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## **Policy on Exemption from Irish**

### **Introduction:**

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management (BoM) in response to a growing demand by parents for exemptions and recent changes in special educational provisions. It was formulated during May 2020.

### **Rationale:**

The purpose of this Circular is to advise recognised Primary Schools of the revised arrangements for the exemption of pupils from the study of Irish. It supersedes Circular 12/96 and the 2009 revision of that Circular both of which are hereby withdrawn. The Language component of the Primary Curriculum is for all pupils and comprises both Irish and English. In exceptional circumstances, some pupils may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To allow for pupils of differing abilities, interests and circumstances
- To enhance inclusivity within the school
- To enable children of all abilities to access the curriculum in a learner friendly manner

### **Granting an exemption from the study of Irish**

Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her access to the curriculum and his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers, and the pupil. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out below.

## **The circumstances in which a pupil may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish:**

Exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following exceptional circumstances only:

**a.** pupils whose education up to 12 years of age (or up to and including the final year of their primary education) was received outside the State and where they did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish

**Or**

**b.** pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in primary schools who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three consecutive years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the state and are at least 12 years of age on re-enrolment

**Or**

**c.** pupils who: i. have at least reached second class

**and**

**ii.** present with significant learning difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in both Irish and English over time. Documentary evidence to this effect, held by the school, should include Student Support Plans detailing regular reviews of learning needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment target-setting evidence-informed intervention and review, including test scores (word reading, reading comprehension, spelling, other scores of language/literacy) at key points of review. **and**

**iii.** at the time of the application for exemption present with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.

**Or**

**d.** children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.

## **Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish**

A parent/guardian must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil.

a) Considering an application for exemption The principal will:

1. Ensure that the date of receipt of the application by the school is recorded on the form.
2. Acknowledge receipt of the application for exemption from the study of Irish in writing.
3. Discuss the written application with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and confirm the subparagraph on which the application is based (2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c or 2.2d) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
4. Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the next steps in processing the application.
5. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil regarding any implication of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.
6. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that the application will be processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.
7. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted.

8. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that, where an application is refused, the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

9. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) the arrangements for the pupil's learning in the case of an exemption being granted.

b) Recording the decision The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school principal in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be issued. The Certificate of Exemption will also state the name and address of the school, the school roll number, the pupil's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted.

Parents/guardians and pupils should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

#### **2.4 Appeal**

Where the application for exemption from the study of Irish is refused, a parent/guardian can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC). The deliberations of the IEAC will focus solely on the process the school engaged in reaching its decision. The IEAC will consider how the school followed the process as prescribed in this Circular and the accompanying Guidelines for Primary Schools. An appeal must be lodged within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school not to grant an exemption was notified in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s). The Irish Exemptions Appeal Form and Guidelines for Primary Schools can be accessed at [www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/](http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/).

#### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

In-school Management, class teachers, SEN Leader & BoM will contribute to the implementation of school procedures.

#### **Success Criteria:**

- Seamless integration of non-nationals and pupils with learning difficulties
- Happy school learning environment
- Positive teacher/parental feedback

#### **Review:**

This policy will be reviewed in May 2023

