ST CUTHBERT'S
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Access Arrangements Policy (Examinations)

for the Academic Year 2026 – 2027

Approved by:	Local Governing Committee	**Approved on:**	
Review date:		**Revision approved:**	
Version No:	1	**Originator(s):**	JCQ Policy

1. What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

1.1 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 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.

1.2 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 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.

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland

2. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that St Cuthbert's Catholic High 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's **General Regulations for Approved Centres**, section 5.4) This document is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by the ALS lead/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.

Where the ALS lead/SENCo is storing documentation electronically he/she **mus**t create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([1]AA, section 4.2)

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**'. [1]This document is further referred to in this policy as AA

3. Key Staff involved in this policy.

Role	Name(s)
ALS lead/SENCo	Richard Collinson
Senior leader(s)	David Swindells, Juliana Blackie, Karl Stuart, Jenni Westwood, Matt Turner, Michael Donnelly and Paul Burrows
Head of centre	Daniel P. Murray
Assessor(s)	Christine Regan
Access Arrangement facilitator(s)	Richard Collinson and Carol Wetherell

4. General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine and implement appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (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 them 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, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.

Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis

A centre **must** make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

Applications should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working.

Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.

The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre.

The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination.

5. Equalities Policy (Exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy (Exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting, and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams.

Equalities Policy will be placed on the school's SharePoint portal for all staff to view.

The head of centre/senior leadership team will.

- Recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private candidates, ensuring compliance with all aspects of the Equality Act 2010†, particularly Section 20 (7).
- This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates.
- Where the centre is under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, the centre **must no**t charge a disabled candidate any additional fee in relation to the adjustment or aid...
- †or any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect (GR, section 5.4)

The Access Arrangements Policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

6. 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 by JCQ regulations in AA, section 7.3.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s) Christine Regan – Certificate of Psychometric Testing Assessment and Access Arrangements (CPT3A)

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties. At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s): Richard Collinson (SENco – Assistant Head) will verify/ensure that appropriate training and completion of training has taken place to Level 7 or equivalent (Postgraduate) including at lease 100hrs relating to individual specialist assessment. SENco to ensure that assessor has thorough understanding of current legislation documented in the JCQ Access to Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments booklet. SENco to ensure assessor (s) have read and understood the Equality Act 2012. Verification of assessor's qualification are held centrally (Headmaster's PA) and ensure they are appropriate to teach and work with young people.

All relevant JCQ regulations and guidance provided in GR and AA including:

The head of centre/senior leadership team will… have a written process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of their assessor(s) but that the correct procedures are followed as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments… (GR, section 5.4) The head of centre must ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate. 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. (AA, section 7.3)

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s): Evidence is held in the Exam Officer's room and by the headmaster's personal assistant through employment files as documented in 7.4 Assessor is suitably qualified.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor: R Collinson (SENco) will arrange/review candidates considered for Access Arrangements. Section 7.5 guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulty by an assessor. Part 1 of Form 8 informed by assessment/staff engagement and SENco will ensure a comprehensive picture is formed to assess needs accurately. Normal way of working (see below). Oral Reading Fluency – comprehension tested using WIAT 3. Results outlined in part 2 of Form 8. Writing skills assessment – standardised spelling accuracy and writing speed will be assessed using DASH 16 and WIAT 3. Outcomes will be recorded on part 2 of Form 8. Cognitive processing – areas of cognitive processing to be considered include short-term/long-term memory, working memory, phonological awareness/memory/processing/rapid naming, visual/motor processing, reading fluency and mathematical processing (with exception of an assessment for extra time): outcomes recorded in part 2 of Form 8 (CTOPP 2)

Picture of need/normal way of working: As indicated, form 8 is completed to paint a 'holistic picture of need' and gather evidence to confirm normal way of working. This could include previous history of needs and interventions, commentary from staff to support evidence submitted, information from previous examinations including evidence to ascertain 'normal way of working'.

Any access arrangement previously used will be outlined here in addition to assessments/diagnostic testing outcomes as indicated above.

R Collinson (SENCo) will review documentation with the assessor to ensure consistency is applied and representative of the needs ascertained in both background information and current 'normal way of working'.

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

An independent assessor **must** contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This **must** take place **before** the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor **must** be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

All candidates **must** be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor must discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SENCo. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENCo. (AA, section 7.5)

(As applicable, also refer to Supplementary Guidance March 2026 which provides additional exemplification to support understanding of the evidence that may be used to support an online application for 25% extra time)

7. Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval: *Access arrangements online* (AAO) is used to apply for approval of arrangements/adjustments for the qualifications listed within the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

AAO is a shared digital service that enables centres to request and manage pre-agreed adjustments, such as extra time, readers, scribes or modified papers, for students with specific needs, disabilities or temporary injuries in a consistent and efficient way across JCQ member qualifications.

It sits within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal and is used by centres to submit a single application per student, rather than applying separately to each member, helping to streamline administration

while supporting regulatory compliance and data protection requirements. (www.jcq.org.uk/about-us/shared-services/#aao)

AAO applications are submitted once pupil files are compete including assessment/outcomes and action taken to date. In addition to this, all necessary evidence is acquired and presented to the SENco R Collinson who will review and approve the application.

Two copies of the application are printed and stored, one within the exams officer's office and the other in the SENco' s office – both securely held in locked rooms/cabinets.

The SENCo **must** keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes, a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) evidence of assessor's qualification (where required). (AA, section 8.6)

Evidence collated in accordance to AA, section 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments), section 6 (Modified papers) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments: SENCo makes decisions about centre delegated arrangements based on evidence gained through diagnostic testing or evidence based on 'normal way of working'. Documentation on access arrangements is stored centrally in the SENCo's office in the exams access arrangements file. Information is shared with the Exams Officer for inform access arrangement

8. Centre-specific criteria for arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams): An exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

The word processor policy will be placed on the school's SharePoint staff portal for all staff to view. SENco makes decisions about centre delegated arrangements relating to word processor access. Documentation to support the use of a word processor is stored centrally in the SENCo's office/access arrangements file. Information is sent to the Exams Officer with regards to candidate's use of word processing.

A member of the centre's senior leadership team must produce a word processor policy, specific to the centre, which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments. This policy must be available for inspection. (AA, section 5.8)

Alternative rooming arrangements Policy: A decision where an exam candidate may be approved will be made by the ALS lead/SENCo.

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect **and**
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre (AA, section 5.16)

Pupils/students who require alternative rooming arrangements will be identified and discussed with pastoral and SENco to categorise need. We will consider the following:

- In the classroom support (where appropriate)
- Working in small groups for reading and/or writing or class intervention
- Literacy support lessons
- Literacy intervention strategies
- Internal school tests/exams
- Mock examinations

- Medical notes/letters
- Working with Primary schools
- Current interventions by counsellor or health prevention
- In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability is **established within the centre** (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4). It is known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities. **For** example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.
- Alternative rooming arrangements must reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations **is not** sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre.

The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation would apply 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. (AARA 5.16)