**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, Isabelle Goetschel, who has a Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing and a Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment & Access Arrangements and who has been designated as the school’s access arrangements assessor.

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).

This is intended as a guidance document with teachers and parents being the target audience. The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with learning needs, including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The policy forms an integral part of our teaching and learning philosophy, which seeks to create a learning environment whereby every individual may fulfil their potential.

**Definitions**

***DISABILITY***

Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a ‘physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on someone’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities’.

***SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS***

A candidate has “special educational needs” as defined in the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

**What are access arrangements?**

Access arrangements or exam concessions are special arrangements that can be applied for and allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access public examinations.

Access arrangements are reasonable adjustments, as defined by the Equality Act (2010), and are specific to the individual candidate. They enable a level playing field to be provided, by overcoming a potential disadvantage, when they are applied. They must not provide an unfair advantage and hence applications must be based upon a rigorous evaluation of need and are heavily regulated by the JCQ and the Exam Boards themselves.

Access arrangements are based upon an identified need and normal way of working. For instance, if a candidate normally has a break after 30 minutes because they have concentration difficulties, this is their normal way of working and an application for a supervised rest break can be made based upon need. Each application must be considered carefully and individually and may vary from exam to exam.

**What are reasonable adjustments?**

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a **substantial disadvantage** in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements. The reasonable adjustment will depend upon 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. There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.

**What are special considerations?**

Special Consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate’s mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the exam.

**Who is eligible for access arrangements?**

Anyone with a special educational need or disability may be eligible for access arrangements in public exams. They can also be considered for candidates with temporary injury. Bishop Challoner Catholic College aims to ensure that all students have equal access to examinations and are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by their peers by any long term special educational needs or disabilities. The JCQ outlines 4 areas of need:

1. **Cognition and Learning:**

• Including specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia,

• Candidates must be assessed by a specialist assessor who is level 7 qualified

1. **Communication and Communication Need:**

• Including candidates with autism

• Including candidates with speech and language needs

• Candidates must be assessed by a speech and language therapist, clinical specialist or specialist assessor

• Any difficulty must be within the candidate’s first language

1. **Sensory and/or Physical Needs:**

• Including candidates with visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or other sensory need

• Including candidates with physical disability, such as cerebral palsy

• Candidates must be assessed by a specialist clinician, such as a neurodevelopmental paediatrician or clinical psychiatrist

• Candidates must be assessed by a specialist teacher for VI and/or HI where there are sensory needs

1. **Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs:**

• Including candidates with ADHD/ADD and anxiety-related conditions

• Candidates must be assessed by a specialist clinician, such as a neurodevelopmental paediatrician or clinical psychiatrist.

• Exam anxiety is a normal emotion experienced by the majority of pupils in the examination period. The auditorium is a silent space that accommodates this need. A separate room will be processed in exceptional cases whereby it has been outlined in documentation from a neurodevelopmental paediatrician or clinical psychiatrist.

**What evidence is needed for Bishop Challoner Catholic College to consider an application for EAA?**

There are a number of pieces of evidence that can be used to apply for EAA to Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ):

• Previous EAA from Primary Schools/ other Education Providers or transition information from previous school.

• The results from the Year 7 baseline screening, using the New Group Reading Test (NGRT), indicates a need- all students in Year 7 are tested using the NGRT. This test can help identify students with a weakness in reading. If a major concern is uncovered at this stage, the Learning Support Team will instigate reading intervention and informal access arrangements.

• Parental 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 about the most suitable course of action.

• Teacher referral- As with Parental Referrals, teachers can refer a student to the LST where they have concerns about the learning and progress of a student in their class. All of the student’s current teachers will be asked to give feedback to gain information, and following this a decision will be made about the most suitable course of action.

