

Beech Lodge School
Access Arrangements Policy
2024/2025

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.

Approved/reviewed by	James Thorpe
Date of next review	September 2025

Key staff involved in the procedure

Role	Names
Proprietor	Daniela Shanly
Head of Centre	James Thorpe
SENCo	Sara Doherty
SLT members	Daniela Shanly, Lucy Barnes, Dan Gillespie, James Thorpe, Jack Rider
Teaching staff	All staff
Access arrangement facilitator/Exams Officer	Sara Doherty/Shelley Hopper

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'. (AARA¹, 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. (AARA¹, 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 Beech Lodge 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 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. (¹AARA 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**'.

¹This 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, who will coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, candidates for whom English is an additional language, as well as 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.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course.

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.

A copy of the Equality Policy (exams) is held by the Exams Officer and a further copy is held in the admin office. In addition, electronic copies of all exam related policies appear on the school website and on the staff drive on the school network so that all teaching staff can access them.

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

Types of access arrangements

Access arrangements may include:

1. Supervised rest breaks
2. Extra time of up to 25%
3. Extra time of up to 50%
4. Extra time of over 50%
5. Reader/Computer reader
6. Read aloud
7. Scribe/Voice to text software
8. Word processor

9. Braille transcript
10. Prompter
11. Oral Language Modifier
12. Live speaker for pre-recorded examinations components
13. Sign Language Interpreter
14. Practical Assistant
15. Alternative accommodation away from the centre
16. Other arrangements for candidates with disabilities

In line with JCQ regulations, Beech Lodge School will make all decisions with regard to access arrangements based upon whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect, in conjunction with the access arrangement being the candidate's normal way of working at Beech Lodge School – demonstrating the involvement of the teaching staff in determining the need for the access arrangement.

Appropriate evidence of need will be available for inspection.

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 AARA 7.3.

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

OCR Level 7 Certificate in Assessing and Teaching Learners with SpLD (Dyslexia) Assessment Practising Certificate issued by patoss BSc Honours degree in Psychology Post Graduate Certificate in Education MSc Educational Psychology

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)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The assessor must hold a post-graduate qualification in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 which must include training in all of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The theoretical basis underlying psychometric tests, such as the concepts of validity and reliability; standard deviations and the normal curve; raw scores, standard scores, quotients, percentiles and age equivalent scores; the concept of statistically significant discrepancies between scores; standard error of measurement and confidence intervals○ The appropriate use of nationally standardised tests for the age group being tested• Upon appointment at Beech Lodge School, the assessor is required to produce a copy of their qualification and assessment practicing certificate which is held in their personal file. |
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A further copy of the qualification and assessment practicing certificate is held by the SENCo/exams officer

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

The SENCo/exams officer holds a file evidencing that all assessors are suitably qualified. The names of all external assessors are entered in Access Arrangements Online to confirm their status, as required by JCQ regulations in AARA 7.4

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

- All previous relevant assessment records, diagnosis' reports and documentation pertaining to a student's needs will be requested upon joining Beech Lodge School and held on record in the pupil file; this will assist the SENCo/exams officer in determining any potential entitlement to access arrangements.
- Baseline assessments are conducted of all students on admission to Beech Lodge School. This will be a full cognitive assessment in all cases. In addition, a speech language and communication assessment and/or an occupational therapy assessment will be conducted if appropriate. Assessments are updated yearly. This provides recommendations to teaching staff on how to support the student in class and will provide further information to '*paint a picture of need*' and identify potential candidates who qualify for access arrangements.
- Students and parents are informed, in advance, about the assessment process, and the reasons for students being tested.
- Students and the assessor are provided with a quiet space for the assessment to be conducted.
- A copy of the assessment scores and outcomes is kept in the students access arrangement file.
- All teaching staff are given a list detailing the access arrangement entitlement of all students, and this list is updated as necessary.
- Parents can contact the school to ask for advice about further testing if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. Once contact has been made with the parent, the SENCO/exams officer will investigate their concerns by speaking to the student's subject teachers. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to test a student further.
- Any staff member can contact the SENCo and Exams Officer directly at any time to raise any concerns about a candidates' learning or ability to access to the curriculum.
- Access arrangements will be applied for using *Access Arrangements On-line* before the annual JCQ deadline. The exception to this is where an emergency arrangement has been put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment.
- Beech Lodge is a school for alternative provision and so all of our students will have either special educational learning needs or social, emotional and mental health issues. Due to the nature of our students' difficulties, we do not permit private candidates to take exams at this centre, other than for former pupils within a year of leaving Beech Lodge.

