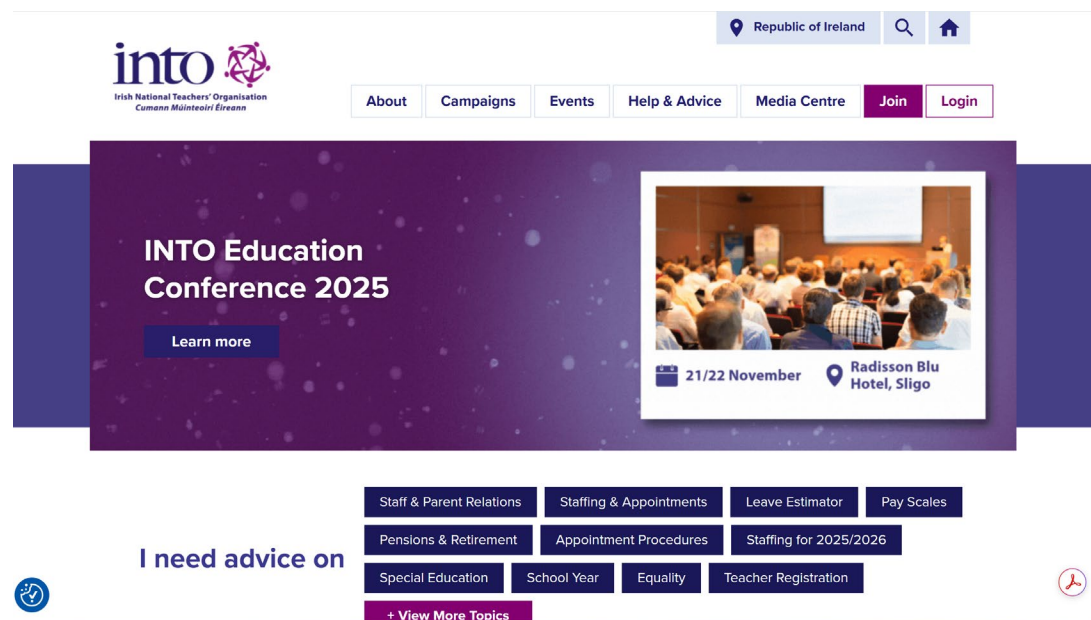


Building Connection



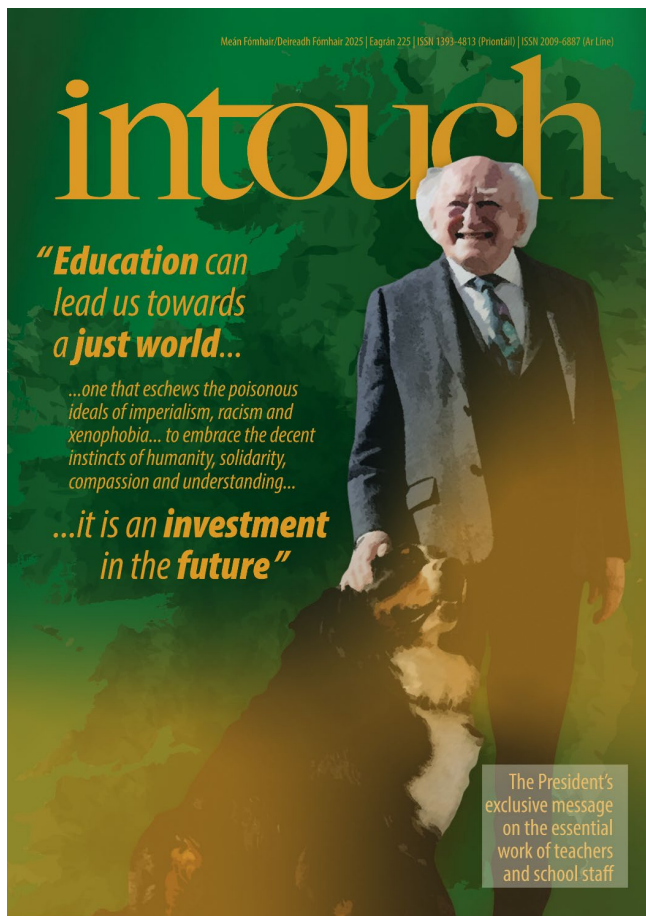
The INTO Website

- Key resource
- Latest news - most up-to-date news
- Information behind the member paywall
- FAQs published as required
- Ensure you are in Rol section





Intouch magazine



- Published bi-monthly
- Available in print and digital
- Delivered to your school (CB home)
- Political and professional updates



Member e-newsletter

Communication Preferences

Instructions for setting your INTO communication preferences

- 1. Log into the INTO Portal**
If you have not already registered for the portal, please contact portal@into.ie to request your unique link. Please include your name and payroll number when you email us.

