



St Fergal's College

Irish Exemption Policy

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1. Aims and Objectives

- To comply with Circular 0055/2022 regarding exemptions from the study of Irish at post-primary level.
- To provide clarity and transparency to students, parents/guardians, and staff on the procedures for applying for and granting exemptions.
- To support the inclusion of all students in St. Fergal's College, recognising individual abilities, interests, and circumstances.
- To ensure appropriate educational provision is made for students who are exempted from studying Irish.

2. Eligibility for Exemption

In accordance with Section 2.2 of Circular 0055/2022, an exemption from the study of Irish may only be granted in the following exceptional circumstances:

a) Education Abroad

Students whose education up to the age of 12 years, or up to and including the final year of primary education, was received outside the State and who did not have the opportunity to engage in the study of Irish.

b) Re-enrolment after a Period Abroad

Students who were previously enrolled as recognised students in a primary or post-primary school in the State and who are being re-enrolled after a period of at least three consecutive years outside the State. Such students must be at least 12 years of age on re-enrolment.

c) Students with Significant and Persistent Learning Difficulties

(i). Students who present with significant literacy 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 should include Student Support Plans with:

- regular reviews of learning needs,
- target-setting,
- evidence-informed interventions and reviews, including test scores (word reading, reading comprehension, spelling, and/or other literacy measures).

(ii). At the time of application, the student must present with a Standardised Score at/below the 10th percentile in Word Reading, Reading Comprehension, or Spelling.

d) Students with Multiple and Persistent Needs

A small cohort of students may experience multiple and persistent needs that significantly affect participation and engagement in learning. Exemption may be considered where substantial written evidence shows these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans implemented over at least two school years. Evidence of review and monitoring with parents/guardians and the student is

required, and the principal must be satisfied that exemption is in the student's overall best interests.

e) Students in Special Schools or Classes

- (i). Students currently enrolled in, or previously enrolled in, a recognised special school or special class are automatically entitled to exemption.
- (ii). Students deemed eligible for a place in such provision may apply for exemption with supporting documentation.

3. Applications for Exemption

- Applications must be made in writing by the parent(s)/guardian(s), or by the student if aged 18 or over, using the school's Application Form (Appendix 1).
- The application must clearly state the exceptional circumstance forming the basis of the request.
- Supporting documentation, including Student Support Plans and test results where relevant, must accompany the application.

4. Processing the application for exemption from the study of Irish

The school principal, on behalf of the school's board of management, processes applications received by the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish after they have been reviewed by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator or relevant SET. The formal written application submitted by the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student must indicate the exceptional circumstance that forms the basis for the application in accordance with criteria explained above.

The Principal, on behalf of the Board of Management, is responsible for processing and deciding on applications.

Steps include:

1. Record the date of receipt of the application.
2. Acknowledge receipt of the application in writing.
3. Consult with the parent(s)/guardian(s), the student, and relevant school personnel (e.g. SENCO/SET).
4. Review all documentary evidence.
5. Confirm the criteria under which the application is being made.
6. Explain implications of exemption (option not to exercise exemption, possibility of returning to Irish, impact on subject choice or future education).
7. Confirm the outcome of the application in writing within 21 school days of receipt.

5. Outcomes

- Where granted, the Principal issues a Certificate of Exemption (Appendix 2) and updates the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) without delay.

- Where refused, the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student will be informed in writing of the reasons for refusal and their right to appeal to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days.

6. Appeals

- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee using the official Department of Education Appeals Form.
- The Committee's decision is final.

7. Arrangements for Students with an Exemption

- Students with exemptions will follow an alternative programme of study or support, which may include:
 - literacy or numeracy support,
 - EAL support,
 - supervised independent study,
 - another approved short course or subject.
- Students may continue to participate in cultural activities and retain the right to re-engage with Irish at a later stage.

8. Record Keeping and Data Protection

- All applications, supporting documentation, and decisions are securely stored in line with GDPR and school policy.
- Certificates of Exemption, application forms, and outcome letters are retained in the student's file.
- P-POD will be updated with exemption status and category.

9. Sharing Exemption Information Between Schools

- It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the student (if aged 18+) to provide a copy of the Certificate of Exemption to St. Fergal's College on enrolment.
- With parental consent, the school will provide exemption information to a receiving school on student transfer.

10. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if there are updates to Department of Education circulars or procedures.

Reviewed by staff:	Date:
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Reviewed by students:	Date:
Approved by BOM Chairperson:	Date:

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Application Form for Exemption from the Study of Irish

For completion by the parent(s)/guardian(s) on behalf of a student or a student who has reached 18 years of age

Name of student	Date of birth:	Year Group

I/We wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of

_____ or I _____ (student who has reached 18 years)
wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish. Please indicate the ground for
applying for an exemption from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular 0055/2022
A student moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the
Irish language

1. An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a student 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 ()
2. A student who experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum ()
3. A student who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the student's participation and engagement in their learning and school life ()
4. A student 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 ()

Please provide detail of any supporting documentation being submitted to the school

I/We the undersigned understand that documentation provided may be reviewed for the purpose of processing this application by relevant school personnel and other professionals where necessary.

Signed:	Date:

For the school:	
Date of receipt of application: _____	
Principal: _____	Date: _____

Appendix 2:

Evidence of Exemption Need

Name of student:

Year Group:

Information from primary school:

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Entrance Exam Results

Year completed:

NGRT / Access	Cat4 Verbal	Quantitative	Non-verbal	Spatial	Overall

WRAT 5 Test results

Date Completed:

Sub-test	Standard Score	Observations
Word Reading		
Spelling		

School Based Results indicating a difficulty in language acquisition (VSware)

Subject	First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Irish			
English			
Maths			

Meeting with Guidance Counsellor

Date:

Input from Irish Teacher:

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Granted

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Not Granted

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Signature of Principal: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3:

Certificate of Exemption

Exemption from the study of Irish - Circular 0055/2022

Name & address of school: St Fergal's College
Rathdowney,
Co Laois.

School number: 71520D

Type of school Secondary: ETB

Name of pupil:

Pupil no: _____ **Date of birth:** _____

Name and address of psychologist:

Date of report:

Name & address of medical specialist:

I certify that the above-named pupil has been granted an exemption from the study of Irish in second level education in accordance with the terms of Circular 0055/2022.

Signature: _____
[Principal]

Date: _____

Address: Post Primary Administration Section, Post-Primary Branch,
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Appendix 4:

Processing Checklist for Schools

- ☐ Application received in writing and date recorded
- ☐ Acknowledgement issued to parent(s)/guardian(s)/student
- ☐ Consultation with parent(s)/guardian(s), student, and relevant staff
- ☐ Supporting documentation reviewed
- ☐ Implications of exemption explained
- ☐ Outcome decision within 21 school days
- ☐ Certificate of Exemption issued / Refusal letter issued
- ☐ Record updated on P-POD
- ☐ All documentation filed securely in line with GDPR