

St. Patrick's S.N.S.

Policy on Exemption from Irish

Introduction:

This policy was drafted by the staff and Board of Management (BoM) of St. Patrick's SNS in response to recent changes in special educational provisions.

Rationale:

It is important to have a policy that clearly explains to staff, management and parents of children who may be seeking an exemption, the grounds on which an exemption is granted and the steps that must be followed in order for an exemption certificate to be granted by the school.

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
- To ensure that parents and staff have the information they need to make an informed decision about the child/children in question

Guidelines for exemptions:

The question of the need to grant exemption from the learning of Irish *should arise only in rare and exceptional circumstances* in accordance with **Circular 12/96**

- Parents are entitled to approach the principal to enquire about an exemption for their child in Irish where they will be informed of the content of this policy
- They will be advised that we do not recommend considering an exemption from Irish until the child has reached at least 6th class, unless their child has a full psychological assessment or a report from an appropriate medical specialist and is struggling to such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue. This is to ensure that the child is given every opportunity to acquire the language of Irish. They should be informed of the potential future implications for admission to some third level colleges that may prove difficult if the child has been exempt from Irish. Parents can request a review of the request when their child is in 6th class.
- In exceptional circumstances, some applications from *category d (see below)* will be considered if the child is struggling to such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue. Such an exemption would only be granted after consultation with all the staff who works with the child in conjunction with the review of assessment results.
- If an exemption is not granted, the Principal will explain the reasons to the parents

Categories of pupils who may be eligible for an exemption:

- (a) Pupils whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland, provided that the parent or guardian who had custody of the pupil was permanently resident in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland during the pupil's period of education up to that age;
- (b) Pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in national schools who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the State and the pupil is at least 11 years of age on re-enrolment;
- (c) Pupils
- (i) who function intellectually at average or above average level but have a Specific Learning Disability of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
 - (ii) who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment [i.e. mental handicap] and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
 - (iii) who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.

The evidence of such a disability must be furnished by a qualified psychologist (psychologist's report should be of a full psychological assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist not more than two years prior to the application for exemption) , supported in the case of (iii) by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. In addition, a full report on the pupil must be furnished by the school.

- (d) Some of our international pupils e.g. if the Minister is satisfied that they are resident in this country as political refugees.

It is the policy of St. Patrick's that even children who may be exempt should sit in on Irish classes, unless the time would be more fruitfully spent on extra tuition in areas of weakness. They should have an opportunity to gain a knowledge of spoken Irish and to participate in the learning activities (differentiated where necessary). Alternatively, other suitable arrangements may be made such as allocating school work in other subject areas.

Procedures:

- The school requires a written application, to the principal, for an exemption from the parents/guardians of the particular child to the principal (*see Appendix I*). It must be accompanied by documentary evidence such as age, previous schooling etc. and a psychologist's report/medical report (if relevant)
- The principal, in consultation with staff, class teachers and BoM will grant an exemption, if warranted, and will present a certificate of exemption (*see Appendix II*), signed by the Principal to the parents in accordance with Circular 12/96
- Where an exemption is being sought under sub-paragraph 1(c) above, the parent or guardian will be required to furnish reports from a qualified psychologist and appropriate medical specialist as appropriate

- The application, school report, psychologist's report, report of medical specialist, copy of certificate of exemption and other relevant documents will be retained by the school and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department
- Note: The school no longer needs to send a copy of the exemption form to the DES. The school grants the exemption and keeps the form on file
- Exemptions granted will also be recorded on the relevant children's profile on Aladdin
- A copy of the exemption certification should be sent to the relevant second level school when the pupil in question has completed her/his primary education

Roles and Responsibilities:

Middle Management, class teachers, parents and the BoM will contribute to the implementation of this policy when necessary.

Success Criteria:

- Seamless integration of all out students
- Happy school learning environment
- Positive teacher/parental feedback

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Patrick's S.N.S. at its meeting on 10th February 2014.

Date: 10th February 2014

Fr. Liam McClarey
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Review:

This policy will be reviewed in September 2014

Appendix I

Re. Díolúine ón nGaeilge/Exemption from the study of Irish

Dear Parent(s)/ Guardian(s),

Following our meeting re. exemption from Irish for _____, I wish to bring some points of information to your attention so that you have a clear understanding of any future implications which this exemption may have for your child. I also include a copy of Circular 12/96 for your attention which deals specifically with this topic. Should you require further clarification on any aspect of this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

However, if you are entirely satisfied with the information provided and wish to proceed with the application for the exemption, please request same in writing, specifying the grounds on which the exemption is being sought and sign this page underneath and return.

Le deá-mhéin,

Mary O' Riordan

Points of Information on Exemption from Irish

It is the school principal, as stated in Department Circular 12/96, who grants the exemption from the study of Irish. In some cases, where exemption from the study of Irish has been granted, admission to some third level colleges may prove difficult, if not impossible. In other cases, under the same circumstances, admission may be granted on certain conditions. A basic Junior Certificate/Leaving Certificate standard of Irish is a requirement for certain careers. As a consequence of seeking an exemption from the study of Irish and bearing the above points in mind, you may, sometime in future years, deprive _____ of certain employment opportunities

I wish to apply for an Exemption from Irish for _____

Grounds for exemption: _____

Signed: _____

_____(Parent(s)/Guardian(s))

Date: _____

Agreed plan (among parents, principal and current teacher) for Irish lessons for this child e.g. no participation, participates orally, differentiated tasks, alternative work, should the child be withdrawn for extra support during Irish?

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION

Name of school: _____

Address: _____

Roll Number: _____

Name of pupil: _____

Date of birth: _____

Name and address of psychologist: _____

Date of report: _____

Name & address of medical specialist: _____

Date of report: _____

I certify that the above-named pupil has been granted an exemption from the study of Irish in primary schools in accordance with the terms of Circular 12/96.

The exemption has been granted on the following grounds:

Signed: _____
Principal Teacher

Date: _____