

St Matthew Academy

Access Arrangements (Exams)

2026/2027 Policy



Date of approval	Autumn 2026
Date of review	Autumn 2027

Key staff Involved in this policy

Role	Name(s)
SENCo	Ms S Williams
SENCo line manager (Senior Leader)	Mr J Potter
Head of Centre	Mr J Potter
Assessor	Ms S Williams
Exams Officer	Ms G Williams
Access Arrangement facilitator(s)	Ms S Williams
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader with oversight of exams administration)	Ms V Dunne

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that St Matthew Academy has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligations in respect of identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements

[JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres, (section 5.4)]
This publication is further referred to in this policy as [GR](#)

This policy is maintained and held by the SENCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENCo is storing access arrangements documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([AARA](#) 4.2)

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

This publication is further referred to in this policy as [AA](#)

What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as 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'.

[[AARA](#) Definitions]

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010* requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of 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 candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements.

Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on a number of factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate
- the effectiveness of the adjustment
- the cost of the adjustment, and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment. This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'."

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

[[AARA](#) Definitions]

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that St Matthew Academy has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangement process and:

- Is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements (GR5.4)
- Has a written process in place to check the qualification(s) of its assessor(s) and that the. Correct procedures are followed, as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (GR 5.4)

General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, who will coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, candidates for whom English is an additional language, as well as those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in [AA](#) (section 4.2). These include:

- The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.
- The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.
- Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AARA 4.2)
- Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis (AARA 4.2)
- A centre **must** make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations (AA 4.2)
- Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of the course
- Arrangements must always be approved **before** an examination or assessment (AARA 4.2)
- The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre (AARA 4.2)
- The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination (AARA 4.2)

Equalities Policy (Exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the **Equalities Policy (Exams)**¹ which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams.

This policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in [AARA](#) section 7.3.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

The current assessor holds a Certificate of Psychometric Testing Assessment & Access Arrangements (CPT3A)

Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in [AARA7.3](#). This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate (AARA 7.3)

Evidence of successful completion of a post-graduate course in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 or a printout of a screenshot of HCPC or SASC registration is held on file for inspection purposes to evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified (AARA 7.3, 7.4)

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

Specialist qualifications are checked by the Academy HR Department; applicants are required to bring original certificates to interview. Copies of these are kept on file by the HR Department.

¹ The Equalities Policy (Exams) can be found on the Academy website

Members of staff who gain further qualifications whilst in the employ of the Academy are also required to present their original certificates to the HR department. Copies of these are kept on file for inspection purposes.

In addition, copies of specialist awards certificates are kept confidentially by the SENCo and the Exams Officer. If a pupil assessment has been completed by an Educational Psychologist, or other appropriately qualified assessor, outside school, the SENCo will request and check their qualifications to ensure that they comply with current JCQ and exam board guidelines.

In the case of appropriately qualified psychologists (registered with the Health & Care Professions Council), or specialist teacher assessors holding a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, who are directly employed within the centre, there is no need to record the names of these individuals within *Access Arrangements Online* (AARA 7.4)

The names of all other assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications as covered by the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document must be entered into *Access arrangements online* to confirm their status (AARA 7.4)

N.B. External candidates must comply with the same regulations as internal candidates.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

Candidates who may have a learning difficulty and may therefore require access arrangements/reasonable adjustments are highlighted to the SENCo by teaching staff. Candidates may also self-refer.

An assessment is carried out by one of the appropriately qualified specialist assessors. Assessments are completed adhering to the timeframes required for regulations for external examinations.

The Inclusion department has a range of assessments which can be used depending on the individual needs and/or difficulties of the candidate. If assessment results meet the criteria for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments, they are combined with the candidate's history of need and supporting evidence gathered during their time at the Academy to show examples of where arrangements are required and used as the candidate's normal way of working.

The SENCo will make the decision to apply for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

At St Matthew Academy, where it is felt that access arrangements/reasonable adjustments may be required in the classroom and for internal tests and examinations, a record of need is built up and recorded.

Where there is evidence of the need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments for a pupil who will be taking Public Examinations in an exam season, the pupil is assessed by one of the specialist assessors who will complete a JCQ Form 8. The Form 8 will be signed off by the SENCo.

Where a candidate has learning difficulties and is not subject to a current *Education, Health and Care Plan*, the SENCo will paint a picture of need and demonstrate the candidate's normal way of working by completing Part 1 of Form 8 prior to the candidate being assessed.

