Kingsmeadow Community School

A GUIDE TO EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



Kingsmeadow
Integrity, Resilience, Respect



What are exam access arrangements?

Access arrangements are agreed before an exam. They allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the exam and show what they know, without changing what the exam is testing.

Under the Equality Act 2010, exam boards must make reasonable adjustments where a disabled student would be at a substantial disadvantage. An adjustment may be unique to one student and may not appear on the standard list.

An adjustment may not be reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs or timeframes, or affects the security or integrity of the exam. Exam boards do not have to change what an exam is assessing (the assessment objectives).

(Based on JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, 2025/26)

Examples of Access Arrangements

Examples of access arrangements include:

- 25% extra time
- Supervised rest breaks
- Help with reading: a reader, computer reader or exam reading pen
- Help with writing: a scribe, speech recognition technology or a word processor
- A prompter
- A separate room within the school
- Modified papers, such as enlarged print or coloured paper

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 SENDCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.
JCQ (2025/26)



What is the process for securing access arrangements?

How will the process start?

- Please let the SENDCo know as soon as possible if your child has additional needs. Good, open communication matters. You can contact our SENDCo and SEND team at contactsend@kingsmeadow.org.uk.

- The SEND team will work with teachers and your child to identify possible arrangements. This usually happens during Key Stage 3, so that arrangements are in place by the start of Year 10.

- Not every student with additional needs will need access arrangements. It depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. An additional need or a diagnosis does not, on its own, mean a student will have access arrangements.

What happens once an additional need has been highlighted?

- We first gather evidence of how your child normally works in lessons, in internal tests and in mock exams. This includes feedback from their teachers.

- Some arrangements, such as 25% extra time for a learning difficulty, also need a formal assessment. This is carried out by the school's qualified assessor, no earlier than the start of Year 9, **and only after the teacher evidence has been gathered.**

- For students whose needs are not a learning difficulty (for example, autism, ADHD, anxiety or a medical condition), we will usually consider supervised rest breaks before 25% extra time. JCQ advises that rest breaks are often more helpful for these students.

- Specialists, such as a medical consultant or psychiatrist, provide a formal diagnosis. **They do not decide on access arrangements.** The SENDCo makes that decision, following JCQ rules.

- Any arrangement must be your child's normal way of working in school. We record how well it works in lessons, tests and mock exams.

- JCQ **does not** allow comments from parents to be recorded on the application forms. Please still share what you know with us, as it helps us know what to look for.

- If the evidence **does not** meet JCQ's criteria, the school cannot put the arrangement in place. **Doing so could count as malpractice.**

Access Arrangement Information

Below is a summary of the current JCQ directives regarding access arrangements.

Supervised Rest Breaks

During a supervised rest break, the exam clock is paused. Your child takes a short break without access to the paper, supervised by an invigilator.
Rest breaks may be allowed where:

- your child has a long-term difficulty that has a substantial effect on them;
- rest breaks are their normal way of working in school; and
- their difficulties are known to staff, such as their form tutor, head of year or the SENDCo.

This can include learning needs, autism and other communication needs, sensory or physical needs, medical conditions, and social, emotional and mental health needs such as ADHD or anxiety.

Please Note: feeling nervous or worried about exams is normal, and is not on its own a reason for rest breaks. If your child has an ongoing anxiety or mental health difficulty, please talk to us. Our invigilators are experienced and trained to support students who are upset or worried on the day.

25% Extra Time

There are two routes, depending depending on your child's needs. Students with 25% extra time normally sit their exams in the hall, unless they have another arrangement in place.

Learning difficulties (for example dyslexia)

The evidence needed is:

- the SENDCo's record of how your child works in lessons, tests and mock exams, including teacher feedback, completed before any assessment;
- an assessment by the school's qualified assessor, no earlier than the start of Year 9;
- samples of internal tests or mock exam papers showing your child using the extra time; and
- comments from teachers on why your child needs extra time and how they use it.

The assessment must show at least two below average scores (84 or less), or one below average score and one low average score (85–89). The two scores must be in two different areas of speed of working, such as speed of reading, speed of writing or cognitive processing.
Where a student has two low average scores (85–89), the exam board must approve the application.

