



Notre Dame High School

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Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy 2026-2027

Policy Name	Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy
Status	Live
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Contents

1. Aim
2. What Are Access Arrangements?
3. Principles of the JCQ Regulations
4. Types of Access Arrangements
5. Identification of Need
6. The Assessment Process
7. The Importance of Normal Ways of Working
8. Roles and Responsibilities
9. Evidence, Records and Data Protection
10. Frequently Asked Questions
11. Useful information and resources

1. Aim

Our aim is to ensure that all students have fair and equitable access to examinations and assessments. Access arrangements are agreed in accordance with Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and are designed to remove barriers to learning and assessment without compromising the integrity of the qualification.

This policy meets the requirement in the JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres for the centre to have a written access arrangements policy, and supports the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates.

2. What Are Access Arrangements?

Access arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. They are intended to:

- Reduce substantial disadvantages experienced by students with SEND.
- Ensure equality of opportunity.
- Allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Provide fair access to examinations without affecting the assessment objectives.
- Support compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and JCQ regulations.

Important: access arrangements are not awarded to give candidates an advantage over other students. They simply seek to level the playing field.

Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, an awarding body and the centre must make reasonable adjustments where a disabled candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage compared with a candidate who is not disabled. Access arrangements are the principal way reasonable adjustments are made in examinations. Not all adjustments will be reasonable in every case: the awarding body decides what is reasonable, taking account of the need to maintain the integrity of the qualification. Where a student's needs cannot be met through the standard arrangements, the SENCO will consult the awarding body.

3. Principles of the JCQ Regulations

All access arrangements must:

- **Be evidence based** – a student's need must be supported by a range of evidence gathered over time.
- **Reflect normal way of working** – the arrangement must be routinely used in lessons, internal assessments, mock examinations and classroom activities.
- **Be appropriate** – the arrangement must genuinely address a barrier experienced by the student.
- **Be regularly reviewed** – the effectiveness of arrangements is monitored and updated where necessary.

4. Types of Access Arrangements

Category	Examples
Time related	25% extra time; supervised rest breaks
Reading support	Human reader; exam reading pen; computer reader; text-to-speech software
Writing support	Word processor; scribe; speech recognition software
Alternative formats	Modified papers; enlarged print; braille materials
Environment	Separate room; small group setting; individual room where evidence supports need
Other	Prompter; coloured overlays or paper; practical assistant; bilingual dictionary where eligible

Word Processors

In line with JCQ requirements, the school has a word processor policy. A word processor is allocated where it reflects a student's normal way of working and is appropriate to their needs; it is not granted simply because a student prefers to type or types faster. Spelling and grammar checks and predictive text are disabled unless a separate arrangement applies.

5. Identification of Need

A student may be considered for access arrangements following:

- Teacher referrals.
- SEND reviews.
- Information from primary schools.
- Educational Psychology reports.
- EHCP documentation.
- Medical evidence.
- Parental concerns.
- Performance data.
- Observations of classroom difficulties.

The school adopts a graduated approach and gathers evidence over time.

Please note: a diagnosis alone does not automatically qualify a student for exam access arrangements. Private assessment reports commissioned by parents are considered as part of the evidence, but under JCQ regulations they cannot on their own be used to award arrangements without the school's own evidence of need and normal way of working.

6. The Assessment Process

The SEND team follows a structured process:

1. Identification of potential need.
2. Collection of evidence from teaching staff, including a picture of need and history of provision.
3. Review of classroom practice and existing support.
4. Formal assessment by an appropriately qualified assessor where required by JCQ regulations (for example for extra time, a reader or a scribe). The assessor works in partnership with the SENCO and has a current, established working relationship with the school as JCQ requires.
5. Completion of the necessary JCQ documentation, including Form 8 where required, and online application through Access Arrangements Online by the JCQ deadline for the examination series.
6. Implementation and monitoring within school, so the arrangement becomes the student's normal way of working.
7. Application of arrangements in external examinations, coordinated by the Examinations Officer.

Assessments may be carried out from Year 9 onwards, once sufficient evidence of need and normal way of working has been established; most take place during Key Stage 4. Arrangements approved for GCSE remain valid for the duration of the course, and are reconsidered for post-16 study.

7. The Importance of Normal Ways of Working

JCQ requires schools to demonstrate that an arrangement is a student's normal way of working. Examples include using a laptop regularly in lessons, receiving extra time in assessments, using reading software during learning activities, and taking supervised rest breaks during tests.

Arrangements cannot be introduced solely for examinations. The arrangement must already be established and routinely used before exam entries are made.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Head of Centre** – accountable to JCQ for compliance and for ensuring the SENCO has sufficient time and resources.
- **SENCO** – leads the identification, assessment and application process, ensures evidence is robust, and briefs staff on each student's arrangements.
- **Assessor** – conducts and signs off assessments of learning difficulties in line with JCQ qualification requirements.
- **Examinations Officer** – submits applications, orders modified papers, arranges rooms and invigilation, and ensures arrangements are delivered correctly in every examination.
- **Teachers and LSAs** – provide evidence of need, implement arrangements as normal classroom practice, and act as readers, scribes or prompters where trained.

9. Evidence, Records and Data Protection

Evidence of need, assessments and applications are held securely by the SENCO and Examinations Officer and made available for JCQ Centre Inspection. Records are retained for the period required by JCQ regulations and processed in line with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the school's privacy notice. JCQ's candidate privacy notice is shared with students and parents where required for applications.

10. Frequently Asked Questions

Does a diagnosis automatically mean my child receives extra time?

No. A diagnosis alone is not sufficient. The school must demonstrate a substantial and long-term difficulty, supported by evidence and normal way of working.

Can parents request an access arrangement?

Parents can raise concerns and provide information. However, eligibility is determined through the JCQ process and supporting evidence.

Will all students with SEND receive access arrangements?

Not necessarily. Arrangements are awarded based on individual need and evidence.

When are students assessed?

Assessments usually take place during Key Stage 4, from Year 9 onwards, when sufficient evidence of need and normal way of working has been established.

What if I disagree with a decision?

Please speak to the SENCO in the first instance. If the matter is not resolved, the school's Complaints Policy applies. Decisions about what is reasonable ultimately rest with the awarding bodies under JCQ regulations.

11. Useful information and resources

- **JCQ – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2026–2027:** www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration
- **JCQ – Guidance for parents, carers and students about access arrangements:** available on the JCQ website.
- **Sheffield SEND Information, Advice and Support Service:** www.sheffieldsendias.org.uk

For questions regarding assessments, provision or exam arrangements, please contact the SEND Team at SEND@notredame-high.co.uk.