• Concerns raised by SEN/Pastoral Team

• Evidence from Medical Professionals

• Private Education Psychologists Reports (please note that as Private Educational Psychologist’s reports cost a significant amount of money, this therefore means that parents who are unable to obtain a private report through their financial circumstances are put at a disadvantage. As an exam centre we must be consistent in our decisions and ensure that no student is ‘either given an unfair advantage or be disadvantaged by any arrangements put in place. Often private educational psychologists, recommend that children should receive EAA which can be in conflict with what the centre tester/ specialist teacher recommends. We will consider this evidence alongside the history of need, the other evidence available, including an assessment from a specialist assessor, and the students’ normal way of working within the centre)

**Will a student receive extra time if they were given it for KS2?**

An important principle is that just because a student has received EAA in the past, it does not necessarily follow that they will continue to receive EAA as their needs may very well have changed. For example, a student whose baseline testing at KS2 shows a reading speed score below the threshold required for EAA may not qualify for the EAA at KS4 as their reading speed may have improved to the extent that it no longer meets the exam board criteria.

**How do staff and parents know whether a student has EAA?**

Teaching and support staff can access the SEN list on Class Charts. The information about results of assessments for EAA are kept confidentially in line with school policy and are shared only on a need to know basis. Parents will be contacted by a member of the SEND Team to discuss what they are entitled to, why and when. Formal arrangements for access arrangements will begin to be confirmed to parents from May of Year 9 and throughout Year 10.

**How are Exam Access Arrangements applied for?**

Students need to be tested from the end of Key Stage 3 onwards for EAA. Just because they were entitled to EAA at KS3 does not automatically entitle them to it at KS4 or KS5 (Sixth Form).

The member of staff qualified to assess for access arrangements will use a variety of nationally recognised tests such as:

● Wechsler Individual Achievement Test 2nd UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-II-T)

● Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH)

● Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing 2nd Edition (CTOPP2)

● Lucid EXACT

This is not an exhaustive list, and is subject to change, as the assessments are replaced/updated periodically in line with current practice. The test that the assessor uses depends upon the type of barrier to learning that the student may have. Should the student need further testing to assess for other learning issues or further EAA, the assessor will arrange this. Following a report produced by the assessor, an application is made to the Awarding Bodies for permission to implement the specified arrangement(s).

There are some considerations within this access arrangement application:

● The authorisation granted by the Awarding Bodies lasts 26 months, therefore it is prudent to assess and apply for EAA in the April/May of Year 9 in order that any permitted exam access arrangements are in place for the full GCSE period of both Year 10 and 11.

● When a candidate progresses from GCSE/BTEC to GCE A-level (i.e. KS5), a re-application must be made. Per the JCQ guidelines, it is possible to “roll forward” the application for EAA, however the centre must have available evidence which clearly shows that the EAA is still needed for GCE AS and A-level examinations.

● There is a deadline imposed by the Awarding Bodies for when exam access arrangements can be applied for. This date is usually at the beginning of February, although the exact date changes yearly.

**What are the procedures for processing an application?**

Once the student has a completed Form 8 in place, assessments have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the assessor for EAA, the school can then apply to the awarding bodies. Once confirmed by the awarding bodies, parents are informed and the EAA is then added to student records and class lists. The application will require evidence of need, and the centre needs to hold evidence in its files that can be inspected at short notice. This can include:

● Recommendations by teachers based on professional observations

● Data from standardised assessments

● Educational psychologists’ reports

● Letters from outside agencies such as CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), hospitals or doctors

● Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

**Important**

“Normal way of working” is a very important principle, sometimes even considered the most important. An application for EAA made late in Year 11 or Year 13 lacks validity as there is little or no evidence of the EAA being the “normal way of working”. However, within this concept, Bishop Challoner Catholic College recognises that on very rare occasions some students can mask learning difficulties and significant concerns raised in Year 11 or Year 13 will still be investigated. In these situations, even if test results meet the JCQ criteria, substantial evidence from teachers will be needed to support any possible application and without this we cannot apply for formal EAA. While Parental Referrals are valuable, the phenomenon of issues being suddenly and unexpectedly raised in the weeks and months before external examinations is a serious concern for the JCQ.

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

*Policy developed by Isabelle Goetschel (Assistant SENCo) and Rebecca Hampson (SENCo) to meet JCQ regulations. September 2025.*