

## ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

### Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. They fall into two distinct categories with some being delegated to centres and others requiring prior JCQ<sup>CIC</sup> Awarding Body approval.

Access Arrangements allow candidates/learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment, for example: readers, scribes and Braille question papers. In this way awarding bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

### Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Biddenham School fulfils *"its obligations in respect of identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements."* (JCQ 'General regulations for approved centres', 2021, Chapter 5.5) This document is further referred to in this policy as GR.

The policy is reviewed annually to ensure that arrangements are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication: *"Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties; Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments; General and Vocational qualifications."* (JCQ, AA, 2021). This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA.

### 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.

How reasonable the adjustment is, will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, time frames 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."* (JCQ AA, 2021, p7)

### The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required in JCQ regulations as follows:

- An access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. An access arrangements assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8; and/or
- an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments; and/or

- a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by Patoss, Dyslexia Action or BDA and listed on the SASC website, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments.

(A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award Access Arrangements or process an application using Access Arrangements Online).

And

*“An access arrangements assessor must have successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, which must include training in all of the following:*

- *The theoretical basis underlying psychometric tests, such as the concepts of validity and reliability; standard deviations and the normal curve; raw scores, standard scores, quotients, percentiles and age equivalent scores; the concept of statistically significant discrepancies between scores; standard error of measurement and confidence intervals.*
- *The appropriate use of nationally standardised tests for the age group being tested.*
- *The objective administration of attainment tests which can be administered individually. This must include tests of reading accuracy, reading speed, reading comprehension and spelling. Appropriate methods of assessing writing skills, including speed, must also be covered.*
- *The appropriate selection and objective use of tests of cognitive skills, see paragraph 7.5.12, page 86.*
- *The ethical administration of testing including the ability to understand the limitation of their own skills and experience, and to define when it is necessary to refer the candidate to an alternative professional.”* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 7.3)

### **Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)**

The headteacher of the school is responsible for checking the qualifications of the assessor(s). A copy of the assessor’s/assessors’ qualification(s) is kept with the exams files and can be supplied on request. Bear in mind all relevant JCQ regulations and guidance provided in GR and AA, including centres are required to:

*“...have a **written** process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of their specialist assessor(s) but that the assessment process is administered correctly...*

*...ensure that where a candidate with a learning difficulty requires an assessment of his/her needs, he/she is assessed by an appropriately qualified specialist assessor as appointed by the head of centre.”* (JCQ GR, 2021, Chapter 5.4)

*“Evidence of the assessor’s qualification(s) must be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo.”* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 7.3.4)

### **How the assessment process is administered**

Students needing Access Arrangements for exams are identified through a number of routes. Initial screening tests in literacy are conducted when students join the school and these will often identify students who are likely to need further assessment and arrangements put in place. Most commonly, these screening tests identify students in need of a reader, scribe or extra time. School staff will also refer students who they observe having difficulties in class and think need further assessment; evidence of why the arrangement is needed is also provided by the school staff as well as the students. Parents can also refer if they feel their child needs consideration for access arrangements. Without appropriate evidence of need, arrangements cannot be put into place or further assessment carried out e.g. a request for assessment for extra time cannot be considered unless there is evidence that, with extra time, the student gains additional marks in a timed test. Formative and

summative assessments are all useful in helping to identify and provide evidence of need for an arrangement.

If a student is identified as possibly needing support in assessments they are recorded as having the appropriate trial provision. This is then communicated with teaching staff using appropriate systems to ensure they are given the opportunity to use the arrangements during any assessment to build up an evidence base of need.

### **Gathering evidence of *normal way of working***

Evidence that the AAE is the student's 'normal way of working' must be held on file for inspection purposes. The '*normal way of working*' as defined by JCQ states:

*"The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre\*, e.g.*

- *In the classroom.*
- *Working in small groups for reading and/or writing.*
- *Literacy support lessons.*
- *Literacy intervention strategies.*
- *Mock examinations.*

*\*This is commonly referred to as 'normal way of working'. For candidates with learning difficulties this is typically the background information recorded with Section A of Form 8.*

*SENCOs and assessors must refer to section 7.6.1, page 87, for information on how to confirm 'normal way of working'. (The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment, (see section 8.3, page 89)."* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 4.2.5)

Evidence for 'normal way of working' can take different forms, for example: copies of assessments where additional arrangements have been used, round robin responses from teachers/teaching assistants and observation records from assessments.

### **Recording evidence of need**

Once the normal way of working for a student has been established in respect of additional arrangements for exams, and evidence of their beneficial use is recorded, an online application needs to be made, the school completes a form (JCQ Form 8) on which the following is recorded:

- Relevant information/evidence of the candidate's persistent and significant difficulties.
- Details of how the candidate's disability/difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom. Provide evidence of feedback from teachers and/or support staff (Learning Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants).
- Detail the candidate's normal way of working within the centre, the support given and how this relates to the proposed arrangement(s). For example: have teaching staff recorded any support regularly provided in the classroom? The completed Form 8 is passed to the School's approved assessor(s) to inform what further assessments are required. The assessor completes Part C of the form and confirms that the student qualifies for the requested arrangement before the School applies to the exams boards for the access arrangement to be approved. Before the application is made, the student is asked to sign a Data Protection Form giving their consent for the application to be made online.

### **Processing applications for access arrangements**

#### **Access arrangements online**

Some access arrangements must be formally applied for and approved before being used in exams. These arrangements, which must be the student's normal way of working within the centre include:

- Alternative accommodation (away from the centre).

- Bilingual dictionary with extra time of up to 10% (for the use of a dictionary).
- Computer reader/Reader.
- Examination on coloured/enlarged paper.
- 25% extra time.
- Extra time over 25%.
- Modified papers (see chapter 6, pages 75-81).
- Oral Language Modifier.
- Practical Assistant in practical assessments.
- Practical Assistant in written papers.
- Scribe/voice recognition technology.

