



Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore NS

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Principal: Ms. Cairíona Lancaster

Deputy Principal: Mr. Shane Walsh

Irish Exemption Policy

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the practices and procedures involved in processing applications for exemption from the study of Irish in Scoil Chéile Chríost, Rathmore NS. This policy is informed by the provisions set out in subsection 2.2 of Circular 0054/2022, as well as any subsequent official Department of Education circulars relating to the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish that may be issued and in force prior to any future update of this policy

Relationship to the school Ethos:

This policy is in keeping with the mission statement of the school, which strives to enhance the self-esteem of all through providing for the intellectual, physical, moral and cultural needs of all.

Rationale:

1. Circular 0054/2022 advises Primary Schools of the revised guidelines for the exemption of pupils from the study of Irish. The language component of the Primary Curriculum is for all pupils and comprises both English and Irish. Irish is a **core subject** in recognised primary schools, and all pupils should be given every reasonable opportunity to participate in learning Irish. Only in exceptional circumstances defined in the circular, may pupils be considered for an exemption from the study of Irish. Pupils may choose not to exercise an exemption and can continue learning Irish without losing their right to use the exemption later. Rathmore NS promotes an inclusive, differentiated approach to language learning before considering exemptions, consistent with Department guidance.

Aims and Objectives:

This policy aims to support the school in:

- Addressing a wide diversity of learner needs by providing appropriately differentiated learning experiences.
- Promoting an inclusive learning environment where all pupils feel supported and valued.
- Enabling children of all abilities to access the curriculum in a learner-friendly and developmentally appropriate manner.

Policy Content:

2. Granting an exemption from the study of Irish.

2.1 An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her access to the curriculum and his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers, and the pupil. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section 2.2 below.

2.2. The circumstances in which a pupil may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish . An exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following circumstances, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 or 2.2.5 only:

2.2.1 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 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.

2.2.4 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.

2.2.5 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.

2.3 Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish

A parent/guardian must make an application in writing [using Appendix A] to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil.

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) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c or 2.2d) 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. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil regarding any implication 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) 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) 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) 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).
9. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) the arrangements for the pupil'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 principal in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

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 sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted.

Parents/guardians and pupils 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.

2.4 Appeal

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

www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/

2.5 Documents Required.

Depending on the eligibility ground, applications may require (as specified in Department checklists/forms): Evidence of prior education outside the State and lack of opportunity to study Irish. Relevant school-based assessment data (e.g., literacy difficulties) and evidence of a monitored period of differentiated language instruction. Other documentation set out in the corresponding 2.2.x checklist and certificate template.

2.6 Record-Keeping and Reporting. Scoil Cheile Chrost, Rathmore NS will securely store applications, decisions, certificates, assessments, and related correspondence in the pupil's Student Support File and/or school records, in line with data protection requirements. The school will record on POD pupils who are exempt and the reason for exemption, as required by the Department.

Roles and Responsibilities:

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

Success Criteria:

- Seamless integration of non-nationals and pupils with learning difficulties
- Happy school learning environment
- Positive teacher/parental feedback

Communication with parents/Guardians.

This policy will be available on the school website and a hard copy provided to parents if required outlining and summarising: eligibility grounds, steps, timelines, documents required, and appeal pathways, with links to official Department resources.

Ratification of Exemption from Irish Policy

This policy will be reviewed in 2 years or sooner if there are changes to Department circulars or guidance. Circular 0054/2022 (Primary) is current, any subsequent official circulars will be adopted and this policy updated accordingly.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 11/02/2026

Signed: *Seamus O'Neil*
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: *Caitríona Lancaster*
Principal

Date of next review: 2028

[Appendix A]

Irish exemption Letter of Application

To _____ [Insert Principal's Name]

We, _____ [Insert Parents' Names], parents of
_____ [Insert Pupil's Name], _____ [Insert Date of Birth], hereby
request an exemption from the study of Irish for _____ [Pupil's Name],
because _____

