

Examination Access Arrangements - Information for Parents

What is an Access Arrangement?

If a student has an identified learning need or disability that means that he or she is disadvantaged in comparison to other students of similar ability, he or she may qualify for access arrangements for public examinations. There are a number of different types of access arrangement and these are determined by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The main ones are listed at the bottom of this document. The criteria that must be met for an access arrangement changes frequently and JCQ issue guidance booklets every year. You can access these online – www.jcq.org.uk for information.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body (Exam Board) to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. (JCQ 2017)

When we will assess a student

Throughout Key Stage 3, subject teachers will use a variety of strategies to identify students who may require Examination Access Arrangements. At the end of year 9 and throughout year 10, subject teachers submit evidence of 'normal way of working' to the SENDCo. The SENDCo will then collate the evidence in year 10 in order to ascertain whether students meet the criteria for access arrangements to be granted. For some students, this may mean we undertake an access arrangements assessment. The SENDCo is the schools qualified access arrangements assessor. If students meet the published criteria, the SENDCo will apply and register the arrangements using Access Arrangements Online. For some students with more complex needs, for whom bespoke arrangements may need to be made, we will begin the process in year 9. Any application is only valid for 26 months and it is for this reason that we do not apply earlier.

In order for us to apply we need to provide evidence of an ongoing need and show that the access arrangement we apply for is the student's normal way of working. Therefore, throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 we may trial various strategies and conduct a number of different tests and assessments in order to make sure that we are not only meeting the criteria but that we can work out what might be the best provision for your child.

No access arrangement is formalised until the at the earliest the start of Year 10 and any arrangement made before that time is essentially part of the assessment process. This can be quite confusing for parents as we are aware that students have sometimes been granted an access arrangement for tests at primary school. Please be aware that these do not carry forward and that the assessment process for GCSE examinations, does not occur until year 9/10.

Once we have completed the process of gathering the required evidence from subject teachers, it may be necessary for the SENDCo to undertake a specialist assessment with your child. Under the current JCQ regulations, we are not able to use a privately commissioned report in applications for Access Arrangements, however where a parent has chosen to commission such a report, we will take the advice in the report into consideration and investigate whether teachers are able to provide evidence required for the SENDCo to undertake an Access Arrangements assessment. The SENDCo will not assess a student for access arrangements unless there is a history of need and evidence of normal way of working from subject teachers, in accordance with the JCQ rules.

If Access Arrangements are agreed, you will be informed in writing, via Classcharts.

Please be aware that having an Education Health and Care Plan or diagnosis of a Specific Learning Difficulty or other need, such as Autism or ADHD, does not necessarily mean that a student will qualify for access arrangements, even if your child has regular in class support.

If you have any queries, please contact [Sarah Burley](#), SENDCo.

Access arrangements information

Below is a summary of the current JCQ directives regarding access arrangements.

Supervised rest breaks

- These must always be considered before applying for extra time in students with Autism, ADHD or other medical needs.
- These will be allowed where it is the candidate's normal way of working.
- Medical conditions – rest breaks can be agreed if you have a serious medical condition, examples of this are type 1 diabetes or a sensory need. Medical evidence from consultant level is required. ADHD or Autism- if you have a diagnosis we will look at the recommendations and consider whether rest breaks will be helpful in exams. Evidence of your diagnosis is required, such as a diagnosis report or consultant's letter.
- Evidence from CAMHs of current treatment for a condition that requires rest breaks. However, we do not accept evidence from this service if you have been discharged from treatment.
- In all cases rest breaks must be the student's normal way of working in school.

Please Note: We are not able or allowed to provide rest breaks in advance for anxiety/worry/ stress caused by taking exams. It is normal to feel stressed and worried about exams. Please feel reassured that our exam invigilators are experienced and trained to deal with students who are upset and worried on the day.

Prompter

- A prompter may be permitted where a candidate has a substantial and long term adverse impairment resulting in persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating.

25% extra time

This must be applied for and registered on **Access Arrangements Online**.

- Applications will be considered based on either an assessment carried out no earlier than Year 9 by a specialist assessor to confirm a learning difficulty, or evidence of complex needs such as an Education, Health and Care Plan, or letter from an appropriately qualified specialist. (Please note- we cannot accept letters from GPs as evidence)
- Candidates with a learning difficulty must have a specialist assessment that shows two below average standardised scores of 84 or less in either;
 - Reading speed
 - Writing speed
 - Cognitive processing measures

Allocation of a reader

This must be applied for and registered on **Access Arrangements Online**.

- A reader will only be allowed if; language and vocabulary difficulties have a substantial and long term adverse effect on the candidates' ability to access written text or there is a substantial and long term visual impairment which means the candidate cannot access Braille or enlarged print independently.
- A reader will not be allowed where difficulties relate to English as an additional language.
- A reader will not be allowed in exams assessing reading, such as the English language reading exam
- Where substantial impairment is evidenced the SENCO must be able to demonstrate the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other, non-disabled candidates undertaking the exam.
- Some candidates may use a computer reader pen as their normal way of working in class. This will be permitted in exams, including exams assessing reading.

Allocation of a scribe

This must be applied for and registered on **Access Arrangements Online**.

- Applications will be considered based on either an assessment carried out no earlier than Year 9 by a specialist assessor to confirm a learning difficulty, or complex needs evidenced by an Education, Health and Care Plan or letter from an appropriately qualified specialist.
- If a word processor is the candidates' normal way of working within school then it should be used within examinations.
- The use of a scribe must reflect the candidates' normal way of working within school.
- A scribe should only be used where a candidate cannot use a word processor with the spelling and grammar check disabled.
- A scribe will only be allowed where; impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the candidates' writing or a candidate cannot write, type or Braille independently, or at sufficient speed to record their answers even with extra time allowed, or when a candidate sustains a temporary injury meaning they cannot handwrite.

Word Processor

The following criteria details how the centre awards and allocates word processors for examinations and controlled assessments.

- We are required to have a Word Processor policy for exams, and this sets out when a word processor will be allowed. Please email the SENDCo or Examinations Officer if you would like a copy of our Word Processor Policy.
- The candidate may or may not wish to use the word processor on the day of the examination and may only use the word processor for certain subjects.
- The JCQ requirement and recommendation for candidates regarding the use of word processors in examinations and/or controlled assessments is that this is their **normal way of working**.
- Where a candidate is allocated a word processor, it will be provided with spelling and grammar check facility disabled, unless the candidate has qualified for a scribe.
- The use of a word processor in exams is for students who need to do extended writing. Unless there is a medical reason or a specific need, we do not permit the use of a word processor for Maths.

Separate Invigilation

(Students' sit with others in a smaller room rather than in the Sports Hall for examinations and controlled assessments)

There is an exceptionally high demand for separate invigilation and we require evidence of need from the Pastoral team and/or other appropriately qualified specialist, such as CAMHS or counsellor.

We are not able to accept letters from GPs. We will not be able to offer separate invigilation where students are anxious due to exam stress. We encourage all students requesting separate invigilation for this reason to make use of the school's pastoral team and school counsellor to help with student welfare, wellbeing and exam stress.

Individual Invigilation

Individual Invigilation can only be accommodated in highly exceptional circumstances. We require evidence of need such as an Education, Health and Care Plan or a letter from a consultant or specialist which provides details of the student's condition and states exactly why Individual Invigilation is necessary. Following submission of this evidence, the SENDCo and Examinations Officer will make a final decision and communicate this back to the applicant and parents/carers.