

# IRISH EXEMPTION POLICY OF



# Tarbert Comprehensive School

*Ratified by the Board of Management: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019  
Updated; 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022*

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to inform parents and students of Tarbert Comprehensive School on the policy on, and procedures for, exemption from the study of the Irish language. The Policy has been developed in line with circular 055/2022

This policy is informed by and compliant with the following guidelines:

- Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools (2004);
- Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)
- 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);

This Policy is mindful of 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.

It is the duty of parents/guardians and students to familiarise themselves with this Policy.

## **2. Objective of this Policy**

In setting out this policy, the Board aims to present to pupils, parents and staff the procedures and processes involved in the consideration of granting an exemption from Irish.

The Policy is applicable to current and future students of the School and is effective from the beginning of 2022/23 School Year.

## **3. Granting an exemption from the study of Irish in exceptional circumstances**

Exempting a student from the study of Irish will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, by the Principal. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish is not made lightly as it is an important decision that may have implications for the students' future learning.

Parents or guardians may request the exemption from the study of Irish process to be initiated. Where a student has reached the age of 18 years, he/she may also initiate the application process.

In reaching a decision on whether to grant or refuse an exemption, the Principal will, as relevant, consult with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student on whose behalf the application is being made, or the student where he/she is the applicant, and relevant School personnel (the class teacher, special education teachers, special education coordinator) and satisfy himself/herself that all key evidence has been accessed.

## **4. Grounds for exemption from the study of Irish**

Exemption from the study of Irish may be considered in the following exceptional circumstances 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4 only:

- 2.2.1** 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 enrolment<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Policy where students enrol in the final 2 months of an academic year, their enrolment/re-enrolment will be considered to take place on the first day of the following academic year.

**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<sup>2</sup> special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation<sup>3</sup> and has been deemed eligible<sup>4</sup> 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.

**5. Transitioning from another School**

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 Tarbert Comprehensive School when students are transitioning from other schools.

**6. Procedures for the processing of an Irish exemption application**

The Board of Management has delegated authority to exempt a student from the study of Irish to the Principal.

**The applicant**

A parent/guardian on behalf of a student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, must make a formal application in writing to the Principal of Tarbert Comprehensive School for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish.

<sup>2</sup> A recognised special school/class is a primary or post-primary level class sanctioned and resourced by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). See <https://ncse.ie/> for a list of such schools/classes

<sup>3</sup> The recommendation for the student to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the student has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

<sup>4</sup> See Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (English-medium), DE (2022).

The applicant will:

1. Read this Policy in full
2. Provide written consent for the School authorities to use all School records in order to process the application and retain all documentation after the application for Department of Education audit
3. Complete an application on the appropriate application form (see Appendix 1)
4. Confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4)
5. Be available to communicate with the School Principal/Deputy to discuss the application
6. Be aware that applications made before periods of School holidays may experience delays in processing as relevant School staff may be unavailable.

The Principal/Deputy 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 or via email.
3. Discuss the written application with the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
4. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student regarding any implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.
5. Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the next steps in processing the application.
6. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student that the application will be processed in accordance with this Policy and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.

The decision

1. The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the School in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student.
2. Where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the Principal will issue a signed Certificate of Exemption. The Certificate of Exemption will also 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. In addition parent(s)/guardian(s)/student will be explained the arrangements for the student's learning at Irish time. These arrangements will be consistent with the Schools' Special Education Needs Policy (available on the School website). Parents/guardians and students will also be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.
3. Where an application is refused, the Principal will outline the reason(s) for the decision.
4. The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student will be informed that the 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)/student.

## **7. An Appeal**

Where an application for an exemption from the study of Irish is refused, the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student, may appeal the School's decision not to grant an exemption to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC) within 30 calendar days from the date on which the schools decision was notified in writing. Irish Exemption Appeal Form and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools can be accessed at [www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/)

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) should be made on the appropriate form published on the Department's website.

## **8. Reporting on exemptions granted to the Department**

Schools will be required on a monthly basis to record data on students who are exempt from the study of Irish and the reason for that exemption on the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD).

## **9. Data retention**

The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, 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 of Education and Skills.

## **10. Review:**

The Board will monitor the frequency of the granting of Irish exemptions and will regularly review the procedures to ensure that it is being used fairly and appropriately and in the best interests of the entire school community.

This policy was initially ratified by the Board of Management on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2022 and will be reviewed in the academic year 2024/25 or whenever is deemed necessary by the Board or as informed by revised Departmental policies.

## Appendix 1

<b>Application for Exemption from the Study of Irish Post-Primary Schools</b> <b>For completion by the parent(s)/guardian(s) on behalf of a student (or by a student who has reached 18 years of age)</b>		
<b>Name of Student</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>I _____ (student who has reached 18 years) wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish.</p> <p>Please indicate (✓) the grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular 0055/2022</p>		
<b>2.2.1(a)</b>	The student 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 student'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.	
<b>2.2.2</b>	The student 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.	

<b>2.2.3</b>	The student 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 student'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 student concerned.	
<b>2.2.4(ii)</b>	The 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	
<p>Please provide detail of any supporting documentation being submitted to the school</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p>		
<p><b><u>For school use only</u></b></p> <p><b>Date of receipt of application:</b></p> <p><b>Principal:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____</p> <p><b>School roll number:</b> _____</p>		