



## EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

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THIS POLICY APPLIES TO MILLFIELD

### RATIONALE

Our Exam Access Arrangements Policy explains the activity undertaken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN), which will include those with formally diagnosed Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). The policy supports and facilitates Millfield's aim to create a learning environment in which every student can fulfil his or her full potential.

### EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

Exam Access Arrangements are actions taken to remove the disadvantages to a student accessing an examination caused by physical, learning, sensory or psychological difficulties, without creating any unfair advantage or compromising the integrity of an assessment. These arrangements are agreed before an assessment and must reflect a student's normal way of working within the school.

### REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a student 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. A student with a disability or difficulty which has a substantial and long-term effect on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

### THE IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL PROCESS

Some students will join the school with recognised AEN; for these the SENCo will use all available information to decide the correct course of action in terms of exam access arrangements. For other students, identification and referral for exam access arrangements will follow the procedure set out in the AEN policy, but is outlined briefly below in terms of exam access arrangements:

#### **For students joining Year 9 or Year 10: Stage 1 - Early Screening**

Literacy levels of all students joining Year 9 or Year 10 are screened to identify potential learning needs. Those whose scores are of concern are flagged and their names are added to the assessment list for formal assessment. Parents are informed of this process. Adjustments to teaching within lessons are made according to need to enable a student to learn and make progress. All staff are involved in monitoring these adjustments.

## **Stage 2: Formal Testing**

Formal assessments take place during the autumn term for new entrants to Y10, and during spring/summer term for Year 9. Parents are invited to select which assessment option they would like the school to follow as outlined in 'Assessment Options' below.

In some cases, the SENCo may advise a particular option for a student. These assessments are delivered in accordance with the JCQ guidelines. For those students who qualify for an exam access arrangement, teachers are asked to provide evidence of need and normal way of working in advance of an application being made/put into place (see 'The Application Process' for more detail).

### **For students joining Sixth Form**

Literacy levels of all students joining Lower Sixth are screened to identify potential learning needs.

### **Students progressing from Millfield Year 11 to Millfield Sixth Form**

Those who progress to Millfield Lower Sixth from Millfield Year 11 will be invited for a review of their exam access arrangements within the first term of L6 with a Millfield assessor. Students who have re-take examinations or module examinations in November or January will be prioritised for this review meeting. Students will not necessarily require an updated assessment, so long as the need for continued exam access arrangements can be established. This includes evidence from their use of exam access arrangements during Key stage 4 (KS4) courses and examinations and normal way of working, as well as confirmation from L6 teachers that these arrangements remain the normal way of working in their Sixth Form studies. Students who have not made use of exam access arrangements at KS4 and/or whose teachers feel these arrangements are not the student's normal way of working are unlikely to be granted the same arrangements in the Sixth Form. A trial period may be granted in the L6 year before this decision is made. Students whose parents would like a full assessment are invited to select which assessment option they would like the school to follow as outlined in 'Assessment Options' below.

### **Students who are new to Millfield Sixth Form**

Those who join Millfield in L6 are requested to supply the LSC with documentation regarding previous EAA. This includes a Form 8, signed by the assessor (all sections), and any other relevant assessment reports/information and evidence. Formal assessments take place during the autumn term of L6. Again, parents are invited to select which assessment option they would like the school to follow as outlined in 'Assessment Options' below.

## **ASSESSMENT OPTIONS**

In order to ensure we have enough detailed assessment information to fully meet a student's individual needs, the LSC offers a two-tiered system of assessment, depending on the level of assessment it is felt the student would best benefit from and on parental preference:

1. Students can be assessed 'in house' which carries no additional cost. This is not a full assessment and parents will not receive a written report of this assessment, but the results will suffice to complete the paperwork for exam access arrangements, should the student qualify. Parents will be given some brief feedback of this assessment, and an updated Student Profile based on this assessment, by one of the administration staff or one of our qualified assessors who will carry out the assessment. If the LSC do not receive any indication of parental preference, this assessment will be undertaken for exam access arrangements and parents will be informed of the outcome once processed.