The vast majority of pupils at Beech Lodge have an EHCP and therefore do not require a form 8. Where a candidate has a current Education, Health and Care Plan, the SENCo must substantiate the documentation with a picture of need. This must be completed using Form

9. Those requiring a form 8 are formally assessed following AA 7.5 guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's difficulties.

Recording evidence of need

- The SENCo has a separate file for each student with relevant information pertaining to any formal diagnosis', background information, relevant assessment reports, evidence of need/normal way of working, as well as details of both individual and group interventions and performance monitoring data.
- Six monthly performance monitoring is conducted for all students to monitor their reading comprehension, spelling ability and maths ability. Standardised scores are produced and the results are disseminated to all relevant subject teachers and SLT members to a) inform their future teaching practices and b) monitor the success of interventions & plan future interventions. Any low scores also provide continuing '*evidence of need*'.
- Access arrangement testing is routinely done on all students starting examination courses during the Autumn Term to provide up to date scores and continuing '*evidence of need*'.
- The tests used to determine entitlement to access arrangement are designed to examine the following:
 - Reading speed
 - Reading comprehension
 - Spelling ability
 - Writing speed/legibility
 - Processing speed
 - Working memory

For that purpose, Beech Lodge uses the WIAT, DASH, CTOPP 1 and 2, TOWRE and TOMAL

- All tests used are on the SASC approved list of tests for access arrangements.
- At the time of applying for access arrangements, a form 8 will be completed by the appropriate persons.
- Where a candidate has a current Education, Health and Care Plan, the SENCo must substantiate the documentation with a picture of need. This must be completed using Form 9.
- This '*picture of need*' will be updated accordingly and used to apply for access arrangements at the appropriate times. Additional supporting evidence will be required to process applications in this way.
- When tests, formal assessments and mock exams are conducted, a note is made where the expected test time has elapsed by marking a line on the test/assessment paper. The student is then allowed the appropriate amount of extra time as designated. This enables the subject teacher to ascertain the effectiveness of the extra time awarded.
- The exam officer will monitor the effectiveness of any alternative ways of working and access arrangements to ensure that they are still required and continue to be of benefit to the student. If an arrangement is not used or is found to no longer be of benefit to the student, it will be removed in accordance with JCQ guidance.
- A data protection notice will be signed by the candidates.

