



# St Francis National School

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## Policy for exempting Pupils from the Study of Irish

*In reading this policy, it should be noted that the term "Parent(s)" also includes Guardians and should be interpreted as such.*

### Rationale and Relationship to School Ethos

The policy seeks to clarify for parents and teachers our criteria and considerations for granting pupils exemptions from the learning of Irish in our school.

Circular 54/2022 outlines the Department of Education (DE) policy on exemption from the study of Irish. It states:

*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. In order for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish to be recognised when the Department validates school enrolment returns for grant payment and teacher allocation purposes, schools will continue to be required to record data on pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish and the reason for that exemption on the Primary Online Database (POD).*

We respect this, and, in so far as it is reasonable, we seek to give all pupils the opportunity to study Irish. One of our whole school aims is: *Spéis agus suim a chothú sa chultúr – teanga, spórt, ceol, stair srl.*

However, we accept that there are pressing reasons why some parents may seek an exemption from the study of Irish for their children. This policy seeks to clarify

1. When it is appropriate to seek to exempt a pupil from Irish
2. What criteria will be used to grant an exemption
3. What procedures will be followed with regard to exemptions



We believe that it is a serious decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish, one which could impact upon career choice later on. Therefore, it is a decision that we do not take lightly.

### **When is it appropriate to seek to exempt a pupil from Irish?**

Circular 54/2022 sets 12 years of age or the final year in primary education as the most appropriate time to consider an application for an exemption from the study of Irish where pupils

- i. may have received their primary education outside the state or
- ii. are re-enrolling following a period abroad.

In the case of pupils with significant and sustained learning difficulties, an exemption may be considered where they have at least reached second class in primary school

In St Francis NS, we believe that all children in mainstream classes should have the opportunity to take part in Irish lessons. In compliance with DE directives, no applications for exemptions will be considered up to the end of second class. From second class, formal reading and writing in Irish is practised. As with every subject, class teachers will seek to differentiate when it comes to teaching and setting work in Irish, in order to meet the needs of the children in their class.

### **Special classes in St Francis NS**

St Francis NS provides an inclusive education of children with special educational needs . In recognising the authority devolved to the Board of Management of St Francis NS by the DES in decision making concerning the Irish language learning needs of the pupils concerned, a formal application for a Certificate of Exemption is **not** required. Pupils in our special classes will therefore be exempt without holding a Certificate of Exemption.

In line with DE policy however, St Francis NS aims to provide all pupils, to the greatest extent possible and in a meaningful way, with opportunities to participate in Irish language and cultural activities at a level appropriate to their learning needs.

### **Mainstream classes**

If parents of children (who meet the criteria set out below) still request an exemption from Irish, we will consider each request on its merit.

We will make our decision based on

- Input from the teacher as to the needs of the pupil and the degree to which the continued study of Irish is impacting on his/her success other areas of the curriculum
- Input from the parent as to the needs of the pupil and the degree to which the continued study of Irish is impacting on his/her success other areas of the curriculum
- Evidence based on testing



- Recommendations from outside professionals e.g. in psychological reports

### **Criteria under which an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted**

Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for their access to the curriculum and their future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, following detailed discussion and consultation with the pupil's parents, 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.

### **What criteria will be used to grant an exemption?**

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



In the case of children of foreign nationals who are resident in the country, where the children are enrolled from Junior/Senior Infants, we do not generally grant exemptions.

However, many children who meet the criteria do not need an exemption from Irish. As stated previously, we will consider each request individually and we will grant an exemption where we believe it is the best option for the pupil.

Where there is a recommendation from a professional involved with the pupil, this will certainly form part of our consideration. However, the class teacher and/or SET who has day-to-day interactions with the child is best placed to inform any decisions being made.

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

A parent 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 and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 or 2.2.5) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
4. Advise the parents of the next steps in processing the application.
5. Inform the parents/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 parents 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 parents 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 parents 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 parents.
9. Explain to the parents 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 parents.

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 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**

Where the application for exemption from the study of Irish is refused, a parent 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 parents. 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/).

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

St Francis NS will 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 may still be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with their 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 their primary education was received outside the state, should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for their full engagement with the Primary Language Curriculum at a level commensurate with their ability.

An exemption granted to a pupil may be operative throughout their enrolment in primary and post-primary school.

### **Pupils transitioning to other schools**

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that a copy of the pupil's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school.



**Roles and Responsibilities:**

Class teachers, parents, principal and BoM will contribute to the implementation of school procedures as outlined in the policy.

**Communication**

This policy will be available in the Plean Scoile and on the school website.

**Responsibility for Review:**

All members of staff, Parent Association and Board of Management.

**Timeframe for Review:**

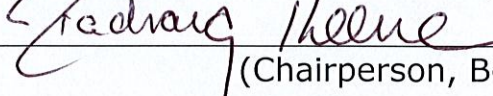
This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as required to meet the needs of the school.

**Next review:** December 2027

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**Policy for exempting Pupils  
from the Study of Irish**

Ratified by the Board of Management on 23/4/2024 (Date)

Signed:   
(Chairperson, Board of Management)



## Appendix 1: Application for an Exemption from the study of Irish

Application for Exemption from the Study of Irish (Primary Schools) For completion by the parent(s)/guardian(s)	
Name of pupil	
Date of birth	
Class	
Name of school	St. Francis NS Roll: 20259G
<p>We wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of _____ .</p> <p><i>2.1 A pupil moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language</i></p> <p><i>2.2 A pupil who experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum</i></p> <p><i>2.3 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</i></p> <p><i>2.4 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></p> <p><i>2.5 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</i></p> <p><i>Please indicate below the ground for applying for an exemption from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular 0054/2022.</i></p>	



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**Please provide detail of any supporting documentation being submitted to the school**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

**I/we the undersigned understand that documentation provided may be reviewed for the purpose of processing this application by relevant school personnel and other professionals where necessary.**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date:**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date:**



***For the school:***

***Date of receipt of application:*** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix 2. Exemption Report Form** *(To be printed on headed paper)*

Re: Exemption from The Study of Irish for:

Date of Birth:

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following a review of their school support file, \_\_\_\_\_ has /has not been granted an exemption from the study of Irish under section \_\_\_\_\_ of Circular 54/2022.

Please note the following from section 6 of the exemption Guidelines, published in May 2020:

The advantages associated with learning two languages simultaneously include improvements in cognitive, linguistic functioning, creativity and problem-solving by enhancing their communicative and thinking skills, as well as their participation in society. The principles of inclusion and differentiation are to the fore in current curricular provision and developments. Learning two languages develops pupils' linguistic functioning through the development of a deeper understanding of how language works and can be used to communicate. It enhances their ability to analyse how language works, to compare languages, and to reflect on how they learn languages in addition to advantages in other curricular areas.

What are the arrangements for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish?

To support inclusion practices, and in keeping with the principles underpinning language learning in primary schools, 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.

If an exemption has been granted, the option to learn Irish is still open to the pupil. Please note that some career options would be unavailable to those who do not study Irish.

Le gach dea mhéin,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Oreena Lawless

Príomhoide