

# **CONTINGENCY PLAN**

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	October 2026

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	<b>Emma Wijnberg</b>
Senior leader(s)	<b>Mark Freakes, Hannah Coleridge</b>
Exams officer	<b>Adrianna Marczak</b>
SENCo (or equivalent role)	<b>Alice Fullilove</b>

## Contents

Key staff involved in the plan.....	2
Purpose of the plan.....	4
Contingency arrangements.....	4
Operating across more than one centre.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
National Centre Number Register and other information requirements .....	4
Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	5
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process .....	5
1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle .....	5
2. SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	5
3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	6
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence .....	6
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice.....	7
6. Cyber security .....	7
7. Failure of IT systems .....	8
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown).....	9
9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period .....	9
10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open.....	9
11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations.....	10
12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers.....	10
13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.....	10
14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked .....	10
15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services .....	11
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	12
DfE .....	12
Ofqual .....	12
JCQ.....	14
GOV.UK.....	15
Wales.....	15
Northern Ireland .....	15
National Cyber Security Centre .....	16

## Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process at Sydenham School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the document *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**

This plan also confirms Sydenham School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre:

- a contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery

## Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Sydenham School **must** have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan **must** cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders **must** have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- the potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site or alternative sites which can be used if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different year groups.

Sydenham School **must** have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

Sydenham School **must** ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

## National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Sydenham School completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even if there are no changes to centre details) which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

## Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

The main duties and responsibilities will be held by a Deputy Headteacher Hannah Coleridge.

### Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

#### 1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

##### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken, including:*

##### *Planning*

- *annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered*
- *annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines*
- *sufficient invigilators not recruited*

##### *Entries*

- *awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff*
- *candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment*
- *awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred*

##### *Pre-exams*

- *invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams*
- *exam timetabling, rooming allocation, and invigilation schedules not prepared*
- *candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates*
- *confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions*
- *internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators*

##### *Exam time*

- *exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies*
- *required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration*
- *candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies*

##### *Results and post-results*

- *access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates*
- *the facilitation of the post-results services*

##### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exam information are held on One Drive available for SLT and Martin Brooks
- Martin Brooks has experience of running exams and has access to Bromcom Exam System
- Mark Freakes SLT and Hannah Coleridge is fully informed of stage of exam preparation from monthly meetings with the Exam Officer

#### 2. SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

##### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken, including:*

##### *Planning*

- *candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements*
- *centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010*

- *evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated*

*Pre-exams*

- *approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body*
- *centre-delegated arrangements not put in place*
- *modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline*
- *staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained*

*Exam time*

- *access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Access Arrangements information are hold on One Drive available for SLT, Exam Officer and Inclusion Team.
- • Adrianna Marczak is exam officer and have experience supporting team in Sendco Department who can help. All information is on school computer files, which can be shared.
- • Lucy Hehir is SLT for Sendco Department and have monthly meetings with the Sendco Department so can support Sendco in case of extended absence.

**3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) **extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle****

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks not undertaken, including:*

*Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received*

*Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies*

*Non-examination assessment (including controlled assessments and coursework) tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled*

*Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking*

*Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Head of Departments takes responsibilities from absent teacher with support of SLT and Exam Officer
- Retains a workforce of an appropriate size and competence, including sufficient managerial and other resource, to undertake the delivery of the qualification as required by an awarding body. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure occupational competence where this is required for the assessment of specific qualifications
- Provides fully qualified teachers to mark non-examination assessments, and/or fully qualified assessors for the verification of centre-assessed components
- Enables the relevant senior leader(s), the examinations officer (EO) and the ALS lead/SENCo to receive appropriate training and support in order to facilitate the effective delivery of examinations and assessments within the centre, and ensure compliance with the published JCQ regulations

**4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams*

*Invigilator shortage on peak exam days*

*Invigilator absence on the day of an exam*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Recruits, train and deploys a team of internal/external invigilators; appoints lead invigilators, as required and keeps a record of the content of training provided to invigilators for the required period Have a backup team of invigilators prepared to fill in for emergency absences Collaborate with three staff agencies that have invigilators available on a daily basis.

## **5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning*

*Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days*

*Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

We have spare venues within the school- Activity Studio, Canopy, Main School Hall

Use Year 11 classrooms during GCSE exams

Use Year 13 classrooms during A Level exam Alternative site(s) details: Forest Hill School

Alternative site(s) details: Forest Hill School

## **6. Cyber security**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

We've enrolled the school into the NCSC Mail Check & Web Check platforms which are running and the school adheres to the recommendations. The school are also Cyber Essentials certified which is an NCSC scheme, and something not always required but very good to have.

We have many Microsoft 365 features enabled for security & redundancy, and we also have a backup policy for data in the school.

We have in place:

Establishing a robust password policy

Enabling multi-factor authentication (MFA)

Keeping software and systems up to date

Implementing network security measures

Conducting regular data backups

Educating employees on security awareness

Developing and testing an incident response plan

Regularly assessing and auditing security controls

Daily backups of data - We keep a cloud and on site backup of data for the school and also have data stored within office 365

Web filtering security - We have LGFL who administer our web security and they do the whitelisting amongst other

filtering methods. All harmful pages and spam and attacks are initially blocked and protected by their systems and we get monthly reports of any harmful stuff that has occurred in school during that month.

Computer Security - We use Sophos protection on all devices in the school for protection against adware and malware and virus attacks. On remote desktops they also have access to Malwarebytes which is an additional free tool used to investigate any adware and malware immediately and resolve and or quarantine these issues.

