Access Arrangements Policy

2026/27

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Date of next review	September 2027

Key staff involved in the access arrangements process

Role	Name
SENCo	Hayley Rowden
SENCOs line manager	Claire Tanner
Head of Centre	Mr N Rutherford
Assessors	Rachel Munro, Andrew Orchard, Kirsten Crocker
Access arrangements coordinator	Clare Newman

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What are access arrangements?

*"Access arrangements are agreed **before** an assessment. They allow candidates with **specific needs**, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular 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'."* [AA *Definitions*, page 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. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on a number of 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'.

References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010.

General principles

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AA (section 4.2). These include:

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

The SENCO, or an equivalent member of staff within The Thomas Hardye School, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment and should be the candidates' normal way of working.

The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustments(s) before his/her first examination.

The Centre is unable to accommodate candidates listening to music/white noise.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that The Thomas Hardye School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its *"obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements."*[JCQ *'General regulations for approved centres'*Chapter5.5]. This document is further referred to in this policy as GR.

This policy is maintained and held by the Exams Officer and the SENCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations. The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes 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.* This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA.

Disability policy (exams)

A large part of the access arrangements process is covered in the Disability policy (exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams.

This policy can be viewed on The Thomas Hardye School website under Curriculum > Policies.

"*The head of centre/senior leadership team will recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010. This must include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates; or any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect."*

*"A **written** disability policy setting out how the centre seeks to comply with the Equality Act 2010† and fully supporting disabled candidates **must** be available for inspection purposes..."* [GR 5]

The access arrangements policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by assessors appointed by the head of centre. The assessors are appropriately qualified as required in JCQ regulations in AA, section 7.3.
Whilst professionals outside of education may recommend a certain access arrangement for a child, this must be approved by the school with regard to the candidate's normal way of working in the setting, and the relevant gathering of evidence.

The qualifications of the current assessors and coordinator

Andrew Orchard – Real training AAC and CCET
Rachel Munro – Real training AAC and CCET plus Level 7 certificate in assessing and teaching learners with SPLD.
Kirsten Crocker- Level 7 certificate in assessing and teaching learners with SPLD, Literacy Specialist Teacher
Clare Newman – Real training AAC
Only the above-named assessors will carry out assessments for Access Arrangements within the Thomas Hardye School and evidence of their qualifications is held by the Exams Officer.

Where a student transfers to the Thomas Hardye School and has had exam arrangements in place in their previous setting, the school can in some circumstances continue these arrangements if they are in receipt of the relevant paperwork and the previous assessor's certificate of qualification.
[AA 7.3]

Qualification(s) of the assessors

Evidence of the assessors' qualification(s) is held on file in the Exams Office. An annual online refresher course is undertaken by all assessors.

All assessors are in house and are direct employees of The Thomas Hardye School.

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****..."* [GR 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." and/or the Exams Officer. [AA 7.3]

How the assessment process is administered

The following process is for those students who do not have an EHCP. Access arrangements are always based on a student's normal way of working. Those with a significant and persistent need, requiring adjustments above our universal teaching offer will be referred to the access arrangements team by their subject teachers and/or teaching assistants where appropriate. This includes evidence of the student's normal way of working and how adjustments have been implemented.

In order to meet the threshold for an access arrangements assessment for students with or without an EHCP, we require evidence from at least three subject teachers for students in years 9-11, and from at least two subject teachers in years 12-13, in order to support the 'significant and persistent' nature of the difficulty. The process may involve; the student undertaking a short, written assessment (this will not be applicable for students with an EHCP), gathering information about any preexisting needs, attainment scores, any specialist advice, speaking with the student themselves, and in some cases individual referral to awarding bodies. A decision will then be made taking into account all relevant information, sometimes by the access arrangements team and some arrangements have to be formally requested through JCQ online. (In accordance with section AA7.5)
[GR 5.5]

If a candidate has a diagnosed SEND (special educational need or disability), is on the diagnostic pathway, or has a recommendation from a specialist, the decision to award an access arrangement will still be made by the centre as a result of the evidence that a certain arrangement is the students 'normal way of working' (as above).