- 2. Select 'My Profile'**

- 3. Communication preference settings**
 - Under 'Communication Preferences' you will see what your current settings are.
 - If you wish to amend these settings, e.g. to opt out of receiving a hard copy of *InTouch*, click on view and amend.

☐ I do not wish to receive a hard copy of the InTouch Magazine from the INTO


- 4. Don't forget to hit save!**


If you have any queries in relation to accessing the member portal please contact the INTO at portal@into.ie for assistance.

into 
Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

- Subscribe and encourage others under INTO communication preferences
- Timely updates
- Published every Tuesday (term-time)
- Occasionally periodic newsletters



INTO Social Media



- Get real-time updates on negotiations, campaigns and events.
- Know about urgent actions like petitions, rallies, or consultations.
- Liking, sharing, and commenting boosts visibility and influence.
- Public support shows solidarity and strengthens union power



Branch Meetings



- All members welcome
- AGM in January and two other meetings
- Each member receives notice
- Invite new members to come along
- Share meeting updates with colleagues

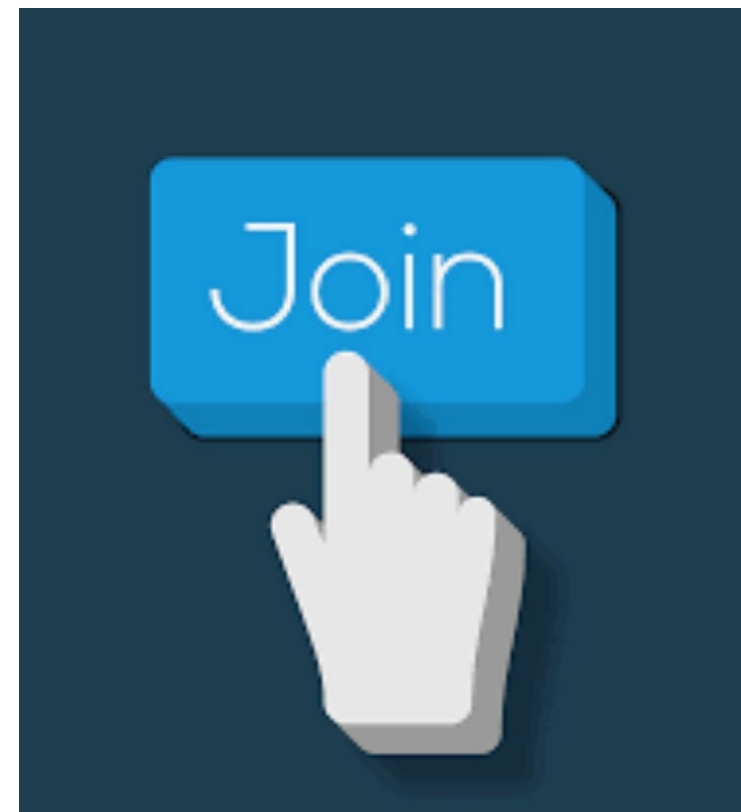


Recruit



Recruiting new members

- Simply invite new colleagues to join
- A personal conversation – a chat is more effective than a generic email
- Create low-pressure opportunities – INTO webinar
- Share personal stories of how INTO helped you
- Make joining easy – QR Code or direct link





Membership Categories

Memberships:

- *Permanent/Fixed-term/Job-Share**
- *Substitutes**
- Career Break €30
- Part time teachers (not on payroll)- pro rata to the number of hours worked

- 3rd & 4th Year Teaching Council Registered Students (Free)

**0.75% of salary and academic allowances (capped at point 11 of the salary scale for teachers appointed on or after 1 January 2011) will be deducted from salary on a fortnightly basis.*



Participate



Create low-barrier entry points

- **Micro-volunteering:** Small tasks like sharing a post, attending a meeting, or signing a petition.
- **Interest-Based Engagement:** Youth Conference, SEN mailing group, or social events to attract members with specific passions.
- **Surveys & Feedback:** Poll teachers on what matters most to them and share at branch meeting/consultations/consultative conference.
- **Build community:** Host meetings/social events
- **Acknowledge Participation:** Provide opportunity to share feedback from INTO conferences
- **Use positive communication:** set up Whats App, email group





Scenarios

We are going to circulate some possible school scenarios.

