# Beech Lodge School

# ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

# 2017/18

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

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| **Approved/reviewed by** | Lucy Barnes |
| **Date of next review** | December 2018 |

## Key staff involved in the policy

| Role | Names |
|---|---|
| **Proprietor** | **Daniela Shanly** |
| **Head of Centre** | **Lucy Barnes** |
| **SENCo** | **Jack Rider** |
| **SLT members** | **Daniela Shanly, Lucy Barnes, Jack Rider, Rachel Cassidy, Karen McIlfatrick** |
| **Teaching staff** | **All teaching staff** |
| **Access arrangement facilitator/Exams Officer** | **Sue Wells** |

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## What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

### Access arrangements

*"**Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment**. They allow candidates with 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 particular 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'."* [AA *Definitions*, page 3]

### Reasonable adjustments

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

*A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements.*

*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.*

*There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment."* [AA *Definitions*, page 3]

### Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Beech Lodge School complies with its *"...obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements..."*

[JCQ *General Regulations for Approved Centres,* 5.5]

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR.

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that arrangements are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication *Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'*.

This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA.

### Disability policy (exams)

A large part of the access arrangements policy is covered in the Disability 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 Disability 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.

The access arrangements 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 is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AA 7.3.

## The qualification of the current assessor

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| OCR Level 7 Certificate in Assessing and Teaching Learners with SpLD (Dyslexia)<br>Assessment Practising Certificate issued by patoss – certificate number: 500001811-IF5572 |

## Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor

- 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:
    - 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. This is recorded on the single central register.
- A further copy of the qualification and assessment practicing certificate is held by the exams officer
- The head of centre makes provision for the assessor to attend yearly accredited training courses with specific regard to access arrangements and any additional courses that are considered to be relevant to the role. This ensures that the assessor is always kept abreast of the latest legislation, new tests available and good practice, and maintains CPD requirements. In doing this, the assessor has the skill set and most up to date knowledge to ensure that the assessment process is carried out correctly. The exams officer maintains a record of the training attended

**How the assessment process is administered**

- 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.
- The head of centre makes provision for the exams officer to attend training courses that are relevant to the role. The exams officer is a member of the Exams Office organisation and has access to help, support, updated procedures/requirements from the exams boards as well as the latest regulations and legislation. The exams officer is also a part of the local Windsor and Maidenhead exams officers network which provides networking opportunities as well as practical support and advice. This assists the exams officer to ensure that they have the necessary skill set and knowledge to oversee the assessment process and ensure that it is carried out correctly.
- The exams officer is aware of her responsibility to familiarise herself with the annually amended JCQ regulations and amend the centre's policies and procedures accordingly. This ensures that the assessment process continues to be carried out correctly in accordance with the latest JCQ legislation.
- All amended/updated exam related policies and supporting JCQ publications will be disseminated to the relevant teaching staff and SLT members.
- Similarly, any relevant JCQ 'notice to candidate' documents will be given to the candidates at the appropriate times. A record will be kept by the exams officer detailing the information disseminated.
- All exam related policies/ supporting JCQ documents will be put on the staff drive on the school's computer network.
- All relevant exam related policies and JCQ publications will be put on the school website and updated annually. A newsletter will be sent to all parents to inform them when the policies/publications have been amended/updated.

- 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 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. This will provide 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. The exams officer holds a copy of every baseline and relevant assessment reports.
- Previous EAA from other schools for new students joining Beech Lodge School will be considered.
- 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.
- Any staff member can contact the Exams Officer directly at any time to raise any concerns about a candidates' learning or 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.

**Recording evidence of need**

- The exams officer 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*' and the exams officer maintains a record of this assessment data.
- Access arrangement testing is routinely done on all students going into years 9 and 11 during the month of September 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.
- Alternatively, where appropriate, a SENCo file note is made for the students who have complex needs and are on an EHCP. This file note 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.
- At the time of applying for access arrangements, a form 8 will be completed by the appropriate persons. Alternatively, a SENCo file note will be made in line with JCQ requirements and including all relevant supporting documents.
- A data protection notice will be signed by the candidates.

**Gathering evidence to demonstrate *normal way of working***

- All 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 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 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 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 is arranged for the student which 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 and alternative methods of recording work are encouraged. This arrangement is therefore their '*normal way of working*'
- Read/Write Gold (an assistive reading software programme) is installed on all the student's laptop computers to assist them with reading tasks and with proof reading and editing their work. It also has a vocabulary feature to assist students with weak language skills and/or weak comprehension. This is used in class where appropriate and supports the student's '*normal way of working*'
- 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**

**Arrangements 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 listed on page 2 of AA. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications listed on page 74.

AAO is accessed by logging in to any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

- 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 Form 8 report by the assessor will be held on file along with a data protection form signed by the student.
- Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation for access arrangements, the Exams Officer then applies to the exam boards via AAO; the decision is instant and a printed copy of the confirmation is held on file by the Exams Officer.
- 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

- All information is held on file by the exams officer and will be available for inspection.
- At this point the access arrangement is added to the list of students and circulated to relevant staff.
- Parents are informed of the access arrangement by letter and the students are informed verbally.
- Some individual needs will not be accommodated by a computer system, which cannot deal with every reasonable adjustment in specific cases. 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 access arrangements

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 separate invigilation 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 access arrangements

## 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 this is the candidate's preferred way of working within the centre.

The '*normal way of working*' for exam candidates at Beech Lodge School, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams. An exception to this is where a candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology.

**Awarding word processors**

There are also exceptions where a candidate may be awarded the use of a word processor in exams where he/she has a firmly established need, it reflects the candidate's normal way of working and by not being awarded a word processor would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

Exceptions might include where a candidate has, for example:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly
- a medical condition
- a physical disability/impairment
- a sensory impairment
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand – this may stem motor planning issues such as Dyspraxia or alternatively language processing issues
- Poor/illegible handwriting

It is permissible for a candidate using a word processor in an examination to type certain questions ie. those requiring extended writing and handwrite shorter answers. The need to use a word processor may be

considered on a subject by subject basis as some examinations require more simplistic answers and are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet.

Conversely, other examinations require a significant amount of writing or place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers and these are where candidates will frequently need to type.

**Allocating word processors**

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be allocated by the IT department in liaison with the SENCo and the exams officer.

## Separate invigilation within the centre

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre will be made by the SENCo.

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."* [AA 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 in a separate room 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 separate invigilation 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.