



**Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Fheargus,  
An Gleann,  
Co. Luimnigh.**

**St.Fergus' National School,  
Glin,  
Co. Limerick.**

**Tel:(068) 34344**

**E-Mail : [glencorbry.ias@eircom.net](mailto:glencorbry.ias@eircom.net)**

**[www.stfergusns.ie](http://www.stfergusns.ie)**

## **Policy on Exemption from Irish February 2020**

### **Introduction:**

This policy is a review of previous school policy on Exemptions from Irish. It has been drafted by staff and Board of Management (BoM) of St. Fergus' National School in response to Circular 0052/2019-Exemption from the Study of Irish, issued to all primary schools in September 2019. Consultation was held with NEPS Psychologist Ms Antoinette Trimble.

This policy has been drawn up taking the following documents into account;

- Exemptions from the study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools (English-Medium)
- Circular 0052/2019 (Revision of Circular 12/96)
- Languages Connect (2017 DES): Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026
- Circular 0013/2017 and Circular 0007/2019 to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Primary Schools: Special Education Teaching Allocation
- Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Education Needs in Mainstream Schools
- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020, DES (2011)
- The Primary Language Curriculum (all levels 2019)
- NEPS Documentation-Special Needs Guidelines and Special Needs Resources
- St. Fergus' N.S. Policies on
  - Additional Support
  - Literacy
  - Gaeilge
  - English as an Additional Language

**Rationale:**

The Board of Management and Staff of St. Fergus' National School recognise the importance of learning two languages in our school. We endorse the explicit aim of the Constitution of Ireland to develop a bilingual society and the improvements that learning two languages makes to the cognitive, linguistic functioning, creativity and problem-solving skills of the individual as well as their participation in society.

Teaching and learning of languages in St. Fergus, reflects good practice in identifying and addressing the needs of pupils in the areas of literacy and language in both Irish and English. We promote and implement the principles of equity and inclusion within our teaching. The integrated approach of the Primary Language Curriculum which is implemented in our school supports us in the transfer of language learning skills between Irish and English. It allows teachers in St. Fergus' N.S. to flexibly address individual pupils' learning needs. This, along with the Special Education Teaching Model, gives teachers in St. Fergus' N.S. autonomy to address and allocate resources as we see fit, using School Support Plans and the Continuum of Support Framework.

We recognise that special education needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Despite targeted intervention over time, there may be exceptional circumstances in which a child continues to struggle to make adequate progress in acquiring English in St. Fergus' N.S. This policy sets out our school's criteria for granting exemptions from Irish in those circumstances.

**Relationship to the school Ethos:**

This policy is in keeping with the mission statement of St. Fergus' N.S. We strive to promote the holistic development of the whole child by fostering a caring and creative environment which emphasises the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual and moral development of each child.

**Aims and Objectives:**

The aims and objectives of this policy are:

- to make provisions for all children in our care so that they can access an educational programme most suitable for their needs. In exceptional circumstances this would include an exemption from the study of Irish based on the criteria of Circular 0052/2019.
- to clarify to staff, parents and guardians the terms of the Department of Education and Skills circular 0052/2019 on the exemption from the study of Irish.
- to state the exceptional circumstances in which an exemption from the study of Irish may be sought.
- to explain the process of applying for and granting an exemption.
- to outline the procedure and criteria for seeking/ granting an exemption.
- to explain what the child with an exemption may do when the class teacher is teaching Irish to the rest of the class.
- to provide the templates to be used in all steps of the process of applying for/granting an exemption for the study of Irish for recording purposes.
- to inform parents / guardians on how/where to appeal a decision.
- to advise on when the policy will be reviewed.

## Steps in Applying for an Exemption from Irish

1. Parents whose child is continuing to struggle with English, despite having received sustained and targeted intervention using a School Support Plan and taking into consideration the Continuum of Support, may request that the exemption from the study of Irish process may be initiated. This may be done through the standard application form attached to this policy. (c.f. Appendix A)

In this application form, requesting a Certificate of Exemption, parents must specify the grounds under which they are applying for an exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of their child.

The grounds are based on Circular 0059/2019 are;

- a) Pupils whose **education up to 12 years of age (or up to and including the final year of their primary education) was received outside the state** and where they did not have the opportunity to engage in the study of Irish

**OR**

- b) pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in primary schools who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least **three consecutive years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the state and are at least 12 years of age on re-enrolment**

**OR**

- c) pupils who:
  - i. have **at least reached second class**

**AND**

- ii. present **with significant learning difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in both Irish and English 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. at the time of the application for exemption **present with a standardised score** on a discrete test in either **Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.**

**OR**

- d) children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.

