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**Policy on Exemption from Irish**

**Introduction:**

This policy was reviewed by the staff and Board of Management of St. Mary’s N. S. as part of our cycle of reviewing and updating the School Plan in May 2021.

**Rationale:**

The purpose of Circular 0052/2019 is to advise recognised Primary Schools of the revised arrangements for the exemption of pupils from the study of Irish. It supersedes Circular 12/96 and the 2009 revision of that Circular both of which are hereby withdrawn. This Circular aims to support schools in addressing a wide diversity of needs by providing a differentiated learning experience for pupils in an inclusive school environment

**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:**

* To allow for pupils of differing abilities, interests and circumstances.
* To enhance inclusiveness within the school.
* To enable children of all abilities to access the curriculum in a learner friendly manner.

**Policy Content:**

In accordance with Circular 0052/2019, the need to grant an exemption from learning Irish should only arise in rare and exceptional circumstances. The exceptional circumstances in which pupils may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish reflect developments in curricular provision and education more generally including current understandings of learning difficulties and differences.

**Consideration of the most appropriate stage at which to grant an exemption from the study of Irish**   
Reflecting the principles underpinning the Primary Language Curriculum and the Continuum of Support, Circular 0052/2019 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

1. may have received their primary education outside the state

or

1. 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.**

**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. 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:

1. have at least reached second class

**and**

1. 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**

1. 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.

**Procedures:**

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.

1. 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(s)/guardian(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (*2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c or 2.2d as per Circular 0052/2019*) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.

4. Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the next steps in processing the application.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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).

9. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) the arrangements for the pupil’s learning in the case of an exemption being granted.

1. Recording the decision

The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school principal in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

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/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.

**Appeals**

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.

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/](http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/)

The class teacher and the Special Education Teacher (SET) will co-ordinate school work to be undertaken during Irish class by the child who is exempt from studying Irish.

**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.

**Roles / Responsibilities:**

The Principal and Board of Management contribute to the implementation of school procedures.

**Success Criteria:**

* Seamless integration of pupils who are exempt from studying Irish
* Happy school learning environment
* Positive teacher/parent feedback
* Efficient transfer of certificate of exemption to relevant Secondary School

**Review:**

This Policy will be reviewed in the school year 2023/24 or earlier if deemed necessary.

**Ratification:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson