

Scoil Chaitríona Baggot Street

Exemption from Irish Policy

Introduction

This policy was drafted in response to changes in Special Educational Provisions and the increased enrolment of children from abroad. It reflects our ethos by ensuring that our school's inclusive nature is reflected in how we recognise the needs and potential of every child.

This policy document should be read in conjunction with Circular 12/96. This outlines eight categories of pupils who may be entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish, including children with specific learning difficulties, general learning disabilities and/or sensory impairments and some of our international pupils.

Please note that throughout this policy, the term 'parent' or 'parents' also includes legal guardians.

Aims and Objectives

- To cater for the educational needs of pupils with differing abilities, differing first languages and differing educational circumstances
- To ensure that the requirements of DES' Circular 0012/1996 are met
- To assist teachers in providing appropriate differentiation for pupils with special educational needs
- To enable children of all abilities to access the curriculum in an appropriate way
- To ensure that parents have the information they need to make an informed decision on their child's education.

Eligibility for Exemption from the study of Irish in Primary Schools (Circular 12/96)

(a) Pupils whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland, provided that the parent or guardian who had custody of the pupil was permanently resident in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland during the pupil's period of education up to that age;

(b) Pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in national schools who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the State and the pupil is at least 11 years of age on re-enrolment;

(c) Pupils who function intellectually at average or above average level but have a Specific Learning Disability of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or

- who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or

- who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.

The evidence of such a disability must be furnished by a qualified psychologist, supported in the case of (c) by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. In addition, a full report on the pupil must be furnished by the school.

(d) Pupils from abroad, who have no understanding of English when enrolled, would be required to study one language only, Irish or English;

(e) Children of non-Irish nationals who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland;

(f) Children from other countries in whose case the Minister is satisfied that they are resident in this country as political refugees.

Procedure to be Followed in the Granting of Exemptions from Irish:

1. A written application for exemption will be made by the parent or legal guardian to the principal of the school. This application will specify the grounds on which the exemption is sought.
2. The school will prepare a full report on the student in consultation with relevant teachers.
3. A decision to grant exemption will be conveyed to the parent or guardian by way of a written certificate, signed by the school principal, that the exemption has been given in accordance with Circular 12/96. Appendix 1.
4. The application, school report, psychologist's report, report of medical specialist, copy of certificate of exemption and other relevant documents will be retained by the school and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department.
5. It is not required that a copy of the Exemption be sent to the Department of Education and Skills at this point in time but all exemptions must be included in the Annual Census Returns.
6. The Exemption will be noted at a Board of Management meeting.
7. A copy of the exemption certification will be sent to the relevant second level school when the pupil in question has completed his primary education.
8. A Register of Exemptions granted will be kept by the school. Irish Exemptions will also be recorded on the Aladdin system.
9. A formal record will be completed for every pupil who has been considered for an Irish Exemption but the Exemption has not been granted. This will be kept on the pupil's file for future reference.

Identifying Pupils who may require an exemption from Irish

Special Educational Needs

1. Our school adopts a Staged Approach to the identification of pupils with special educational needs.
2. When a pupil has been identified as in need of clinical assessment, the question of an Irish Exemption will be discussed with the relevant teachers and psychologist at that point in time and subsequently with parents where there is a specific recommendation for an Exemption from Irish.
3. When a pupil has been diagnosed with a Specific Learning Disability* or General learning Disability, but no specific recommendation is made regarding the learning of Irish, the school will maintain a record of the pupil's progress in English and the question of an Exemption will be included in the annual IEP review.
4. Normally, an Irish Exemption will not be granted prior to the pupil reaching 4th class. An exception to this rule would be where there is a significant sensory disability.

Non-English speaking pupils

1. In the case of non-English speaking pupils, a decision on an Irish Exemption will not be made until the pupil has completed two years in the Irish school system.
2. Pupils who do not have English as a first language should not be required to do written work in Irish, either in school or for homework, until they have completed a minimum of two years in the Irish school system and then only providing they have attained a reasonable level of English.
3. Where a non-English speaking pupil fails to reach a reasonable level of English commensurate with his ability after a two year period in the Irish system of education, consideration will be given to the granting of an Irish Exemption. This will be done in consultation with the class teacher, the SEN team, the principal and the parents.
4. The principal, in consultation with the SEN team, will conduct an annual review of EAL pupils to ascertain if any of them need an Exemption from the learning of Irish.

Differentiating for Pupils with Exemptions from Irish

- Pupils are not excluded from Irish classes and should be included as much as possible in the learning of oral Irish (unless this is proving detrimental to English language development, pupil's emotional state, etc.).
- Pupils who have been exempted from Irish should not receive written work in Irish, either in class or for homework.
- Pupils who have been exempted from Irish should never be required to learn Irish spelling lists or lists of Irish vocabulary.
- Pupils who have been exempted from Irish should be assigned alternative written work appropriate to their learning needs and ability to work independently (e.g. work on English reading, phonics work, English sight vocabulary, etc.). This work must be planned for by the class teacher and should be included in an IEP which is regularly reviewed in consultation with parents and the SEN team)

**The term 'Specific Learning Disability' does not include disabilities due to poor general intellectual functioning. Account must be taken of the following criteria in determining whether a Specific Learning Disability exists:*

- *assessed intellectual functioning at average level or above;*
- *marked failure to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic skills such as reading and writing;*
- *a history of such failure not related directly to factors such as poor attendance, poor motivation or problems in social interaction which may affect attainment.*

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on May 11th 2016

Chairperson _____

Date: _____

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FROM IRISH
Scoil Chaitríona Baggot Street

Roll Number: 19896G

Name of Pupil: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Pupil's Nationality: _____

Sub Paragraph of Circular 12/96 under which the Exemption is Requested:

Specific Grounds for Exemption:

(if applicable)

Name and Address of Psychologist:

Date of Report: _____

I certify that the above-named pupil has been granted an exemption from the study of Irish in primary schools in accordance with the terms of Circular 12/96.

Siobhán Weekes
Principal