



Mount Anville

Montessori Junior School

2½ – 12 years

Policy on Exemption from the Study of Irish

1. Introduction

This policy was drafted by the Support Staff and Board of Management of Mount Anville Montessori Junior School in consultation with staff in response to circular 0054/2022 for the granting of an exemption from Irish.

1.1 Rationale

Circular 0054/2022 advised 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.

1.2 Relationship to the Ethos of the School

This policy is in keeping with the vision statement of the school which strives to support the pupil to reach their potential.

1.3 Aims

To allow for pupils of differing abilities, interests and circumstances to access the curriculum in a learner friendly manner.

1.4 Content

Reference to circular 0054/2022 which is available on

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0054_2022.pdf



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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 future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, support teacher 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 exceptional 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 enrolment¹ or re-enrolment

OR

(b) who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state.

¹ For the purposes of this Circular where pupils enrol in the final 2 months of an academic year, their enrolment/re-enrolment will be considered to take place on the first day of the following academic year.



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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.



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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.



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2.2.4 A pupil in a recognised² special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation³ and has been deemed eligible⁴ 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

- (i) Parent(s)/guardian(s) must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a *Certificate of Exemption* from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil. Click [here](#) for application.

² A recognised special school/class is a primary or post-primary level class sanctioned and resourced by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). See <https://ncse.ie/> for a list of such schools/classes

³ The recommendation for the pupil to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the pupil has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

⁴ See Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools (English-medium), DE (2022).



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- (ii) The principal shall mark the date of receipt of the application on the application form and issue an acknowledgement to the parent(s)/guardian(s) upon receipt of the application. Click [here](#) for acknowledgement.
- (iii) At the earliest opportunity the principal or support teacher should contact the applicant(s) and:
 - discuss the written application with the applicant(s) and confirm the subparagraph on which the application is based (as outlined in section 2.2 above).
 - advise the applicant(s) of the steps involved in processing the application. The relevant checklist for processing applications for exemption will be discussed and completed with the parent(s)/guardian(s). Click [here](#) for relevant applications.
 - inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the pupil while in primary education and into the future.
- (iv) The principal will discuss the application and review supporting material with the class teacher and the support teacher. In making his/her decision, the principal may consult additional appropriate documents. Click [here](#) for supporting material and additional documents.
- (v) The principal will complete the relevant checklist for confirming a decision.
- (vi) The application should be fully processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application, unless MAMJS concludes that further (internal/external) assessments are required.
- (vii) If an exemption is granted, a letter and the *Certificate of Exemption* will be forwarded to the parent(s)/guardian(s). Click [here](#) for the letter and [here](#) for the Certificates.
- (viii) It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to retain the original *Certificate of Exemption*. A copy of the *Certificate of Exemption*, along with all other relevant documentation will be retained at school in accordance with *MAMJS Record Keeping Policy* and data protection legislation. Where an application is refused, a copy of the application form, together with the letter of refusal and all supporting documentation, will be retained by the school in accordance with *MAMJS Record Keeping Policy* and data protection legislation.



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2.4 Appeal

If an exemption is refused, a letter of refusal will be sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s). Parent(s)/guardian(s) can appeal using the letter of appeal to the Chairperson of MAMJS BOM within 30 calendar days from the date on the letter of refusal. The deliberations of the Chairperson of MAMJS BOM will focus on the process the school engaged in in reaching its decision. The Chairperson of MAMJS BOM will consider how the school followed the process as described in *Circular 0054/2022*. The advice of a recognized educational psychologist may be sought and MAMJS BOM will abide by their advice.

Click [here](#) for letter of refusal and [here](#) for letter of appeal.

3. Arrangements for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish

The school will take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available support. Pupils may remain in the class during Irish lessons and be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with her ability and interests.

4. Option not to exercise the exemption

Pupils have the option not to exercise the exemption granted without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

In-school Management, teachers, staff and Board of Management will contribute to the implementation of this policy for the granting of an exemption to Irish.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and as legislation or regulations require.

7. Ratification

This policy has been ratified on 28th November 2022.

Signed: _____ Date:

Chairperson of MAMJS BOM

Signed: _____ Date:

Principal of MAMJS