

Bishop Challoner Catholic College

Exam Access Policy

Introduction

This policy has been written with reference to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance on adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' and should be read in conjunction with Bishop Challoner's SEND Policy.

This policy was created by the school's Learning Support Coordinator, Caroline Milne, who has a Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (Level A) and a Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment & Access Arrangements and who has been designated as the school's access arrangements assessor.

This policy has been updated by the SENCO (Rachel Wheeler) who has a Postgraduate Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia), equivalent to level 7, with AMBDA status (University College London), in consultation with the school's Exam Officer (Lorraine Houldcroft-Flint).

This policy sets out the framework which ensures that students with additional educational needs, as well as those with formally diagnosed special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not significantly disadvantaged when completing exams due to an educational need.

The term 'additional educational needs' in our school is an umbrella term which incorporates students who do not meet the criteria for SEND under the new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (2014). This allows us to track and monitor the needs of students who are struggling and may need additional support in the classroom which is met by quality first teaching targeted at the area of need. It includes students on the exam access arrangements list who receive additional support for exams (internal and external).

What are exam access arrangements?

Access arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates in external exams based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Some arrangements are delegated to centres, others require prior approval from the JCQ awarding body.

Access arrangements allow candidates with learning difficulties, special educational needs, disabilities, or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment. In this way awarding bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a **substantial disadvantage** when taking an exam due to learning difficulties.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not appear in the list of available access arrangements which includes the following (examples are given in brackets):

- separate accommodation (for a student with a medical condition where it isn't appropriate for them to sit an exam in the main exam hall);

- supervised rest breaks (where a student has a disability which prevents them from concentrating for long periods of time);
- extra time (where it can be demonstrated that a student's ability to process information is slower than average);
- a computer reader or a reader (where there are two standardised scores of below 85 in a test delivered by a specialist assessor);
- a word processor (where handwriting speed is too slow to be able to complete the exam in the allotted time, or handwriting is illegible – see Exam Access Word Processor Policy);
- a scribe (where a candidate cannot write or type independently);
- read aloud (where a candidate works more effectively if they can hear themselves read);
- a prompter (where a candidate has persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating);
- coloured overlays;
- coloured/enlarged papers.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the candidate; the effectiveness of the adjustment; the cost of the adjustment; and the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

Identifying the need for access arrangements

Students who may qualify for formal access arrangements during key stage 4 (and key stage 5) are usually identified early in key stage 3 (year 7). At this stage students are screened, rather than formally assessed, in order to identify those with learning needs.

A pupil passport provides teachers with a concise summary of a student's strengths and weaknesses and identifies barriers to learning.

According to need, adjustments are made to quality first teaching within lessons to enable a student to access their learning and make progress. Teaching and support staff are involved in monitoring these adjustments.

Formal assessments take place through year 9 and into year 10. Screening and ongoing monitoring determine the level of specialist assessment required. These assessments are carried out in accordance with JCQ guidance.

Further evidence beyond testing is always needed to demonstrate that using extra time is the candidate's normal way of working, not only in formal examinations but also in day-to-day school activities, particularly internal tests, mock exams and any timed classroom based work.

Access arrangements are applied for in accordance with JCQ regulations and applications are processed by the published deadlines to allow for provision to be made in terms of timetabling, logistics, accommodation and staffing. Only temporary applications on account of a temporary injury or impairment are permissible after the published deadline.

Parents/carers will be informed in writing when a successful application for access arrangements has been made and given details of what arrangements their child is entitled to.

Formal access arrangements expire after 26 months and after this period the student may be re-tested to determine whether their needs have changed. The most recent testing is binding and determines any subsequent access arrangements.

Sixth form students new to Bishop Challoner should make us aware of any access arrangements they have had in the past as soon as they join the school and bring the relevant paperwork (a signed copy of Form 8 and proof of the assessor's qualification) with them from their previous school. In the absence of this paperwork the student will need to be assessed to determine their needs

Formal assessment for access arrangements

In year 9 a list of pupils who may be eligible for exam access arrangements is compiled. An initial assessment is carried out using Lucid Exact exam access test to determine whether there is a need for further assessment of word reading, spelling, reading comprehension and speed of reading or handwriting speed.

