

Post Primary Access Arrangements

Information for parents, guardians and teachers

September 2021

What are access arrangements?

Access arrangements are how 'reasonable adjustments' are made for pupils who have a disability, special educational need or temporary injury that **has a substantial** effect on their performance in an assessment.

Access arrangements are based on need and must reflect the pupil's normal way of working on a regular basis when taking tests and exams as observed in school over a period of time.

Where possible, access arrangements which enable a young person to work independently are encouraged e.g. using a computer reader instead of a reader. This also helps prepare for further education.

What are reasonable adjustments?

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) bases its guidance on the Equality Act (UK) 2010. This requires that awarding bodies to make a **reasonable adjustment** where a candidate who is disabled would be at a **substantial disadvantage** in comparison to someone who is not disabled without a reasonable adjustment being made.

Access arrangements do not change the skills or knowledge being tested and must **not give a pupil an unfair advantage**. An access arrangement should "level the

playing field”.

What is the definition of disability?

The Equality Act (UK) 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has both a **substantial and a long term adverse effect** on the ability of someone to carry out their normal day to day activities. This statutory guidance states that disability is **more than** the normal differences in ability that exists between young people.

Who decides the access arrangements required for GCSE and A Level examinations?

The evidence of need required by JCQ, is based on teachers’ observations, evidence must be collated by the SENCo before the school applies to JCQ for access arrangements. The SENCo stores the evidence gathered for each pupil and is required to produce this evidence for the JCQ Inspector.

JCQ annually publishes regulations and guidance relating to access arrangements.

All schools and colleges are bound by JCQ and their stipulations must be adhered to.

JCQ regulations state that schools must be able to demonstrate a history of need and consistent use of reasonable adjustments to support formal applications for a pupil’s access arrangements.

Does the pupil need to be assessed by an educational psychologist to qualify for access arrangements?

An assessment by an educational psychologist is **not** a requirement. The SENCo is normally the school’s designated qualified assessor. The SENCo takes the lead on the access arrangements process within the school.

Teaching staff support the SENCo in identifying, determining and implementing appropriate access arrangements.

If a pupil has a SEN, a medical diagnosis or a physical condition are they automatically entitled to access arrangements?

A determination of SEN or a medical diagnosis/physical condition itself, does not automatically entitle a pupil to access arrangements. The pupil will need to have been observed as being substantially disadvantaged in taking school tests and exams to be awarded access arrangements. The teachers in school will have observed and recorded the pupil's normal way of working over a period of time, not just before external exams.

JCQ state that the SENCo's detailed information, must be supported by specialist evidence confirming the candidate's disability.

Private psychologist's assessments

GL and AQE primary transfer tests are not regulated exams, therefore any private psychologist's report submitted for transfer purposes cannot be used as evidence to support access arrangements in post primary school .

Private assessors cannot complete JCQ documentation

The post primary school must be able to demonstrate evidence from over a period of time in order for a pupil to qualify for access arrangements. The school is under no obligation to follow any advice or recommendations from private reports which in the SENCo's professional opinion (and the school's experience of working with the young person), conflicts with the presentation of the pupil in school.

JCQ would consider the school submitting a private report that has been commissioned by the parent prior to the exam, and that is not consistent with the pupil's normal way of working in school, to have the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's results.

Please be aware that all schools must comply with JCQ regulations.

Useful access arrangements document for schools

[JCQ \(2021/22\) Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#)

Exam Stress

Exam stress is a usual and common part of the examination process. Schools offer advice to students taking examinations on how to cope with pressure. Parents can offer support at home by suggesting the use of the taught strategies.

Useful websites

Listed below are some useful websites which provide information on how to manage examination stress that pupils may experience:

[AQA—Student and parent support: managing exam stress \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Childline UK— Preparing for exams \(opens in new window\)](#)

[NHS—Coping with exam stress \(opens in new window\)](#)

This leaflet has been produced by the EA SEND Implementation Team following consultation with CCEA and JCQ.