The assessor will make full reference to AARA 7.5 *Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor* and 7.6 *Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties* and record the process that reflects the requirements

The assessor will also detail any process (where relevant) for private candidates, distance learners and home educated candidates - refer to the requirement in GR 5.4

Picture of need/normal way of working

Evidence to confirm the candidate's normal way of working throughout their time at St Matthew Academy is collected from teaching staff by the SENCo. Teaching staff are encouraged to provide the SENCo with relevant copies of tests or classwork, and to email the SENCo with any further information.

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo must provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as per Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

A historical picture of the use of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments for each candidate is collated. The SENCo will bear in mind the “normal way of working” as defined by JCQ:

The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre*, e.g.

- in the classroom;
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- literacy support lessons; literacy intervention strategies; mock examinations.

This is commonly referred to as ‘normal way of working’. For candidates with learning difficulties this is typically the background information recorded with Part 1 of Form 8.

*The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment (see section 8.3 of JCQ AA).

An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate’s normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor must be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

The candidate must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor must discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SENCo. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENCo. (AA 7.5)

Processing Applications for Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access Arrangements Online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for qualifications covered by the tool. [AARA 8](#) This tool also provides the facility to apply for modified papers for those qualifications included in [AARA 6](#).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Online applications must only be processed where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8 Summary)

The SENCo must keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a signed candidate personal data consent form; a completed Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo form; a copy of the candidate’s approved application; appropriate evidence of need (where required); evidence of the assessor’s qualification (where required). (AA, section 8.6). A Data protection confirmation must be completed by the EO or SENCo prior to the processing of an online application, which must be retained for 26 months after the date of the online application being approved.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

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 breaks
- candidates who read aloud
- small room provision
- use of a word processor
- use of a prompter
- use of a live speaker
- coloured overlays
- alternative rooming within the centre
- fidget toys or stress balls

The assessor will complete a cover sheet to support the arrangement. The SENCo must be satisfied that there is a genuine need for the arrangement to be put in place.

In addition, the candidate's difficulties must be established within the school and thus known to a form tutor, the Director of Learning, the SENCo and/or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment (see section 8.3 of JCQ AARA).

Centre Specific Policy

Word processor policy

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.

Further details and explanation are contained in the Word Processor Policy (Exams)².

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation) by the SENCo. This may include sitting examinations outside the main examination room in a smaller room for a group of candidate or on-to-one invigilation.

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long term impairment which has had an adverse effect; and
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre (AARA 5.16)

Alternative rooming arrangements reflects the candidate's normal way of working in internal assessments and mock examinations as a consequence of a long term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional needs. The candidate's difficulties are established within the centre and known to a Form Tutor, a Director of Learning, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre.

1:1 invigilation and the use of an alternative room would apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room.
(AARA, section 5.16)

Further details and explanation are contained in the Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy (Exams)³.

Modified Papers

Modified papers are ordered using AAO

- Modified papers must be ordered in advance of a specific examination series, no later than the published deadline for the series concerned (AARA 6.1)
- Modified papers are prepared for candidates for whom other adjustments are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore, centres must provide the awarding bodies with early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper (AARA 6.1)
- Modified papers **must not** be ordered for candidates unless the centre intends to enter them for the relevant examination series (AARA 6.1)
- For the adjustment to be effective, the candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using an awarding body's past modified papers before their first examination (AARA 6.1)

Roles and Responsibilities

When an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment has been processed on-line and approved, the evidence of need (where required) must be made available to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request. An awarding body may also request evidence of need when considered necessary. This can either be in hard copy paper format or electronically. (AARA 4.2)

Where documentation is stored electronically an e-folder for each individual candidate must be created. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection (AARA 4.2)

It is the responsibility of:

- Ms S Williams (SENcO) to inform candidates that an application for access arrangements will be processed using *Access arrangements online*, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Ms S Williams (SENcO) to submit applications for approval using AAO
- Ms S Williams (SENcO) to keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required) (AARA 8.6)
- Ms S Williams (SENcO) to submit applications for approval directly to an awarding body for any qualification that does not fall within the scope of AAO
- Ms S Williams to order modified papers

² The Word Processor (Exam) Policy can be access on the Academy website

³ The Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy is within the Exams Policy on the Academy website