



**FORGE
VALLEY
SCHOOL**
& SIXTH FORM

EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

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Contents

1. Examination Access Arrangements Policy	3
2. What are Exam Access Arrangements?.....	3
3. Reasonable adjustments.....	3
4. Responsibility	4
5. Access Arrangements for Examinations.....	4
6. Identifying the Need for Exam Access Arrangements.....	4
Procedure	5
7. How are pupils identified for Exam Access Arrangements screening?	5
8. Parental Concerns.....	5
9. Teacher Referral.....	5
10. Key Stage 3 screening.....	5
11. Formal Access Arrangement testing.....	6
Stage 1: Screening	6
Stage 2 Formal Testing.....	6
12. What Happens Next?.....	7
13. Granting 25% Extra Time Without Testing	7
14. Information Regarding Word Processor Use in Exams.....	7
15. Information Regarding Alternative Rooming for Examinations.....	8
16. Candidates Moving to Post-16 Studies.....	8

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We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of all school policies on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This policy has been developed by building on our own best practice and that of other educational networks. It has been developed in consultation with governors and staff and is accessible through the Forge Valley website. The policy is updated annually and is publicly available on the school website.



1. Examination Access Arrangements Policy

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout Forge Valley School for all students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN), including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND).

2. What are Exam Access Arrangements?

Exam Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Exam Access Arrangements fall into two categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres; others require prior Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) awarding body approval. Exam Access Arrangements allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of it. The intention behind an Access Arrangement is to meet the 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'.

3. Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 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. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several 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; and
- 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; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'. The centre must ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

4. Responsibility

Exam Access Arrangements are the responsibility of the Head teacher and Executive SENCO. Formal testing for Exam Access Arrangements can only be conducted by a suitably qualified person in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Such an assessor may be bought in by school and authorised to conduct testing by the Head teacher.



5. Access Arrangements for Examinations

JCQ requirements are updated annually. However, the following are some of the standard practices of Exam Access Arrangements currently permitted:

- Extra Time *
- Supervised Rest Breaks
- Reader (Except in English Language)
- Scribe *
- Prompter
- Word Processor

* These arrangements need to be tested for by a suitably qualified assessor. In the case of a temporary injury which affects the candidate's ability to write at the time of the examination, a scribe may be permitted when medical evidence is provided. However, a Word Processor will be considered first. The other arrangements can be authorised by school, providing that they are the candidate's normal way of working.

6. Identifying the Need for Exam Access Arrangements

Pupils who may qualify for formal Exam Access Arrangements during Key Stage 4 are usually identified early in Key Stage 3 using informal screening rather than being formally assessed. We are also aware that some pupils may have been in receipt of Exam Access Arrangements for Key Stage 2 SATS. Where these are advised to us by Primary schools upon transition to Forge Valley School, we will consider whether these should continue in Key Stage 3. Recommendations for adjustments to Quality First teaching within lessons such as allowing a little extra time or reading questions to pupils are then made to staff to make work accessible and allow pupils to make progress.

Formal Exam Access Arrangements testing usually takes place during Year 10. Screening and ongoing monitoring determines the level of specific assessment required. Where formal Exam Access Arrangements are determined and agreed these must be utilised to ensure that they are considered to be the pupil's 'normal way of working'. This means that appropriate Access Arrangements are applied in all internal or external assessments. If a pupil continually does not use the agreed Access Arrangements either because their needs change or they do not feel they are necessary, then Access Arrangements can and should be removed to ensure that we remain compliant with JCQ regulations.

In order to comply with JCQ regulations, pupils who appear to need extra time must first trial the use of Supervised Rest Breaks before extra time can be considered. Only once these are found to be unsuccessful can extra time be considered.

Changes to the JCQ regulations in September 2025 mean that pupils must trial the use of extra time to provide evidence of need before applications can be made. This may occur either before or after formal assessment takes place. We are also required to obtain pupil opinions about their needs before making any Page 5 of 9 decisions about Exam Access Arrangements testing and applications. This will be done by a member of staff completing a Pupil Voice Form with the pupil before any further action is taken.



Procedure

7. How are pupils identified for Exam Access Arrangements screening?

- Notification from previous school(s) that they had Access Arrangements for Key Stage 2 SATs or other tests
- Teacher referral
- Parental concerns
- Pupil concerns (self-referral)
- Inclusion on the School Special Educational Needs Register or SEN Monitoring List
- Low reading ability noted on admission to Forge Valley School
- Inclusion in literacy interventions at Forge Valley School
- Evidence of qualifying medical conditions
- Informal Exam Access Arrangements granted in Key Stage 3

It should be noted that usually no formal testing for Exam Access Arrangements will take place before Year 10. This is because Exam Access Arrangements are only valid for 26 months and this ensures their validity throughout a 2 year GCSE course. On rare occasions, we may decide to test a cohort during the last half term of Year 9 due to the availability of the Specialist Assessor. Informal arrangements can be put in place at any time during Key Stage 3 at the discretion of the Executive SENCO or Head teacher but pupils and their parents/carers need to be aware that these may be removed if the pupil does not meet the criteria set by JCQ when pupils reach Year 10.