If parents feel that their child requires a specific access arrangement, they should discuss this with their child's subject teacher in the first instance.

Recording evidence of need

Before the candidate's assessment, the referring staff member must provide the assessor with background information, i.e complete the teacher supporting information form. The assessors and teaching staff **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

All candidates **must** be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8, or Form 9 in the case of students with an EHCP.

In the case of a need for a reader/computer reader, the centre will undertake the relevant assessment and only make applications for a reader/computer reader where evidence for this is found. This is recorded on Form 9, except in the case of students for whom a Form 8 is completed with respect to other access arrangements where evidence for a reader can now be included in this.

- The assessor is required to establish if the results of tests in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has an impairment which substantially affects their performance.
- Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional.
- The assessor must carry out tests which are relevant to support the application.
- Current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores must be used, where published.
- The candidate's chronological age must be less than the 'ceiling' of the test, unless there is no published test for the candidate's age.
- Results must be given as standardised scores which use a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 (these are standard scores). Standardised scores of 84 or less are described as 'below average'. Standardised scores of 85-89 are described as 'low average'. Test results for Part 2 of Form 8 must not be reported as percentiles, scaled scores, T-scores or age-equivalent scores. Such scores must be converted into standard scores.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

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.

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

For those qualifications listed within the Deadlines section, Access arrangements online enables centres to make a single online application for a candidate requiring access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments using any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites. Access arrangements online will provide an instant response and will only allow a maximum of 26 months for any arrangement. Further information on Access arrangements online is available from: AAO – Frequently Asked Questions - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications Extra time of more than 25% (26% to 50%) and/or a Language Modifier must have tests recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 dated within 26 months of the final examination(s).Further information on Access arrangements online is available from:

http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/aao-access-arrangements-online" [AA 8.1]

Requests for assessments will be given via the Microsoft referral form which all teachers have access to. Applications for access arrangements will be completed by the assessors, in accordance with JCQ deadlines. The Form 8, Form 9 or file note, supporting evidence and JCQ approval are kept on file securely. A letter will be sent home informing students and parents of the assessment process where they have met the threshold to assess.

When an application requires referral to the awarding bodies, the Exams Office process this, giving more supporting information from their SEN file.

The SEN manager will keep detailed records of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application and appropriate evidence of need (where required) for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

For arrangements which do not require JCQ approval, for example changes to rooming, word processor (see separate policy); the in-house assessors will require evidence of normal way of working and record this on file. Small rooms for candidates with significant needs substantiated by a medical letter from a professional more specialist than a GP. In exceptional cases, the candidate may be known to the senior leadership team who can provide substantial evidence of their needs and normal way of working. The number of students in a 'small room' setting will be decided upon at the discretion of the centre and will depend entirely on capacity.

The Thomas Hardye School does not provide off site arrangements.

Sixth form students

Students in 6th form will be contacted via Microsoft Teams and Arbor to arrange an assessment, if necessary, once sufficient evidence has been received. If a student fails to turn up for an assessment, it is their responsibility to make contact with the assessment team in order to re-arrange.

Deadlines 2026-2027

JCQ deadlines are absolute and as such, Thomas Hardye School adheres to them. 5th February 2027 is our final deadline for access arrangement referrals for Year 11 and 13. We cannot assess students for exam arrangements when these have passed. The only exception to this will be students who require a temporary arrangement e.g. for a broken arm.

The use of access arrangements

If students do not use their access arrangement (and therefore it is not their 'normal way of working'), the arrangement can be withdrawn. This will be explained in the letter to parents/guardians when the arrangement is originally recorded. There is **not** an expectation for students to have used their arrangement in all subjects.

- May- Year 12 end of year assessments
- June- Year 10 end of year assessments
- December- Year 11 mock exams
- December- Year 13 mock exams

Information about JCQ Regulations and Guidance can be found here:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/