

## Irish Exemptions for Primary and Secondary School Students

Irish is one of the core subjects in the school curriculum in Ireland. All students must study Irish unless they are given an exemption from studying the subject. You can apply for an exemption from studying Irish in primary and secondary school if you meet certain criteria. You cannot get an exemption from Irish in a school (a Gaelscoil) where Irish is the main language of instruction.

An exemption is only given in certain circumstances. Detailed information about the exemption from studying Irish in school, is set out in the Department of Education's Circular [54/2022](#) (for primary schools) and [Circular 55/2022](#) (for post-primary schools).

The decision to exempt a student is made by the principal of the school following discussion with a student's parents or guardians, the class teacher, special education teachers and the student themselves.

### Students who may get an exemption from the study of Irish:

**Students with multiple and persistent needs** *\*This category of exemption is particularly relevant to children and youth with DCD\**

A student who has at least reached second class and meets all of the following conditions may get an exemption if:

- The student has a high level of significant, multiple and persistent needs that affect their learning and participation in school life
- The student's school has substantial written evidence that the student's needs persist despite a Student Support Plan which has been implemented for at least 2 years
- The student has been given every reasonable opportunity to learn Irish in mainstream classes
- The principal is satisfied that giving an exemption is in the best interests of the student

### What are multiple and persistent needs?

A student has a high level of multiple and persistent needs if their needs are enduring and severe in nature and significantly affect their daily functioning at school despite the support of an individualised support programme.

### Exemption for special schools and special classes in mainstream schools

A student is considered exempt and does not need to apply for a certificate of exemption if they are:

- A student in a special school or a special class in a mainstream school
- A student who has previously enrolled in a special school or class
- A student who is eligible and has been recommended to enrol in a special school or class.

Your child's school can make decisions about the Irish language learning needs of a student in a special class. However, schools are expected to provide students with opportunities to take part in Irish language and cultural activities as much as possible.

You can read more about the exemption from Irish in the Department of Education's [FAQ for parents](#).

#### **Students coming to live in Ireland from abroad may get an exemption if:**

- A child is enrolling for the first time after completed a full course of primary education outside the State, and did not have the opportunity to study Irish
- A child aged 12 or over who received their education outside the State for at least 3 consecutive years, and did not have the opportunity to study Irish
- A child of a foreign diplomatic or consular representative in Ireland (primary schools only)

#### **Students with literacy difficulties may get an exemption if:**

A student who has at least reached second class and meets all of the following conditions can also get an exemption:

- The student has significant literacy difficulty that persists after having access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy over time. This should be documented in a Student Support Plan.
- The student has a standardised score at or below the 10th percentile in word reading, reading comprehension or spelling.

The school must monitor a student's needs and programme over time to identify that the student has significant and persistent literacy difficulties.

#### **How to apply for an exemption from studying Irish**

You apply to the school principal for an exemption from studying Irish. You can get an application form and find further information on [gov.ie](#)

If you do not agree with the decision to refuse an exemption for your child, you can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC) using the [official appeals form](#). You must appeal within 30 days from the date you are notified in writing of the school's decision.

You can get more information and an Irish exemption appeal form to appeal the decision on [gov.ie](#)

You can reapply for an exemption if it was refused. You should discuss with the school if it has the correct evidence to support your application.

#### **Irish language requirements for third-level courses**

##### **Exemption from Irish at school**

Some third-level courses require a student to have a certain mark in Irish at the Leaving Certificate examination. If you have been exempted from Irish at school, you may be exempted from the third level requirement for a course. However, this is a matter for each individual college.

If you want to do a particular course, you should check with the college that it allows exemptions from Irish for the course you want to apply for. You can also check the [CAO website](#) for information about language exemptions.

If you are applying for a third-level course through the Central Applications Office (CAO), you should send a copy of the exemption certificate with your CAO application form.

### **Exemption from Irish at third-level**

If you didn't get an exemption from Irish in school under the rules set by the Department of Education, you can still apply to the third-level institute for an exemption from Irish in their entry level requirements. The third-level institute will decide on your application.

The college may also ask you to complete an exemption application form and to submit supporting documentation. You should check with the individual college for details on how to apply for an exemption.

*Information courtesy of <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/>*