Exemption from Irish Policy



2024 - 2025

Principal: Tony Riley

Roll no: 17479D

Introduction:

This policy was drafted by staff and the Board of Management of Lacken National School in response to recent changes in special educational provisions.

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:

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

Policy Content:

Granting an exemption from the study of Irish

In accordance with Circular 0054/2022 an exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances (Section 2.1)

Exempting a pupil 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 pupil 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 pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers[1] and the pupil. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section 2.2 below.

Section 2.2 Circular 0054/2022

The circumstances in which a pupil 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, 2.2.4 or 2.2.5 only:

2.2.1 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 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 enrolment[2] or re-enrolment

OR

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

2.2.2 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

[1] Including the teacher from the Visiting Teacher Service, where one is assigned to the pupil

[2] For the purposes of this Circular where pupils 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.

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.

2.2.3 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

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 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.

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.

2.2.4 A pupil in a recognised[3] special school or class <u>or</u> who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class <u>or</u> who has a recommendation[4] and has been deemed eligible[5] for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school

[3] 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

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

[5] See Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools (English-medium), DE (2022).

(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.

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.

2.2.5 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

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 (see appendix A) 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) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (as outlined in section 2.2 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. The record keeping requirements are outlined 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.

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/

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. 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.

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). The IEAC will comprise three persons who shall be selected from a panel of persons established and maintained by the Minister, having regard to the need for each IEAC to have available to it:

- Experience and skills in the provision of or inspection of special education in schools
- Experience and skills in the area of educational psychology and/or child and adolescent wellbeing and mental health
- Experience and skills in the leadership and administration of schools
- Experience and skills in the initial or continuing education of teachers of pupils with special educational needs.

The IEAC will make a decision on whether the exemption should be granted or not, inform the school of the decision and require the school to give effect to their decision. In making a decision the IEAC will consider the decision of the school and the grounds given for refusing the application, the criteria set out in this Circular and any supporting documentation that was available to the school, contained in the Student Support Plan(s) and any supplementary information provided to the school by the applicant. The appeal should be made on the appropriate form published on the Department's website.

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. Irish Exemption

Appeal Form and Guidelines for Primary Schools can be accessed at www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/

Roles and Responsibilities:

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

Success Criteria:

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

Ratification of Exemption from Irish Policy:

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on Monday 17th of February 2025.

Signed: John Donohoe Signed: Tony Riley

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: 17/02/2025

Date of next review: 18/02/27

Appendix A

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		
I/We wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of_____ Please indicate (□) the grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular 0054/2022		
2.2.1(a)	The pupil is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment whose education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he/she did not have the opportunity to engage in the study of Irish.	
2.2.1(b)	The pupil's 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 who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another State.	
2.2.2	The pupil has at least reached second class and experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum and which are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in all subjects/across the curriculum and over time and 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	The pupil has at least reached second class and experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs, that persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs (over not less than two years) and which are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life and who been given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish in mainstream classes for as long as possible and the Principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the pupil *concerned*.	
2.2.4(ii)	The 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	
2.2.5	The pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representatives of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history.	

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

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

For the purpose of this application the documentation provided will be assessed, by relevant school personnel and other professionals where necessary, to determine whether there is grounds to grant an exemption from the study of Irish. Tick the box if you wish to proceed.

○

Signed:_____Date:_____

Signed:_____Date:_____

<u>For school use only</u>

Date of receipt of application:

Principal: _____ **Date:** _____

School roll number: _____