2. The student can have a full Educational Psychologist (EP) assessment (or, where appropriate, an Occupational Therapist or Speech and Language assessment) which the LSC can arrange here at school. This option incurs a cost. There are advantages to this fuller assessment, in that it will give the school a more detailed picture of a student's profile for this stage of his/her education and can be used as evidence should the student continue onto University after leaving Millfield. Parents will also receive a full and detailed written report. However, it is not essential. The SENCo may sometimes advise that a student should have this in-depth assessment when staff require expert guidance on a student's learning needs.

Parents will be asked to consent to a given cost before any charged assessment takes place.

**Please note that whilst reports from Educational Psychologists/Specialist Assessors that have been commissioned privately provide useful information to help with the education of your child, it is not possible for us to use those to support an application for access arrangements for exams. We are bound by the JCQ regulations which stipulate that any specialist assessor / educational psychologist must have an established working relationship with the school. Likewise, medical letters will prompt an investigation, but not override the evidence seen in school. Assessments for a diagnosis should always be discussed with the LSC prior to their undertaking, so that we are able to show the involvement of the school and evidence any difficulties in this setting.**

## **SPECIALIST ASSESSORS**

All assessments for applications for access arrangements are carried out by a Millfield approved assessor. These assessors are either appropriately qualified assessors or appropriately qualified and registered healthcare practitioners / Educational Psychologists who are named on a list of approved assessors (maintained by HR) and have an established working relationship with the school.

EPs (Educational Psychologists) and other assessors are appointed by the Head of Centre. They can be added to the list of approved assessors only via the following process:

- Interview with SENCo and Head of Centre.
- SENCo confirms the:
  - ❖ Assessor / EP has the necessary qualifications and is on the register of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC);
  - ❖ The Specialist Assessor has the necessary qualifications and holds a current SpLD / Assessment Practising Certificate;
  - ❖ The Access Arrangements Assessor has successfully completed a postgraduate course at, or equivalent to, Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, as outlined in 7.3.4 of the JCQ regulations.
- HR DBS checks are complete.
- EP/Assessor signs to say that they have a thorough understanding of the current edition of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, that they agree to work within the JCQ regulations to carry out assessments in light of the picture of need and the background information detailed within Section A of Form 8. The assessor agrees to complete Section C of Form 8 using recent editions of nationally standardised tests and reporting test results as standard scores. This agreement will be kept on file by the SENCo for inspection purposes.

The list of approved assessors will be reviewed annually by the SENCo and Head of Centre. The EP/Assessor will be required (annually) to confirm their understanding of the JCQ regulations and to confirm that their qualifications are current. The Exams Officer will be informed of those on the list at the start of the academic year and of any changes to the approved list during the year so that the correct names can be added to the Register of Assessors.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

Some exam access arrangements must be applied for through the Access Arrangements Online (AAO) system. These include:

- 25% extra time.
- More than 25% extra time (in exceptional circumstances).
- Reader / Computer Reader.
- Scribe (or voice activated software, or word process with spellcheck enabled).
- Practical Assistant.

In order for a student to be granted permission for these access arrangements, the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) requires an assessment to be carried out during or after Curriculum Year 9 to ensure a student with learning difficulties 'qualifies' for an arrangement. Qualifying scores are those which fall below the average level. Furthermore, for an arrangement to be granted, the school is also required to 'paint a picture of the normal mode of working for the student' and this must clearly demonstrate the need for the arrangement across the curriculum. This means the school must gather and maintain a dossier of evidence, on a subject by subject basis, to substantiate an application.

An application for an EAA cannot be made until all the documentation and assessments are in place, and thus confirmation of these arrangements in each subject is not possible until later on in the student's courses. Such decisions are ultimately made by the School and the SENCo is required to be completely satisfied that there is suitable evidence to support such an application.

