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Irish Language and Culture Policy

1. Rationale and Purpose

The Irish language (Gaeilge) and Irish culture are central components of our national identity and are valued as important aspects of education in St. Nicholas' Special School. As a special school, we are committed to creating inclusive, engaging, and accessible opportunities for our pupils to experience and enjoy the Irish language and cultural heritage in ways that are appropriate to their individual needs and abilities.

This policy is created in line with **Department of Education and Skills Circular 0052/2019**, particularly:

- **Part 2.2.3**, which outlines the responsibility of all schools to promote the use of Irish as a spoken language and to nurture positive attitudes toward it.
- **Part 2.2.4**, which emphasizes the importance of promoting Irish cultural awareness in all schools, including special education settings, and encourages schools to embed the Irish language and culture in daily school life.

By incorporating these principles, our school aims to foster a respectful and inclusive environment where all pupils can connect with their cultural heritage, develop language awareness, and experience pride in Irish traditions.

2. Aim

To foster an appreciation for the Irish language and Irish cultural traditions within a supportive learning environment that respects the diverse abilities and learning styles of our pupils.

3. Policy Statement

St. Nicholas' is committed to:

- Encouraging the use of the Irish language (Gaeilge) in daily school life, at a level appropriate to pupils' abilities and communication needs.
- Promoting Irish culture through music, dance, storytelling, traditional celebrations, and participation in events such as Seachtain na Gaeilge.
- Ensuring inclusive access to Irish language and cultural activities, using adapted materials, assistive communication tools, and differentiated instruction where needed.
- Encouraging staff to model positive attitudes toward the Irish language and culture.
- Collaborating with families and the wider community to promote cultural engagement.

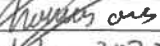
4. Implementation Strategies

- Use of simple Irish greetings and classroom phrases across all class levels.
- Incorporation of Irish songs, poems, and rhymes in school activities.
- Use of visual supports, AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication), and Lámh signs to support language acquisition and engagement.
- Celebration of Irish cultural events including Seachtain na Gaeilge, St. Patrick's Day, and other traditional Irish festivals.
- Collaboration with Irish cultural organizations, local musicians, or artists for workshops or school visits.
- Professional development for staff on inclusive Irish language teaching and cultural awareness.

5. Related Documents

- Primary Language Curriculum
- Special Education Guidelines (NCSE)
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Whole School Curriculum Plan
- Equality and Inclusion Policy
- Communication Policy

6. Policy Ratification and Review

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 05/11/2025
Signed (Chairperson): 
Signed (Principal): 
Review Date: October 2027

This policy will be reviewed in consultation with staff, pupils (as appropriate), parents, and the Board of Management to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.