

Exams Access Arrangements: information for parents & carers

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What are Access Arrangements?

If a student has an identified learning need or disability that means that they are disadvantaged in comparison to other students of similar ability, they may qualify for Access Arrangements for examinations. There are a number of different types of Access Arrangement and these are determined by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The main ones are listed at the bottom of this document. The criteria that must be met for an Access Arrangement changes frequently and JCQ issue regulation booklets every year. You can access these online – www.jcq.org.uk for information. *A student does not need to have a formal diagnosis to qualify for an access arrangement, but a learning need does need to be evident within the school setting. Similarly, many students at WBS have diagnosed SEN but are not granted access arrangements as their needs can be met within the usual exam processes.*

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body (Exam Board) to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. (JCQ 2017)

Assessing students

Ongoing information is gathered about students throughout their education journey. This is done through teacher feedback, data analysis, learning walks, intervention meetings, pupil voice, and SEND reviews where appropriate. Students may be eligible for Access Arrangements if they are significantly underperforming for their own ability level over a period of time.

Access Arrangements will not be officially granted and applied for until the beginning of Y10 because any application is only valid for 26 months.

In order for us to apply we need to provide evidence of an ongoing need and show that the Access Arrangement we apply for is the student's normal way of working. Therefore, throughout Key Stage 3 we may trial various strategies and conduct a number of different observations and assessments in order to make sure that we are not only meeting the criteria but that we can work out what might be the best provision for the individual.

No Access Arrangement is formalised until the start of Year 10 and any arrangement made before that time is essentially part of the assessment process.

Students may arrive from primary school having had Access Arrangements in Year 6; please be aware that due to the regulations being different for assessments in primary school, these do not carry forward and that the assessment process for GCSE examinations does not occur until Year 10. Please also be aware that having an Education Health and Care Plan or diagnosis of a Specific Learning Difficulty, does not necessarily mean that a student will qualify for Access Arrangements, even if your child has regular in class support. The Access Arrangements are granted based on individual need.

As part of the exploration process, if your child's teachers and SEND team have raised that your child may require AA, a member of the SEND team will be in contact during KS4 to inform you about any testing or information gathering that may take place for your child, and the subsequent outcome of this. This process may be lengthy, and will include a period of time where assessments are due to take place due to the evidence of exploration of need that is required by JCQ. If you are raising this concern as the parent/guardian, the same exploration processes will be followed. Deadline for applications are 31st Jan 2026 and a period of exploration is required prior to this so please note that concerns raised after Jan 9th are high unlikely to be able to be explored due to the regulation about normal ways of working and the evidence required. If you believe there is an exception circumstance, please contact the school. **Please see appendix.**

If you have any queries, please contact SEND@wbs.school.

Access Arrangements information and type

“The SENCo must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties; and the candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010”.

Access Arrangements and Reasonable adjustments - JCQ

Below is a summary of the current JCQ directives regarding Access Arrangements. The information is extensive but not exhaustive, please see www.jcq.org.uk for more information.

Supervised rest breaks:

- Students with RB will be in the Sports Hall unless another AA is in place
- “where a candidate other than a diagnosed learning difficulty, the SENCo must have trialled and exhausted the option of rest breaks through mock exams and internal test ahead of considering 25% extra time” JCQ 2025-26
- These will be allowed where it is the candidate's normal way of working.
- Medical conditions – rest breaks can be agreed if you have a serious medical condition, examples of this are type 1 diabetes or a sensory need. Medical evidence is required. AD(H)D - if you have a diagnosis we will look at the recommendations and consider whether rest breaks will be helpful in exams. Evidence of your diagnosis is required.
- Evidence from CAMHs of current treatment for a condition that requires rest breaks. However, we do not accept evidence from this service if you have been discharged from treatment.

Please Note: We are not able or allowed to provide rest breaks for anxiety/worry/ stress caused by taking exams. It is normal to feel stressed and worried about exams. Please feel reassured that our exam invigilators are experienced and trained to deal with students who are upset and worried on the day.

