



Policy on Exemptions from the Study of Irish

Introductory Statement

This policy was drafted by the staff and Board of Management (BoM) of Citywest and Saggart CNS in response to a recent circular on exemptions from the study of Irish. All practice stated in this policy is in line with circular 0052/2019. Our school is one with a diverse community of needs who require a differentiated learning experience. This policy is underpinned by documentation from NEPS, The continuum of support and guidelines for schools on exemptions from the study of Irish.

Summary of this Irish Exemptions Policy

Application	Application must be made by parents on behalf of their child to the school principal. The principal must inform the parents if the implications of an exemption and the rights of the child with regard to future education.
Criteria	Criteria is set out in this policy and in circular 52/2019
Granting	Exemptions are granted following a process of discussion and evidence gathering on the part of the school. Parents must be informed within 30 days of the exemption request
Appeals	Parents may appeal the decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days
Supports	Children who are granted exemptions must be supported during the times at which Irish instruction occurs. This can take the form of additional language support in English.
Misc.	Children with exemptions from the study of Irish are not exempt from experiences with the Irish language aurally or culturally in the class or at whole school level.

Rationale

In recent years, there has been an increase in both the cultural diversity in our school as well as the amount of additional needs such as learning difficulties, sensory impairments and other learning disabilities. An exemption from the study of Irish would be considered in exceptional circumstances in line with the circular where the study of Irish is having a detrimental effect on the language and literacy skills of the child in English.

Relationship to School Ethos

Citywest & Saggart CNS seeks to enable each child to develop to his/her individual potential. It is the policy of the school to, as far as is possible, identify all the needs of the pupil and put in place measures to adequately cater for their needs. Inclusion, equality and excellence are cornerstones of the CNS model and this policy aims to ensure that children receive excellence in education, equality of opportunity and continue to feel a sense of belonging in the school community.

Aims and Objectives

The primary purposes of this policy:

- To allow for pupils of differing abilities, interests and circumstances
- To enhance inclusivity within the school
- To enable children of all abilities to access the curriculum in a learner friendly manner

Procedures

An exemption from Irish will only be granted in **exceptional circumstances** and where all alternative avenues have been explored to help the child to attain language and literacy skills to their ability. Early intervention in the form of English language lessons and other early intervention programmes will be used to ensure children gain the greatest support in gaining language skills. Considerations should be given to the future education of the child and parents must be well informed before the decision is made. The decision to grant/not grant an exemption should be made in consultation with the principal, parents, class teacher and special education teacher.

The process for application and granting of an exemption is as follows:

1. The parents/guardians of the child must apply to the principal in writing. The letter should detail the criteria (a, b, c or d) for which the exemption is being sought. Circular 52/2019 sets the following criteria:

a.	<i>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 opportunity to engage in the study of Irish</i>
b.	<i>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</i>
c.	<i>Pupils who have at least reached second class <u>and</u> 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. <u>and</u> at the time of the application for exemption present with a standardised score on a <u>discrete test*</u> in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.</i>

d.	<i>Children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.</i>
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*A list of discrete tests can be found in the appendices of this policy

2. The request from the parent must be acknowledged in writing by the principal and the date of receipt must be recorded on the parents' request. A sample is attached.

3. A meeting between the parents and principal/teachers must be held to discuss the criteria for which the exemption is being sought. The template attached to this policy can be used to record the discussion and ensure the parents are advised of the implications and rights associated with the granting of an exemption from Irish. A period of time may follow where further assessments and information gathering can occur on order for the school to make an informed decision about the exemption.

4. The outcome of the request must be confirmed in writing within 21 days of the receipt of the parents' request.

5. Where an exemption has been granted, a signed certificate of Exemption will be issued to the parents. The school will retain a copy of this on the pupils file. A copy of this certificate is attached in the appendices.

6. Where the exemption has not been granted, the parents may appeal this decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days from the date the decision was notified to the parents.

Arrangements for Pupils where exemptions *have been granted*

Alternative and meaningful work must be provided for the child in question during Irish language lessons. 'Busy work' must not form this work. Such work must involve a skill/concept which would help to develop the proficiency of the child in the English language. Withdrawal with a special education teacher may occur during this time also to allow for more intensive and individualised work on the child's support plan.

It is important to note that, even though an exemption from the study of Irish has been granted, the child may be involved in listening to Irish and taking part in the learning of Irish songs/poems in other parts of the curriculum – the purpose of which is to engage with Irish culture rather than Irish language. Children with exemptions from Irish will not be exempt from cultural celebrations of Irish language and 'Irishness'. Examples of this includes the display of Irish language in the classroom and school, the celebration of *Seachtain na Gaeilge* or other whole school Irish language/cultural activities.

Arrangements for Pupils where exemptions *have not been granted*

Where an exemption for Irish had been applied for due to poor language/literacy attainment and had not been granted, the school and parents must work together to develop a support plan which would aim to improve that child's attainment of both English and Irish.

Roles and Responsibilities

In-school Management, class teachers, BoM will contribute to the implementation of school procedures.

Principal

- Implementation of this policy
- Liaise with the parents through writing throughout the process and provide informed guidance to parents
- Liaise with the teachers with regard to gathering evidence
- Issue the certificate of exemption if granted
- Ensure provision is made for pupils where an exemption is granted/not granted

- Reporting the granting of exemptions to the BoM and Department of Education each year

Teachers

- Liaise with the principal with regard to the gathering of evidence
- Conduct discrete tests where applicable in the process

Parents

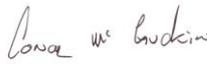
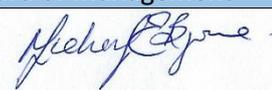
- Apply for the exemption on behalf of their child where they feel an exemption is necessary
- Become fully informed of the implications of exemptions and their child’s rights as a result
- Ensure that the certificate of exemption is passed on when the child is transitioning to a different school setting

Ratification / Communication

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management in November 2019 and communicated to all parents.

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, when further circulars will be issued

This policy was ratified by the school’s Board of Management	
Signed:  Chairperson	Signed:  Principal
Date: 12.12.19	Date: 12.12.19

Discrete Tests for Gathering of Evidence (Not exhaustive)

Word Reading	Reading Comprehension	Spelling
Wide Range Attainment Test (WRAT) 4/5 Word Reading	WRAT 4/5 Reading Comprehension	WRAT 4/5
Wechsler Individual Attainment Test 3(WIAT 3 - teachers) Word reading	WIAT 3(teachers) Word reading	WIAT 3
Woodcock Johnson IV	York Assessment of Reading Comprehension - YARC (primary norms)	Vernon
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test 3 rd Edition (WRMT-III) (2011)	YARC (post primary norms)	The Diagnostic Spelling Test
	Woodcock Johnson IV	British Spelling Test 2 nd edition

- Test 2R