When the decision is made by the SENCo to apply for Access Arrangements for a student, then the Access Arrangements Coordinator, under the direction of the SENCo, will apply online using the Access Arrangements Online (AAO) portal. The SENCo will be available to answer any queries and guide the Access Arrangements Coordinator accordingly.

Administrators in the LSC office will track the progress through the application procedure keeping a record of the date of each of the following where applicable:

- Initial referral or receipt of background history from previous school.
- Receipt of teacher evidence (in file).
- Receipt of parental approval for an assessment.
- Form 8 Part 1 completed prior to assessment.
- Form 8 Part 2: Assessment completed and signed by the assessor
- Form 8 Part 3 completed and signed by the SENCo, and a stapled paper copy placed in file.
- Data protection notice signed by the student (in file).
- Application entered on-line by the Access Arrangements Coordinator.
- Application approved (copy of Approval Notice in file).

All files will be stored in the LSC office.

A tracking record will be accessible by the SENCo and Head of Centre and will be used to enable them to monitor the application process.

## **CENTRE DELEGATED ARRANGEMENTS**

Access Arrangements designated 'Centre Delegated' do not need to be applied for using AAO. However, evidence of need and 'normal way of working' are still required and will need to be kept in student files, as per the JCQ regulations.

Centre delegated arrangements include the following:

- Word processor / laptop.
- Supervised rest breaks.
- Separate invigilation.
- Read aloud.
- Reading pen.
- Prompter.

In all cases, the delegated exam access must still meet the following criteria:

1. It must reflect the student's normal way of working within the centre.
2. It must be appropriate to the student's needs.

### **Word Processor (with the spelling and grammar check disabled):**

Where appropriate, and where permitted by the current JCQ regulations, the school may provide a word processor for a student to use in external written examinations. Word processing is available to students according to need rather than preference. A word processor cannot simply be granted to a student 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 processing will only be permitted when use of a word processor meets the criteria below:

1. That use of a word processor is the student's normal way of working within the school: this means that a student uses a word processor for the majority of written tasks. Using a word processor for prep tasks only is not sufficient grounds for use of a word processor in examinations. Teachers in the subjects concerned will be asked to confirm a student's normal way of working and students will be expected to use a word processor in all relevant class tests and internal school exams, in line with their usage in external examinations.
2. It is permissible for a student using a word processor to type in answers to certain questions e.g. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter, or more simplistic, answers.
3. Use of a word processor is appropriate to the student's needs:

Examples of when the exam access arrangement of a word processor may be appropriate to the student's needs are as follows:

- A student has a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly.
- A student has a medical condition which necessitates the use of a word processor due to difficulties with handwriting/coordination skills. This will require confirmation in the form of a letter from a specialist medical practitioner (rather than the GP), such as an Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, medical consultant or a specialist assessor which outlines the needs and recommendation of use of a word processor.
- A physical disability.
- A sensory impairment.

- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand (as formally assessed by an Educational Psychologist or specialist assessor).
- A writing speed of below average level and an average typing speed (use of WP may be recommended instead of extra-time).

Regulations state that 25% extra time should only be given in conjunction with the use of a word processor if the student has other significant difficulties and permission for extra time has been approved through AAO.

The practical arrangements for using a word processor and printing out the script will be made by Millfield's Exams Officer (Access Arrangements Coordinator) and the Exams team. Word processors provided for this purpose will have the spelling check and grammar check disabled as required by the current JCQ regulations (unless a student qualifies for the spellcheck to be enabled: see Scribe (or voice activated software, or word process with spellcheck enabled). As far as possible, these arrangements will also apply, under the same conditions, in internal examinations.

#### **iPads:**

Whilst the school mobile learning project has embraced the integral use of iPads via a range of multimedia and apps in teaching and learning activities, currently these devices cannot be configured for use in examinations. It should also be noted that the use of an iPad as a normal way of working does not on its own constitute an appropriate need to use a word processor in exams (see above).