Prompt:

- A prompter may be permitted where a candidate has a substantial and long term adverse impairment resulting in persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating.
- This will mirror the prompt that students are given within the classroom setting in order to support with re-focus.

25% extra time:

- These must be applied for and approved by JCQ and the exam board by Jan 31st 2026
- “Extra time simply means prolonging the time a candidate remains in a potentially stressful environment [...] may not address the underlying issue which is often related to emotional regulation or attention” JCQ 2025-26. Therefore, rest breaks may be more appropriate.
- “Where a candidate has an impairment other than a diagnosed learning difficulty, the SENCo must have trialled and exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks through internal tests and mock exams” JCQ 2025-26
- Applications will be considered based on either a Statement of Special Educational Need or an assessment carried out no earlier than Year 10 by a specialist assessor to confirm a learning difficulty.
- Candidates must have at least two below average standardised scores of 84 or less; or one below average standardised score of 84 or less **and** one low average standardised score (85-89). In either scenario, the two standardised scores **must** relate to two different areas of speed of working as below:
 - speed of reading **and** speed of writing; or
 - speed of reading **and** cognitive processing; or
 - speed of writing **and** cognitive processing; or
 - **two different areas** of cognitive processing which have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on speed of working.
 - **Evidence must be written from teaching staff as to why the candidate requires extra time and how they use it**

Allocation of a reader:

- These are typically in place for students whose impairment is significant enough for them to have been allocated a TA to support them during their time in school
- These must be applied for and approved by JCQ and the exam board by Jan 31st 2026
- Applications will be considered based on either a Statement of Special Educational Need or an assessment carried out no earlier than Year 10 by a specialist assessor to confirm a learning difficulty.

- A reader will only be allowed if; language and vocabulary difficulties have a substantial and long term adverse effect on the candidates' ability to access written text or there is a substantial and long term visual impairment which means the candidate cannot access Braille or enlarged print independently.
- Where substantial impairment is evidenced the SENCo must be able to demonstrate the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other, non-disabled candidates undertaking the exam.
- A reader is not permitted in exams where reading is being assessed (e.g. Eng. Lang.)

Allocation of a scribe:

- These are typically in place for students whose impairment is significant enough for them to have been allocated a TA to support them during their time in school
- These must be applied for and approved by JCQ and the exam board by Jan 31st 2026
- Applications will be considered based on either a Statement of Special Educational Need or an assessment carried out no earlier than Year 10 by a specialist assessor to confirm a learning difficulty.
- If a word processor is the candidates' normal way of working within school then it should be used within examinations.
- The use of a scribe must reflect the candidates' normal way of working within school.
- A scribe should only be used where a candidate cannot use a word processor with the spelling and grammar check disabled.
- A scribe will only be allowed where the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the candidates' writing or a candidate cannot write, type or Braille independently, or at sufficient speed to record their answers even with extra time allowed.

Word Processor:

The following criteria details how the centre awards and allocates word processors for examinations and controlled assessments.

- If a candidate believes they should be using a word processor for their examinations and/or controlled assessments they must first speak with the SEND team. The use of a laptop will only be granted to a student if it is appropriate to their needs and approved by the SENCo.
- If the school agrees that a word processor is acceptable for a candidate to use in their examinations and/or controlled assessments (as set out in Section 5.8 of the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments), they will inform the examinations officer and subject leader staff by email.
- The examinations officer, will then add this entitlement to their Exams profile so it is recorded for public examination seasons. However, please note that the candidate may or may not wish to use the word processor on the day of the examination and may only use the word processor for certain subjects.
- The subject teacher will be responsible for making sure that the word processor is ready if the candidate wants to use this for their assessment. However, the candidate may or may

not wish to use the word processor on the day of the assessment. Please note that word processors cannot be used in assessments if prohibited for that unit and/or specification. The examinations officer will be able to advise and/or contact the relevant awarding body to seek clarification or permission to use a word processor in that assessment unit.