Other needs (for example autism, ADHD, a medical condition, a sensory or physical need, or a learning difficulty with an Education, Health and Care Plan)

Assessment scores are not needed. The evidence needed is:

- the SENDCo's record of your child's current difficulties, confirming that 25% extra time is their normal way of working;
- evidence confirming the diagnosis, for example from CAMHS, a registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist or a local authority specialist service, or a current EHCP;
- samples of internal tests or mock exam papers showing your child using the extra time; and
- comments from teachers on why your child needs extra time and how they use it.
- For these needs, we will usually consider supervised rest breaks first, as JCQ advises.
- In exceptional cases, while a student is on a waiting list, a CAMHS or NHS letter confirming they have been accepted for assessment may be used instead of a diagnosis.

"It is important that SENDCOs consider and, where appropriate, implement access arrangements that will prepare candidates for the workplace. 25% extra time may not always be the most appropriate arrangement. SENDCos should instead consider alternative arrangements, such as assistive technology, listening to music/white noise, supervised rest breaks or a timer."

(JCQ 2025/26)

Prompter

- 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.

Allocation of reader/computer reader

- They may be allowed where a student has poor reading skills because of a long-term difficulty, and a reader is their normal way of working in school.
- This can include learning difficulties, autism, speech, language and communication needs, sensory or physical needs, social, emotional and mental health needs, and English as an additional language. The SENDCo confirms the difficulty and normal way of working.
- A computer reader can be used in exams that test reading. A human reader cannot.

Scribe / speech recognition technology

If a word processor (with spelling and grammar check switched off) is your child's normal way of working, it should be used instead. This lets them work independently and gain marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
A scribe is only allowed where a long-term difficulty has a substantial effect on your child's writing, or they cannot write, type or Braille independently or fast enough, even with extra time. It must be their normal way of working.

- **Learning difficulties:** an assessment by the school's qualified assessor, no earlier than the start of Year 9, showing a below average score (84 or less) for writing speed, or for spelling accuracy with spellings that cannot be recognised.
- **Other needs** (autism, sensory or physical needs, social, emotional and mental health needs, or a learning difficulty with an EHCP): no assessment is needed. The SENDCo records the difficulties and normal way of working, supported by evidence confirming the diagnosis or a current EHCP.

Poor spelling alone is not usually enough, if the writing can still be read.

Word Processor

- If a candidate believes they should be using a word processor for their examinations and/or controlled assessments they must first speak with the SENDCo. The use of a laptop will only be granted to a student if it is appropriate to their needs and approved by the SENDCo.
- If the SENDCo 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 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.**
- A word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because they now want to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard or because they use a laptop at home.



Joint Council for Qualifications

It is important to note that the school is governed by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and guidance regarding access arrangements.

We are inspected by the JCQ each year.

Parents & Carers can find the regulations and guidance here:
https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/

Malpractice

Failure to comply with JCQ regulations has the potential to constitute malpractice, which may impact on the candidate's results).
Candidates and parents/carers should also note that centres are required to report anyone who attempts to unfairly influence/place undue pressure upon a centre staff member. As this is deemed as an attempt to undermine the integrity of the examination/assessment, it is defined as malpractice and may lead to one of the following sanctions:

- Disqualification from the unit
- Disqualification from all units in one or more qualifications taken in that series or academic year
- Disqualification from the whole qualification
- Disqualification from all qualifications taken in that series or academic year
- Barred from entering for examinations for a set period of time



Other Information

Young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

• Although access arrangements themselves aren't special educational provision that can be secured through an EHC plan (because it is the exam awarding bodies that have the power to make an access arrangements, not the Local Authority) the usual way someone needs to be supported to work may be things that need to be thought about when specifying special educational needs and provision in an EHC plan. For example, there may be reference made to the young person to use technology to assist them with reading (such as reading pen or computer reader) or to write (such as the use of a laptop).
• Should you have concerns about your child accessing their learning and access adjustments are not specific within the EHC Plan, you should discuss this with our SEND team who will, if necessary, be able to submit evidence to the Local Authority at the point of the Annual Review. As a reminder, it is the Local Authority who have the power to amend provision within an EHC Plan, not the school.
• The EHC Plan can be provided by the school as evidence during the application process for exam access arrangements.

Who do I contact?

• You can discuss access to learning with any of your child's subject teachers if you think there is a specific difficulty in a particular subject.

• If you have an overarching concern that your child requires exam access arrangements, please contact our SEND team: Contactsend@kingsmeadow.org.uk