



St. Patrick's Junior School

TENNIS COURT LANE, SKERRIES, CO. DUBLIN.

K34 D799.

Principal: Máire Ní Chróinín

Deputy Principal: Ann Bowe

R. N. 16333Q

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Policy on Exemptions from the Study of Irish.

Introduction

This policy sets out school procedure in relation to making a decision on an application for an exemption from the study of Irish.

Rationale

This policy has been put in place to clarify for parents and guardians how St. Patrick's JNS applies the terms of Department of Education and Skills circular 12/96 and associated guidelines in relation to applications for exemptions from the study of Irish in St. Patrick's Junior School.

Relationship to School Ethos

In St. Patrick's JNS, teachers are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of each pupil. We strive to be a centre of excellence where professional standards are maintained and where pupils learn in a safe and happy environment. Formative assessment and differentiation of the curriculum to suit each pupil by all teachers in our school is a central feature of the teaching of Irish. Because of this professional practice by all teachers in our school, it is envisaged that consideration by the Board of Management of an application for an exemption from the study of Irish, which is a compulsory subject in Irish primary schools, would arise only in rare and exceptional circumstances.

"The primary school programme in Irish is designed to meet the learning needs of a wide variety of pupils. It is taught in a stimulating and activity-centred fashion and the main emphasis is on oral learning and interaction. The question of the need to grant exemption from the learning of Irish should arise only in rare and exceptional circumstances." (DES circular 12/96)

Aims / Objectives

This policy is intended to provide clarity regarding

- the procedures for applying for an exemption from the study of Irish in this school
- the factors that will be taken into account when the school makes a decision on whether a child is eligible for an exemption
- How the decision is made
- How the results of that decision are communicated to parents / guardians.

This policy is in no way intended to supersede relevant circulars issued by the Department of Education and Skills in regard to the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish. All BOM decisions in this regard will be made in full compliance with the relevant circulars and legislation.

Policy Content

Application Procedure:

When a parent or guardian wishes to apply for an exemption they do so by filling in the attached form. Where both parents are guardians, both must sign the form. Copies of all reports relied upon to show eligibility for consideration for an exemption must be included with the application. The decision to grant or refuse an exemption rests with the Board of Management. Please note there is no automatic entitlement to an exemption from the study of Irish. A diagnosis of an SLD will not in and of itself lead to the granting of an exemption from the study of Irish.

When an application has been received the school principal will as soon as practicable convene a meeting of relevant teachers as follows:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Post holder(s)/senior member(s) of staff
- The pupil's class teacher
- The pupil's learning support/resource teacher
- The pupil's previous teachers (where this is possible).

This meeting will examine documentary evidence provided and consider the application with regard to the following factors:

- The terms of the Department of Education and Skills circular governing the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish
- The terms of any other Department of Education and Skills circulars which may be relevant in any given case
- Guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills regarding the administration of circulars governing the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish.
- The results of assessment(s) submitted in support of an application.
- The pupil's capacity relevant to the new primary language curriculum
- The general language acquisition capacity of the pupil
- The young age of our pupils
- The predominately oral nature of the Irish curriculum in our school
- The practice of ongoing formative assessment and differentiation of the Irish curriculum by all teachers in our school
- The implications for the future education of the child, including the possible limits which the activation of a Certificate of Exemption may place on the child's education and future employment opportunities.
- The pupil's facility with Irish

- The pupil's general ability as evidenced by
 - Results of standardised tests
 - Teachers' professional observations of the pupil in the classroom
 - Any learning support/resource help given to the pupil
- The pupil's attendance levels
- The pupil's application to study
- Any other relevant circumstances.

In the case of every application, the school reserves the right to consult with NEPS and with the Inspectorate of the Department of Education regarding the granting of an exemption from the study of Irish.

An application for an exemption from the study of Irish presupposes permission to share information (including reports of any assessments relied on) relevant to the application with the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school, the DES inspector assigned to the school and other personnel in NEPS and the Inspectorate as needed.

A report on the pupil will be prepared as the basis for a decision regarding the application. Once the relevant documentation has been prepared the Board of Management will consider the application in accordance with the relevant circulars.

When the Board of Management has reached a decision in regard to the application it will inform the parents /guardian in writing of the decision made and the basis on which it has been made.

Where the exemption is **granted**, the parents or guardians will receive a certificate of exemption. A copy of this certificate will be kept on the pupil's file and a copy will be **immediately** sent to the Department of Education and Skills for their records. When the pupil leaves St. Patrick's JNS this certificate will be sent to the school to which she/he transfers. All documentation received as part of the application will be held on file in the school for examination by inspectors from the Department of Education and Skills.

