



VIRGIN MARY GIRLS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Virgin Mary Girls' National School

Exemption from Irish Policy 2021

Introduction:

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management of Virgin Mary Girls' National School in response to recent changes in special educational provisions.

Rationale:

1 Circular 0052/2019 advises Primary Schools of the revised arrangements 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. In exceptional circumstances, some pupils may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish.

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.

Aims and Objectives:

- 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

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 her access to the curriculum and 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

Exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following exceptional circumstances only:

a. 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

Or

b. 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

Or

c. pupils who:

i. have at least reached second class

and

ii. 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. 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. 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.

Or

d. children of non-Irish nationals who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.

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 principal will convey the outcome of the application process 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

1. the name and address of the school,
2. the school roll number,
3. the pupil's name,
4. the pupil's date of birth
5. 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 Circular 0052/2019 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/

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-Irish nationals and pupils with learning difficulties
- Happy school learning environment
- Positive teacher/parental feedback

Ratification of Exemption from Irish Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19th/10/2021

Signed: Pat Kenney
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Niamh Cuthbert
Principal

Date: 19th Oct 2021

Date: 19/10/2021

Date of next review: Oct 2022

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 _____[Insert
Pupil's Name],
based on the fact that _____[Insert Pupil's Name],
_____ [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]

☐ **2.2a** ☐ **2.2b** ☐ **2.2c** ☐ **2.2d**

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

_____ [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)

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.

Thank you,

<i>For Office Use Only:</i> Date Application received by School _____

[Parents' Signature(s)]

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

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Virgin Mary Girls' National School 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*]

☐ **2.2a** ☐ **2.2b** ☐ **2.2c** ☐ **2.2d**

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

Yours sincerely,

Principal

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 0052/2019

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

☐ **2.2a** ☐ **2.2b** ☐ **2.2c** ☐ **2.2d**

Any further information (if relevant):

Signed: _____
Principal Teacher

Date: _____

Please note:

- *Where appropriate and where possible, Virgin Mary Girls' National School 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 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.*