

Coláiste Eoin Irish Exemption Policy



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Irish is a compulsory subject at post-primary level.
- 1.2 Exemptions may only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.3 This policy is aligned with Department of Education Circular 0055/2022.
- 1.4 The Principal is the designated decision-maker.

2.0 Categories of Eligibility

- 2.1 Education Outside the State
- 2.2 Significant and Persistent Literacy Difficulties (≤ 10 th percentile)
- 2.3 Multiple and Persistent Needs
- 2.4 Recognised Special Class Placement

3.0 Application Process

- 3.1 Application in writing by parent/guardian or student (18+).
- 3.2 Supporting documentation required.
- 3.3 Decision issued within 21 school days.
- 3.4 Written rationale provided in all cases.

4.0 Recording & Compliance

- 4.1 Certificate of Exemption issued where approved.
- 4.2 Recorded on school register and PPOD.
- 4.3 Records retained in line with GDPR.

5.0 Appeals

- 5.1 Appeals may be made to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Irish is a compulsory subject at post-primary level in accordance with the Education Act 1998,

which places a statutory obligation on schools to provide education in line with the prescribed curriculum as determined by the Minister for Education. Under Section 9 of the Education Act 1998, schools are required to provide education appropriate to the abilities and needs of students while adhering to the curriculum framework.

1.2 Exemptions from the study of Irish may only be granted in exceptional circumstances

and strictly in accordance with Department of Education Circular 0055/2022 – Exemptions from the Study of Irish (Post-Primary). An exemption is not an entitlement nor a support strategy; it is a formal administrative decision based on clearly defined criteria.

1.3 Circular 0055/2022 supersedes all previous exemption circulars

and sets out the categories of eligibility, documentation requirements, procedural steps, recording obligations, and appeal mechanisms. Coláiste Eoin is committed to implementing the circular in full and ensuring that all determinations are lawful, transparent, and evidence-based.

1.4 The Principal is the designated decision-maker under Circular 0055/2022

and is responsible for reviewing applications, assessing eligibility against the specified criteria, issuing written decisions, and ensuring appropriate record-keeping including updating the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) where required. The Principal may consult with relevant staff; however, the final determination rests with the Principal.

1.5 In exercising its functions under this policy, the school also has regard to the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004,

which promotes inclusive education and the right of students with special educational needs to appropriate educational provision. Decisions regarding exemption must balance statutory curriculum requirements with the student's right to appropriate and proportionate educational supports.

1.6 Rationale – Inclusive Practice and Wellbeing:

Coláiste Eoin is committed to inclusive practice, student wellbeing, and equitable access to learning. While Irish remains a core subject, the school recognises that, in rare and clearly defined cases, continued participation in Irish may present a disproportionate barrier to a student's overall educational progress. In such circumstances, granting an exemption may support the student's broader learning, confidence, and engagement with school. All decisions are made in the best interests of the student, grounded in evidence, and aligned with Department guidance.

1.7 This policy applies to all students enrolled in Coláiste Eoin

and should be read in conjunction with the school's Admissions Policy, AEN/Inclusion Policy, Data Protection Policy, and all relevant Department of Education circulars.

2.0 Categories of Eligibility

2.0 Who May Qualify for an Exemption from Irish?

Under Department of Education Circular 0055/2022, exemptions from the study of Irish may only be granted in exceptional circumstances where specific criteria are fully met.

2.1 Education Outside Ireland

A student may qualify where:

- They have received their full primary education outside the State and did not have the opportunity to study Irish; OR
- They are aged 12 years or older and have been educated outside Ireland for a minimum of three consecutive years without access to Irish.

Documentary evidence of schooling abroad (e.g. school reports or confirmation letters) is required.

2.2 Significant and Persistent Literacy Difficulties

A student may qualify where:

- Standardised test scores in word reading, reading comprehension and/or spelling are at or below the 10th percentile; AND
- Literacy difficulties have persisted despite targeted and sustained intervention; AND
- The school can demonstrate documented evidence of interventions over time.

A diagnosis alone (e.g. dyslexia) does not automatically qualify a student. The evidence must demonstrate that continued study of Irish would be seriously detrimental to overall educational progress.

2.3 Multiple and Persistent Needs

A student may qualify where:

- They present with complex, multiple and persistent needs across educational and functional

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domains; AND

- Individualised planning and supports have been implemented over time; AND
- The Principal determines that exemption is in the student's best interests.

Supporting documentation may include psychological reports, Student Support Plans, and intervention records.

2.4 Recognised Special Class Placement

Students enrolled in a recognised special class may be exempt from Irish in accordance with Circular 0055/2022. All exemptions must be formally recorded and certified by the Principal.

3.0 Application Process

3.1 Submission of Application

Applications must be made in writing to the Principal by a parent/guardian or student aged 18+. The application must clearly reference the relevant category under Circular 0055/2022.