We are asking you to consider the best way to engage with each.
Confer with those around you.

Constructive debate is encouraged.





**Scenarios: Engage, recruit and
participate**



Scenario 1

A newly qualified teacher has joined the school. As staff rep you notice they haven't signed up for INTO and, in casual conversation, the teacher says:

"I'm not sure unions are for me. I just want to focus on teaching and avoid politics."



Scenario 2

As staff rep you organise an informal coffee morning to engage members and recruit new ones. Only two people showed up, and others said they were “too busy” or didn’t see the point.



Scenario 3

Two experienced teachers in the school have been INTO members for years. Recently, they approach the staff rep during a break and say:

“We don’t see any value in our membership anymore. We pay every month, but nothing changes for us. INTO feels distant from what’s happening in our classroom.”



Scenario 4

At an INTO school meeting, several teachers express strong frustration about the primary school curriculum. Comments include:

“It’s overloaded and unrealistic.”

“We spend more time ticking boxes than teaching.”

“INTO isn’t doing enough to fix this.”

The mood is tense, and some members question whether INTO is effectively representing their concerns.



Thank You

Thank you for taking on the role.

You contribute to the work of this Organisation.

A trade union is not a service you buy, but a co-operative movement where everyone has something to contribute for the benefit of us all.



Questions
tut@into.ie



In this session we will discuss...



- Key responsibilities, our branch structure & contacting your CEC Rep
- How to encourage recruitment & participation
- Exploring scenarios – Where to seek advice on queries
- How to stay in touch and keep up to date with your union
- What are the best things about being in the INTO



Importance of Recruitment

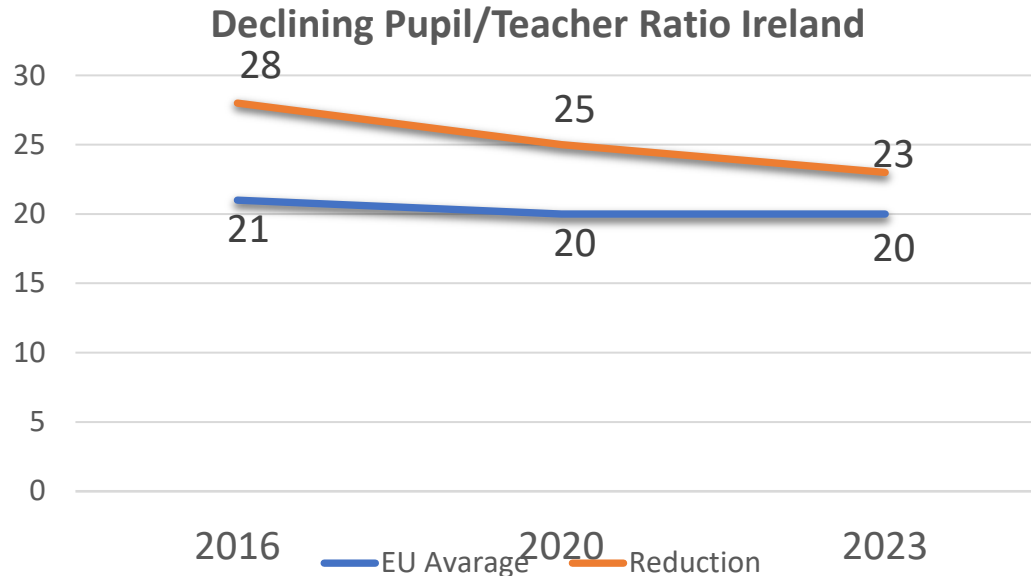
- Unity in the profession
- Promotes solidarity amongst staff
- Strength in numbers
- Collective bargaining power
- Benefit from the negotiations
- More diverse range of views and opinions





The Impact of Participation

A simple, but highly effective, example of member participation/lobbying has been the INTO campaigns relating to the reduction of class sizes.





