

Ref: Exam Access Arrangements Policy
Approved by Governors: October 2021
Reviewer: SENDCO/October 2023

EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY



Governing Body Approval

Policy approved by:

_____ (NAME)
_____ (SIGNATURE)
_____ (GOVERNOR POSITION)
_____ (DATE)

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Rationale

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic College for all students with additional learning needs (ALN), including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND). The policy forms an integral part of our teaching and learning philosophy, and is in line with our mission statement where we aim to support pupils in feeling confident about their own abilities and use a wide range of resources and strategies to encourage, motivate, reward and praise. This ensures all pupils can reach their full potential.

Definition of Special Educational Needs (SEND)

A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- (a) Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- (b) Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if they fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above, or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them (Clause 20 Children and Families Bill). The Learning Support Department at Blessed Trinity consists of a team of skilled people dedicated to ensuring all pupils, especially those experiencing difficulties, are able to access the curriculum and are encouraged, and enabled, to progress throughout their time at Blessed Trinity.

Definitions:

Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working, which are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010* to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 (1.25) requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille (4.3)

A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on a number of factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- The needs of the disabled candidate
- The effectiveness of the adjustment
- The cost of the adjustment
- The likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- Involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body
- Involves unreasonable timeframes
- Affects the security and integrity of the assessment. This is because the adjustment is 'not reasonable'

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Evidence of Need

The evidence of need will vary depending on the disability and the access arrangement(s) being applied for, but for all cases, the SENDCO or an assigned member of staff, must produce a short concise file note on centre headed paper, signed and dated. This notes will confirm the nature of the candidate's impairment and that the use of access, which has been agreed, is that pupil's normal and current way of working within the centre. For candidates with learning difficulties assessment evidence and Form 8 may no longer be required. However, the SENDCO must be satisfied that:

'The candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant reading difficulties (this could be in the form of an external assessment, medical advice or a report from a professional body); that the candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act, and there is a genuine need for the arrangement'.

Responsibility

Access arrangements are the responsibility of the assigned SEND specialist who has awareness of the purpose of the annually updated JCQ publications, directed by the SENDCO and overseen by the Head teacher.

Access arrangements for exams need to be conducted by a member of staff who processes the relevant qualifications in accordance with JCQ guidance **or** indeed a qualified person may sought for advice. These are:

- a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by Patoss, Dyslexia Action or BDA and listed on the SASC website
- An appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council.

Access Arrangements for examinations

JCQ requirements can change annually however the following are some of the standard practice of access arrangements:

- Extra time
- Rest breaks
- Readers
- Reading aloud
- Scribes
- Prompts
- Use of word processors
- Smaller room (see SEMH)
- Coloured examination papers & use of coloured overlays

Identifying the need for access arrangements within Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic College

Students who may qualify for formal Access Arrangements during KS4 are preferably identified early in KS3 (Y7). At this stage needs are screened and identified, rather than formally assessed. Adjustments to Quality first teaching within lessons are then made according to their individual needs. This will better enable a student to access their learning and make progress. All teaching and support staff are involved in the monitoring of the adjustments.

Further and more formal assessments may take place during Year 9 as Access arrangement expire 26 months after formal testing takes place. The initial screening and ongoing monitoring will determine the level of specific assessment required. These assessments are delivered in accordance with the JCQ guidance.

Where formal Access Arrangements are determined and agreed upon, these become part of 'normal practice'. This means that appropriate Access Arrangements should be taken into consideration in every day teaching and formally applied in any internal or external assessments. If a student chooses continually not to use the agreed access arrangements either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement, then access arrangements can be removed.

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PROCEDURE

How would students be identified for Exam Access Arrangement?

- They would have had EAA at KS2 for their SAT's
- Primary school has raised a concern on transition documentation and subsequent testing / screening has occurred which highlights a need
- Parental Referral
- Subject Teacher Referral
- Medical or professional report

KS2 SAT EAA

Students who have EAA at KS2 will be re-screened for EAA in the early stages of KS3. Although they may have received EAA at KS2, it doesn't necessarily mean that they automatically receive it at KS3 or KS4 because their needs may have changed. For example, a student who had a Reader for KS2 may not qualify for a Reader at KS4 because their reading has improved to the extent it does not meet the exam board criteria.

Parent Referral

Parents can contact the school to ask for advice about testing if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. Once contact has been made with the parent, the SEND team will investigate their concerns by sending a "round robin" to the child's teachers to gain information. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to test a student.

Teacher Referral

As with Parent Referrals, teachers can refer a student to the SEND team when they have concerns about the learning and progress and information. Following this a decision will be made as to whether to test a student for EAA. Where a teacher thinks that a student requires extra time, they are asked to get the student to change the colour of the pen (and stamp it or initial it) to indicate they have continued after the allotted time is up. Annually, teacher complete a feedback form to confirm that the pupil has regularly used the exam access and that is it their 'normal way of working'. This is then used as proof to JQC and the exam boards to prove a history of need. Teachers are asked to refer students to the SEND team initially if they feel that a child may have a specific learning difficulty rather than contacting parents about their concerns. The SEND team will then speak to and screen the pupil for any underlying SEND concerns. SEND will then contact the parents to inform them of the findings.

KS3 screening

Pupils who are flagged either during transition or during Y7 as having difficulties accessing their learning will be screened. All teaching and TA support staff are involved in this early identification process. Should a screening identify that a pupil has a specific learning difficulty, a letter will be issued home to parents. Throughout KS3 all staff are responsible for implementing a pupil's recommended adjustments and assessment access arrangements. All staff will be involved in the monitoring of these adjustments. Needs of students not identified in Y7 may become apparent at any point during KS3. All staff are responsible for reporting any concerns to the SEND team who can then arrange for screening to be carried out.