3.2 Supporting Documentation

Applications must include appropriate documentation such as standardised test scores, psychological reports, intervention records, or confirmation of schooling abroad, as relevant.

3.3 Review Process

The Principal will acknowledge receipt, review the documentation against the circular criteria, and may consult with relevant staff. The review will be objective and evidence-based.

3.4 Decision Timeline

A written decision will issue within 21 school days of receipt of a complete application.

3.5 Written Rationale

All decisions will issue in writing. Where approved, a Certificate of Exemption will be issued and recorded on PPOD. Where refused, the written rationale will reference circular criteria and include information regarding the appeals process.

4.0 Recording & Compliance

4.1 Certificate of Exemption

Where an exemption is granted, the Principal will issue a formal Certificate of Exemption in accordance with Circular 0055/2022. The certificate will include the student's details, date of decision, relevant circular category and Principal signature.

4.2 School Register and PPOD

All exemptions granted will be recorded in the school's Irish Exemption Register and updated on the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) in a timely manner.

4.3 Record Retention and GDPR

The school will retain copies of applications, supporting documentation, written decisions and certificates in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018, GDPR, and the school's Data Protection Policy. Records will be securely stored and accessible only to authorised personnel.

4.4 Transparency and Inspection

Records will be maintained to ensure accountability, audit readiness and full compliance with Department of Education requirements.

5.0 Appeals

5.1 Right of Appeal

Where an application is refused, a parent/guardian or student aged 18+ may appeal the decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC) in accordance with Circular 0055/2022.

5.2 Timeframe

Appeals must be lodged within 30 calendar days of the date of the written decision issued by the Principal.

5.3 Submission Process

The appeal must be submitted in writing, include a copy of the school's decision, state the grounds for appeal, and provide any additional supporting documentation.

5.4 School Cooperation

The school will cooperate fully with the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee and provide all relevant documentation reviewed in reaching the original decision.

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5.5 Outcome

The decision of the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee will be final. Where upheld, a Certificate of Exemption will issue and PPOD will be updated accordingly.

5.6 Fair Procedures

The school is committed to fairness, transparency, confidentiality, and adherence to Department guidance throughout the appeals process.

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Section 6: Participation in Irish Following the Granting of an Exemption

Coláiste Eoin strongly promotes and supports the study of the Irish language as an important part of the school's educational ethos and cultural identity. The granting of an exemption from the study of Irish is intended to support students where appropriate and does not act as a barrier to participation in Irish classes.

Students who have been granted an exemption may, in consultation with their parent(s)/guardian(s), the school, and with due regard to the student's own views, choose to continue attending Irish classes and engaging with the subject where this is considered appropriate and beneficial.

Coláiste Eoin is committed to fostering a positive and inclusive approach to the Irish language and will support students who wish to continue their engagement with Irish, where appropriate, while also respecting the purpose and provisions of the exemption process as outlined in **Department of Education Circular 0055/2022**.

Where a student chooses to continue attending Irish classes following the granting of an exemption, this arrangement will be agreed in consultation with the student, their parent(s)/guardian(s), and the school, and may be reviewed by the school where necessary in order to ensure that the student's educational needs are appropriately supported.

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Frequently Asked Questions

- Does a diagnosis of dyslexia automatically qualify a student?
No. Standardised scores and documented interventions must meet the circular criteria.
- How long does the process take?
A written decision will issue within 21 school days of receiving a complete application.
- Can a refusal be appealed?
Yes. Appeals may be made to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days.
- 3.4 What happens if my child is exempt?
- Students will be provided with meaningful alternative educational activities during Irish class time.

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Parent Guide: Exemption from the Study of Irish

This guide explains when a student may qualify for an exemption from Irish under Department Circular 0055/2022. Exemptions from the study of Irish – post primary

Who May Qualify?

- Students educated outside Ireland without access to Irish
- Students with significant literacy difficulties (≤ 10 th percentile)
- Students with complex and persistent needs
- Students enrolled in recognised special classes

How to Apply

Submit a written request to the Principal with relevant reports and documentation. A decision will issue within 21 school days.

Appeals

If refused, you may appeal to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days.

Appendix – Application Process Flowchart (Staff Reference)

Step 1: Written Application Received



Step 2: Check Documentation Complete?

↓ Yes → Proceed to Review

↓ No → Request Further Documentation



Step 3: Review Against Circular 0055/2022 Criteria



Step 4: Principal Decision



Approved → Issue Certificate → Update Register & PPOD

Refused → Issue Written Rationale → Inform of Appeals Process

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Board of Management Ratification Memo

The attached Irish Exemption Policy has been updated to align fully with Department of Education Circular 0055/2022. The policy outlines eligibility criteria, decision-making procedures, recording requirements and appeal mechanisms.

The Board is requested to review and formally ratify this policy.

Signed: Alan Costello (Principal)

Date: 25/3/2026

Adopted by Board of Management: Margaret Grogan

Review Date: _____