#### **Separate Invigilation and Supervised Rest Breaks:**

The SENCo is permitted to recommend supervised rest breaks and/or separate invigilation for a student where it is his/her normal way of working within the centre.

To comply with JCQ Regulations the SENCo must be satisfied that:

- The student has an impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties.
- There is a genuine and established need for the arrangement.
- Evidence exists within the centre that this is required.

Students who are anxious about exams or about being distracted by others must accept that this is a normal part of the examination process and not sufficient grounds for a separate room and/or rest breaks.

Separate invigilation and/ or supervised rest breaks may be awarded where it is a reasonable adjustment and school facilities allow on account of:

- Cognition and learning needs not met by an alternative access arrangement;
- Communication and interaction needs e.g. ASD, SLCN;
- A medical condition;
- Sensory and/ or physical needs e.g. PD, HI, VI;
- Social, mental and emotional needs e.g. AD(H)D, established mental health conditions.

Please note that a letter from the GP does not constitute sufficient medical evidence.

In addition, the student's difficulties must be established within the centre and thus known to the Group Tutor, Head of Year, HsM and/ or SENCo. The only exception to this would be a temporary illness, a temporary injury or other temporary indisposition which is clearly evidenced. Where evidence of need is not immediately apparent within the school, the SENCo reserves the right to request further evidence from a medical specialist.

During supervised rest breaks the student will not have access to the question paper/answer booklet. He/she will either leave the room accompanied by an invigilator, or remain at the desk and the invigilator will remove the paper for the duration of the rest break.

The duration of rest breaks will usually be up to 10 minutes long, taken within each hour of the exam paper (except for known medical conditions). The student will alert the invigilator to the need for a rest break by holding up/showing the 'rest break' card he/she will have been given. The time taken for rest breaks will be officially logged by the invigilator and added to the end of the exam.

#### **Read Aloud:**

This access arrangement can make a significant difference to a student who persistently struggles to understand what they have read, but who does not use a reader as their normal way of working. The student will be placed in a separate room where this is reasonably possible so that he/she can read aloud without being overheard by other candidates.

The arrangement must reflect the student's normal way of working in internal school tests and rehearsal examinations.

#### **Examination Reading Pen:**

The use of an examination reading pen, provided by the centre, might benefit those students who wish to work independently who do not qualify for a reader.

- It will benefit students who only require occasional words or phrases to be read to them.
- An examination pen can be used in papers (or sections of papers) testing reading.
- The arrangements must reflect the student's normal way of working in internal school tests and rehearsal exams.

#### **Prompter:**

A prompter may be permitted where a student has a substantial and long-term adverse impairment resulting in persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating, for example the student:

- Has little or no sense of time because of ASD or AD(H)D.
- Persistently loses concentration.
- Is affected by an obsessive-compulsive disorder which leads them to keep revising a question rather than moving on to other questions.

The SENCo is responsible for making a final decision about centre delegated arrangements and will make such decisions in accordance with relevant JCQ regulations.

## DEADLINES FOR ACCESS ARRANGEMENT APPLICATIONS

### GCSE / Key stage 4:

Deadlines to make applications for exam access arrangements for GCSE / Key stage 4 examinations will depend on specific exam boards, who each publish their own schedules. However, all deadlines fall within the first half of Year 11. Therefore, in order to ensure that there is ample time to collate evidence and make applications, as well as to inform students prior to exam sittings, the school deadline for exam access arrangements for GCSE / Key stage 4 will be by the end of the autumn term of Year 11. This will enable the school to ensure these arrangements are confirmed and students are aware of their arrangements for the summer. Other than in exceptional circumstances, it will not be possible to make applications beyond these deadlines.

For those students in L6 who will sit retake exams at GCSE, the deadline for applications is the end of September of the L6.

