

SIMPLIFIED SAIPAN LACKS DRAMA OF REAL EVENTS

Ken Early
Sports Monday



What struck me this year is how Irish art makers are increasingly pulling their avant-garde intentions into the mainstream

Una Mullally
Opinion



HAPPY CHRISTMAS STORIES OF THE BEST OF CUSTOMER CARE

Conor Pope
Pricewatch

Incentives needed to boost supply of teachers – department

Minister informed of more than 1,900 unfilled positions across State’s schools

Shortage in Dublin despite ‘more than adequate numbers of qualified teachers’

MARTIN WALL
Public Policy Correspondent

New initiatives, including targeted bursaries for teachers and a universal teaching qualification, will have to be considered to resolve recruitment challenges faced by schools, particularly around Dublin, the Department of Education believes.

Briefing documents prepared by the department for new Minister for Education Hildegard Naughton on her appointment last month noted 1,228 unfilled positions in primary schools, 621 at second level and 60 in special education, according to previously unpublished figures.

Officials told Ms Naughton that while there were “more than adequate numbers of qualified teachers in the State”, there was an acute shortage, including substitutes, particularly in Dublin and surrounding counties.

They also said “there is a lack of teachers at post-primary with qualifications in some subjects (Stem, modern foreign languages, Irish, home economics and practical subjects)”.

Officials said while new measures would have to be looked at to boost supply, the introduction of a special allowance for living in Dublin would lead to demands for a similar measure for staff across the public service.

The briefing documents said that as of last March, a record 79,225 teachers were employed across primary and second level.

“Teacher supply has been impacted further due to the growing population, including increased immigration. The cost of living is also a factor (rent, cost and lack of housing) in some large urban areas.”

Officials said primary school enrolments were projected to decline until 2036, while at second level, it was expected that numbers would peak in 2026/27 before easing back to current levels by 2031/32.

“Despite the projected enrolment decrease in primary,

and post-primary, it is not expected to resolve the often-acute recruitment challenges faced by some schools, particularly in the Dublin commuter belt.

“Approximately 3,625 newly qualified teachers are registering with the Teaching Council annually, with a slight majority of primary teachers. The demand for additional post-primary teachers will continue for a number of years and further measures to increase the numbers available will need to be considered, such as new routes to teaching, a universal teaching qualification, conversion programmes and additional upskilling programmes, further targeted bursaries and sharing limited subject teaching resources between schools.”

Specific nature of posts
Officials said developing measures that adequately addressed these challenges was “hindered by the structure of the education system, and the often-specific nature of the teaching posts that are unfilled. For example: sharing resources between schools.”

The documents said the budget last year introduced a €2,000 annual bursary for student teachers in Stem fields (including science, maths, chemistry, physics and engineering) during the final two years of their undergraduate teacher education, with a requirement to complete at least two years of post-qualification teaching in a recognised post-primary school.

Meanwhile, the department said its payroll service facilitated salary and pension payments to 166,000 people. It said at the end of last year, overpayments of €6.8 million had been made to 3,550 people. It said it was seeking repayment and arrangements were put in place but this presented a challenge in cases where the individual was no longer employed by the department and had no pension entitlements.

➔ **More than 300 more educational psychologists needed, officials say: page 4**



Rite of passage Solstice at Newgrange

Winter solstice at Newgrange, Brú na Bóinne, Co Meath, at dawn yesterday. Thousands of people, including druids and high priestesses, made their way to the Neolithic passage tomb to witness the darkness of the longest night lift.

Report: page 2
Photograph: Nick Bradshaw

Prisoner tagging to be run by private company

Electronic system to be provided by firm that will also monitor tagged prisoners

CONOR LALLY
Crime and Security Editor

A new system to electronically tag prisoners in the Republic, which will be used in an attempt to ease chronic overcrowding in jails, will be established and run by a private company.

It is the first time any part of the criminal justice system has been privatised. It follows similar developments in other countries, including the UK and US, where tagging systems, and even prisons, have been privatised.

However, Garda and prison

sources said there was significant confusion about whose responsibility it will be to respond when prisoners who are freed on a tag breach their conditions. In particular, if a response does not occur, or does not occur fast enough, and a tagged person goes on to commit a serious crime, it was unclear who would be answerable.

