

**ST. ATTRACTA'S SENIOR NATIONAL SCHOOL
MEADOWBROOK
DUBLIN 16**



EXEMPTION FROM GAELIGE - GUIDELINES



**SCOIL SHINSIREACH NAOMH ATHRACHT
CLUAIN GHLAISE
ÁTH CLATH 16**

UIMHIR ROLA: 19716B

Scoil Shinsireach Naomh Athracht, Cluain Ghlaise, Áth Cliath 16
Exemption from Gaeilge - Guidelines
St. Attracta's Senior National School, Meadowbrook, Dublin 16.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Attracta's Senior National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school which provides a happy caring and secure learning environment in which the individual student is enabled to achieve his/her full potential.

St. Attracta's Senior School promotes excellence in teaching and learning. The school community that we create is welcoming, safe, respectful and inclusive of all its members. All aspects of the child, academic, spiritual, moral and cultural are cherished.

INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE:

This policy was drafted by staff and Board of Management in response to the changing needs of our school - in part due to the increased enrolment of children from abroad and in part due to the number of pupils diagnosed with special educational needs or with learning difficulties.

In keeping with our Mission Statement, we strive to provide a happy caring and secure learning environment in which the individual student is enabled to achieve his/her full potential. In some cases children - through no fault of their own - fail to achieve their full potential in the acquisition of Irish. This policy addresses issues surrounding this situation.

This policy document should be read in conjunction with Circular 12/96, attached, which is a Revision of Circular 18/79 on the Exemption from the Study of Irish

AIMS:

The aims of this policy are

- to allow for pupils of differing abilities, interests and circumstances
- to enhance inclusively within the school.
- to enable children of all abilities to access the curriculum in such a way as to enhance their self-esteem
- to provide support for pupils who struggle with the learning of Irish to such an extent that learning is no longer a positive experience
- to ensure that parents have the information they need to make an informed decision for their child/children

GUIDELINES:

It is the policy of St. Attracta's Senior National School that even children who may be exempt from Irish, should still sit in on Irish classes, unless the time would be more fruitfully spent on extra tuition or practice in areas of weakness. However, children who are exempt are not expected to do Gaeilge homework and should spend more time instead on additional English reading or writing.

We believe that children benefit from the study of additional languages and that in general children have an enhanced capacity for language learning, especially in their early years.

Circular 12/96 outlines 8 categories of pupil who may be entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish, including children with specific learning difficulties, general learning disabilities and/or sensory impairments and some of our international pupils.

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 medical report and/or a psychologist's report (if relevant).

No exemption can be provided without the relevant documentation and it should be noted that a psychologist's report must not be more than two years old at date of application.

A recommendation from a psychologist for an exemption from Irish is not sufficient in itself to guarantee an exemption.

Once granted, an exemption from Gaeilge is operative throughout pupil's stay at primary school. We have a work programme in place for pupils who have an exemption from Gaeilge. See below.

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURE FOR SEEKING/GRANTING EXEMPTION:

Once a parent enquires about an exemption from Irish for their child, the following procedure applies:

- Step 1: Discussion with class teacher during which teacher will emphasise that exemptions are granted only in rare and exceptional circumstances
- Step 2: Copy of school policy to be given to parent
- Step 3: Written application by parent to principal for exemption from Irish specifying the grounds on which it is sought - documentary evidence of age and previous schooling.

- Step 4: We satisfy ourselves as to the documentary evidence and we prepare a full report on the student including:
- information on assessments carried out in school
 - results of tests
 - written reports from relevant class and support teachers
 - information on pupil's attendance
 - information on application to study
 - information on support provided
 - samples of pupil's unaided written expression
- Step 5: Where necessary parents must provide appropriate psychological and/or medical reports.
- Step 6: The Principal, in consultation with staff, will grant an exemption, if warranted, and will provide a certificate of exemption to the parents in accordance with Circular 12/96. An exemption cannot be granted unless it complies with this circular.
- Step 7: Decision to grant exemption will be conveyed to parent by way of a written certificate signed by principal. See example below.
- Step 8: A copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be kept in the child's file and in the Exemption from Gaeilge file held by the principal.
- Step 9: If an exemption is not granted, the principal will explain the reasons to the parents.

N.B. Operation of Circular 12/96 will be monitored by the Department of Education & Skills

WHAT HAPPENS IF A CHILD IS GRANTED AN EXEMPTION FROM GAEILGE?

Children exempt from Irish arising out of a diagnosis of dyslexia can work independently on the SNIP Literacy Scheme. A ring-bound folder is set up for each child in the Learning Support Room. The pupil collects the folder at the beginning of the Irish Lesson and returns it at the end.

Before the child begins to work independently on the SNIP Programme, it is vital that the Learning Support Teacher works through a few lessons with the student. Each lesson, although it targets a new set of vocabulary, follows a similar pattern. This makes it very simple for the child to work independently.

WHAT IS THE SNIP LITERACY SCHEME?

The SNIP literacy scheme is aimed at increasing reading and spelling and uses the primary high frequency words. These words are grouped by selecting those that visually look different to each other. The programme approaches literacy acquisition at the word level and addresses the gaps in phonics knowledge through the application of analytic phonics (drawing pupils' attention to the make-up of words as they break up the target word). The student works on this programme during Gaeilge time and in Resource classes.

CRITERIA to MERIT AN EXEMPTION FROM IRISH

Circular 18/79 was revised & updated
Circular 12/96 is the most recent circular

“the question of the need to grant exemption from the learning of Irish should arise only in rare and exceptional circumstances”.

Pupils (in these circumstances) **may** be granted exemption from the study of Irish:

- (a) pupils whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in the North of Ireland or outside Ireland.
- (b) Pupils who are at least 11 years of age, who had been enrolled in a national school and are being re-enrolled after at least 3 years abroad.
- (c) Pupils who function at average or above average level but who have a specific learning disability and show a marked failure to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic reading and writing
- (d) Pupils who have a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment and are failing to attain basic language skills in the mother tongue.
The evidence of such a disability must be furnished by a qualified psychologist - supported by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. This must be carried out no more than 2 years prior to application.
- (e) pupils from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled are required to study one language only - Irish or English.
- (f) Children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.
- (g) Children from other countries in whose case the Minister is satisfied that they are resident in this country as political refugees.

Pupils from e, f, g, should be given the opportunity to gain a knowledge of spoken Irish and to participate in the learning activities.

- (h) pupils from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled are required to study one language only - Irish or English.
- (i) Children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.
- (j) Children from other countries in whose case the Minister is satisfied that they are resident in this country as political refugees.

Pupils from h, i, j, should be given the opportunity to gain a knowledge of spoken Irish and to participate in the learning activities.

- (k) pupils from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled are required to study one language only - Irish or English.
- (l) Children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.
- (m) Children from other countries in whose case the Minister is satisfied that they are resident in this country as political refugees.

Pupils from d, e, f should be given the opportunity to gain a knowledge of spoken Irish and to participate in the learning activities.