

Policy name: Exams Access Arrangements Policy 2025 to 2026

Reviewer: SENDCO

Date of last review: January 2026

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EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY 2025 TO 2026



Governing Body Approval:

Policy approved by:

Name: Mr Ken Tyson

Signature: 

Governor Position: Chair of Governors

Date: 5th May 2026

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Policy/Procedure/Guideline:	Examination Access Arrangements
Senior Manager Responsible:	Mrs D Williams / Mrs Kelly (Mrs Tasker for September 2026 to July 2027 Maternity Cover SENDCO)
Author:	Ms. N Daulton (Assistant SENDCO)
Next Review Date:	

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.

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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'

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 Assistant SENDCo, must demonstrate a history of need and normal way of working using evidence like assessment tests, EHC plans, or professional reports. This evidence 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.

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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 (in year 7 after a term of monitoring for evidence of needs). 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.

PROCEDURE

How would students be identified for Exam Access Arrangement?

- They would have had EAA at KS2 for their SAT's and Primary school has raised a concern on transition documentation and subsequent testing / screening has occurred which highlights a need

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- A parental referral will formally initiate a monitoring period, during which evidence of need will be collected to inform the screening assessments.
- Subject Teacher Referral will again initiate a monitoring period, during which evidence of need, in other subject areas, will be collected to inform the screening assessments
- Medical or professional report with a new formal diagnosis.
- A specialist teacher report requesting exam access.

KS2 SAT EAA

Students who were awarded Exam Access Arrangements (EAA) at Key Stage 2 will be re-assessed for EAA during the early stages of Key Stage 3. Previous approval for EAA at Key Stage 2 does not automatically entitle a student to the same arrangements at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4, as individual needs may change over time. For example, a student who required a Reader at Key Stage 2 may no longer meet the examination board criteria for this arrangement at Key Stage 4 if their reading skills have improved.

Parent Referral

Parents may contact the school to seek advice regarding assessment if they have concerns about their child's progress and learning. Once contact has been established, the Assistant SENDCO will initiate a monitoring period, during which evidence of need will be collected to inform the screening assessments. Following the review of this information, a decision will be made as to whether further assessment of the student is appropriate.

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. A subject teacher referral will again initiate a monitoring period, during which evidence of need, in other subject areas, will be collected to inform the screening assessments

During this monitoring period. For example: where a teacher thinks that a student requires extra time, they are asked to get the student to change the colour of the pen (or stamp it / initial it) to indicate they have continued after the allotted time is up.

On an annual basis, teachers are required to complete a feedback form to confirm that the pupil has consistently used the exam access arrangement and that it represents their normal way of working. This documentation is used as evidence for the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and examination boards to demonstrate a history of need.

Teachers are asked to refer students to the SEND team in the first instance if they have concerns that a pupil may have a different or more specific learning difficulty, rather than contacting parents directly. The SEND team will then meet with and screen the pupil to identify any underlying SEND needs. Following this process, the SEND team will contact parents to share the outcomes and next steps.

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KS3 screening

Pupils who are identified during transition or in Year 7 as experiencing difficulties in accessing their learning will be screened. All teaching staff and teaching assistants contribute to this early identification process. Where screening indicates that a pupil has a specific learning difficulty, a formal letter will be issued to parents.

Throughout Key Stage 3, all staff are responsible for implementing pupils' recommended adjustments and assessment access arrangements. Staff also share responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of these provisions.

For pupils whose needs are not identified in Year 7, difficulties may become apparent at any point during Key Stage 3. All staff are therefore responsible for reporting concerns to the SEND team, who will arrange further screening as appropriate.

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
- Audiology Consultants
- Orthotics Consultants

These accommodations will be implemented as soon as the report is received, and all teaching staff will be informed accordingly.

The report and recommendations provided by external agencies form only one component of the current regulations and serve as part of the required evidence of need for the application of reasonable adjustments in a pupil's final GCSE examinations.

The regulations further stipulate that teacher and SEND records must demonstrate that these adjustments are used consistently in both classroom practice and assessments, thereby establishing the pupil's normal way of working.

Use of a reader or reader pen in examination:

The SENDCO / Assistant SENDCO will produce a form 9, or a Form 8 (depending on area of need and diagnosis) confirming the nature of the candidate's impairment and that the use of a computer reader and/or a reader reflects his/her normal and current way of working within the centre.

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Standardised scores are not required for a computer reader/reader, however, the centre will reserve the right to assess reading to confirm evidence of need. The use of a computer reader and/or a reader must reflect his/her normal and current way of working within the centre. (5.5.5)

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 (Greater use of supervised rest breaks is being encouraged especially in the cases of anxiety, ADHD, ASD, medical condition, SEMH. This access **MUST** be trialled before extra time is considered. Extra time can still be applied for via form 9 if this is relevant to the candidate's needs).
- 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 CYMPH

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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 assessor for EAA, the Specialist Teaching Assistant / Assistant SENDCo 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 Cloud 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
- 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) or Form 9 report signed and dated by the designated tester
- An exam Access checklist
- 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

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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).

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)