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) has also questioned how a private company running the new tagging system will communicate in real

time with An Garda Síochána, the Irish Prison Service, Probation Service or Courts Service.

“It is unclear what oversight mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that it operates ethically and appropriately,” said IPRT executive director Saoirse Brady, adding it was not clear who would oversee the private operator and what form that oversight would take.

In Britain, where tagging is being expanded, the House of Lords’s justice and home affairs committee has recently

highlighted the “dire” performance of some private companies that operate tagging systems there.

In recent weeks, documents have been issued by the Department of Justice for the supply of the software and hardware to establish an “electronic monitoring system” that would tag, and then continuously monitor, prisoners.

“Data from the tags will be recorded by the service provider and shared with the relevant agency according to agreed op-

erating procedures and reporting,” it added of the 12-month pilot to tag 50 prisoners released on bail or temporary release.

The proposal comes at a time of chronic prison overcrowding, all across the network of Irish jails. In June 2024, the number of prisoners in custody had passed 5,000 for the first time but has risen since then to 5,800, with the system 25 per cent above official bed capacity and 50 per cent above capacity in the women’s prisoners in Dublin and Limerick.

Pop-rock band drummer is landlord of ‘uninhabitable’ garden studio flat

NIAMH TOWEY

A founding member of the Irish pop-rock band The Script is the landlord of a mould-ridden, unregistered rented studio described by the tenant living there as “uninhabitable”.

Glen Power plays drums and co-founded the band with Danny O’Donoghue and the late Mark Sheehan in 2001.

The band have achieved huge commercial success across the world, having sold 12 million albums and four million concert tickets, according to their Spotify page.

Mr Power is the director of a company called Open Bridge Ltd, with his son Luke Power registered as the secretary.

Open Bridge Ltd had tangible assets of more than €8 million at the end of 2024, the latest financial statement filed for the company shows.

The company is listed as the landlord of a studio apartment

in the garden of a three-bedroom semidetached house in Tallaght, Dublin 24. While the three-bed house is registered with the Residential Tenancies Board, the one-bedroom apartment at the rear is not.

Tenant Oriel Corway is in receipt of the Housing Assistance Payment, a State scheme for people on the social housing list. This State-funded payment covers the majority of the rent for the apartment, which is more than €1,300 a month.

In May 2025, Ms Corway paid for an engineer’s survey on the property which found high levels of dampness and mould growth throughout the inside of the apartment.

It also found insufficient ventilation, exposed live wires and poor weather sealing around the doors and windows.

The report recommended engaging a damp-proofing specialist to resolve the issues, the removal and treatment of the

mould and the rewiring of the unit.

“There is mould everywhere, it’s all over everything and it is probably all over me,” Corway said.

She has raised the issue with letting agent Ray Cooke on several occasions, and they have sent in workmen a number of times. However, the mould and leaks persist in the apartment.

A spokesman for Ray Cooke, also speaking on behalf of Glen Power, said the landlord “is fully committed to have the issues resolved in full” and has “been looking at ways to keep [the] tenant in situ while works are completed”.

More than €9,000 has been spent trying to rectify the issue over the last eight months, he said.

➔ **Living in a mould-covered garden studio: ‘Christmas is going to be miserable’: page 3**

Weather

Mostly cloudy with outbreaks of patchy rain and drizzle spreading from the east. Highs of 6-11 degrees in light winds.

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Home News

Flu outbreaks: There are expected to be between 800 and 1,100 people in hospital with the flu on any given day this week, according to the HSE. **Page 4**

Help to Buy: More than 110,000 people have benefited from the scheme since its inception in 2016. **Page 3**

World News



Russia: The Kremlin has said input from Kyiv and other European capitals in US-led talks to end the war is damaging prospects for peace. **Page 5**

Business Today

PTSB sale: PTSB and its advisers are on track to call on parties circling the bank to submit firm expressions of interest by the end of January. **Page 12**

AvantMoney: The Irish unit of Spanish bank Bankinter has expanded its ‘soft launch’ of a deposit offering. **Page 12**

Sports Monday

Gaelic Games: Loughrea and Ballygunner will contest the All-Ireland club SHC final in January after yesterday’s semi-finals.

Soccer: Liverpool fear Alexander Isak has sustained a significant injury and is facing a lengthy period on the sidelines.

NCH

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