

Examination Access Arrangements Policy

Key Information for Teachers, Parents and Carers

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with learning needs, including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

1. Introduction:

- 1.1. Thomas Keble School is committed to ensuring that all our students receive the support they need and are eligible for. Examination Access Arrangements (EAA) are to ensure that students who are disabled within the meaning of The Equality Act 2010 are able to **access** examinations as far as is possible. This means that EAA work to remove barriers to students showing their knowledge and ability without compromising the integrity of the examination. Schools need to ensure that they are levelling the playing field for those that are disadvantaged, not advantaging students unfairly. EAA are **not** designed to enable students to achieve higher grades.

Definitions:

Disability: Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a '**physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities**'.

Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect on day to day activities include:

- persistent and significant difficulty in reading and understanding written material where this is in the person's native language, for example because of a mental impairment, a learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment;
- persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating;
- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions;
- physical impairment – for example, difficulty operating a computer because of physical restrictions in using a keyboard.

Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- minor problems with writing or spelling;
- inability to read very small or indistinct print without the aid of a magnifying glass;
- inability to converse orally in a language which is not the speaker's native spoken language (JCQ definitions).

Special Educational Needs: A candidate has 'special educational needs' as defined in the "SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years" if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairment such as those affecting sight or hearing, mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not

necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people, and those with SEN.

What are Access Arrangements?

- 1.2. Access arrangements allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without changing the demands of the assessment. This is to meet the particular needs of a 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'.
- 1.3. Thomas Keble School applies for access arrangements following clear rules set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines booklet 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties'. The JCQ guidelines state what reasonable adjustments can be made and are always the first reference point in determining the appropriate access arrangement for a student. These are updated every year on 1st September and run through until 31st August. It is important to abide by these regulations as "failure to comply... has the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's result(s)".
- 1.4. Schools are regularly inspected to make sure they are following the JCQ regulations – usually every summer during the examination season. The consequences of malpractice can be severe. These may include disqualification for the student from one or more examinations, disqualification for a whole cohort of students, or even the centre being closed down for up to 5 years.

Examples of malpractice include:

- Students being granted EAA which are not their normal way of working
- EAA being "suddenly" granted before examinations
- A student has no history of need or provision
- EAA being granted without sufficient evidence
- Students not using their EAA in a mock examination and still being allowed it in the public examinations

What evidence is needed to apply for EAA?

- 1.5. Examination access arrangements are driven by a student's normal way of working in school. To meet JCQ regulations, the access arrangements that are put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre e.g.:

- In the classroom or
- Working in small groups for reading and or writing or
- Literacy support lessons or
- Literacy intervention strategies and or
- In internal school tests and mock examinations. (JCQ 4.2.5)

Therefore, we assess students on the basis of their normal way of working in school as required by the JCQ regulations; for example, with the help of someone reading to them as they are unable to read independently. If their normal way of working in school (not at home) is the same as the majority of students then they will not be eligible for EAA and will not be assessed as an assessment result alone is not sufficient to award EAA.

- 1.6 Educational psychologist reports can **only** be used to support our findings and cannot drive the EAA process as it is driven by a student's normal way of working in school and the evidence collected in school. Private Educational Psychologist reports are expensive, and therefore you should contact the school if you are considering arranging for an Educational Psychologist assessment as this may not be necessary and it will not gain EAA.

- 1.7 For candidates with a medical condition, it is the SENCo or Examination Access Arrangement Coordinator who must determine the appropriateness and reasonableness of access arrangement(s) to be awarded and not a GP or similar. In order to assess the need for EAA, we need evidence of a formal diagnosis from a clinical paediatrician or a hospital consultant to supplement our centre based evidence. In line with JCQ regulations, a doctor's note **is not** sufficient to support evidence of a need for EAA.
- 1.8 Please see the 'Thomas Keble School Use of Laptops Policy' (located in Exam Policy) for questions about laptops.

2. Our EAA process:

- 2.1. We start the assessment process in Year 9 and, by this point, their normal way of working in school is well established.
- 2.2. We do not normally put any EAA in place in KS3 examinations unless the student's normal way of working is considered irrefutable and we are very confident that they will certainly be awarded EAA at GCSE. (For example, a student has a long history of fine motor control difficulties and their handwriting is illegible. They word-process in all their lessons and will therefore do so in KS3 exams too). In addition, evidence of how students perform in examinations without support can assist in demonstrating the need for support. KS3 examinations are an opportunity for us to gather this evidence. In the best interests of the students, we must ensure students do not become used to EAA which they may not be eligible for at GCSE.
- 2.3. All teachers are consulted about which students need EAA due to their normal way of working in their lessons.
- 2.4. Students whose normal way of working indicates they may be eligible for EAA are tested in Year 9. These assessments are standardised by age so that the results of a 14 year-old and 25 year-old are directly comparable. There is therefore no need to retest and we do not retest.
- 2.5. Evidence for EAA includes results of internal assessments administered by the EAA assessor in line with JCQ regulations, evidence from teachers (i.e., usual way of working over time), evidence from exercise books, tests and examinations.
- 2.6. Please be aware that EAAs can only be discussed with the EAA Coordinator, SENCo or Exams Manager. Other teachers are not able to comment on eligibility of students for EAA and, therefore, cannot discuss EAA eligibility with students or parents. Any concerns shared with teachers will be reported to the EAA coordinator.
- 2.7. The EAA process is driven by a student's normal way of working in school and the support which they are eligible for and normally receive in school. Sometimes we may require additional information, such as letters of diagnosis from hospital consultants, and we will then contact you to seek that information. However, it is not a process of consultation or negotiation with home but one where we apply strict regulations from the JCQ to ensure the correct outcome. Final decisions regarding access arrangements are made by the school, and possibly a diagnosis of a SpLN does not automatically mean an access arrangement will be awarded. Hence we will inform you of the outcome once the EAA assessment and investigation process is complete.

3. Informing parents of the results of the Year 9 EAA assessments:

- 3.1. We share the outcomes of the assessments and evidence with parents in the letter informing them of whether a student who has been assessed is eligible for EAA and, if so, which EAA. We do not share actual assessments as these are kept for the JCQ inspector and only form part of the decision and would not be useful in isolation.
- 3.2. All parents of students who have been assessed are informed of the final outcome. Due to the time-consuming nature of the assessments, evidence gathering and application process, the

letter should be expected before the Year 10 examinations. Please retain this letter for information as it will apply throughout the GCSE period.

- 3.3. Please be aware that the assessment programme is very rigorous and time-consuming. A great deal of work goes into it before parents are informed of the final outcome which has been agreed by JCQ. Whilst we appreciate that all parents want the best for their children, it must be remembered that EAA are to level the playing field for students with disabilities and not to advantage students. For example, all students would do better with extra time but part of the purpose of examinations is to see what can be done under timed conditions. We try to give as much information as possible in the letter informing parents of the outcome.

4. What to consider when EAA are in place:

- 4.1. Teaching staff stay informed of the EAA for individual students so that it can be reflected in lessons and assessments as far as possible.
- 4.2. It is not always possible for EAAs to be applied in mock exams due to constraints beyond our control. For example, a computer reader requires an interactive downloaded paper from the exam board and not all departments use past papers in mock exams.
- 4.3. If EAA are not used, they are removed as they are not reflecting a student's normal way of working. For example, some tasks do not lend themselves to word processor use but if a student routinely chooses to handwrite in lessons and assessments then word-processing is no longer their normal way of working and the EAA will be removed.
- 4.4. If EAA are abused they will be removed. This includes misuse of computers which leads to ICT network privileges at school being removed and students not being able to access a word processor or laptop.
- 4.5. Please see the full 'Disability Policy (Exams)' for additional information.