- The JCQ requirement and recommendation for candidates regarding the use of word processors in examinations and/or controlled assessments is that this is their **normal way of working**.
- Where possible, students taking year group and in class assessments will have the opportunity to use a laptop, if one is available. There will be occasions, particularly during the year 11 mock exam series and the summer public exam series, where laptops may not be available to other year groups.

Smaller room Invigilation: (students sit with others in a smaller room rather than in the Sports Hall) for examinations and assessments.

JCQ requires medical evidence of need from a consultant or specialist on headed paper if this is not a student's usual way of working, and centre based evidence is still required. We cannot accept a letter from GPs. This must be dated within one year of the exam to be taken. General anxiety, low mood, stress indicators or other common conditions or factors will generally not provide adequate evidence for separate invigilation. We encourage all students requesting separate invigilation to make use of the school's pastoral team and school counsellor to help with student welfare, wellbeing and exam stress.

Individual Invigilation

Individual Invigilation can only be accommodated in highly exceptional circumstances and reflects a student's usual way of working. We require evidence of need from a consultant or specialist which provides details of the student's condition and states exactly why Individual Invigilation is necessary. Following submission of this evidence, the SENCo and Examinations Officer will make a final decision and communicate this back to the applicant and parents/carers.

Temporary Access Arrangements and applications for **special consideration** can also be made in certain situations. These arrangements can be processed as the need arises. E.G. a Year 11 pupil has broken a finger of their writing hand. In such a case, the school would look at the most appropriate and reasonable adjustment to make to ensure that the pupil can access the exam but is not given an unfair advantage. As with all applications, the school is required to ensure that the appropriate documentation is held on file to support any arrangement made.

In line with JCQ regulations, WBS 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 arrangement being the candidate's **normal way of working** in lessons – demonstrating the involvement of the teaching staff in determining the need for the Access Arrangement.

Appropriate evidence of need will be available at WBS for inspection. A portfolio of 'evidence of need' is obtained by the SEND team to support any application for Access Arrangements; this will include teacher feedback and evidence of student's work taken from exam conditions.

Identifying the need for Access Arrangements within The West Bridgford School

Students who may qualify for formal Access Arrangements during KS4 are continually identified during KS3. At this stage needs are identified, rather than formally assessed. Adjustments to Quality First, Inclusive and Adaptive teaching within lessons are then made according to need to enable a student to access their learning and make progress.

All staff are involved in monitoring the adjustments.

Assessment process:

- During the transition process from Year 6 into Year 7 the transition team will gather relevant information from feeder schools regarding a student's needs.
- Ongoing assessment of need is gathered through the following methods:

Teacher feedback, data analysis, learning walk feedback, intervention meetings, pupil voice, and SEND reviews where appropriate.
- If there is evidence that a student still faces substantial impairment after rest breaks have been trialled, psychometric testing will be considered for Access Arrangements. The most recent tests are binding and determine any subsequent Access Arrangements.
- Specialist assessments for Access Arrangements will be carried out at WBS by an appropriately qualified assessor. Private reports may be taken into consideration however these will not form the basis of any decisions about Access Arrangements without evidence of need in the school and from this evidence of Normal Ways of Working in lessons ahead of the application deadline 31st Jan 2026. Where evidence of need and normal ways of working demonstrate that the student may be entitled to Access Arrangements, they will still be tested by the independent assessor employed by the school or Trust.
- At WBS, examination officers, specialist assessors, primary and secondary SEND teams and teaching staff all work together to ensure that appropriate Access Arrangements are put in place for all tests and examinations.
- If a student chooses continually not to use the agreed Access Arrangements either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement, then the arrangements will be removed, and parents/carers informed.
- If the SEND team in school and/or specialist assessor considers that Access Arrangements cease to be the student's '**normal way of working**', they reserve the right to withdraw the permission, providing written confirmation to parents/carers.

Procedures for processing an application

In all cases, the following steps will be followed to ensure that the required evidence is collated, and the correct application procedure followed:

1. Teachers will complete a questionnaire.
2. Parents/carers will be informed of the process.
3. The relevant member of the SEND team will meet with the student to discuss their needs.

