



**Cloontuskert N.S.
Cloontuskert,
Lanesboro,
Co. Roscommon.
N39 AT80.
Roll No. 18116S**

**Cloontuskert N.S.
Exemption from Irish Policy**

Drafted: January 2026

Policy for Exempting Pupils from the Study of Irish

Rationale and Relationship to School Ethos

Cloontuskert National School recognises Irish as the first official language of the State and as a core subject within the Primary Curriculum. The school is committed to providing all pupils, insofar as is reasonable and meaningful, with opportunities to engage with the learning of Irish in an inclusive and supportive manner.

This policy has been developed in accordance with Circular 0054/2022: Exemptions from the Study of Irish, issued by the Department of Education, which replaces Circular 0052/2019. Exemptions from the study of Irish are granted only in exceptional circumstances and in strict accordance with the criteria and procedures set out in that Circular.

The school acknowledges that the decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is a significant one, with potential implications for future learning and career opportunities. Accordingly, such decisions are not taken lightly and are made only following careful consideration of the pupil's needs and best interests.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to clarify for parents/guardians and staff:

- When it is appropriate to seek an exemption from the study of Irish
- The criteria under which an exemption may be granted
- The procedures to be followed when applying for, considering, granting, recording or refusing an exemption

General Principles

- Exemptions from the study of Irish are granted only in the exceptional circumstances set out in Circular 0054/2022.
- Exemptions do not apply in schools where Irish is the medium of instruction.
- Pupils should be given every reasonable opportunity to continue learning Irish for as long as possible, including engagement with oral Irish where appropriate.
- A pupil who is granted an exemption may choose not to exercise it at any time, without loss of the right to exercise it in the future.
- Inclusive practices underpin all decisions, and incidental learning of Irish through greetings, phrases and cultural activities may continue.

- No applications for exemption from the study of Irish will be considered prior to the end of Second Class, in line with Circular 0054/2022.
- From Second Class onwards, applications may be considered only where the pupil meets one of the criteria outlined below. Normally, pupils should be supported to engage with Irish until at least Fifth Class, except in very exceptional circumstances.

Criteria under which an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted

A pupil moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil 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 or re-enrolment

OR

(b) who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state.

A pupil 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 pupil:

(i) who has at least reached second class

AND

(ii) 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

(iii) 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.

Normally, pupils availing of an exemption under this category should be encouraged to engage with the study of oral Irish language for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.

A pupil who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life

It is recognised that there is a small cohort of pupils 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 pupils, 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 pupil:

(i) who has at least reached second class

AND

(ii) 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

(iii) whose school has substantial written evidence that these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs

AND

(iv) 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 pupil

AND

(v) 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 in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time

AND

(vi) the principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the pupil concerned.

Normally, this will mean that the pupil will be expected to engage with the study of Irish at least to the end of fifth class. However, in very exceptional circumstances, where the principal is satisfied that an exemption is warranted to address the high level of multiple and persistent needs of the pupil, and certifies that all of the conditions in (i) to (vi) above have been met, it may be granted at an earlier stage, but in no case may this be earlier than second class.

A pupil in a recognised special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who 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

(i) Where a pupil 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 pupil is automatically entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish without an application.

OR

(ii) Where a pupil 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.

Normally, pupils availing of an exemption under (i) **OR** (ii) of this category should be encouraged to engage with the study of oral Irish language for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.

A pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history.

Procedures for Granting an Exemption

Application

- A parent/guardian must apply in writing to the principal for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish.
- The date of receipt of the application will be recorded by the school.
- Written acknowledgement of receipt will be issued to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Considering the Application

The principal will:

- Discuss the application with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and confirm the specific category under which the application is made. If the category is not confirmed, the application is deemed null and void.
- Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the steps involved in processing the application.
- Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupil of the implications of an exemption for current and future learning.
- Consult with the class teacher, special education teacher, and other relevant professionals.
- Review all relevant school documentation, including Student Support Plans.
- The application will be processed and the outcome communicated in writing within 21 school days of receipt.

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

- i. The Certificate of Exemption will 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.

- ii. The arrangements for the pupil's learning will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil.
- iii. It will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that incidental learning of Irish language may occur through engagement with greetings, phrases, festivals and that a positive attitude to Irish should be fostered by the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- iv. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil 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.
- v. The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption 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.
- vi. In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school will update the pupil's record on the Primary Online Database (POD) as soon as possible to include the reason for that exemption.

Where an application is refused, a copy of the application form, together with the letter of refusal and all supporting documentation, will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation. The school should maintain the records for at least the duration of the pupil's enrolment in the school.

Appeal

A parent/guardian may appeal a refusal to grant an exemption to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC) within 30 calendar days of the written decision. The IEAC will consider the school's decision, the criteria set out in Circular 0054/2022, and the documentation available to the school at the time of decision-making.

Arrangements for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish

Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special education teaching resources.

To support inclusive practices, a pupil 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. It should be noted that pupils have the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

Supports for pupils who have no understanding of English when enrolled

A pupil who has no understanding of English when enrolled should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his/her full engagement with the curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

Data Protection and Record Retention

All applications, supporting documentation and Certificates of Exemption will be retained securely by the school in accordance with data protection legislation and school data protection policies. Appropriate parental/guardian consent will be obtained. Records will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department of Education.

Pupils Transitioning to Other Schools

It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of the Certificate of Exemption is provided to the receiving school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Management, principal, teachers, parents/guardians and pupils all have roles in the implementation of this policy in accordance with Department of Education requirements.

Implementation, Communication and Review

This policy will be communicated to staff and parents and will be implemented from the date of ratification by the Board of Management. It will be reviewed periodically, or as required, in line with updates to Department of Education circulars or guidance.

Signed; _____
(Chairperson of B.O.M)

Signed; _____
(Principal)

Date; _____

