

Temple Carrig School

Irish Exemption Policy

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the practices and procedures involved in processing applications for exemption from the study of Irish in Temple Carrig School. This policy has been developed in line with Circular 0055/2022. **Please note that the only circumstances in which consideration may be given to the granting of an exemption from the study of Irish are set out in subsection 2.2 of Circular 0055/2022 or any subsequent official DES circulars relating to the grant of Irish exemptions which may from time to time be issued and in force prior to any update of this policy.**

Context of the policy

The context of this policy is supported by the implementation of the terms of **Circular 0055/2022** and by:

- The Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools developed by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), the Inspectorate and Special Education Section, DES (2017)
- Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support, NEPS (2007)
- Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (English-medium), DES (August 2022)

Guiding Principles of this policy

This policy aims to support the school in addressing a wide diversity of needs by providing a differentiated learning experience for students in an inclusive school environment.

It is informed by the principles of

- Inclusion and the benefits of bilingualism for all students that underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and curricular provision in Senior Cycle including contributing to the development of key cognitive, linguistic, creative and problem-solving skills.
- How developing lifelong language skills through engagement with both languages has the potential to prepare students well for learning additional languages as they journey through education and participate in a global society.
- The position of Irish as an official language in a bilingual society.

The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish has very significant implications for their future learning and potential employment opportunities. Students should therefore be given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish for as long as possible. The policy of the Department of Education is to provide for the inclusive education of children with special educational needs in mainstream education, other than in circumstances where it would not be in the best interest of the child, or the effective education of children with whom they are to be educated. In line with the department's policy schools are expected and encouraged to provide all students, to the greatest extent possible, and in a meaningful way, with opportunities to participate in Irish language and cultural activities at a level appropriate to their learning needs.

Grounds for Exemption from the study of Irish for the purpose of examination

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted only in **exceptional** circumstances. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the Principal, following detailed discussion with all teachers including the student's Irish teacher, the student's parents, the student, the Special Education Team and the Year Head. A decision to grant an exemption will only be considered in the circumstances set out below as per **Section 2.2** of circular **0055/2022** which is linked here and outlined below:

Circular 0055/2022 Exemptions from the Study of Irish

<https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/f33d5-exemptions-from-the-study-of-irish-post-primary/>

Circular 0055/2022 Section 2.2

The circumstances in which a student 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 or 2.2.4 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)

(a) who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment⁶ 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 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:

(i) 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

(ii) 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:

(i) 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

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

AND

(iii) 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

(iv) 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

(v) 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

(i) 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

(ii) 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.

****A recognised special school/class is a primary or post-primary level class sanctioned and resourced by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). The recommendation for such placement meets the specifications as determined by the NCSE and the student has been deemed eligible and in receipt of a letter of eligibility and/or is awaiting the recommended placement***

*Note: In the case of a student transitioning to a **mainstream** school/class from a **special** school/class, and to assist transition, the principal of the special school/class should provide the student with the Certificate of Exemption to which the student was entitled in accordance with **Section 2.2.4 (i)** of the Circular. The students Support File should be up to date and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption included.*

Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish

(a) Steps required for a valid application for an exemption from the study of Irish

1. A parent/guardian on behalf of a student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, must make an application in writing to the Principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish.
2. The school staff or Principal shall mark the date of receipt of the application on the application form and issue an acknowledgement to the parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student as relevant, 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, or the student where he/she is the applicant, 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 the current DES Irish Exemptions 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)/student on whose behalf an application is made of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-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)/student and a copy will be held by the school in the student's file. The record keeping requirements are outlined further at 2.3(c) 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.

(b) 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 student's class teacher/s;
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 Post-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 Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students 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/56c43-supporting-pupils-and-students-with-special-educational-needs-guidelines-for-schools/>
 - *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support*, NEPS (2007): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/dca316-special-education-needs-a-continuum-of-support/>
 - *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools: A Guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an Existing Team*, NEPS (2021): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>
 - Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools: [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
 - *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines*, NCCA (2021): https://ncca.ie/media/5062/updated-guidelines-2021_en.pdf

(c) 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 student's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted.

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

iii. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student will be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future date.

iv. The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the completed 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.

v. In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school will update the student's record on the Post-Primary Online Database (P-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 student's enrolment in the school. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental/guardian/student consent for the retention and use of such records.

Appealing the decision

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 students 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 Post-Primary Schools can be accessed at www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/

Arrangements for students who are exempt from the study of Irish

Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of students who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special education teaching resources.

Students who are exempt from the study of Irish may also be allowed to substitute another subject, short course or area of learning for Irish. To support inclusive practices, a student 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 students have the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.***

Supports for students who have no understanding of English when enrolled

A student who has no understanding of English when enrolled should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his/her full engagement with the curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

Additional Information

- An exemption granted to a student may be operative throughout their enrolment in primary and post-primary school.
- Students to whom exemptions were granted prior to the beginning of the school year 2022/23 are unaffected by Circular 0055/2022.

Students transitioning to other schools

- It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student (the applicant) to ensure that a copy of the student's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school.

Further information can be found at the following website: www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/

Procedures for application to Temple Carrig for exemption from Study of Irish

Before submitting an application Parent(s)/Guardian(s), or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, should first familiarise themselves with the **exceptional** circumstances under which an Irish Exemption can be granted as per **Section 2** of circular **0055/2022**.

An application form can be downloaded here <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f1dd1-exemption-from-the-study-of-irish-forms-and-documents/> or a copy requested from the school principal.

Additional Information

- Please note that the onus is on the schools to conduct and consider its own testing and the student's performance in school. The school may also have external evidence/reports of a test result at/below the 10th percentile, and **in addition** to its own test results these results may be useful to help inform the school in relation to the student's needs
- A psychological or medical professional's report is not a requirement for granting an exemption from the study of Irish.
- If a school receives an external report (e.g. from a psychologist, speech and language therapist (SLT), Psychiatrist, GP or other practitioner), this may contain advice and recommendations that are useful to help inform the school in relation to the student's needs and to identify appropriate interventions, but is not the primary supporting document for granting an exemption from the study of Irish.
- **While an external report might recommend an exemption it is up to the school to decide if it has the evidence as set out in the circular, (ongoing support, response to intervention and current level of need as identified in school testing) when considering the exceptional circumstances in which an exemption should be granted.**
- Multiple and persistent needs are those that are enduring and severe in nature and that significantly impact on the student's functioning at school on a day to day basis, and are a cause of significant distress to the student in the school environment, despite the implementation of a highly individualised, intensive and evidence-based programme of support, that has been developed, implemented and monitored by the school, in collaboration with the student, parents and other relevant agencies involved in providing support.

Data Protection

In processing applications the school will comply with data protection law.

Review and Ratification of Policy

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Temple Carrig School on 5th December 2024

It will be reviewed should the Board of Management think it necessary in light of changed or amended legislation or circulars. Any review will continue to be guided by the school's characteristic spirit and commitment to its responsibilities under data protection legislation.