



EXEMPTION FROM IRISH POLICY

The Board of Management of St. David's National School has put in place the following policy on the exemption from 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:

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

CIRCUMSTANCES FOR EXEMPTION: Taken from Circular 0054/2022

Pupils in the following circumstances may be allowed exemption from the study of Irish in National Schools:

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

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

(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.

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. 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/her participation and engagement in his/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.

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.

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

PROCEDURES

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 will 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 will contact the applicant(s) and:

- discuss the written application with the applicant(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph/circumstance on which the application is based. If a parent/guardian does not confirm the sub-paragraph/circumstance under which the application is based then the application is null and void and no further processing of the application will take place.
- 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 will 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 will 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.

STEPS FOR CONSIDERING THE APPLICATION

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 above;
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/
 - 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 - Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools (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>

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.

ii. The arrangements for the pupil's learning will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil.

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.

vi. In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school will 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 will maintain the records for at least the duration of the pupil's enrolment in the school. In maintaining such documentation, the school will ensure that we 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).

The appeal must be lodged within 30 calendar days from the date of the written decision of the school not to grant an exemption was notified in writing to the applicant.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUPILS WHO HAVE RECEIVED AN EXEMPTION

Teachers at St. David's National School, where appropriate, will take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special education teaching resources.

To support inclusive practices, 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 their ability and interests.

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.

For pupils transitioning to secondary school, the Education Passport materials developed by the NCCA will be used 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.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Seamless integration of non-nationals and pupils will learning difficulties.
- Happy school learning environment.
- Positive teacher/parental feedback.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis or at any time when it is seen necessary.

RATIFICATION

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on date shown below.

The policy will be published on the school website.

Signed: Rev. Ruth O'Keely. Date: 21/9/22

(Chairperson)

Signed: Vivien Rank Date: 21/9/22

(Principal)