Encouraging Participation

- Ask members to attend meetings to encourage participation at local branch level.
- Explain to non-members how they can join.
- Promote supports and services provided by the INTO.
- Inform colleagues about INTO events.
- Include members with particular interests in lobbying politicians.
- Assist local and national media coordinators in achieving positive coverage for issues promoted by the INTO.



Report Of The Task Force On Participation

Local task force members - Staff Survey said -

- Being asked by a colleague or staff representative to attend
- Being interested in an issue being discussed
- Their own volition





Report Of The Task Force On Participation

Young INTO activists said

Being asked to attend the local branch meeting

Having meeting procedures, acronyms, general INTO structure and culture explained to them.

Being encouraged by officers and other members to speak out, be active and undertake a role.



Overheard In The Staffroom

You are chatting about the INTO and the next branch meeting, a member of staff says to you. “The INTO, I’m not going to waste money subscribing to them, sure they do nothing for you”

How do you respond?





Handling Queries

The role of the Staff Representative is

- To **listen** to the problem.
- To **give** relevant **information**.
- To **refer** the member to where the information may be found.



1. A colleague in SET comes to you, they are frustrated as they have been asked to cover different classes for substitution reasons and haven't been available to teach any of their own groups or pupils. What can they do?
2. Two teachers have requested a job-sharing split-week working pattern. They would like to work; Teacher 1. Monday Tuesday, Teacher 2. Thursday and Friday and every other Wednesday. The principal has refused these working arrangements, they must each work Monday to Friday and alternate. What can they do?
3. During Covid-19 restrictions all teachers agreed to supervise for an additional 10 mins every morning to allow parents to drop off children without congregating. This was a good will gesture from staff but now that Covid-19 restrictions are lifted there is no sign of it changing. They come to you for advice.
4. The temperature in a colleague's class has been less than 12 degrees Celsius at the start of school every day this week. They are freezing and fed up.
5. An LGBTQ member of staff who has been open about their sexuality comes to you, they feel that other staff members are not being inclusive in their language/behaviour towards them on staff. What can you do?

6. There has been a recent AP1 post of responsibility appointment at school. A member of staff comes to you aggrieved. They feel that procedures were not followed as the notification of the appointment was not posted in the staff room following selection. They were an unsuccessful candidate. What do you do?

7. An NQT chats to you regarding remuneration for items bought for their class. Your principal is unwilling to engage with the NQT on the matter. They are concerned about what they should do moving forward.

8. Your School has placed a bank of PC/Tablets/Laptops in all classrooms. A member approaches you as they feel they have a large knowledge gap around the use of ICT. They are unsure about their position if students access inappropriate material. Will they be held responsible if an incident like this arises?

9. In a member's opinion the health and safety of the children in the school is being put at risk. A rodent/mould infestation is not being handled correctly by school management. Your colleague is worried about a situation where a child contracts an infestation related illness. They ask you what level of responsibility they have in this situation.



Handling Queries



To help members with queries, do the following:

- Listen to the problem and assure the member that their query will be dealt with in confidence.
- Provide advice only if you are certain that it is completely reliable, and if in doubt consult.
- If it is an urgent matter, direct the member to Head Office or their local CEC representative.
- Direct the member to further sources of information, for example, the INTO website, their CEC representative or INTO Head Office Handling members' queries.



Members' Query-Line

- The fastest way to get an answer to a question is to visit [the INTO website](#).
 - You can also ring the query line on 01 804 7700 or email info@into.ie
-
- ☐ The query line is operational from 9 am to 5 pm daily. However, a team member may call you back up to 6 pm.
 - ☐ Calls to the query line are logged by our reception staff, who will need to verify you are an INTO member.
 - ☐ Your query is then assigned to a team member with the relevant expertise to deal with the specifics of the enquiry.



Staying Informed



- Go to your branch meetings. Check dates with your branch secretary or look at the events calendar on the INTO website.
- Read the Eolas. Whenever we have exceptional news, an Eolas is issued to members and posted online.
- Read the INTO e-newsletter. *It is emailed on Tuesdays during term-time.*
- Visit the INTO website.
- INTO's social media channels: *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram*



Mile Buióchas