ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

2025/26

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
M Cousins	
Date of next review	November 2026

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
Senco (or equivalent role)	**Miss A MacKay**
Senior leader(s)	**Mr L Clarke, Mr M Cousins**
Head of centre	**Mrs S Howell**
Exams officer	**Mr G Pyle**
Assessor(s)	**Christine Regan**
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	**Learning Support Staff**

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What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

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'. (AARA[1], Definitions)

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. (AARA[1], Definitions)

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

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Sacred Heart 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**, 5.4)
This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by SENCo (or equivalent role) 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 SENCo (or equivalent role) is storing documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([1]AARA 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**'.

[1]This publication is further referred to in this policy as AARA

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 appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and 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.

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 end of year 9 prior to commencing key stage 4. Final check taken in half term 2 in year 11.

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.

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.

This policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment processes

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 AARA 7.3.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

Christine Regan , Cert of Psychometric testing (CPT3A)

Appointment of assessors

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 AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

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

The head of centre/senior leadership team will ensure that all necessary staff have the relevant qualifications and provide ongoing CPD opportunities.

A certificate to confirm qualifications is required and held on file to ensure that Sacred Heart meets the requirements of the JCQ (AARA 7.3)

Reporting the appointment of assessors

A copy of the required qualification is held in Learning Support and in the Exams Office in line with AARA 7.4 (Reporting the appointment of assessors) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

Senco follows AARA regulations and guidance for assessing a students learning support requirements.

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

Evidence is taken from official testing and also from evidence provided by teachers who observe Overtype here information relating to the centre's process for painting a 'holistic picture of need' and gathering evidence to confirm normal way of working.

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.

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)

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. (Refer to AARA 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and 6 (Modified papers).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8 Summary)

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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 for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

AAO applications are submitted once pupil files are compete including assessment/outcomes and action taken to date. In addition to this, all necessary evidence **including Candidate Personal Data Consent form** is acquired and presented to the SENco who will review and approve the application, complete the **Data Protection Confirmation by the SENco** prior to the processing of the online application by the Assessor and Exams Officer.

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 signed candidate personal data consent form, a completed Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENco form, 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.

Centre-specific criteria for particular 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.

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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.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs will be made by the SENCo (or equivalent role).

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 (AARA 5.16)

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

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.