A list of year 7 and 8 students are also compiled, of student with a formal diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition/ASC, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder/ADHD, or a specific learning difficulty/spld (dyspraxia or dyslexia). These students are awarded 25% extra time and a separate room if needed, and teachers are asked to feedback to the SENCO if they **do not** make use of the extra time. Students in years 7 and 8 with medical conditions (principally diabetes) are also included on this list as they may need a rest break.

Formal assessments are carried out in the summer term of year 9/ autumn term of year 10 and will confirm whether a student is eligible for access arrangements according to the criteria stipulated by the JCQ.

The outcomes of assessments are recorded and summarised on the 'Application for access arrangements – Profile of learning difficulties' (JCQ/AA/LD Form 8) by the SENCO. Completed forms are retained as evidence in support of the online application. The online application is made by the SENCO.

The rolling forward of a Form 8 from GCSE to GCE qualifications requires the SENCO to update the centre based evidence as per the JCQ regulations.

Students with a statement of special educational need or an education and health care plan automatically qualify for **needs matched** access arrangements. A report is produced by the SENCO highlighting the key elements including history of need and results of screening.

Parents/ Carers may contact the school to ask for advice about assessment if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. Feedback will be sought from their child's teachers so that a decision can be made whether to test the student for access arrangements.

Parents/ Carers are informed if their child is going to be assessed for exam access arrangements and they are then notified if their child meets the strict criteria needed for them to qualify for exam access arrangements.

Responsibility

Access arrangements are the responsibility of the SENCO, who is supported by teaching and support staff in determining and implementing appropriate access arrangements.






The SENCO is the in-house access arrangements assessor. Alternatively, a qualified specialist assessor external to the school may be bought in to carry out assessments, if the need arises.

The needs of students not identified in year 7 may become apparent at any point during key stage 3. Teaching staff are responsible for reporting any concerns to the SENCO who can then arrange for assessments to be carried out.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students have equality of access to all internal tests and exams. Wherever possible, they should ensure that students who need extra time are allowed to complete classroom tests under exam conditions whilst other students remain quiet. If this is not possible, arrangements should be made for the student to complete the test at another time. Teachers are asked to be mindful that, if extra time goes into break or lunchtime, or students are asked to come back at the end of the day, this can be potentially stigmatising. Students may choose not to use their extra time if they are hungry/ do not want to miss their time to socialise/ tired at the end of the day. Therefore, where possible, students should not be made to sit their exams outside of lesson time.

Teachers are responsible for collating evidence of any student given informal exam access arrangements in class, to help build up a picture of a student's 'normal way of working'.

It is the responsibility of the SENCO to ensure that information regarding access arrangements is collated and accessible to the exams officer and teaching staff. The exam access arrangements register can be found in the staff shared area and is updated whenever an application is approved and whenever changes have been made to a student's entitlements. A user friendly list is also regularly updated and emailed to staff (password protected). In addition to this, exam access arrangements are displayed on the individual student tiles on Class Charts;

-  EAA Prompt
-  EAA Reader
-  EAA Separate room
-  EAA Word Processor
-  EAA 25% Extra Time

This will be further developed this so that there are also codes for students with medical conditions (mainly diabetes) and a code for 'rest breaks.'

The SENCO and exams officer will ensure that all paperwork required by JCQ is in order.

The exams officer is responsible for arranging invigilation and support in external and mock exams for candidates with access arrangements.

If a student chooses not to use agreed access arrangements on a regular basis, either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement, then access arrangements can be removed.

Important

It would be exceptional for a student to be identified as needing exam access arrangements in either year 11 or year 13 when they are already half way through their course and highly unusual for an application to be made at this late stage.

Rachel Wheeler

2nd October 2022