4. The SEND team will collate the information and determine whether a student is eligible for psychometric testing, and which areas of assessment are required.
5. The SEND team will complete Part 1 of the JCQ Form 8.
6. Assessments will take place.
7. The assessor will assess the student and complete, hand sign and date Part 2 of Form 8.
8. Part 3 of Form 8, making recommendations for Access Arrangements, must be completed by the school following the assessment.
9. The SEND team will make an application for Access Arrangements to the JCQ through Access Arrangements Online. Applications must be processed and approved no later than the JCQ published deadline. Late applications are only permitted in very specific circumstances and will be subject to additional scrutiny.
10. The student, parents/carers, teachers and the Examinations Officer will be notified of the outcome and implications for schoolwork and internal tests.
11. Evidence will be kept on file for inspection by the JCQ inspector, including the original copy of Form 8, the signed Data Protection Notice, confirmation of approval of the Access Arrangement and the portfolio of evidence of need/**normal way of working**. Evidence must be available on request.

Externally commissioned reports

Private reports cost a significant amount of money. This means that parents/carers who are unable to obtain a private report due to their financial circumstances are put at a disadvantage. As an exam centre WBS must be consistent in its decisions and ensure that **no student is either given an unfair advantage or disadvantaged by any arrangements put in place**. Therefore, when parents/carers submit such reports, we will look for evidence of a history of need and the student's **normal way of working**. Such privately commissioned reports can sometimes be in conflict with what WBS's Specialist Assessor recommends. If the school's diagnostic tests contradict privately commissioned reports, then the school's tests and assessments will take precedence and will inform Exam Access Arrangement decisions and no further negotiation regarding this matter will take place with the parent/carer.

A parent/carer may choose to have their child assessed by a private educational psychologist or private dyslexia assessor. Where parents/carers do commission diagnostic assessments for their child, the organisation or individual performing the assessment should have prior contact with the school to gather background information on the student before going ahead with the assessment. A privately commissioned assessment carried out **without prior consultation with the centre will not be able to be used to support the Access Arrangements process. See appendix.**

Please see appendix for JCQ overview, and contact SEND@wbs.school for additional enquiries.

Appendix

JCQ information for parents & carers



Guidance for parents, carers and students about access arrangements



WHAT ARE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

- Access arrangements allow students with specific needs, such as special educational needs or disabilities, to access an exam.
- They allow students to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the exam.



HOW WILL THE PROCESS START?

- Parents and carers should let the SENCo know as soon as possible if their child has additional needs. Good and open communication is important.
- Students in further education should record their additional needs on the college's enrolment form.
- The SENCo will work with teachers and the student to identify possible arrangements.
- Various access arrangements are available. For example, support for students who have difficulties with reading, writing, speed of working or concentration.
- Not all students with additional needs will require access arrangements. This depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. Additional needs or a diagnosis alone do not entitle a student to access arrangements.



WHO WILL MAKE THE ASSESSMENT?

- If a student has learning difficulties, the school or college's appointed assessor must conduct the assessment to determine the need for access arrangements, such as 25% extra time.
- If an external assessor diagnoses a learning difficulty (for example, dyslexia or dyscalculia), the assessment can only be used as evidence for access arrangements if the assessor has liaised with the school or college and received the necessary access arrangements paperwork in advance of the assessment taking place.
- Specialists (for example, a medical consultant or a psychiatrist) are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are **not** responsible for decisions about access arrangements.
- The school or college must decide which access arrangements a student has for their exams.
- Teachers must give evidence to show that an access arrangement is needed. The school or college will record how effective the arrangement is in the classroom, in internal tests or in mock exams.



WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The school or college will have to apply for some arrangements.
- If a student has complex needs, a school or college can discuss their needs with the exam board.

FINALLY

Schools and colleges **must** follow the rules. They are inspected and if they are found to be breaking the rules, this will be malpractice.

**If you have any questions about access arrangements,
please speak to the school, college or SENCo.**