ST CUTHBERT'S
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Examination Contingency Plan

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. Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at St Cuthbert's Catholic High School by outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the document *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the JCQ guidance Preparing for disruption to examinations

This plan also confirms St Cuthbert's Catholic High School's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre:

- a contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery
- The centre's contingency planning **must** include succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.31-36), St Cuthbert's Catholic High School **must** have in place, and at all times comply with, an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan **must** cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders **must** have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- the potential impact of other events such as flooding, which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site or alternative sites which can be used if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different year groups.

St Cuthbert's Catholic High School **must** have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

St Cuthbert's Catholic High School **must** ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that St Cuthbert's Catholic High School completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even it there are no changes to centre details) which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of

someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

In the event of the absence of the head of centre or the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to the Senior Leadership Team.

3. Key Staff involved in this plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Daniel P. Murray
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Karl Stuart
Exams manager/officer	Carol Wetherell
ALS lead/SENCo	Richard Collinson
Senior leader(s)	David Swindells, Juliana Blackie, Jenni Westwood, Matt Turner, Michael Donnelly and Paul Burrows

2. Possible causes of disruption to the examination process

(a) Examination manager/officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the examination cycle not undertaken including:

i. Planning

- annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered.
- annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines.
- sufficient invigilators not recruited.

ii. Entries

- awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff.
- candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment.
- awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred.

iii. Pre-exams

- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams.
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared.
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates.
- confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions.

- internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators.

iv. Examination time

- exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies.
- required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration.
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies.

v. Results and post-results

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates.
- the facilitation of the post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- **Assistant Head (Curriculum) Mr Karl Stuart to take over in the absence of the Examination Manager/Officer.**

(b) SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

(a) Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements.
- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated.

(b) Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body.
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place.
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline.
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained.

(c) Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms.

- **Leadership Team expertise in SENCO role will cover any absence.**

(c) Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams manager/officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received.
- Final entry information not provided to the exams manager/officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies.
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled.

- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking.
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- **All departments have a member of staff who can deputise for the Head of Department in his/her absence.**

(d) Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

- Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams.
- Invigilator shortage on peak exam days
- Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- **The school and the Trust have a network of support staff who could support if necessary.**

(e) Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

- Exams manager/officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning.
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

Alternative venue details:

- **We use the Sports Hall and Exam Room for examinations. Further space in and emergency would be the Main Hall, various meeting rooms and classrooms and the gymnasium**.

(f) Cyber-security

Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

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(This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)

(GR 3.38) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must include:

- the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
- keeping all account details strictly confidential;
- the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
- how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;
- an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
- the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

A record of completed cyber security training must be held on file for inspection. This record could take the form of a certificate, a paper checklist, a spreadsheet-based checklist or a Learning Management System (LMS) report.

Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The TES training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre, implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
   - where available, MFA must be used for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data. Where MFA is not available on the centre's systems, an equivalent multi-layered security approach must be in place. For example, strong log-in controls, access and monitoring controls and secure storage so that exam-related data is protected in line with cyber security best practice.

   - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices;

c) updating any passwords that may have been exposed
d) setting up secure account recovery options
e) reviewing and managing connected applications
f) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
g) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*
   Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' MFA requirements.

reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

(g) Failure of IT systems

- MIS system failure at final entry deadline
- IT system corruption affecting candidates work
- MIS system failure during exams preparation
- Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on -screen examination
- MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- **Good practice means that deadlines are always met in advance. Should MIS system fail the IT support team has always been able to fix. Would contact the awarding bodies for advice if IT support failed to fix the problem, would act on the advice with the situation. Ensure where candidates work is produced electronically that it is backed up and implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks. On results day, Candidate Statement of Results can be downloaded from the awarding body websites, and these can be handed out to students/pupils. In the unlikely event of a power outage the centre would contact the supplier to ascertain the estimated downtime and liaise with the awarding bodies.**

(h) Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

- Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- **Contact the awarding bodies to explain situation and act on their advice with the situation.**

(i) Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period.

- Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- (Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- in the case of unitised courses, the centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.
- The centre should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning.
- Students go online to resources set by teachers if school is closed and/or do lessons via teams.

(j) Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open.

- Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- Awarding body advised of the nature of the crises, if appropriate students kept in isolation so exam is not compromised, special consideration applied for if appropriate.

(k) **Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period** (Including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

- Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- **Awarding body advised of the situation, and we would hire external hall so students could sit their exams elsewhere and complete the alternative site application form online.**
- **Alternative site details: This will be sourced in consultation with BBCET.**

(l) Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

- Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made, and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date)
- Contact awarding organisation so electronic access to exam scripts via secure external network is available. Once downloaded and copied in sight of EO, all copies to be stored in secure store, same as posted exam scripts.

(m) Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts.

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body.
- for any examinations where centres make their arrangements for transport, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*.
- centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection. Ensuring script packages are not left unattended at the collection area
- Papers to be locked in exam secure store if postal service is disrupted. If postal service not disrupted but collection stopped exam papers would be delivered to a local sorting office.

(n) Assessment evidence is not available to be marked.

- Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked.
- Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- **(Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.)**
- **Exam scripts of not collected at the end of the day are kept in fireproof safes overnight. However, if scripts destroyed before they can be marked, we would inform the awarding body and act on advice even if students have to sit the exam again on the contingency exam day or use other appropriate evidence of student achievements as defined by the awarding body.**
- **All assessment evidence is backed up on the schools' servers as most assessments go via secure download to awarding bodies. If hard copies are posted to awarding bodies each department keeps a hard copy securely in their teaching area.**

(o) Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post-results services (Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

- Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- **(Distribution of results: centre to decide to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation centres to decide to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.)**
- **(Facilitation of post-results services: centre to decide to make post results requests at an alternative location centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible)**
- **Providing we had internet access then student statement of results can be obtained through each awarding body. These can be distributed to students as normal. If no internet access, we would have to wait until the service was resumed as well as contacting awarding bodies for advice and act on the advice.**

Alternative venue details: This will be sourced in consultation with BBCET.