

FIRST-ROUND OFFERS 2025 EIGHT-PAGE SUPPLEMENT

College offers **helpdesk** live on **irishtimes.com**



Travis Kelce proposed, the crowd went wild. And now, the two great themes of Taylor Swift's lyrical universe—love and limelight—have come together in holy matrimony

Finn McRedmond
Opinion



FAIRWAY TO HEAVEN A BOLD REDESIGN ON THE GROUNDS OF CARTON HOUSE

Interiors
Residential Property

Growing FF expectation Gavin will seek Áras nomination

Prospect of former Dublin manager's candidacy warmly received in party

Hanafin 'encouraged' by response after she declared her interest in running

PAT LEAHY
Political Editor

There is a growing expectation in Fianna Fáil that former Dublin football manager Jim Gavin will seek a nomination to contest the presidential election for the party.

Sources at several levels of the party said yesterday that although there has been no confirmation from Mr Gavin or party headquarters that his name will be put forward, they expect he will enter the race.

The prospect of Mr Gavin's candidacy has been warmly received at all party levels. Although Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin has not declared his hand, several party sources believe Mr Gavin's potential candidacy would not have advanced to this stage without the Taoiseach's tacit approval.

Furthermore, sources said Mr Gavin's meticulous nature was such that he would not have allowed his potential candidacy to proceed without careful planning and consideration.

"This is not something that was thought up at the last minute," one senior source said.

One person who has been involved in internal discussions said it would be accurate to say Mr Gavin was giving the issue "serious consideration".

Another person with a similar involvement used the same phrase, but stressed there had been no confirmation of Mr Gavin's intentions.

Mr Gavin has previously declined to comment and did not respond to messages yesterday.

'Hunger'

However, the sense of expectation he will be a candidate has grown in the party in recent days.

"I would be surprised if he is not in there," one person adjacent to internal discussions on the issue said.

"It certainly seems to be going down well," one TD said. "He ticks a lot of Fianna Fáil's boxes—the GAA, he's an Army officer who served with the UN, he has shown concerns about disadvantage."

"There is a sense around him that he could win. And there's a desire in Fianna Fáil to win—the hunger is there."

Another TD, from Dublin, said: "Do I like the idea of canvassing for Jim Gavin? Yes."

One Minister spoke highly of Mr Gavin and noted "he'd have denied it by now if it wasn't happening".

Another Minister sounded a similar note, saying: "It's been three days now and he hasn't denied it, so I presume he's interested."

Selection process

Several members of the parliamentary party and other party sources said they would welcome Mr Gavin's candidacy, but said they expected there would be a selection process in the coming weeks.

It is expected Mr Martin will set out that process shortly, perhaps this weekend, though no meeting of the parliamentary party has been organised as yet.

Mr Martin has said he would set out his approach at the end of summer.

There is expected to be a handful of candidates contesting the selection process.

Former minister Mary Hanafin wrote to members of the parliamentary party yesterday, saying she had been "very encouraged by the response and encouragement of the people I met" since declaring her interest in seeking the Fianna Fáil nomination.

There was also speculation about the intentions of MEP Billy Kelleher, though several TDs confessed to relying on media reports to know what was happening. "The circle is so tight," one senior TD said.

There was a blow for Independent candidate Catherine Connolly yesterday, however, when former Labour leader Alan Kelly said he would neither nominate nor vote for her, despite the party promising to support her bid to become president.

"She has shown disdain for us since 2006," he said.

➔ **Presidential election could define next era for Sinn Féin: page 2**



Learning curve First day for junior infants

Arya (5) with parents Eeshita Ray Singh Mumon and Pragya Singh on the first day in the classroom for junior infants at Hansfield Educate Together National School in Ongar, northwest Dublin, yesterday.

Report: page 3
Photograph: Alan Betson

'Deeply unfair' college random selection criticised

JACK WHITE

The random selection process has again been criticised as "deeply unfair" after some students who achieved maximum points in their Leaving Cert lost out on their first preferences for college courses yesterday.

In all, 51 per cent of third-level applicants received their first choice following the initial round of offers from the Central Applications Office (CAO), with four-fifths being offered one of their top three college choices.

However, places on 25 level-eight courses in high demand were allocated using random selection. Two of these courses required the maximum 625 points for entry, meaning some top-performing applicants missed out while others got in.

These two courses at Trinity College Dublin, which resorted to using the lottery system for six courses, were Dental Science and its degree in Management Science and Information Systems Studies.

Despite expectations among

some in the sector that lowering grade inflation might reduce the use of random selection, there was no change in the number of courses using it.

Preston Ó Caoimh, president of the Irish Second-Level Students' Union, described the process as "deeply unfair", saying it had caused "ongoing concerns" for students in the lead-up to the State exams.