2. The school principal, on behalf of the Board of Management, process applications received by the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish. The Principal will;
- Ensure that the **date of receipt** of the application by the school is recorded **on the form**.
  - **Acknowledge receipt** of the application for exemption from the study of Irish **in writing**.
  - **Discuss the written application with** the parent(s)/guardian(s) and **confirm the subparagraph** on which the application is based (2.2a; 2.2b, 2.2c or 2.2d) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
  - **Advise** the parent(s)/guardian(s) **of the next steps** in processing the application.
  - **Inform** the parent(s)/guardian(s) **regarding any implication** of an exemption from the study of Irish for the pupil while in primary education and into the future.
  - 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**.
  - Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that that a signed **Certificate of Exemption will issue** where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted.
  - 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 in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)**.
  - Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) **the arrangements for the pupil's learning in the case of an exemption being granted**.
  - Use the provided **Quick Guide and Checklists** (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3) to guide the processing of applications in the case of the relevant sub-paragraph in Section 2.2 of the Circular.
  - **Convey the outcome** of the application **in writing** to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
  - **The application form and all supporting documentation, including a copy of the Certificate of Exemption (Appendix 4) where applicable, and the Checklist in accordance with data protection law will be kept in a file in a locked filing cabinet in the school office**. This documentation will be maintained and be made available for review by authorised Department of Education and Skills officials.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Statistical information relating to the number and grounds on which applications were granted in the previous school year, under the terms of Circular 0052/2019, will be provided to the DES using the Primary Online Database.

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

The Principal and staff of St. Fergus' N.S. will take into account the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special education resources in accordance with the school's Additional Support Policy.

Timetabling for Special Education Teaching will be organised during class teaching time for Irish whenever possible. Where this is not always possible, timetabling will ensure that pupils who are exempt will not miss class instruction in the same curricular areas on more than two occasions in the same week. Pupils who are receiving support in a given area (e.g. Literacy/Numeracy), must not miss class instruction in the given area, due to receiving S.E.T. It is the responsibility of the Special Education Teacher and the Class Teacher involved to ensure the smooth running of this timetabling.

Pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish will be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability (e.g. Frásaí na Seachtaine, Rince Mór, Seachtain na Gaeilge).

Where a pupil has English as an Additional Language needs, he/she will be provided with access to an intensive EAL programme to ensure his/her full engagement with the Primary Language Curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability. Details of this programme will be found in the pupil's School Support Plan and in St. Fergus' N.S. English as an Additional Language Policy.

### **Sharing Information about a pupil's Certificate of Exemption**

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that a copy of a pupil's Certificate of Exemption is made available to any receiving school.

### **How do we ascertain if a pupil meets criteria for a Certificate of Exemption?**

When gauging whether or not pupils meet the criteria for Certificate of Exemption the staff of St Fergus' consulted the following;

- NEPS Resource Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers-Chapter on *Assessment and Measuring Progress* and *Appendices 15 Understanding Tests and Test Results* and *16 Tests of Literacy Currently In Use*
- Circular 0035/2017
- Data Protection Law and St. Fergus' N.S. Data Protection Policy.
- Circular 0052/2019

The criteria set out in Circular 52/2019 are;

#### **Section 2.2. c**

Pupils/students who:

- i) have at least reached second class [Circular 0052/2019 – primary schools]

**and**

- ii) present with significant learning difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning over time (Irish and or English). 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) at the time of the application for exemption present with a Standardised Score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile.

In consultation with our NEPS Psychologist, Ms. Antoinette Trimble and following staff discussion and with reference to the Guidance on selection of discrete tests of literacy attainment in English document, pupils whose parents wish to apply for an Exemption from the Study of Irish will be tested using the following discrete tests. This list is subject to review and change based on information at a given time.

<b><u>Word Reading</u></b>	<b><u>Reading Comprehension</u></b>	<b><u>Spelling</u></b>
Woodcock Johnson IV	York Assessment of Reading Comprehension-YARK (primary norms)  Woodcock Johnson IV	The Diagnostic Spelling Test  British Spelling Test 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition

These discrete tests are standalone tests which assess a single literacy skill-in this case a test of either, Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling. They measure attainment levels as a standardised score which can be expressed as percentile rank for the purpose of application of this policy.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

This policy will be reviewed by staff under the guidance of the school principal and in line with any educational directives and information from the Department of Education and Skills and other bodies. This will be done every two years or sooner if necessary.

**Review:**

First review due March 2022

**Policy first ratified at a Board of Management Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Tommy Barrett  
CHAIRPERSON.  
Board of Management.  
11/3/2020