Insert reason why the pupil should be exempt from the study of Irish]

In line with the School's Policy the application reason is based on sub-paragraph *[please tick the relevant criteria]*

2.2.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.2.5

We have discussed this matter at length with _____ [Insert Principal's Name] and have been made aware that:

1. _____ [Insert Pupil's Name], may, into the future, be restricted from certain jobs where Irish may be a requirement and that there may be other longer-term, as yet unforeseen, implications (e.g. while in post-primary education)

2. The school's goal is to maximise the child's participation and enjoyment in Irish oral language and to ensure he/she feels part of the Irish culture and ethos of the school, thereby increasing the likelihood of him/her being able to re-engage with Irish in the future. The incidental learning of Irish language may occur through engagement with greetings, phrases, festivals. As such, a positive attitude to the language should be fostered by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

3. The holder of this certificate retains the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

Thank you,

[Parents' Signature(s)]

For Office Use Only:

Date Application received by

[Appendix B]

School's Acknowledgment of Receipt of
Irish exemption Letter of Application

Dear *Parent(s)/Guardian(s)*

Scoil Cheile Chríost acknowledges receipt of your ***Irish exemption Letter of Application*** on _____ (*enter date school received the application here*) and in line with the School's Policy confirm that this application is based on sub-paragraph [*please tick the relevant criteria*]

2.2.1 **2.2.2** **2.2.3** **2.2.4** **2.2.5**

Your application will be processed and the outcome confirmed in writing in the next 21 days (*from receipt of the application*).

A signed **Certificate of Exemption** will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted.

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)/Gurdian(s). For more information on this appeals process, please refer to the School's Irish Exemption policy.

Yours Sincerely,

Signed: _____

Principal Teacher

Date: _____

Decision to grant Irish Exemption Application

Dear Parent/(s)/Guardian(s)

Following review of your application under sub-paragraph

2.2.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.2.5

of Circular 0054/2022, Scoil Cheile Chrost, Rathmore NS has granted an exemption from the study of Irish for _____ [Pupil Name].

Enclosed is the official Certificate of Exemption .

Please note:

- *Where appropriate and where possible Scoil Chéile Chríost, will endeavour to take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special educational needs resources.*
- *To support inclusive practices, a pupil who is exempt from the study of Irish will be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability and interests.*
- *Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Pupil(s) always retain the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.*
- *Please keep this certificate safe as it is the responsibility of parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of this certificate is made available to any school to which their child enrolls.*
- *An exemption granted to a pupil may be operative throughout his/her enrolment in primary and post-primary school.*

Yours Sincerely,

Signed: _____

Principal Teacher

Date: _____

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH

Name of school: _____

Address: _____

Roll Number: _____

Name of pupil: _____

Date of birth: _____

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 0054/2022

The exemption has been granted on the following grounds: [please tick the relevant criteria]

2.2.1 **2.2.2** **2.2.3** **2.2.4** **2.2.5**

Any further information (if relevant):

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal Teacher

Please note:

- *Where appropriate and where possible Scoil Chéile Chríost, will endeavour to take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special educational needs resources.*
- *To support inclusive practices, a pupil who is exempt from the study of Irish will be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability and interests.*
- *Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Pupil(s) always retain the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.*
- *Please keep this certificate safe as it is the responsibility of parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of this certificate is made available to any school to which their child enrolls.*
- *An exemption granted to a pupil may be operative throughout his/her enrolment in primary and post-primary school.*

[Appendix E]

Decision to Refuse Irish Exemption Application

Dear Parent(s) /Guardian (s),

Following review of your application under sub-paragraph

2.2.1 2.2.2 2.2.3 2.2.4 2.2.5

of Circular 0054/2022, Scoil Cheile *Chríost, Rathmore* NS has not granted an exemption from the study of Irish for

_____ [Pupil Name].

You have the right to appeal to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC) within 30 calendar days of this decision. The Primary Appeal Form and guidance are available from the Department.

Kind regards,

Signed: _____

Principal Teacher

Date: _____