How do we decide upon the correct reasonable adjustments we need to apply to a pupil?

BTRCC receives reports from numerous outside agencies which will include the adjustments that need to be made in order for the pupil to equally access their learning.

Outside Agencies include:

- ELCAS
- Occupational Therapy
- Dyslexia Assessors
- Educational Psychologists
- Speech & Language Therapists
- Community & Neurodevelopmental Paediatrics

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- Audiology Consultants
- Orthotics Consultants

These accommodations will be applied as soon as the report is received and all teachers will be informed.

The external agencies report and recommendations form only one part of the new regulations, which provides the 'Evidence of need' required for these reasonable adjustments to be applied in a pupil's final GCSE's.

The second part of the regulations state that: 'Teacher (and SEND) records must prove that these adjustments are regularly used (both in class and in assessments), and therefore creating a pupil's 'normal way of working'.

How do we 'prove' that exam access is regularly used, and is the pupil's normal way of working?

The arrangements put in place must reflect the support given to the pupil in school, for example:

- in the classroom
- intervention sessions
- extra literacy or mathematic lessons;
- literacy intervention strategies implemented in class
- internal school tests/examinations where access has been used
- mock examinations showing use of exam access

The JCQ regulations state that a pupil must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement before his/her first classroom assessment or examination.

If (as a school) we cannot prove that a pupil has made use of the arrangement granted to them, e.g. 25% extra time or accessing a reader, then it is not considered their normal way of working. The JCQ assessor may consider withdrawing the arrangement, which would place the pupil at a substantial disadvantage.

Under Equality Act there may be justification for actions that may otherwise amount to indirect discrimination by the school: "the school would be failing to apply a provision, criterion or practice that puts a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared with someone else who is not disabled".

Therefore, it is essential that teachers, form tutors, Heads of Year & teaching assistants keep meticulous records to show 'evidence of need' and documentation, from throughout their time at secondary school, which proves their differentiation and access is their "normal way of working".

Use of Exam Access in the classroom

There are arrangements for which a formal application to JCQ is not necessary and the school can agree upon these arrangements, such as:

- Supervised rest breaks
- Word processor (with spell checker disabled to enable SPAG marking in exams. See Word Processor Policy)
- Prompter
- Smaller room
- Own invigilation

However, as in all exam access arrangements, evidence of need and proof that it is a pupil's normal way of working still applies. This could be a recommendation from a mental Health Support worker, an ELCAS letter or a diagnosis from an Occupational Therapist. It is not simply providing a smaller room to a pupil, due to normal exam pressures and stress, as this will not prove a normal way of working.

What are the procedures for processing an Exam Access application?

Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the tester for EAA, the Specialist Teaching Assistant then applies to the exam boards. The feedback is instantaneous and at this point the EAA is now formalised for GCSE.

The application will require evidence of need as well as proving that the access is the pupil's normal way of working. BTRCC needs to hold evidence in its files that can be inspected at short notice. This can include:

- Recommendations by specialist teachers
- Educational psychologist reports
- Letters from outside agencies such as CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), hospitals or doctors

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- Information from SALT (Speech and Language Team)
- Statement of Educational Need or Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP)
- Examples of work provided by classroom teachers that shows evidence of need
- Short reports from our SENDCO that details the pupil's difficulties and accommodations regularly used in school

Supporting documentation & permission from the exam boards for the arrangement/s:

- A signed copy of the Form 8 (if required) report by the designated tester
- An exam Access checklist
- A data protection form signed by the student
- A student declaration form signed & dated
- A record of all occasions when a student has been supported by EAA both in assessments, lessons and intervention sessions
- Supporting documentation from classroom teachers showing evidence of need, and normal use.
- For Extra Time – history of evidence of need in the form of copies of work where a student has regularly used more than the allotted time.

Use of Word Processors in Examinations

Introduction

The use of a word processor in exams and assessments is an available access arrangement at Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic College.

The use of a word processor

Centres are allowed to provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off) to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre (AA 5.8.1)

Needs may include

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to write legibly
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- poor handwriting (see AA 5.8.4 for exemptions)

BTRCC will:

- only permit the use of a word processor where the integrity of the assessment can be maintained (AA 4.2.1)
- deny the use of a word processor where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AA 4.2.2)
- consider on a subject-by-subject basis if the candidate will need to use a word processor in each specification (AA 4.2.3)
- consider the needs of the candidate at the start of the candidate's course leading to a qualification based on evidence gathered that firmly establishes the candidates' needs and 'normal way of working' in the classroom, internal tests/exams, mock exams etc. and confirm arrangements in place before the candidate takes an exam or assessment (AA 4.2.4)
- allow appropriate opportunities for pupils to practise using the access arrangement(s) before his/her first examination. This is particularly so where a computer reader, modified enlarged papers, a scribe, speech recognition technology or a word processor will be used in examinations (AA 4.2.7)
- provide access to word processors to pupils in non-examination assessment components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification (AA 5.8.2)

The centre will not

- simply grant the use of a word processor to a pupil because he/she prefers to type rather than write or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home (AA 5.8.4).

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Exceptions

The only exception to the above where the use of a word processor would be considered for a pupil would be:

- In the event of a temporary injury or impairment, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the start of the course (AA 4.2.4)
- Where a subject within the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates (AA 5.8.4)