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## **Irish Language Exemption Policy**

### **Introduction**

This policy was drafted by the staff and Board of Management of Scoil Cholmcille to clarify the circumstances around which an exemption from Irish may be granted according to Circular 12/96 and updated in February 2022 following the latest circular 0052/2019. In recent years many parents have queried obtaining an Irish exemption for their child.

### **Rationale**

Scoil Cholmcille celebrates the role that the Irish language has in our school and community and in social, cultural and political life in Ireland.

We are an inclusive school committed to the holistic education of all of our pupils. Irish is a part of our daily lives in Scoil Cholmcille, however we are cognisant of the needs some of our pupils have to study only one language while in school. We endeavour to include all children in the teaching of basic communication skills in Irish throughout their primary school education.

Circular 0052/2019 outlines the circumstances around which an exemption from Irish may be granted. This policy seeks to provide clarity for parents with regard to the Irish exemption.

This policy was formulated by consultation with staff and the Board of Management of our school and reflects the need for clarity around the procedures relating to provision of an exemption from the study of Irish

### **Aim**

To ensure that procedures around applications for an exemption from the study of Irish are clear to all stake-holders in the school.

### **Eligibility for Exemption from the study of Irish in Primary Schools (as per Circular 0052/2019)** 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 in section 2.2 of circular 0052/2019 (below).

**2.2** 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.

#### **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 sub-paragraph 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.

Pupils from the above categories remain in the class during the Irish lesson so that they may have an opportunity to gain a knowledge of spoken Irish and to participate in the learning activities. Pupils with exemptions do not have to do written work or Irish homework/litriú. Alternatively, other suitable arrangement may be made such as allocating school work on other subject areas.

### **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.

### **Arrangements for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish**

Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special educational needs resources. To support inclusive practices, a pupil who is exempt from the study of Irish should be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability and interests.

### **Supports for pupils who have no understanding of English when enrolled**

A pupil who has no understanding of English when enrolled and whose education up to 12 years of age or up to the final year of his/her primary education was received outside the state, should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his/her full engagement with the Primary Language Curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

## **Reporting on exemptions granted to the Department**

The school management will be required to provide statistical information relating to the number and the grounds on which exemptions were granted under this Circular in the previous school year as part of the Primary School Annual Census.

## **Communication with parents**

This policy will be published on the school website.

## **Implementation and review**

This policy will be implemented fully February 2022. The policy will be reviewed as required, in line with Department of Education Policy. The school management team and the teachers will implement this policy.

The Board of Management ratified this policy on **15.02.2022**.

Signed: *Francis Conaghan* Chairperson

Signed: *Nicola McCarthy* Principal/Secretary

Date: 15/02/2022