



## St. Brigid's GNS Killester

### Irish Exemption Policy

#### **Introduction:**

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management of St. Brigid's GNS in response to recent changes in special educational provision (see Revising Circular 0052/2019 Exemptions from the Study of Irish).

#### **Rationale:**

Revising Circular 0052/2019 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 Revising Circular 0052/2019.

#### **Granting an exemption:**

The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for her future learning.

The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal, but it will be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers and the pupil.

Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish will be considered only in those exceptional circumstances set out in circular: Exemptions from the Study of Irish- Revising Circular 0052/2019 A decision to grant an exemption will only be considered in the following circumstances:

**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 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 enrolment or re-enrolment

**OR**

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

**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.

**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 her participation and engagement in her 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.

**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<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

**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.

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

1. 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.
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) 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)
  - Confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (as outlined above) N.B. If a parent/guardian 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)/pupil of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the pupil while in 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) and a copy will be held by the school in the pupil's file.
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.

### **(b) Considering an application for exemption**

In considering an application for exemption from the study of Irish the principal will:

1. Review the application and any documentation provided by the applicant(s);
2. Consult with the pupil's class teacher;
3. Consult with the special education teacher and the assigned teacher from the Visiting Teacher Service where relevant;
4. Review school documentation for the evidence outlined in subsection 2.2;
5. Consult the following as appropriate;

- *Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools* and the supporting documents maintained by the Department on the Government webpage on exemptions from the study of Irish: [www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/)

- *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* developed by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), the Inspectorate and Special Education Section, DES (2017): <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/edf64-guidelines-for-primary-schools-supporting-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-in-mainstream-schools/>

- *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support*, NEPS (2007): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/dca316-special-education-needs-a-continuum-of-support/>

- Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools: [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

- *Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers*, NEPS (2010): <https://assets.gov.ie/40684/97bbea80d96b4057bf3f1f01107c7db4.pdf>

- *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*, NCCA (2007): <https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2b3eaa53-cb4b-4053-9d71-2d28d9d6c734/Assessment-Guidelines.pdf>

### **(c) Recording the decision**

The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school in writing to the applicant.

**Where an exemption is granted**, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be issued.

- i. The Certificate of Exemption will 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. A Certificate of Exemption is hyperlinked in the checklists within the Guidelines accompanying this Circular, published by the Department on the government website.

- ii. The arrangements for the pupil's learning will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil: Where appropriate and where possible, St. Brigid's will endeavour to take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special educational needs resources.
- iii. It will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that incidental learning of Irish language may occur through engagement with greetings, phrases, festivals and that a positive attitude to Irish should be fostered by the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- iv. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil 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.
- v. The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental/guardian consent for the retention and use of such records.
- vi. In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school should update the pupil's record on the Primary Online Database (POD) as soon as possible to include the reason for that exemption.

**Where an application is refused**, a copy of the application form, together with the letter of refusal and all supporting documentation, will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation. The school should maintain the records for at least the duration of the pupil's enrolment in the school. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental/guardian consent for the retention and use of such records.

### Appeal

Where the application for exemption from the study of Irish is refused, an applicant can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeals Committee (IEAC).

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

A pupil who has no understanding of English when enrolled should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his/her full engagement with the curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

### Reporting on exemptions granted to the Department

The school principal records data on pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish and the reason for that exemption on the Primary Online Database (POD).

### Pupils transitioning to other schools

It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of the pupil's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school. Information will be shared with the secondary school through the Education Passport, to provide information on a pupil's engagement with the study of Irish including details of the granting of an exemption from the study of Irish. The passport is retained in the school until the post-primary school principal or designated person with responsibility for initiating pupil information transfers, sends a written request for the pupil's report cards.

### Privacy Statement

Retention by the school of any applications and supporting documentation provided in respect of applications will be in line with Data Protection law and school data protection policy.

### Roles and Responsibilities:

In-school Management, class teachers, SETs and the Board of Management will contribute to the implementation of school procedures.

### 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 in November 2022 and will be reviewed as necessary in line with best practice.

Signed: *Carmel Reid*

*Chairperson of the Board of Management*

Signed: *Laura Wickham*

*Principal*