8. Parental Concerns

Parents can contact the school to ask for advice about testing if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. The Executive SENCO will investigate their concerns, and a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to test a pupil. Whilst the school will always take parental concerns into consideration, the Executive SENCO cannot use comments and observations from parents on the required application forms. Due to the substantial evidence required to make an application, parents/carers should be aware that it may be several months from their original enquiry to a final decision being made.

9. Teacher Referral

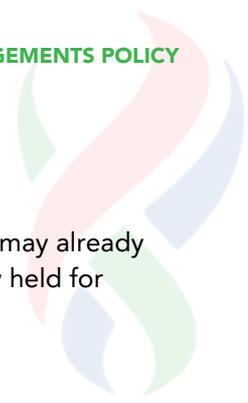
Teachers can refer a pupil to the Executive SENCO where they have concerns, and these will be investigated and appropriate actions taken. However, they must follow the requirements laid out in the school's Access Arrangements Process Flowchart for Teachers.

10. Key Stage 3 Screening

Where Key Stage 3 exams are taking place, the Executive SENCO will identify pupils who it is believed would benefit from Exam Access Arrangements using available literacy and SEN data. When whole year group exams are taking place in the hall, these pupils may be withdrawn and may instead sit their exams in a smaller room where additional help will be available. A list of these pupils is produced and circulated to staff who are then responsible for implementing the recommended adjustments in classroom situations. Throughout Key Stage 3 staff are asked to monitor pupils' use of these adjustments and report any concerns Page 6 of 9 to the Executive SENCO. It is important to remember that Exam Access Arrangements informally granted during Key Stage 3 may not be granted for Key Stage 4 once formal testing has taken place.

11. Formal Access Arrangement Testing

Formal Exam Access Arrangements testing is normally conducted during Year 10. Pupils qualifying for these formal assessments are determined by specified indicators following screening. Pupils with an Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP) automatically qualify for Exam Access Arrangements screening.



Stage 1: Screening

Some or all of these will be utilised by school staff to screen for referral to the Specialist Assessor. We may already have conducted these tests prior to referral for other reasons and may be able to utilise results already held for screening purposes.

- GL Assessment Dyslexia Portfolio
- WRAT Single Word Reading
- WRAT Spelling
- Visual Stress Assessment

The Executive SENCO will analyse the results and decide whether a referral for further testing is appropriate. It is worth noting that school must hold a body of evidence that the requested Exam Access Arrangements are pupils' 'normal way of working'. This includes a sample of internal school tests/mock examinations across relevant subjects showing the application of extra time. To produce this evidence, pupils will be allowed extra time on an informal basis and will be required to change the colour of their pen when the end of normal time is reached. Any work completed during extra time will then be clearly shown and this will be used to show the Exams Inspector that there is clear evidence of need. Where a pupil uses a Word Processor, they will be required to change the colour or style of the font during extra time.

Stage 2: Formal Testing

Depending on the outcomes of the abovementioned screening, the Executive SENCO will complete the necessary paperwork and arrange for the Specialist Assessor to come into school to conduct formal assessments using a battery of tests approved by JCO. The tests used are periodically replaced or upgraded in line with current JCO regulations. The Executive SENCO will sometimes decide to delay bringing in the Specialist Assessor until a small group of pupils require testing. However, careful consideration will always be made to ensure that Exam Board deadlines regarding applications for Exam Access Arrangements are met. This is usually towards the end of March each year for the summer examination season so testing will only be authorised after this time in exceptional circumstances. It is also important that candidates have the opportunity to practice utilising any EAA granted before they take any final examinations to ensure that they can achieve to the best of their ability.

Please note that a privately commissioned assessment where the school has not been involved cannot be used to award Exam Access Arrangements. Relevant staff working within the school will always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the school and, ultimately, assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated. This is to ensure that pupils whose parents/carers do not have the financial means to pay for a privately commissioned assessment are not placed at a disadvantage to those whose parents/carers can afford to take such actions.

12. What Happens Next?

Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the Specialist Assessor that Exam Access Arrangements are appropriate, the Executive SENCO/Head teacher will decide whether to make an application, taking into account history of need. As previously mentioned, school must hold internal tests showing the application of extra time, together with comments and observations from teaching staff as to why the pupil needs extra time. Once an application has been processed and a decision is received, details of the pupil and their agreed Exam Access Arrangements will be added to the appropriate list of students with EAA and this will be circulated to all teaching and Exams Administration staff. The required data will be keyed onto the school database to ensure EAA are detailed on seating plans to inform Exam Invigilators of individual pupil requirements during examinations. The pupil will be informed of the decision by email to their school email address and parents/carers will be informed by letter.



