

Scoil Ursula

• Title

Exemption from Irish

• Introductory Statement

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management in response to recent changes in Special Educational Provisions and the increasing numbers of international pupils enrolled in our school. The policy was reviewed by the Special Needs Team in Autumn, 2010 as part of an overall review of all policies.

It was disseminated to the wider school community through the Board of Management and ratified by the board on _____.

• Rationale

Many non-English speaking newcomer children have enrolled into the school in recent years. Circular 12/96 states that many of these 'New Irish' may be entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish as may children with a severe degree of specific learning difficulties, general learning disabilities and/or sensory impairments as to render it futile to introduce or continue with another language (Irish) when there is a difficulty and/or deficit in attainment in the main language of instruction (English).

Rule 46 states:

"Pupils in the following circumstances may be allowed to substitute any other subject from the list of approved subjects for Irish for the purpose of Rule 21 (1) (a) and (b):-

- (a) Pupils whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland;*
- (b) Pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in a primary or second-level school who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the State and the pupil is at least 11 years of age on re-enrolment;*
- (c) Pupils*
 - i. who function intellectually at average or above average level but have **a Specific Learning Disability** of such a degree of*

severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or

- ii. *who have been assessed as having a **general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment [i.e. mental handicap]** and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.*
- iii. *who have been assessed as having a **general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment**, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.*

The evidence of such a disability should be furnished by a qualified psychologist, supported in the case of (iii) by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. In addition, a full report on the pupil should be furnished by the school.

- (d) *Pupils from abroad, who have no understanding of English, when enrolled, would be required to study one language only, Irish or English."*

• **Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School**

This policy is in keeping with the mission statement of the school which states: "We recognize the wide range of pupils' learning capacities, needs, cultural and religious backgrounds and interests". We are also mindful of the special place of Irish in our curriculum and do not seek to denigrate its status within our school.

• **Aims**

- 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.

• **Guidelines (*content of policy*)**

Before granting an exemption in Irish, the school requires evidence of a specific or general learning disability from a qualified psychologist or in the case of a child with a sensory impairment, from a qualified medical practitioner.

Children of non-English speaking internationals who are resident in the country will

also be granted an exemption from Irish, particularly if their grasp of the English language is limited.

Procedures:

- The school requires a written application for exemption from the parents/guardians of the particular child. It must be accompanied by documentary evidence such as age, previous schooling etc. and a psychologists report (if relevant).
- The principal in consultation with staff, class teachers and Board of Management will grant an exemption if warranted and will present a certificate of exemption to the parents in accordance with Circular 12/96. *“The certificate will also cite the name, address and type of school, the student's name and date of birth, the sub-paragraph of the Rule under which the exemption is being granted and the specific grounds for exemption. Where the exemption is being granted under sub-paragraph (c), the name and address of the qualified psychologist and the date of the psychologist's report and the name of the medical specialist and date of report if applicable, will be included”*
- A copy of the exemption certificate is forwarded to the child's Parents/Guardians.
- The application, school report, psychologist's report, report of medical specialist, copy of certificate of exemption and other relevant documents will be retained by the school and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department.
- While the school will endeavour to timetable support sessions to coincide with Irish lessons, the logistics may be such that a child may still be present in class during such lessons and the school accepts no obligation to provide alternative arrangements in such instances. A child with an exemption may also participate in Oral Irish sessions at the discretion of the Class Teacher but will not be asked to complete written work and/or Homework.

• Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use staff observation and parental feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy in accordance with the following criteria:

- Seamless integration of non-English speaking internationals and pupils with learning difficulties.
- Happy school learning environment.
- Positive teacher/parental feedback.

• Roles and Responsibility

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

- **Timeframe for Implementation**

The policy will be implemented in September 2011.

- **Timeframe for Review**

This policy will be reviewed in 2013.

- **Responsibility for Review**

The school principal will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

- **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the _____ of _____.

Signed: _____, (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Ursula does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula policies are available for inspection in the school and on scoilursula.com.