Picture of need/normal way of working

- Subject teachers complete a checklist detailing a student's '*normal way of working*' for every student. This details comprehensively all additional/alternative arrangements that are used in class to support the student with the teaching and learning. This is repeated every two years to ensure that there is '*continuing evidence of need*'. Teachers will complete a checklist for new students once they are familiar enough with the student to identify their needs.
- As subjects vary, leading to different demands of the candidate, support may be needed in just one or two subjects; another candidate may need support in all their subjects. The key principle is that the specialist assessor can show a history of support and provision.
- All teaching staff are reminded on a regular basis by the SENCO/exams officer to ensure that students are working with their correct access arrangement entitlement and that the students' workbooks are annotated to reflect their designated '*normal way of working*'. The SENCO/exams officer will do periodic spot checks of the student's work books to ensure that the correct way of working is being observed. The SENCO/exams officer may also talk directly to the students to enquire how well their designated arrangement is working
- At the assessment stage, or anytime thereafter, if a need is identified, any relevant assistive technology that is arranged for the student will become their '*normal way of working*'.
- Being a special provision school, the timetable is already modified at source to take account of our student's slower pace of learning and working, and this arrangement is therefore their '*normal way of working*'
- The delivery of the teaching and the language used is adapted at source to take account of our student's learning difficulties and this arrangement is therefore their '*normal way of working*'.
- Resources are adapted at source to take account of our student's learning difficulties. This arrangement is therefore their '*normal way of working*'
- Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo must provide the assessor with background information, i.e a picture of need that has been painted as per Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.
- The independent assessor will contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This information must be provided to the assessor before the candidate is assessed.
- All candidates must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8 (AA, section 7.5).
- The independent assessor will discuss access arrangements with the SENCo. The responsibility to request access arrangements specifically lies with the SENCo. (AA7.5)
- In addition, peer reading will be used and teaching staff may assist with reading. The student's workbooks will be annotated accordingly to reflect '*evidence of need*'.
- Students who are unable to write by hand will record their work using a word processor. Dragon Naturally Speaking is installed on laptop computers of students who are unable to write by hand and unable to use a word processor. Therefore, the student's work books will have typed work in them which will reflect their alternative and '*normal way of working*'
- Where a student is not able to use either a word processor or voice to text technology because of their learning needs, the teacher or LSA will scribe where appropriate. The

student's workbook will be annotated accordingly to reflect both *'evidence of need'* and *'normal way of working'*.

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. AARA, chapter 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and chapter 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)

- Formal access arrangement testing is carried out by the assessor at the beginning of the Autumn term.
- Arrangements must be processed and approved before an examination or controlled assessment/coursework as per the deadlines set out by the awarding bodies.
- A signed copy of the assessors report will be held on file, along with a data protection form signed by the student – consent form must be retained for 26 months from the date of the online application being approved.
- Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation for access arrangements, the SENCo/Exams Officer then applies to the exam boards via AAO; the decision is instant and a printed copy of the confirmation is held in the students file.
- As per JCQ regulations certain applications for students with an EHCP will need to be supported with additional evidence of need; for example:
 - A letter/report from CAMHS or a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist or
 - A letter/report from a hospital consultant or
 - A letter/report from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service or
 - A letter/report from the Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or
 - A letter/report from a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) or
 - A letter report from an occupational therapist
- At this point the access arrangement is added to the list of students and circulated to relevant staff.
- Parents/students are informed of the access arrangement by letter.
- All information is held on file by the SENCo and will be available for inspection.

If an application is not approved, additional paperwork/evidence may be required to justify the request being made. In this situation the SENCo/specialist assessor will work together with the Exams Officer to ensure that the correct evidence is submitted to the relevant awarding body or bodies. The Exams Officer will be notified by the awarding body once an outcome has been decided. A printed copy of any such outcome is to be kept on file.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

Some access arrangements can be "Centre-delegated" which means that an online application to JCQ is not required. Examples of such arrangements include supervised rest/movement breaks, candidates who read aloud, use of a word processor, use of a prompter, coloured overlays and alternative rooming within the centre. Where appropriate, the relevant examinations cover sheet will be completed and/or (if applicable), details noted of supervised rest/movement breaks on the exam incident log. The SENCo/Exams officer must be satisfied that there is a genuine need for the arrangement to be put in place and have supporting evidence on file.

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.

Beech Lodge School has a written *Word Processor Policy (Exams)* which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for exams. A copy of this policy is held in the admin office along with all centre devised policies. This policy is located in the Exam Officer's Office, on the school website (exam policies page) and on the staff drive. Policies are also available on request from the school office either in paper form or electronically.

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 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)

Beech Lodge is a school for special provision. As such, some of our students have difficulty with self-regulation as a consequence of a long-term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional needs. This means that some candidates routinely work with alternative rooming arrangements, so that they can be better regulated in order to access the teaching and learning. It also prevents them from disrupting the learning of others in the same room. For this reason, some candidates may therefore require alternative rooming arrangements and it will reflect the candidate's normal way of working in the classroom and in internal school tests, assessments and mock examinations. The only exception to this would be a temporary illness or other temporary impairment which will be clearly evidenced.