An exemption from the study of Irish will apply to the reading and writing strands of the curriculum only. The pupil will remain in the classroom during the Irish class and may be assigned other suitable work which he or she can complete independently. He or she may at the teacher's discretion be asked to move to another part of the classroom to facilitate the completion of this work.

Where the exemption is **not granted**, the Board of Management will write to the parents or guardians of the pupil explaining the basis on which the exemption was not granted.

Any decision made by the Board of Management in respect of an application for an exemption from the study of Irish has no relevance on Special Educational Need provision in our school.

Appeals Process

Where significant and exceptional circumstances arise, an application for review of the Irish Exemptions criteria can be made by writing to irishexemptions@education.gov.ie or to

Parents, Learners and Database Section,
Schools Division,
Department of Education and Skills,
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath
N37 X659
Telephone (090) 648 4269 / 4270 / 4087

This application should be made in consultation with the school and must include all supporting relevant documentation.

An experienced nominated Inspector within the Department's Inspectorate will review the application. The review will be carried out in accordance with the criteria for exemptions as outlined in circular 12/96 (attached). The inspector will provide his/her advice as required. This advice will be provided to parents and to the principal of the school.

Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed and updated on publication by the Department of Education and Skills of updates to the circulars and/or guidelines governing this process.

In the absence of any updates by the Department of Education and Skills this policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management not later than two years from the date on which it was agreed by the Board.

Richard Hyland, Chairperson BOM.

St. Patrick's JNS, Skerries.
Application for an exemption from the study of Irish.

Child's name	
Child's address	
Child's date of birth	
Child's class	
Grounds on which the exemption is sought:	

Documentary evidence included with this application:	Y/N
Birth certificate	
Report of a medical specialist	
Name of Specialist:	
Date of report	
Report of qualified psychologist	
Name of psychologist:	
Date of report	

We, the parents/guardians of the above named pupil wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish for him/her.

We have read and understand

- DES circular 12/96 on exemption from the study of Irish
- Guidelines for psychologists on Assessment and Reporting
- St. Patrick's JNS policy in respect of applications for exemptions from the study of Irish.

Signed:

 Parent /Guardian 1

 Parent/Guardian

Circular 12/96



Note: This electronic version was re-typed from the original in November 2005

TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND PRINCIPALS OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS

REVISION OF CIRCULAR OF 18/79 ON EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH

1. It is a fundamental principle of the primary school curriculum that due allowance should be made for individual pupil differences in ability, interests and circumstances. In accordance with this principle, the primary school programme in Irish is designed to meet the learning needs of a wide variety of pupils. It is taught in a stimulating and activity-centred fashion and the main emphasis is on oral learning and interaction. The question of the need to grant exemption from the learning of Irish should arise only in rare and exceptional circumstances.

The Minister for Education has reviewed the circumstances in which exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to pupils in national schools and has revised Circular 18/79 to read as follows:

Pupils in the following circumstances may be allowed exemption from the study of Irish in national schools:-

- (a) Pupils whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland, provided that the parent or guardian who had custody of the pupil was permanently resident in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland during the pupil's period of education up to that age;
- (b) Pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in national schools who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the State and the pupil is at least 11 years of age on re-enrolment;
- (c) Pupils
 - (i) who function intellectually at average or above average level but have a Specific Learning Disability of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
 - (ii) who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment [i.e. mental handicap] and are also

failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or

- (iii) who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.

The evidence of such a disability must be furnished by a qualified psychologist, supported in the case of (iii) by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. In addition, a full report on the pupil must be furnished by the school.

- (d) Pupils from abroad, who have no understanding of English when enrolled, would be required to study one language only, Irish or English;
- (e) Children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland;
- (f) Children from other countries in whose case the Minister is satisfied that they are resident in this country as political refugees.

Pupils from the above categories may be allowed to remain in the class during the Irish lesson so that they may have an opportunity to gain a knowledge of spoken Irish and to participate in the learning activities. Alternatively, other suitable arrangement may be made such as allocating school work on other subject areas.

- 2. This revision will apply with effect from the beginning of the school year 1996/97. It will apply to students currently enrolled in national schools as well as to students who will enrol in national schools in the future. An exemption granted to a student will be operative throughout his/her stay at national school.

Exemption may continue to be granted under the terms of [Circular Letter M10/94](#) for second level schools.

- 3. The terms Specific Learning Disability does not include disabilities due to poor general intellectual functioning. Account must be taken of the following criteria in determining whether a Specific Learning Disability exists:

- assessed intellectual functioning at average level or above;
- marked failure to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic skills such as reading and writing;
- a history of such failure not related directly to factors such as poor attendance, poor motivation or problems in social interaction which may affect attainment.