Access Arrangements Online is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for GCSE and GCE qualifications. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for GCSE and GCE qualifications.

*“For GCSE and GCE qualifications, Access Arrangements Online enables centres to make a single online application for a candidate requiring access arrangements using any of the secure awarding body extranet sites. Access arrangements online will provide an instant response and will only allow a maximum of 26 months for any arrangement. (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 8.1)*

At Biddenham the online application for AAEs is made by the SENDCo assisted by the Inclusion Coordinator and Examinations Officer. Each student has an ‘exam file’ containing a signed copy of the Form 8 (or centre devised equivalent for a student with an Education, Health and Care Plan, plus a copy of the EHCP showing the AAE need), the exam board approval notice, a signed data protection consent form along with copies of the assessment tests used and examples of the student’s ‘usual way of working’.

### **Centre-delegated access arrangements**

Some access arrangements can be granted by the school providing there is sufficient evidence of need and evidence of it being the normal way of working within the centre includes:

- Amplification equipment
- Bilingual dictionary
- Braillers
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)
- Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind
- Coloured overlays
- Live speaker for pre-recorded examination components
- Low vision aid/magnifier
- Optical Character Reader (OCR) scanners
- Prompter
- Read aloud
- Separate invigilation (within centre)
- Sign language Interpreter
- Supervised rest breaks
- Word Processor

Each student requiring a centre-delegated access arrangement will have an ‘exam file’ containing a centre devised file note referred to as the SENDCo form along with any evidence of need including medical letters, teacher comments and any copies of examples of the student’s ‘normal way of working’.

## Word processor policy

Please see separate 'word processor policy' for information about the use of word processors in exam situations.

### Separate invigilation within the centre

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate, invigilation within the centre will be based on whether the candidate *"has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect; and is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre"* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 5.16)

"Separate invigilation reflects the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations as a consequence of a long term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional needs." (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 5.16)

Appropriate evidence from a professional working regularly with the student will be necessary before a separate room can be granted on mental health or medical grounds. Evidence for a separate room would need to demonstrate considerable ongoing evidence of need, for example a letter from CAMHS, or a counselling service, not a note from a GP. This evidence will need to be supported by evidence from professionals in school who can substantiate the need. If the evidence is not deemed reasonable, the centre has the right to not provide or allow the arrangement, at our discretion, in accordance with regulations outlined by JCQ. It is worth noting that a separate room arrangement does not equate to 1:1 invigilation. Students will be accommodated, with an invigilator, for their exams in a classroom or office based exam room away from the main cohort of students, with other students with a similar arrangement.

### Supervised Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks within the main exam room should be considered/trialled before separate room provision. Furthermore, the JCQ guidelines state that *"The SENCo must have considered and thoroughly exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks before making an application for 25% extra time"* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 5.2.2).

Therefore the SENDCo will decide on the appropriate access arrangements to be offered, in accordance with the JCQ guidelines. The SENDCo will take into account recommendations made by medical professionals, but cannot guarantee the recommendations will be honoured as the centre will still need to make an assessment as to whether or not it is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre, and what provision, if any, can be offered.

In order for a student to have supervised rest breaks there must be evidence of the *"candidate's established difficulties and that supervised rest breaks reflect his/her normal way of working within the centre"* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 5.1). Evidence from a professional working with the candidate, along with supporting statements from Form Tutor, Head of Year or SENCo also needs to be provided.

### Provision for Extra Time

Where students have been assessed and awarded extra time the centre will make the appropriate arrangement to allow this to happen. However it is worth noting that *"extra time will not be permitted in examinations testing the time in which a skill is performed, such as expressive arts, a musical performance, or a sport, where timing is an explicit part of the assessment objective."* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 5.2.5) *"Also candidates may not require extra time for every examination/assessment and every subject. As subjects and the methods of assessment vary, so the demands on the candidate will vary. Extra time may not be appropriate in: practical examinations; or non-examination assessments (NEAs) where the impairment has a minimal effect on the assessment."* (JCQ AA, 2021, Chapter 5.2.6)

The centre, (including the SENDCo/Exams Officer), make the final decision on whether extra time can/will be granted for any NEAs.

Where students have a substantial impairment allowing them up to 100% extra time for examinations, the centre needs to make appropriate arrangements to allow this provision. Whilst taking into account the risk of fatigue for the students. For controlled assessments in the centre which do not specify a particular date, but rather a range of days in which the assessment must be conducted, provision could be made across multiple days.

### **Guidance regarding access arrangements when a candidate changes centre**

When a student transfers to Biddenham School from another centre, JCQ guidelines state that: *“Where the candidate changes centre, the original or a PDF of a fully completed Form 8, together with evidence of the assessor’s qualification must be provided. There is an expectation that SENDCos will provide this evidence to assist their counterparts in FE colleges. The SENDCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, must ensure that 25% extra time and/or a scribe remains appropriate, practicable and reasonable. Form 8 must be checked to ensure that all parts of the form have been completed, it has been signed and dated and that the candidate meets the current evidence requirements before a new online application for 25% extra time and/or a scribe is processed.”* (JCQ AA, 2021, chapter 7.6.1). It is the student and their family’s responsibility to make the SENDCo/Exams Officer aware as soon as possible of any previous access arrangements, so that evidence of ‘beneficial use’ and ‘normal way of working’ whilst studying at Biddenham can be established and a new application arranged to see if the student still requires access arrangements. This needs to be done well in advance of any external assessments.

### **References**

JCQ, AA (2021) Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

JCQ, GR (2021) General regulations for approved centres

Date of Next Review: **May 2023**