



TALBOT HEATH SCHOOL “Honour Before Honours”

EXAMINATIONS ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT POLICY

Date adopted: Autumn 2025

Date for next adoption: Autumn 2026

Reviewed by: Exams Officer and Headteacher

As a school, we will make reasonable adjustments to this policy, in line with the SEND Code of Practice (2014) and the Equality Act (2010), for students with SEND.

Purpose

It should be read in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- SEND Policy (Whole school)
- EAL Policy
- Examinations Policies (Contingency, Emergency Evacuation, Appeals, NEA & Word Processors)

What are access arrangements?

These are arrangements (for example extra time, reader or scribe) that are put in place to make sure that all students have a “level playing field” when sitting examinations.

Legislation and application at Talbot Heath

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body (examination board i.e. AQA, OCR, EDEXCEL) to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired person who could read braille.

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”.

Talbot Heath School is committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. The school complies with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations document which is amended and published each September.

The JCQ Candidate Personal Data Consent Form and the Data Protection Confirmation by the Exams Officer/SENCo have been withdrawn. Centres must inform candidates that Access Arrangements Online (AAO) will be used to process their data in line with UK GDPR.

Note: The 2025–26 JCQ AARA applies to a wider set of qualifications. Where NCFE external assessments apply, the school follows JCQ AARA (Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments) while submitting notifications via the NCFE Portal (NCFE does not use AAO/CAP until at least 2026/27).

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments/>

Eligibility for access arrangements

Adjustments for students with disabilities and learning difficulties require a range of access arrangements. The identification of students who may need access arrangements are as listed below:

- Cognition and Learning Needs (e.g. general and/or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia)
- Communication and Interaction Needs (e.g. autistic spectrum disorder, speech, language and communication needs)
- Sensory and Physical Needs (e.g. hearing impairment, multi-sensory impairment, physical disability, vision impairment)
- Social, Mental and Emotional Needs (attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mental health conditions)
- English as an Additional Language

Access arrangements awarded on medical grounds will only be accepted by JCQ if the school has been aware of the student's medical history and relevant evidence has been gathered for the arrangement to be put into place. For students who require temporary access arrangements due to medical problems, for instance broken limbs, the school must have a medical letter before the arrangement can be implemented and the school Exams Officer must be made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

What evidence do we need to secure access arrangements?

JCQ inspections require all schools to have the appropriate evidence for every pupil that has been awarded access arrangements. If the school fails to provide sufficient evidence, in line with JCQ regulations, then this may impact the candidate's results. The appropriate evidence needed from the school for JCQ inspection is:

- Relevant evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty/impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect.
- Evidence that the difficulties are persistent and significant.
- Evidence of how the disability, difficulty or impairment has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom and how teachers have supported this difficulty.
- Confirmation that without the access arrangement the pupil would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment.

For access arrangements awarded on grounds of medical or complex needs school will also need to present the following evidence to enable an application to be made, as well as for a JCQ inspection:

- Letter from CAMHS or a HCPC registered clinical psychologist; or
- Letter from a hospital consultant; or
- Letter from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service; or
- Letter from the Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service; or
- Letter from a Speech and Language Therapist.

The school must be made aware of any on-going medical problems as soon as they have been diagnosed. If the school is not made aware of the student's medical history then an access arrangement cannot be put into place for public examinations. In cases when GPs provide medical letters for anxiety or depression, then the evidence must show that the school has been aware of this and has been working with the student to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage. If the school is unable to provide this evidence then the access arrangement will not be awarded.

Access arrangements may vary due to the different demands in some subjects. If this is the case then access arrangements may be awarded only for those subjects, or adapted for those students who require arrangements for all subjects.

Where formal access arrangements are determined and agreed, these become the “normal way of working”. This means that the appropriate access arrangements should be taken into consideration in all internal and external assessments. An access arrangement must be the pupil’s normal way of working in order for the application to comply with regulations. If a pupil chooses continually not to use their access arrangement, then the access arrangement will be removed for public examinations.

Part 1 of Form 8 must include teacher feedback and clear evidence of the candidate’s normal way of working before any assessment is conducted.

Evidence for 25% extra time must include teacher observations across subjects, timed classwork/mocks, and how existing support is used in lessons.

English as an Additional Language

Up to 10% extra time may be awarded for pupils who have lived in the UK for less than three years, providing they arrived with no prior knowledge of English. English should not be spoken at home; the extra time is for the use of a bilingual translation dictionary. Due to the nature of set assessment objectives this provision will not be awarded in the following GCSE subjects:

English Language, English Literature, Geography, History, and Religious Studies.

How are access arrangements awarded?

The Head of Centre is responsible for appointing an Access Arrangement Assessor with the required level of competence. This must be an Education professional who holds Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and has completed a Level 7 qualification in individual assessment, an HCPC registered Psychologist or a Specialist Teacher with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate.

Assessments for extra time are completed internally by the Access Arrangements Assessor (SENDCo or other appointed person), following a referral from subject teachers. Schools can accept private reports as supporting evidence only. Should a school need to work with an external assessor, it should only work with a practitioner where there is an established relationship.

Access arrangement assessments cannot be completed without JCQ’s Form 8, sections A, B and C being completed by the school. This will only be done if in the school’s opinion there is a sufficient history of need; this must be supported with appropriate data and evidence from both the SENDCo and subject teachers. Final decisions regarding access arrangements are made by the school. A diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty does not automatically mean an access arrangement will be awarded.

What is teacher evidence?

Teachers need to demonstrate the student is, for example, not able to complete the classwork/assessments/tests in the set time, or that the handwriting is illegible etc.

In order to support an arrangement, teachers must first explain how work has been differentiated to meet the needs of the pupil within the classroom, and provide details of departmental interventions; sample work and current data may also be used.

Teachers must provide subject-specific examples (e.g. from timed tasks and mock exams) demonstrating persistent and significant need, aligned with the candidate's normal way of working.

Access arrangements for sixth form pupils

Sixth form pupils who are new to the school will complete an application form, this will ask about SEN and any access arrangements awarded during their GCSE examinations. This information will be passed onto the SENDCo. Pupils must collect a signed Form 8 from their previous school. Their information and evidence will also be requested from their former school by the SENDCo. Any further testing required will be carried out and the application processed using Access Arrangements Online.

All applications will need to show information from the pupil's teachers regarding their continuing need as well as specialist assessment evidence proving that they meet the criteria published in the most current JCQ publication.

For candidates joining in the sixth form, applications must be supported by fresh teacher evidence at TH demonstrating continued need and a normal way of working post-16.

JCQ application

Once the necessary evidence has been gathered from teaching staff and/or medical professionals, appropriate tests been administered and Form 8 reports written, an application is made to JCQ who agree a suitable access arrangement for the pupil's need. Access arrangements are agreed before an examination takes place, allowing students with Special Educational Needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access an assessment and show what they can do without changing the demands of the assessment.

JCQ inspections (2025–26 expectations)

Inspectors expect to see: AAO application; Form 8 or Form 9; detailed evidence for 25% extra time (normal way of working); Word Processor Policy; and confirmation of assessors' Level 7 qualifications.

For candidates requiring 25% extra time or a scribe for non-learning difficulty impairments, Form 9 should evidence that supervised rest breaks have been explored, trialled and exhausted.

What next?

If you have an enquiry regarding access arrangements, please contact: Miss Lowe (SENDCo) or Mrs Magnusson (Examinations Officer)

Persons responsible:

- Exams Officer
- SENDCO
- SLT member responsible for exams