**Exemption from Irish Policy**

**Introduction:**

This policy was reviewed by staff and Board of Management of Glenbeg NS in response to recent changes and updated circulars.

**Rationale:**

Circular 0055/2022 emphasises the value of all children studying Irish, the first language of the state, particularly in the context of the Primary Language Curriculum, which takes an integrated approach to language study and acknowledges that young children adapt and improve their language skills over time.

The Primary Language Curriculum is informed by the benefits of bilingualism and by the principles of inclusion. It is designed as a Curriculum for children of all abilities in all school contexts and supports the provision of a differentiated learning experience for pupils in an inclusive school environment.

This rationale underpins the emphasis on pupils under 12 continuing to study Irish with limited exceptions. These exceptions are outlined below.

**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 students 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

**GRANTING AN EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH**

**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 below.

**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:

**2.2.1 A student 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 student 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)**

1. who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment

**OR**

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

**2.2.2 A student 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 student:

1. 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**

1. 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.

**2.2.3 A student who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the student’s participation and engagement in their learning and school life**

It is recognised that there is a small cohort of students 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 students, 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 student:

1. 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**

1. whose school has substantial written evidence that these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs

**AND**

1. 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 student

**AND**

1. 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 to language skills development and the communicative approach underpinning the Specification for Junior Cycle Irish (L2) and the Leaving Certificate Syllabuses for Irish.

**AND**

1. the principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the student concerned.

**2.2.4 A student 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**

1. Where a student 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 student is automatically entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish without an application.

**OR**

1. Where a student 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.

**2.2.5 A pupil, one or both of whose parents/guardians are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland.**

An exemption may be granted to such children 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 to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil. Applications can be requested from the school.

**Step 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 (2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 or 2.2.5) 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.

**Step 2: Recording the decision**

The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school principal in writing to the parents/guardians.

Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption will be issued to the applicants. A copy of the application form and all supporting documentation will be retained in the school and may be inspected by authorised officers of the DE. The pupil’s POD record must also be updated to reflect the granting of an Exemption from the study of Irish and the reason for it.

In addition to the Certificate of Exemption, the principal is obliged to inform the applicants:

* Of the arrangements for the pupil’s teaching and learning
* That the pupil will be exposed to incidental learning of Irish through its use in the school environment
* Of the option not to exercise the Exemption at present without losing the option to use it at a later time

**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). 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 parents/guardians. The Irish Exemptions Appeal Form and Guidelines for Primary Schools can be accessed at

www. education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/

Where an exemption is refused the applicants will be informed and a copy of the application form and all supporting documentation will be retained in the school for at least the duration of the pupil’s attendance at the school.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

In-school Management, class teachers and the 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

**Review and Ratification:**

This Exemption from Irish Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_ **2023.**

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

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