13. Granting 25% Extra Time Without Testing

The Executive SENCO is able to make an application for 25% extra time for pupils with a confirmed diagnosis of the following complex conditions where this is their normal way of working:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Sensory and/or physical needs
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (e.g. ADHD)
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs

However, JCQ Regulations state that the application must be supported by specialist evidence confirming the candidate's disability. Some examples of specialist evidence are a letter/report from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or a letter/report from a Local Authority Specialist Service or a current EHCP. Please note that a letter from the pupil's GP is not acceptable. Whilst such specialists may recommend that Exam Access Arrangements are applied for, the final decision will be made by the Head teacher and/or Executive SENCO. The same rules apply as with pupils granted EAA after formal testing; school must hold evidence to support applications and, without this, under strict JCQ regulation EAA cannot be allowed.

14. Information Regarding the Use of Word Processors in Examinations

JCQ regulations clearly state that 'a word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home'.

- Word processors will normally only be allowed in examinations where a candidate has:
- A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly
- A medical condition, physical disability or sensory impairment affecting handwriting
- Serious planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- Extremely poor handwriting.

In line with the above, Forge Valley School only permits candidates to use a Word Processor in examinations when this is established as their normal way of working and is appropriate to their needs. The Word Processor, which school must provide and not the candidate, will have the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled. To decide whether this is a suitable option, we will collect pupil handwriting Page 8 of 9 samples from teachers and make enquiries regarding the pupil's typing ability. We will also speak to the pupil to explain the implications of using a Word Processor e.g. must be normal way of working, will have spelling/grammar disabled, will be housed in a separate room with other computer users, must be present when the script is printed off. This will enable the candidate to make an informed decision regarding Exam Word Processor use. Word Processors without an extra time allowance are granted at the school's discretion therefore no external testing is required.

If a candidate wishes to use a Word Processor with spelling and grammar check enabled, it will be necessary for school to arrange for them to be tested by a suitably qualified assessor to determine whether they qualify for this. This will include additional assessments to determine spelling ability although poor spelling alone is not a qualifying factor; the target word must be unrecognisable. Candidates using this facility need to be aware that they will not be awarded any marks available for spelling and grammar.

15. Information Regarding Alternative Rooming for Examinations

It is the normal expectation that pupils will be seated in the main examinations hall when undertaking exams and assessments. Along with some other situations, where pupils qualify for readers, word processors and/or have an Education Health and Careplan (EHCP) in place, arrangements will be made for them to sit exams in smaller rooms with candidates with similar needs where these concessions can be delivered. It is recognised that many pupils find the main examinations hall environment stressful, but this is not sufficient grounds for them to be allowed to take exams in an alternative room. Indeed, recent guidance from JCQ is that schools must be careful to ensure that pupils in smaller rooms aren't placed at an advantage compared to those in the main examinations hall due to being in a more nurturing environment. Any requests for smaller rooms will be referred to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will carefully consider each request on a case-by-case basis. Space in smaller rooms is limited and alternatives may be suggested such as seating pupils at the front, back or near the door of the main examinations hall.

The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation will only be permitted where the candidate has a serious medical condition, such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room.

16. Candidates Moving to Post-16 Studies

When a pupil moves into Forge Valley 6th Form from our school, we will automatically consider the rollover of Exam Access Arrangements. When a candidate joins our 6th Form from another centre, we will contact the previous school for information regarding Exam Access Arrangements.

In all cases, we will ask their 6th Form teachers to provide evidence that pupils still need any Exam Access Arrangements that were in place for Key Stage 4. We will also require pupils to complete a Pupil Voice 6th Form Carry Forward Form to indicate where they feel they have difficulties. Providing they have utilised EAA for GCSE Examinations and the candidate meets the current JCQ criteria, we will resubmit an application for GCE/Post-16 studies and they will continue.

If the current criteria are no longer met, the Executive SENCO will carefully evaluate whether it would be appropriate to conduct further testing or whether the Exam Access Arrangements should cease at this time as the pupil would no longer be considered eligible.

When pupils leave Forge Valley School and undertake 6th Form studies at alternative centres, we will provide details of Exam Access Arrangements to the new centre on request. Copies of the relevant documentation will be retained at Forge Valley School in case of future Exam Board queries. Provided that the candidate meets the current JCQ criteria for the requested Exam Access Arrangements, the new centre will need to Page 9 of 9 resubmit an application after obtaining the appropriate evidence of continued need for GCE/Post-16 studies to allow them to continue. If the current criteria are no longer met, the new centre will follow their policy to determine the next steps.

17. Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a small, post examination percentage adjustment made to a candidate's marks to reflect temporary injury, illness, bereavement or other indisposition at the time of the examination or assessment. Applications are made to the Exam Boards immediately after the end of the exam season and, where the circumstances are deemed acceptable, marks will be adjusted by the boards prior to the issue of results. Some circumstances can be declared by school and some will require supporting evidence. This is considered on a case-by-case basis. Please note that school do not decide how much percentage allowance is granted, this is applied by the awarding body based on the information submitted by school.