



St. Mark's Boys National School

Exemption from Irish Policy

Introduction:

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management of St. Mark's Boys National School in response to recent changes in special educational provisions in (*see Circular 0052/2019 Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools*) and updated in accordance with circular 0054/2022 in September 2023.

Rationale:

Circular 0054/2022 advises Primary Schools of the revised arrangements for the exemption of pupils from the study of Irish. The language component of the Primary Curriculum is for all pupils and comprises both English and Irish. In exceptional circumstances, some pupils may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish.

Relationship to the school Ethos:

This policy is in keeping with the mission statement of the school, which strives to enhance the self-esteem of all through providing for the intellectual, physical, moral and cultural needs of all.

Aims and Objectives:

1. To allow for pupils of differing abilities, interests and circumstances.
2. To enhance inclusivity within the school.
3. To enable children of all abilities to access the curriculum in a learner friendly manner.
4. To ensure that our procedures comply with Circular 0054/2022.

1. Granting an exemption from the study of Irish

An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances

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 access to the curriculum and his 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 1.3 to 1.5 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:

1.1 A pupil moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil whose education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish.

AND either (a) or (b)

(a) who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment

OR

(b) who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state.

1.2 A pupil who experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil:

(i) who has at least reached second class

AND

(ii) who presents with significant literacy difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in all subjects/across the curriculum and 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) who, at the time of the application for exemption presents with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.

Normally, pupils availing of an exemption under this category should be encouraged to engage with the study of oral Irish language for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.

1.3 A pupil who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life

It is recognised that there is a small cohort of pupils who have a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to their participation and engagement in their learning and school life. In the case of these pupils, consideration may need to be given to adjusting the range of learning experiences to ensure that their needs are met and that they may engage purposefully in their learning in school. In very exceptional circumstances, this means that consideration may need to be given to exempting them from the study of Irish.

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil:

(i) who has at least reached second class

AND

(ii) who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a very significant and continuing barrier to his participation and engagement in his learning and school life.

AND

(iii) whose school has substantial written evidence that these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs

AND

(iv) whose school has substantial written evidence that these individualised Student Support Plans have been implemented over not less than two school years, and have been monitored and reviewed by the school in collaboration with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil.

AND

(v) who has been given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish in mainstream classes for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.

AND

(vi) the principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the pupil concerned.

Normally, this will mean that the pupil will be expected to engage with the study of Irish at least to the end of fifth class. However, in very exceptional circumstances, where the principal is satisfied that an exemption is warranted to address the high level of multiple and persistent needs of the pupil, and certifies that all of the conditions in (i) to (vi) above have been met, it may be granted at an earlier stage, but in no case may this be earlier than second class.

1.4 A pupil in a recognised special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school

(i) Where a pupil is currently enrolled in a recognised special school or special class in a mainstream school or who has previously been enrolled in a recognised special school or special class in a mainstream school and who is transitioning to mainstream provision, that pupil is automatically entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish without an application.

OR

(ii) Where a pupil has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school an application for an exemption from the study of Irish will be required.

Normally, pupils availing of an exemption under (i) **OR** (ii) of this category should be encouraged to engage with the study of oral Irish language for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.

1.5 A pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history.

2. Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish

- 2.1. A parent/guardian must make an application in writing [using the form in **Appendix A**] to the Principal of the school for a *Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish* on behalf of a pupil. The Principal will:
- Ensure that the date of receipt of the application by the school is recorded on the form.
 - Acknowledge receipt of the application for exemption from the study of Irish in writing [see **Appendix B**].
 - Discuss the written application with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (**1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5** above) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
 - Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the next steps in processing the application.
 - 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. (see **information note Appendix C**)
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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).
 - Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) the arrangements for the pupil's learning in the case of an exemption being granted.
- 2.2. Recording of the decision and the outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school Principal in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- 2.3. Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption will be issued; it will be signed and dated by the school Principal. 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.
- 2.4. 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.

Appeal

- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. 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

3. Roles and Responsibilities:

3.1. In-school Management, class teachers and Board of Management will contribute to the implementation of school procedures which are outlined as a separate document to this policy.

4. Success Criteria:

- Successful integration of new international pupils and pupils with learning difficulties.
- A considered and transparent approach to the granting of exemptions is established.
- Clarity for teaching staff, parents and children regarding exemptions from Irish is established.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 06/12/2023

Signed: Anne O'Donovan
Chairperson

Signed: Johanna Corbett
Principal

Date: 6.12.2023 ,

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Date of next review: 2025 .