### A level / BTEC / Key stage 5:

Deadlines to make applications for exam access arrangements for AS and A levels / BTEC / Key stage 5 examinations will depend on specific exam boards, who each publish their own schedules. In order to ensure that there is ample time to collate evidence and make applications, as well as to inform students prior to exam sittings, the school deadline for exam access arrangements for AS and A levels / BTEC / Key stage 5 examinations will be:

- For BTEC examinations in January of L6: autumn half term in L6.
- For A level / BTEC examinations in U6: the end of L6.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, it will not be possible to make applications beyond these deadlines.

## SUPPORT OFFERED TO STUDENTS WITH EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

Students with exam access arrangements in place are invited to take part in small group sessions to show them how to effectively use these arrangements. For example:

- Students who have access to a reader or scribe are shown how to use them appropriately in exam situations, and it is explained to them what they can and cannot do with the reader/scribe during the exam, and how much support the adult is allowed to give. Please note that it is not possible to guarantee a particular member of the team to read or scribe for a student. Whilst we will do our best to allocate readers and scribes to students they have worked well with previously, unforeseen circumstances preclude us from being able to offer confirmation on a particular member of staff for a particular day / candidate. However, all readers and scribes will be suitably qualified and trained to undertake this exam arrangement.
- Students with extra time are guided by subject teachers and can attend sessions in the LSC on how to use the extra time allowance effectively. They are then encouraged to apply the techniques and strategies given to them in internal exams and assessments.
- All teachers are given access to information on students' exam access arrangements, and are asked to give the Access Arrangements Coordinator at least two weeks' notice before they carry out any 'in class' assessments with students, so that support can be provided for students who require it during the tests/exams.



- In the event that a student does not wish to make use of their exam access arrangement in any given exam, this will be noted. If, in due course, it is felt that the exam access arrangement is no longer the student's normal mode of working, this may be removed. This will be discussed with the student prior to removing the arrangement.

## **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Temporary Arrangements:**

Temporary exam access arrangements may be required for a student suffering from unforeseen illness or injury. In these cases, the school's Exams Officer must be informed at the earliest possible opportunity, and a letter from a GP, consultant or other professional detailing the problem and any arrangement deemed necessary should be obtained as soon as possible. The school will make every effort to accommodate these arrangements. Application for temporary exam access arrangements in these circumstances will be undertaken in the following manner:

- For a student who has existing exam access arrangements, temporary arrangements will be processed by the Access Arrangements Coordinator.
- For a student who does not have any existing exam access arrangements, temporary arrangements will be processed by the Exams Officer.

### **Alternative Accommodation:**

On very rare occasions, a student may need to sit an examination at a residential address or at a hospital due to a severe medical condition or profound psychological condition which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre. In this situation, the school will ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures and staffing. We must be satisfied that the student is well enough to take the examination and there must be appropriate evidence of need held on file. Application for alternative accommodation in these circumstances will be processed by the Exams Officer.

### **Special Consideration:**

Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a student's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination/assessment. The student will have been fully prepared for the exams, but due to some unforeseen circumstance could not demonstrate what they knew. Application for special consideration in these circumstances will be processed by the Exams Officer.

### **Whistle Blowing:**

If any member of staff suspects that applications are being made that are not in line with current JCQ regulations, they must raise a concern immediately. Concerns should be brought to the attention of both the SENCo and the Head of Centre immediately, even if irregularities are suspected and not yet confirmed. If the concerns raised are about either the conduct of the SENCo or the Head of Centre, they should be raised with the governor with responsibility for Access Arrangements and Exams (the Clerk to Governors can facilitate contact). All members of staff directly involved with applications for access arrangements will receive annual (external) training to ensure they are familiar with current JCQ regulations. Should there be any suspicion or actual incident of malpractice, the appropriate awarding body will be notified at the earliest opportunity, by the Head of Centre (or a member of the governing board, if appropriate).

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information can be found on the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) website:  
[www.jcq](http://www.jcq).

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