



BLACKWATER COMMUNITY SCHOOL
LISMORE, CO. WATERFORD.

Policy on Exemption from the study of Irish

27.11.2019

Introduction

This policy was drafted by:

- Board of Management (BoM)
- Principal & Deputy Principals
- Career Guidance Counsellor
- Irish Department
- AEN Department

in response to recent changes special educational provisions.

Rationale

This policy document aims to outline the revised arrangements for the exemptions of students from the study of Irish. It supersedes Circular M10/94 and the 2008 revision of that Circular both of which are hereby withdrawn. In processing applications Blackwater Community School will comply with data protection law.

This policy acknowledges that the school Management are responsible for the decision making process.

Relationship to the school ethos

Blackwater Community School is committed to quality education. It aims to create a caring community where students feel cherished, secure and happy. It aims to give students access to a broad and balanced education and to develop their academic, physical, emotional and spiritual potential to the full.

Aims and Objectives

- Outline the **exceptional circumstances** in which students may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish.
- Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish.

Granting an exemption from the study of Irish

An exemption should be granted only in **exceptional circumstances**.

The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the Principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the student where he/she is the applicant, the class teacher and the Additional Educational Needs Teachers.

The circumstances in which a student may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish

A. Students 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 opportunity to engage in the study of Irish

Or

B. Students who were previously enrolled as recognised students in a primary or post-primary school 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. Students who:

(i) 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

(ii) 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.

Special Classes in mainstream schools

The policy of the Department of Education and Skills is to provide for the inclusive education of students with special educational needs in mainstream education, other than in circumstances where it would not be in the best interest of the student, or the effective education of students with whom they are to be educated.

In the case of students in special classes in mainstream schools, and in recognising the authority devolved to the management authorities in decision making concerning the Irish language learning needs of the students concerned, **a formal application for a Certificate of Exemption is not required. Students in special classes in mainstream schools will therefore be exempt without holding a Certificate of Exemption.** In line with the Department's policy above however, schools are expected and encouraged to provide all pupils, 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.

Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish

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.

(a) 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)/student and confirm the criteria on which the application is based (A, B, C(i) and C(ii)) 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. Liaise with the Guidance Counsellor and 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.
6. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student 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)/student 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)/student 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)/student.
9. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student the arrangements for the student's learning in the case of an exemption being granted.

(b) Recording the decision

The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student.

Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be issued. 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 criteria under which the exemption is being granted.

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. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental consent for the retention and use of such records.

Parents/guardians and students should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

Appeal

Where the application for exemption from the study of Irish is refused, a parent/guardian/student can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeals Committee (IEAC). The deliberations of the IEAC will focus solely on the process the school engaged in in reaching its decision. The IEAC will consider how the school followed the process as prescribed by this Circular and the accompanying Guidelines for Post-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 parent(s)/guardian(s).

Arrangements for students who are exempt from the study of Irish

A. Students 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 opportunity to engage in the study of Irish

Or

B. Students who were previously enrolled as recognised students in a primary or post-primary school 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.

Arrangements:

- English as an Additional Language: Learning Support is provided for students who meet the requirements for EAL support.

-All other students remain in the Irish class and work independently on study/homework.

C. Students who:

(i) 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

(ii) 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.

Arrangements:

Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of students who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available additional education teaching resources. Students who are exempt from the study of Irish may also be allowed to substitute an existing subject within the area of Learning Support subject to resource availability.

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.

Reporting on exemptions granted to the Department

The school management will be required to provide statistical information relating to the number and the grounds on which exemptions were granted under this Circular as part of the annual October returns on the Post Primary Online Database (P-POD).

A copy of the Certificate of Exemption must also be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student being exempted.

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.

Monitor, Review and Evaluation

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the Policy on Additional Educational Needs Whole School Inclusion Policy is implemented in the school.
- The policy is reviewed every year.
- The review is initiated by the School Development Planning Committee.
- Assessment and monitoring of the Policy are carried out on a regular basis by the AEN team.

Adopted by Board of Management: _____

Review Date Agreed: _____