

IRISH EXEMPTION POLICY 2022

1.

Introduction:

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management of St. Paul's Senior National School in response to recent changes in special educational provisions (see *Circular 54/2022 & 55/2022 Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools*).

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.

2. Granting an exemption from the study of Irish

2.1 An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances

Exempting a student from the study of Irish will be considered only in those exceptional circumstances set out in section 2.2 of this Circular. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher/s, special education teachers⁵ and the student. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section 2.2 below.

2.2 The circumstances in which a student may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish

An exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following circumstances, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4 only:

2.2.1 A student 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 student whose education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he/she 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 enrolment⁶ or re-enrolment

OR

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

⁵ *Including the teacher from the Visiting Teacher Service, where one is assigned to the student.*

⁶ *For the purposes of this Circular where students enrol in the final 2 months of an academic year, their enrolment/re-enrolment will be considered to take place on the first day of the following academic year.*

2.2.2 A student 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 student:

- (i) 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

- (ii) 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.

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

It is recognised that there is a small cohort of students 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 students, 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 student:

- (i) Who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a very significant and continuing barrier to his/her participation and engagement in his/her learning and school life

AND

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

AND

- (iii) 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 student

AND

- (iv) 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 to language skills development and the communicative approach underpinning the Specification for Junior Cycle Irish (L2) and the Leaving Certificate Syllabuses for Irish.

AND

- (v) The principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the student concerned.

2.2.4 A student in a recognised⁷ special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation⁸ and has been deemed eligible⁹ for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school

- (i) Where a student 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 student is automatically entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish without an application.

⁷ A recognised special school/class is a primary or post-primary level class sanctioned and resourced by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). See <https://ncse.ie/> for a list of such schools/classes

⁸ The recommendation for the student to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the student has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

⁹ See *Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (English-medium)*, DE (2022).

- (ii) Where a student 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.

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

(a) Steps required for a valid application for an exemption from the study of Irish

1. A parent/guardian on behalf of a student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish.
2. The school staff shall mark the date of receipt of the application on the application form and issue an acknowledgement to the parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student as relevant, upon receipt of the application.

3. At the earliest opportunity a school official should contact the applicant(s) and:
 - Discuss the written application with the applicant(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (as outlined in section 2.2 above)
N.B. If a parent/guardian, or the student where he/she is the applicant, does not confirm the sub-paragraph under which the application is based then the application is null and void and no further processing of the application will take place. Only criteria contained in this Circular can be considered as grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish and no other exceptional circumstances can be considered.
 - Advise the applicant(s) of the steps involved in processing the application.
 - Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf an application is made of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.
4. The application should be fully processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.
5. Where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted a signed Certificate of Exemption will be issued to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and a copy will be held by the school in the student's file. The record keeping requirements are outlined further at 3(c) below.
6. Where an application is refused, the principal must inform the applicant(s) in writing outlining the reasons for refusal and notifying the applicant(s) that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days of the date of the written decision.

4. Arrangements for students who are exempt from the study of Irish

- Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of students 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 will be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability and interests.

- All students in St. Paul's Senior National School (even those with an exemption) will continue to do Irish lessons during their time with us.
- Pupils with an Irish exemption will be exempt from Irish spelling and homework and every effort will be made to make their education in Irish fun and culturally relevant.
- On transitioning to secondary school, with parental agreement, the Irish exemption will be included in the educational passport which is sent to their secondary school of choice.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Pupil(s) always retain the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.
- Please keep this certificate safe as it is the responsibility of parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of this certificate is made available to any school to which their child enrolls.
- An exemption granted to a pupil may be operative throughout his/her enrolment in a primary and post-primary school.

Ratification

This Irish Exemption Policy for St. Paul's Senior National School has been ratified by the B.O.M. at a meeting on :

Signed: _____
Anthony Craven, Chairperson B.O.M.

Date:

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH

Name of School: St. Pauls SNS
Address: Ayrfield Drive, Clonrosse, Ayrfield, Dublin 13. D13 DD74.
Roll Number: 19618B

NAME OF PUPIL:

Date of Birth:

*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 0054/2022**.*

The exemption has been granted on the following grounds: (please tick the relevant criteria)

- 2.2.1
- 2.2.2
-
- 2.2.3
- 2.2.4

(see Circular 0054/22).

Any further information (if relevant):

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Feargal Brougham

School Principal

We have discussed this matter with Feargal Brougham, Principal and have been made aware that:

1. _____ (insert pupil's name), may, into the future, be restricted from certain jobs where Irish may be a requirement and that there may be other longer-term, as yet unforeseen, implications (e.g. while in post-primary education)
2. The school's goal is to maximise the child's participation and enjoyment in Irish oral language and to ensure he/she feels part of the Irish culture and ethos of the school, thereby increasing the likelihood of him/her being able to re-engage with Irish in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) signature(s).