"Students can work tirelessly to achieve the points needed for their course, only to see their hopes dashed by what is essentially a lucky dip. It doesn't truly

reflect the ability, effort or potential of the student just as many feel the Leaving Cert itself doesn't," he said.

Trinity said the downward adjustment in grade inflation this year was "offset by a significant increase in demand", with points rising by an average of 9.6. The number of CAO applicants overall jumped 7 per cent to 89,347, up from 83,543 in 2024.

Trinity vice-provost Orla Sheils, who previously described random selection as a "cruel arbiter", said while the

reduction in the uplift in Leaving Certificate grades was welcome, "it is regrettable that the effects of this gradual unwinding will continue for a number of years to come. There is really no fair way of solving the problem when students present on equal marks".

Prof Peter McHugh, interim president of the University of Galway, which used random selection for four courses including Medicine and General Nursing, said the continued use of the lottery system was unfortunate. "It is worth considering

whether there could be H1a-b and H2a-b [grades] and whether this would help create a distinction between candidates on merit".

Minister for Further Education James Lawless said the random selection process was "very fair". He added: "It's not desirable, it's not preferable, but as a lottery system it's probably the least-worst way to do it at the moment."

➔ **Why the CAO points keep rising: Brian Mooney, page 3**

Suspected case of trafficking involved forced organ removal

KITTY HOLLAND

Social Affairs Correspondent

A suspected case of human trafficking for forced organ removal is highlighted in a report published today.

It is among 162 cases of human trafficking identified between 2022 and 2024, according to the monitoring report from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

The latest figure marks a 30 per cent increase on the preceding three years, when 124 victims were identified.

The number of child trafficking victims has increased by more than 50 per cent in six years despite a context of "chronically low rates of identification of child victims", the report warned.

Of the most recent cohort of victims, 20 were children, compared with nine in the preced-

ing three years. The most frequent reasons for people being trafficked were for sexual exploitation at 62 per cent, labour exploitation at 28 per cent and forced criminal activities at 9 per cent.

"In the reporting period, there was one case of suspected trafficking for organ removal," said the report.

Sexual exploitation

"The data indicates that trafficking for sexual exploitation has remained the most often identified form of exploitation and that it is increasing steadily from year to year."

Anecdotal information also suggests trafficking for forced marriages and exploitative surrogacy, it added.

The majority of child and adult victims were women or girls, with 43 male and 119 female. There are also ongoing

concerns that not all child victims are being identified as minors, while those taken into Tusla's care are not always kept safe from traffickers.

Reports of migrant girls in care homes being targeted for sexual exploitation are cited. "Evidence shows that the accommodation of children in State care institutions is associated with risks of exploitation and human trafficking," said the report.

Separated and unaccompanied children whose age is in dispute—typically aged between 15 and 17—"are some of the groups most vulnerable to trafficking", it said.

The commission draws on data provided "by State agencies and public bodies engaged in the trafficking response" for its regular reports to the Council of Europe group of experts on action against trafficking.

Your Health is Your Wealth

Weather

Low pressure will bring blustery winds and showers. Highs of 17-19 degrees.

THE IRISH TIMES
24-28 Tara Street, Dublin 2.
D02CX89
Telephone: (01) 9203900
Online: irishtimes.com
The recommended retail price of THE IRISH TIMES in the Republic of Ireland is €2.60
Subscriptions: Tel: (01) 9203901
Email: subscribe@irishtimes.com



9 771393 351949 35
Vol. No. 52374. Thursday, August 28, 2025

Home News

Clinics: Three hospitals paid consultants all the funding they received from the National Treatment Purchase Fund for running clinics to cut waiting lists. **Page 2**

Arrest: A garda has been arrested for questioning after the death of a man during an interaction with officers. **Page 4**

World News



US: A gunman killed two children and wounded 17 other people when he opened fire on students attending Mass at a Minneapolis school. **Page 7**

Business + Innovation + Technology

Pensions: Firms planning to move staff on to their existing schemes to avoid the incoming automatic enrolment system are being urged to take action. **Page 12**

Rents: Students face soaring rents as they prepare for the next academic year, property experts predict. **Page 13**

Sports Thursday

FAI: The Football Association of Ireland will introduce a voluntary redundancy scheme to reduce staff numbers by up to 70. **Page 16**

Golf: US captain Keegan Bradley has resisted the temptation to combine his role with playing duties in next month's Ryder Cup. **Page 17**

Pure Pharmacy



Comprehensive Blood Testing Services now available

Available Tests

Blood Screening Panels | Vitamins & Minerals
Male & Female Hormone | Thyroid & Stress
Fertility Panels | Sports Performance | Iron

Book Online in **60 Seconds!**

Visit **purepharmacy.ie** to book in today