- 4. School managements will be required to observe the following prescribed procedures:
 - o A written application for exemption will be made by a parent or guardian to the principal of the school. This application will specify the grounds on which the exemption is sought. It will be accompanied by documentary evidence of age and previous schooling as appropriate to the grounds cited.
 - o The school authorities will satisfy themselves as to the documentary evidence submitted.
 - o The school authorities will prepare a full report on the student in consultation with relevant teachers.
 - o Where exemption is being sought under sub-paragraph 1(c) above, the parent or guardian will be required to furnish reports from a qualified psychologist and appropriate medical specialist as appropriate.

- A decision to grant exemption will be conveyed to the parent or guardian by way of a written certificate, signed by the school principal, that the exemption has been given in accordance with this Circular. The certificate will also cite the name, address and type of school, the student's name and date of birth, the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted and the specific grounds for exemption. Where the exemption is being granted under sub-paragraph 1(c), the name and address of the qualified psychologist and the date of the psychologist's report and the name of the medical specialist and date of report, if applicable, will be included.
 - The application, school report, psychologist's report, report of medical specialist, copy of certificate of exemption and other relevant documents will be retained by the school and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department.
 - A copy of the exemption certificate will be sent to the **Department of Education Primary Administration Section 1, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath** within one week of the granting of the exemption.
 - A copy of the exemption certification should be sent to the relevant second level school when the pupil in question has completed her/his primary education.
5. The psychologist's report should be of a full psychological assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist not more than two years prior to the application for exemption.
- The Department has prepared guidelines on the preparation of these reports which are available to psychologists. ([Download here](#))
6. The school report should include information on assessments carried out in the school **by remedial teachers or other teachers**. It should include, as well, the results of **tests**, reports from relevant teachers, information on the pupil's attendance, application to study and any remedial or other special help given. Samples of the pupil's unaided written expression should also be attached to the report.
7. The operation of the revised circular will be monitored regularly by the Department. The delegated authority to grant exemption may be rescinded in the case of individual schools where circumstances so warrant. The operation of the Circular will be formerly reviewed at the end of the school year 1996/97.
8. An exemption certificate form is attached.
9. Further enquiries in relation to this Circular Letter should be addressed to Primary Administration Section 1, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, telephone (01) 8734700, or (0902) 74621 extensions 5159 or 5153.

John Dennehy
Assistant Secretary

June 1996.

Revision of Circular 18/79 on Exemption from the Study of Irish

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION

Name of school:

Address:

Roll Number:

Name of pupil:

Date of birth:

Name and address of psychologist:

Date of report:

Name & address of medical specialist:

Date of report:

I certify that the above-named pupil has been granted an exemption from the study of Irish in primary schools in accordance with the terms of Circular 12/96.

The exemption has been granted on the following grounds:

Signed: _____

Principal Teacher

Date: _____

Brainse an Iarbhunoideachais
An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta,
Corn a Madadh,
Baile Atha Luain
Co. na hIarmhí
Fón: 09064-83692



Post-Primary Administration,
Department of Education and Science
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath.
Ph: 09064-83692

Guidelines for Psychologists on Assessment and Reporting

Revision of Rule 46 of the "Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools" in relation to exemption from Irish. (Reference: Department of Education [Circular Letter M10/94](#) to the Management Authorities of Primary and Post-primary Schools)

1. The [Circular Letter M10/94](#), sets out the circumstances in which exemption from the study of Irish may be granted, following a review by the Minister for Education. [Circular Letter M10/94](#) states, inter alia, that school managements are authorised to grant exemption under Rule 46 of the "Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools", as revised, in accordance with prescribed procedures and criteria and subject to regular monitoring by the Department.
2. [Circular Letter M10/94](#) should be read in conjunction with these Guidelines.
3. When exemption from the study of Irish is sought, a written application for exemption will be made by a parent or guardian to the principal of the school. This application will specify the grounds on which the exemption is sought. Where exemption is being sought under sub-paragraphs (c) of Rule 46, the parent or guardian will be required to furnish reports from a qualified psychologist and, in the case of sub-paragraph 1, (c), (iii), from an appropriate medical specialist as well.
4. These guidelines are prepared by the Psychological Service/Department of Education in accordance with the provision in paragraph 6 of the [Circular Letter M10/94](#). This paragraph states that the psychologist's report should be of a full psychological assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist not more than two years prior to the application for exemption. It is not intended that these **guidelines** be seen as **directions** to reporting psychologists. It is hoped that they will be of assistance in the preparation of psychological reports so that school authorities will have as full information as possible when making decisions on granting exemptions from the study of Irish. It is hoped that the guidelines will help in the interpretation of certain aspects of [Circular Letter M10/94](#).
5. The psychological report should include the following information:
 - (a) Pupil's name, address, date of birth, date of assessment.
 - (b) Name and address of school.
 - (c) Name and qualifications of psychologist.
6. Assessment of intellectual functioning.
 - (i) The test used should be a standardised test of intellectual functioning administered individually. The following tests, administered in full, are examples of suitable tests: the Wechsler Intelligence Scales; the British Ability Scales; the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale.
 - (ii) The report should include the derived I.Q. Score(s) and should also give an analysis of subtest scores, pointing out significant discrepancies in the I.Q. profile, e.g. marked discrepancies between scores on verbal subtests and scores on non-verbal subtests or between such scores and age-levels.