Device management systems - We use intune, meraki and impero to monitor devices in Sydenham. Intune and Meraki work similarly in that they work for specific devices and apply security policies to protect them and locate them if necessary. Impero inspects all devices in real time and reports any harmful computer usage by users within Sydenham

whether teacher or student

We ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training. The training include:

- the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
- keeping all account details strictly confidential;
- the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
- how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;
- an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
- the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

Certificates of completed staff cyber training are available for inspection.

## **7. Failure of IT systems**

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*IT system corruption affecting candidates' work*

*MIS system failure at final entry deadline*

*MIS system failure during exams preparation*

*Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test*

*MIS system failure at results release time*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

In the event of an IT failure we have many contingencies in place to meantime systems.

If the internet goes down we have a resilient line which will take over automatically to allow the school to stay online.

The school runs on virtual servers spread across 4 hosts and in the event that one goes down then they will move to another. One of the hosts is geographically in a different place on the other side of the school to protect against fires.

All of the schools emails are in Microsoft 365 which have multiple data centres across the UK for resilience. Also we have laptops available to use with internet connection. We have backup system to find and restore students work.

We ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that it is backed-up via the Cloud.

## 8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Inform relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible
- Refer to emergency plans and/or health and safety policy, where appropriate
- Head of centre will decide whether the centre is safe to open, based on advice or instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations
- Communicate any changes to your plans with parents and pupils
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements
- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series, if possible

## 9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seek advice from relevant awarding organisations and JCQ
- Have a contingency plan to facilitate alternative methods of online learning
- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- Communicate any changes to your plans with parents and pupils
- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, we can use Forst Hill school to prepare students, as usual, for examination
- in the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series
- We also able to facilitate alternative methods of learning

## 10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue
- Liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with relevant awarding organisations
- Communicate any changes to your plans with parents and pupils
- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements

### **11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations**

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations*

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Inform relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible
- Refer to emergency plans and/or health and safety policy, where appropriate
- Head of centre will decide whether the centre is safe to open, based on advice or instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations
- Communicate any changes to your plans with parents and pupils
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements
- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series, if possible

Alternative site(s) details: Forest Hill School

### **12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers**

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations*

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Contact awarding organisation if they're able to organise an alternative courier and time to deliver
- hardcopies
- • If the above isn't possible, we will receive electronic access to papers via a secured external network
- • Forest Hill School is a safe location to receive, make and store papers under secure conditions
- • We might ask to the awarding organisation to consider rescheduling the examination

### **13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts**

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence*

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- We are part of the the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections.
- Ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.
- We also have post office service available on a day, collection at 4pm every day.

### **14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked**

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked*

*Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

Our students sit at least one set of mocks in exam conditions and be supported to complete their NEA where possible.

Students should be assessed using the same material at the same time or using different material at different times

Student assessment evidence either the original or a copy, must be retained by the school or college, digitally or physically

Students should be told before taking any assessment whether their performance could be used as evidence.

**15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services**

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Sydenham School will make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible
- to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services
- from an alternative site centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.)
- Facilitation of post results services: centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location centres
- Our students are able to contact us online to request services and we can online request post results services

Alternative site(s) details: Forest Hill School

## Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

### Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Cyber security standards for schools and colleges

Ofqual

### What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC),

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

#### Contingency planning

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties (Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

#### Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

You may also wish to see the JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

#### Steps you should take

##### Exam planning

Review your contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

##### In the event of disruption

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure.
6. Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

##### After the exam

1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation for special consideration.
2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.

3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
4. Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

## **Steps the awarding organisation should take**

### **Exam planning**

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

### **In the event of disruption**

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

### **After the exam**

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students; for example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

### **If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption**

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects, depending on their specific policies.

See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration

### **Wider communications**

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The DfE in England, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, and the Welsh Government will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption, and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Central Applications Office (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

### **Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments**

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for examinations and assessments, including exam timetables.

In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements. As in 2023, Ofqual has provided guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

In December 2022, Qualifications Wales published guidance for contingency assessment arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels and Skills Challenge Certificates in the event that a national decision is made to cancel exams. This guidance is still relevant for the current academic year.

The DfE has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days, and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

The DfE has also issued guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings. It includes the need for contingencies for possible disruption to examinations and links to the existing emergency planning guidance.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur.

### **General contingency guidance**

- emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings from the DfE in England
- handling strike action in schools from the DfE in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the DfE in England
- reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC from the DfE in England
- exceptional closure days: Northern Ireland from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct
- opening schools, childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government
- protective security and preparedness for education settings from the DfE
- police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
- cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated 7 May 2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>)

## **JCQ**

### **15. CONTINGENCY PLANNING**

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates. Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body or bodies.

15.3 All centres must have a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the examination contingency plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 If the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2026. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

15.6 The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is for use in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres **must**, therefore, ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations** 2025-2026  
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

General Regulations for Approved Centres [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Guidance notes for transferred candidates [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Instructions for conducting examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations)

A guide to the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance)

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023; Revised July 2025)  
[www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/)

~~Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/)~~

~~Further clarification for centres affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues – March 2024  
[www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/)~~

## GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: ~~Ensuring the service runs smoothly~~; Contingency planning  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service)

## Wales

School closures: examinations [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](http://gov.wales/school-closures-examinations)

Opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather:  
[www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather](http://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather)

## Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days – Northern Ireland [www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)  
Checklist - exceptional closure of schools [www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

## **National Cyber Security Centre**

Cyber Security for Schools [www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools)

Cyber security training for school staff [www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools)