

Forge Valley Examination Access Arrangements Policy

Policy development:

This policy has been developed by building on our own best practice and that of other educational networks. It has been developed in consultation with governors and staff and is accessible through the Forge Valley website.

The policy is updated annually and is publically available on the school website.

Governor Committee: Standards Committee

Ratified by Governors: 18th November
2021, 15th December 2022 & 2nd
November 2023

Due for Review – Nov 2024

Senior leader responsible: SENCO

Ratified by Chair of Governors:



Examination Access Arrangements Policy

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout Forge Valley School for all students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN), including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND).

What are Exam Access Arrangements?

Exam Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Exam Access Arrangements fall into two categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres; others require prior Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) awarding body approval. Exam Access Arrangements allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of it. This ensures that Awarding Bodies comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable Adjustments

Under The Equality Act 2010, it is the duty of an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. Reasonable adjustments are made to meet the needs of an individual and will therefore vary dependent on need.

Responsibility

Exam Access Arrangements are the responsibility of the Head teacher and SENCO. Formal testing for Exam Access Arrangements can only be conducted by a suitably qualified person in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Such an assessor may be bought in by school and authorised to conduct testing by the Head teacher.

Access Arrangements for Examinations

JCQ requirements are updated annually. However, the following are some of the standard practice of Exam Access Arrangements currently permitted:

- Extra time
- Supervised Rest Breaks
- Reader
- Scribe
- Prompter
- Word Processor

Identifying the Need for Exam Access Arrangements

Pupils who may qualify for formal Exam Access Arrangements during Key Stage 4 are usually identified early in Key Stage 3 using informal screening rather than being formally assessed. Recommendations for adjustments to Quality First teaching within lessons such as allowing a little extra time or reading questions to pupils are then made to staff to make work accessible and allow pupils to make progress.

Formal assessments usually take place during Year 10. Screening and ongoing monitoring determines the level of specific assessment required. Where formal Exam Access Arrangements are determined and agreed these become part of 'normal way of working'. This means that appropriate Access Arrangements are applied in all internal or external assessments. If a pupil continually does not use the agreed Access Arrangements either because their needs change or they do not feel they are necessary then Access Arrangements can and should be removed to ensure that we remain compliant with JCQ regulations.

PROCEDURE

How are pupils identified for Exam Access Arrangements screening?

- Notification from previous school(s) that they had Access Arrangements for Key Stage 2 SATs or other tests
- Teacher referral
- Parental concerns
- Pupil concerns (self-referral)
- Inclusion on the School Special Educational Needs Register
- Low reading ability noted on admission to Forge Valley School
- Inclusion in literacy interventions at Forge Valley School

It should be noted that usually no formal testing for Exam Access Arrangements will take place before Year 10. This is because Exam Access Arrangements are only valid for 26 months and this ensures their validity throughout a 2 year GCSE course. On rare occasions, we may decide to test a cohort during the last half term of Year 9 due to the availability of the Specialist Assessor. Informal arrangements can be put in place at any time during Key Stage 3 at the discretion of the SENCO or Head teacher.

Parental Concerns

Parents can contact the school to ask for advice about testing if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. The SENCO will investigate their concerns and a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to test a pupil.

Teacher Referral

Teachers can refer a pupil to the SENCO where they have concerns and these will be investigated and appropriate actions taken.

Key Stage 3 screening

Where Key Stage 3 exams are taking place, the SENCO will identify pupils who it is believed would benefit from Exam Access Arrangements using available literacy data. When whole year group exams are taking place in the hall, these pupils may be withdrawn and may instead sit their exams in a smaller room where additional help will be available. A list of these pupils is produced and circulated to staff who are then responsible for implementing the recommended adjustments in classroom situations. Throughout Key Stage 3 staff are asked to monitor pupils' use of these adjustments and report any concerns to the SENCO. It is important to remember that Exam Access Arrangements informally granted during Key Stage 3 may not be granted for Key Stage 4 once formal testing has taken place.

Formal Access Arrangement testing

Formal assessments are normally conducted during Year 10. Pupils qualifying for these formal assessments are determined by specified indicators following screening. Pupils with an Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP) automatically qualify for Exam Access Arrangements screening.

Stage 1: Screening

Some or all of these will be utilised by school staff to screen for referral to the Specialist Assessor. We may already have conducted these tests prior to referral for other reasons and may be able to utilise results already held for screening purposes.

- GL Assessment Dyslexia Portfolio
- WRAT Single Word Reading
- WRAT Spelling
- Visual Stress Assessment

The SENCO will analyse the results and decide whether a referral for further testing is appropriate. It is worth noting that school must hold a body of evidence that the requested Exam Access Arrangements are pupils' 'normal way of working'.

Stage 2: Formal Testing

Depending on the outcomes of the abovementioned screening, the SENCO will complete the necessary paperwork and arrange for the Specialist Assessor to come into school to conduct formal assessments using a battery of tests approved by JCQ. The tests used are periodically replaced or upgraded in line with current JCQ regulations. The SENCO will sometimes decide to delay bringing in the Specialist Assessor until a small group of pupils require testing. However, careful consideration will always be made to ensure that Exam Board deadlines regarding applications for Exam Access Arrangements are met. This is usually towards the end of March each year for the summer examination season so testing will only be authorised after this time in exceptional circumstances. It is also important that candidates have the opportunity to practice utilising any EAA granted before they take any final examinations to ensure that they can achieve to the best of their ability.

What Happens Next?

Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the Specialist Assessor that Exam Access Arrangements are appropriate, the SENCO/Head teacher will decide whether to make an application, taking into account history of need. Once an application has been processed and a decision is received, details of the pupil and their agreed Exam Access Arrangements will be added to the appropriate list of students with EAA and this will be circulated to all teaching staff. The pupil will be informed of the decision by email to their school email address and parents will be informed by letter.

Granting 25% Extra Time Without Testing

School are able to make an application for 25% extra time for pupils with a confirmed diagnosis of the following complex conditions where this is their normal way of working:-

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Sensory and/or physical needs
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (e.g. ADHD)
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs

However, JCQ Regulations state that the application must be supported by specialist evidence confirming the candidate's disability. Some examples of specialist evidence are a letter/report from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or a letter/report from a Local Authority Specialist Service or a current EHCP. Please note that a letter from the pupil's GP is not acceptable.

Information Regarding the Use of Word Processors in Examinations

JCQ regulations clearly state that 'a word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home'.

Word processors will normally only be allowed in examinations where a candidate has:

- A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly
- A medical condition, physical disability or sensory impairment affecting handwriting
- Serious planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- Extremely poor handwriting.

In line with the above, Forge Valley School only permits candidates to use a Word Processor in examinations when this is established as their normal way of working and is appropriate to their needs. The Word Processor, which school must provide and not the candidate, will have the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled. To decide whether this is a suitable option, we will collect pupil handwriting samples from teachers and make enquiries regarding the pupil's typing ability. We will also speak to the pupil to explain the implications of using a Word Processor e.g. must be normal way of working, will have spelling/grammar disabled, will be housed in a separate room with other computer users, must be present when the script is printed off. This will enable the candidate to make an informed decision regarding Exam Word Processor use.

Word Processors without an extra time allowance are granted at the school's discretion therefore no external testing is required.

Candidates Moving to Post-16 Studies

When a pupil moves into Forge Valley 6th Form from our school, providing Exam Access Arrangements have been utilised for GCSE Examinations and the candidate meets the current JCQ criteria for the requested Exam Access Arrangements, we will resubmit an application for GCE/Post-16 studies and they will continue.

When a candidate joins our 6th Form from another centre, we will contact the previous school for information regarding Exam Access Arrangements. Provided that the candidate meets the current JCQ criteria for the requested Exam Access Arrangements, we will resubmit an application for GCE/Post-16 studies and they will continue. If the current criteria are no longer met, we will carefully evaluate whether it would be appropriate to conduct further testing or whether the Exam Access Arrangements should cease at this time as the pupil would no longer be considered eligible.

When pupils leave Forge Valley School and undertake 6th Form studies at alternative centres, we will provide details of Exam Access Arrangements to the new centre on request. Copies of the relevant documentation will be retained at Forge Valley School in case of future Exam Board queries. Provided that the candidate meets the current JCQ criteria for the requested Exam Access Arrangements, the new centre will need to resubmit an application for GCE/Post-16 studies to allow them to continue. If the current criteria are no longer met, the new centre will follow their policy to determine the next steps.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a small, post examination percentage adjustment made to a candidate's marks to reflect temporary injury, illness, bereavement or other indisposition at the time of the examination or assessment. Applications are made to the Exam Boards immediately after the end of the exam season and, where the circumstances are deemed acceptable, marks will be adjusted by the boards prior to the issue of results. Some circumstances can be declared by school and some will require supporting evidence. This is considered on a case-by-case basis. Please note that school do not decide how much percentage allowance is granted, this is applied by the awarding body based on the information submitted by school.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.