- (iii) General observations on the pupil's test performance should also be included.
7. Assessment of attainment of language skills in the pupil's mother tongue.
- (i) Evidence of failure to attain adequate levels of language skills in the pupil's mother tongue should include results from the administration of a reliable measure of reading attainment supplemented by results from other measures in areas such as spelling, writing, vocabulary and oral competence. Word recognition tests, on their own, would not be considered sufficient.
 - (ii) Examples of tests in English which are considered appropriate are listed as follows (This is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

Micra- T; Drumcondra Attainment Tests; Neale Analysis of Reading Ability; Young Cloze Test, Wide Range Achievement Test; Widespan; Gap; Daniels and Diack Test; Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test; Blackwell Spelling Test. Many of the tests, which are in use in this country, have not been standardised on an Irish population. However, circumstances may indicate the use of some of these tests (e.g. when a number of areas of language skill needs to be assessed) and bearing in mind that their use will supplement the observation of the psychologist and the assessments of teachers in a school report.
 - (iii) The criterion for marked failure is taken as a test score at, or below, the 10th percentile, or at or below the equivalent level in terms of standard score or other deviation score. When the pupil's score lies just above the criterion the provision of supplementary evidence in areas such as writing, spelling, oral competence is important.
 - (iv) The psychologist's report should specify the tests used and should include the test results (raw and derived scores) together with a general description of the pupil's oral language skills.
 - (v) A history of marked failure in the attainment of language skills, not related directly to factors such as poor attendance, poor motivation or problems in social interaction, is an important part of the overall evidence.
8. Where exemption from the study of Irish is recommended, the grounds on which such a recommendation is made should be stated and should be supported by appropriate detail from the intellectual and language skills assessments.
9. With regard to 8 above, it should be noted that, in accordance with [Circular Letter M10/94](#), apart from circumstances relating to residence, a school may grant an exemption from the study of Irish only to pupils,
- (i) who function intellectually at average or above average level but have a Specific Learning Disability of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
 - (ii) who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment (i.e. mental handicap) and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
 - (iii) who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.
10. In the case of Specific Learning Disability, exemptions from the study of Irish may not be granted on the grounds of disabilities due to poor general intellectual functioning alone.

Account should be taken of the following criteria in determining whether a Specific Learning Disability exists for the purposes of granting an exemption:

- Assessed intellectual functioning at average level or above;
 - Marked failure to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic skills such as reading and writing (please refer to paragraph 7 above)
 - A history of such failure not related directly to factors such as poor attendance, poor motivation or problems in social interaction which may affect attainments
11. The term general learning disability, as used in 9 (ii) above, should be taken to refer to those who, in the professional opinion of the reporting psychologist, fall within the ranges of intellectual functioning indicating the presence of a Mental Handicap, in so far as an Intelligence Quotient may be used as an indication of mental disability. Pupils who, in the professional opinion of the reporting psychologist, are considered as functioning intellectually above the ranges indicating the presence of Mental Handicap are not considered as eligible for the granting of an exemption from the study of Irish on the grounds of a general learning disability alone.
 12. With reference to para 9 (iii) above, pupils who are reported by an appropriate medical specialist as being profoundly deaf should be regarded as eligible for exemption from the study of Irish without any further psychological assessment or reporting. Similarly, pupils who have been diagnosed as severely hearing impaired, but who function at the profoundly deaf level, should also be regarded as eligible for exemption as if they are profoundly deaf. In the case of other serious sensory impairment reported by appropriate medical specialists, exemptions from the study of Irish may be granted if the reporting psychologist considers that the pupils concerned are functioning intellectually in the borderline range of Mild Mental Handicap, or below, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.
 13. The operation of the Rule governing exemptions from the study of Irish will be reviewed formally at the end of the school year 1995/96. A review of these guidelines will be carried out at that time as well.
 14. Copies of these guidelines, together with copies of [Circular Letter M10/94](#), may be obtained from Post-Primary Branch, Department of Education, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Sean MacGleannáin
Chief Inspector
20 April, 1995