

# Rineen N.S.



**Exemption from Irish Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management of Rineen N.S. 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**

Rineen N.S. celebrates our multi-cultural identity and the role that the Irish language has in our school and community and in social, cultural and political life in Ireland. We are an inclusive school committed to the holistic education of all of our pupils. Irish is a part of our daily lives in Rineen N.S, however we are cognisant of the needs some of our pupils have to study only one language while in school. We endeavour to include all children in the teaching of basic communication skills in Irish throughout their primary school education, however other work may be provided for children who are exempt from the study of Irish where appropriate. Circular 0054/2022 outlines the circumstances around which an exemption from Irish may be granted. This policy seeks to provide clarity for parents with regard to the Irish exemption.

## **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

## **Granting an exemption from the study of Irish**

### ***2.1 An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances***

Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her access to the curriculum and his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers, and the pupil. A

decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section below:

## ***2.2 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 only: 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 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 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 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 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.

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**

A parent/guardian must make an application in writing [using Appendix A] to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil.

Considering an application for exemption the principal will:

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) and confirm the subparagraph 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.

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

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, a parent/guardian can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC). 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/)

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

Schools, where appropriate, should 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 his/her ability and interests. It should be noted that pupils have the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

### **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 and Responsibilities**

The principal, class teachers, S.E.T., Board of Management and parents will contribute to the implementation of school procedures.

### **Success Criteria**

- Seamless integration of pupils with learning difficulties and pupils (of at least 12 years of age) who did not study Irish while enrolled in a school abroad
- Happy school learning environment
- Positive teacher/parental feedback



### **Implementation**

This policy was reviewed in \_\_\_\_\_ and will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it remains relevant and reflective of school practice.

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

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

Chairperson, Board of Management

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

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

Principal

[Appendix A]

<p align="center"><b>Application for Exemption from the Study of Irish</b>  <b>Primary Schools</b>  <b>For completion by the parent(s)/guardian(s)</b></p>		
<b>Name of Pupil</b>		
<b>Date of Birth</b>		
<b>Class</b>		
<b>Name of School</b>		
<p>I/We wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish on behalf  of _____</p> <p>Please indicate (✓) the grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish in  accordance with Circular 0054/2022</p>		
<b>2.2.1(a)</b>	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.	
<b>2.2.1(b)</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 <i>concerned</i> .	
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.	
<p>Please provide detail of any supporting documentation being submitted to the school</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p>		

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**For school use only**

**Date of receipt of application:**

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

**School roll number:** \_\_\_\_\_

[Appendix B]

**School's Acknowledgment of Receipt of**  
**Irish Exemption Letter of Application**

Dear *Parent(s)/Guardian(s)*

Rineen N.S. acknowledges receipt of your **Irish Exemption Letter of Application** on \_\_\_\_\_ and in line with the School's Policy confirm that this application is based \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ sub-paragraph:

☐ 2.2.1    ☐ 2.2.2    ☐ 2.2.3    ☐ 2.2.4    ☐ 2.2.5

Your application will be processed and the outcome confirmed in writing in the next 21 days (*from receipt of the application*).

A signed **Certificate of Exemption** will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted.

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).

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal