Access Arrangements Policy for GCSE Examinations

Lady Hawkins' School

Approved by:	H Farrington	**Date:** 01/09/26
Last reviewed on:	September 2026	
Next review due by:	September 2027	

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy outlines the procedures Lady Hawkins' School follows for identifying, assessing and implementing access arrangements for pupils undertaking GCSE and other relevant qualifications.

The school follows the regulations and guidance published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), including *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties*.

The purpose of access arrangements is to ensure that pupils with a disability, learning difficulty or other qualifying need are able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in examinations without compromising the assessment objectives or giving them an unfair advantage.

Access arrangements are based on:

- the individual pupil's demonstrated need;
- evidence of the impact of that need on assessment performance;
- the pupil's normal way of working within the school; and
- the relevant JCQ eligibility criteria.

Access arrangements are therefore **not automatically awarded on the basis of a diagnosis, screening result, EHCP/IDP or parental request alone**.

For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments guidance.

2. What Are Access Arrangements?

Access arrangements are adjustments made for candidates who have a disability, learning difficulty or other qualifying need. They allow candidates to access examinations without changing what the assessment is designed to measure.

Examples may include:

- 25% extra time;
- extra time above 25% in rare and exceptional circumstances;

- supervised rest breaks;
- use of a word processor;
- a reader or computer reader;
- a scribe or speech recognition technology; and
- other adjustments permitted under JCQ regulations.

An access arrangement must reflect the candidate's **normal way of working** within the centre and must be supported by appropriate evidence.

The arrangement must not be introduced for the first time immediately before or during an external examination.

3. Identification and Referral

Lady Hawkins' School uses a **needs-led identification process** based on pupils' performance in everyday classroom assessment, internal examinations and mock examinations.

Any member of teaching or support staff may refer a pupil to the SENCo where there is evidence that the pupil experiences a significant and persistent difficulty which may affect their ability to access timed assessments.

Referrals may be based on evidence such as:

- consistently requiring additional time to complete assessed work;
- incomplete work despite demonstrating the required knowledge and understanding;
- significantly slower reading, writing or processing;
- difficulties with handwriting speed or legibility;
- difficulties which become particularly apparent under timed conditions;
- a pupil routinely requiring an existing access arrangement in lessons and internal assessments;
- evidence from internal assessments or mock examinations; or
- observations from teaching staff about the pupil's normal way of working.

A diagnosis, EHCP/IDP or parental concern may contribute to the overall picture but does not, in itself, establish entitlement to an access arrangement.

4. Green-Pen System

To support early identification and provide consistent evidence of pupils' normal way of working, **all pupils are permitted to use green pen to indicate work completed during additional time in internal assessments across the school**, unless the assessment is being conducted as a formal examination under examination conditions.

The green-pen system is intended to:

1. allow pupils to demonstrate whether additional time enables them to improve the quality, completeness or accuracy of their work;
2. provide teachers with clear evidence of how pupils use additional time;
3. support identification of pupils who may require further investigation; and
4. provide appropriate centre-based evidence for access arrangement decisions.

The use of green pen does **not** mean that a pupil has been granted an access arrangement for public examinations.

Teachers should make appropriate comments where additional time has made a meaningful difference to a pupil's performance.

Examples of useful evidence include:

- the pupil completed additional questions or sections;
- the pupil extended or improved an answer;
- the pupil was able to review and correct their work;
- the pupil demonstrated knowledge or understanding which they had been unable to demonstrate within the standard time; or
- additional time made a clear difference to the quality or completeness of the pupil's response.

JCQ guidance specifically recognises marked internal tests and mock examinations showing the use of extra time, including a change of pen colour, as appropriate evidence for inspection purposes. Focused comments from subject teachers regarding the need for and effective use of extra time are also relevant evidence.

5. Year 10 Mock Examinations

Year 10 pupils who **already use extra time as part of their normal way of working** will be permitted to use this additional time during their Year 10 mock examinations.

Where additional time is used, pupils will change to **green pen** when the standard examination time has ended.

The green-pen section will therefore provide a clear record of the work completed during the additional time.

Subject teachers will be asked to identify pupils for whom the additional time has made a meaningful difference to the quality, completeness or accuracy of their work.

Where a pupil:

- routinely uses additional time as part of their normal way of working;
- demonstrates effective use of additional time in mock examinations;
- produces additional work or improved responses during the additional time; and
- is identified by relevant teaching staff as benefiting significantly from the additional time,

the pupil will be referred to the school's specialist assessor for further assessment.

6. Specialist Assessment

Following consideration of the available school-based evidence, selected pupils will be assessed by the school's appropriately qualified specialist assessor.

Assessment will be undertaken using appropriate, current, nationally standardised assessment tools selected by the specialist assessor in accordance with JCQ requirements.

The specialist assessment will consider relevant areas such as:

- reading speed;
- writing speed;
- cognitive processing speed;
- phonological processing; and

- other relevant skills, depending on the pupil's individual profile.

The assessment must be completed within the timeframe permitted by JCQ.

For 25% extra time for candidates with cognition and learning needs, the current JCQ requirements include appropriate standardised assessment evidence relating to **two different areas of speed of working**, alongside centre-based evidence of need and normal way of working.

A specialist assessment result alone does not establish entitlement. The assessment forms part of the wider evidence considered by the SENCo.

7. Evidence of Normal Way of Working

JCQ requires access arrangements to reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

For candidates being considered for 25% extra time, the school will therefore retain appropriate evidence such as:

- marked internal assessments;
- mock examination scripts;
- evidence showing the use of additional time, including green-pen evidence;
- teacher comments and observations;
- evidence of the pupil's normal way of working in lessons;
- relevant classroom observations;
- evidence from workbooks or other school work where appropriate; and
- specialist assessment evidence.

JCQ's current guidance emphasises that **quality of evidence is more important than quantity**. A representative sample of appropriate evidence is sufficient; schools are not required to retain an entire portfolio of a candidate's work.

8. Decisions and Applications

The SENCo, supported by the specialist assessor where appropriate, will consider the available evidence and determine whether the pupil meets the relevant JCQ criteria.

Where the evidence demonstrates that:

- the pupil has a qualifying need;
- the need has a clear and demonstrable impact on their performance;
- the pupil uses additional time as part of their normal way of working;
- additional time makes a meaningful difference to their ability to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding; and
- the relevant JCQ assessment criteria have been met,

the school will make the appropriate application through Access Arrangements Online (AAO) where required.

Some applications are automatically approved where the published criteria are met, while others require referral to the relevant awarding body.

For 25% extra time, JCQ currently requires two standardised scores of 84 or less relating to two different areas of speed of working, or one score of 84 or less and one score between 85 and 89. Two scores between 85 and 89 require referral to the awarding body.

Extra time above 25% is a rare and exceptional arrangement and requires significantly stronger evidence and justification.

9. External Examinations

Where a pupil has been assessed as meeting the relevant JCQ criteria and the school has established that the arrangement is their normal way of working, the school will apply for the appropriate access arrangement for their external examinations.

The arrangement must continue to be used appropriately within the school.

Approval of an access arrangement does not mean that it must be used in every examination or every subject. The need for an arrangement may vary according to the demands of the assessment.

The school will ensure that approved arrangements are communicated to pupils, staff and the examinations team and are implemented in accordance with JCQ regulations.

10. Key Deadlines

The school will work to the deadlines published by JCQ and the relevant awarding bodies.

Teaching staff should raise concerns about pupils who may require access arrangements as early as possible, rather than waiting until Year 11.

Where a pupil is identified during Year 10, this allows sufficient time for:

- observation of their normal way of working;
- collection of internal assessment and mock examination evidence;
- specialist assessment where appropriate;
- completion of the required JCQ documentation; and
- submission of applications within awarding-body deadlines.

The school will publish internal deadlines for referrals and evidence collection each academic year.

11. Information for Families

Parents and carers are welcome to raise concerns about their child's access to examinations with the SENCo.

However, access arrangements cannot be awarded solely because:

- a parent or pupil requests them;
- a pupil has a particular diagnosis;
- a pupil has an EHCP or IDP;
- a previous school provided an arrangement; or
- a screening or assessment suggests that additional time might be beneficial.

The school must establish the pupil's current need and normal way of working and must meet the relevant JCQ requirements.

12. Pupils with EHCPs or IDPs

Having an EHCP in England or an IDP in Wales does not automatically entitle a pupil to every access arrangement.

Access arrangements must still be appropriate to the individual pupil, meet the relevant JCQ requirements and reflect their normal way of working within the centre.

Evidence from the pupil's EHCP/IDP may contribute to the overall picture of need, but the school must consider the pupil's current presentation and how they work in lessons and assessments.

Where an access arrangement is appropriate, the school will ensure that it is established and routinely used sufficiently in advance of external examinations.

13. Formal Examinations

The green-pen system is **not used in formal external examinations**.

External examinations are conducted in accordance with JCQ regulations and the examination conditions specified by the awarding body.

Where a pupil has approved extra time, the additional time is administered by the examinations team in accordance with the approved arrangement.

14. Further Information

The school's procedures are based on the current JCQ guidance and will be reviewed whenever JCQ publishes updated regulations.

Further information is available from the Joint Council for Qualifications:

For more details on the JCQ rules and regulations, please visit:
JCQ AARA Guidance Document 2024–25

To discuss individual concerns, please contact our SENCo:
senco@lhs.hereford.sch.uk