Nether Stowe School

Access Arrangements Policy

2025/26

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Mr S. Cooper	
Date of next review	October 2026

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
ALS lead/SENCo	Mrs L. Findlay
SENCo	Mr S Bembridge
Head of centre	Ms K Jones
Assessor(s)	Mrs Samantha Hough
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	Mrs R. Bentley Miss J. Gray Mrs L. Harrison

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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 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[1], 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 several 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[1], Definitions)

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Nether Stowe School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements.

(JCQ's **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 documentation electronically they **mus**t create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AARA, section 4.2)

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

[1]This publication is further referred to in this policy as AARA

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 AARA (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 them 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 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.
>
> 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.
>
> Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course.
>
> Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.
>
> The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre.
>
> The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination.

Equalities Policy (Exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy (Exams) 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 appointed by the head of centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AA, section 7.3.

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

Equivalent to Level 7 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 AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

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

Evidence of the assessors' qualification(s) is held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo.

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

Where a candidate has learning difficulties and is not subject to a current Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs, SENCo prepares a detailed picture of need demonstrating the candidate's normal way of working and completing Part 1 of Form 8 prior to the candidate being assessed.

Picture of need/normal way of working

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo provides the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor works together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process. The evidence reflects the candidate's confirmed normal way of working and support given in the classroom and during internal tests/mock examinations.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Applications for access arrangements are submitted to the exam boards using their online tool (AAO). Prior to an application, each candidate must sign a JCQ Data Protection Form. When approved the candidates printed report and all supporting documentation is held on their file in the SENCo department. Their approval number and application expiry date are recorded onto a summary report used when planning examinations.

Applications are processed again for A Levels following GCSE examinations. Access Arrangements will only allow a maximum of 26 months for any arrangements.

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)

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

Where exam board approval is not required, Nether Stowe School may grant individual candidates' personal arrangements to meet their individual needs if at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other candidates undertaking the same assessment. Candidates themselves or their teachers may make a referral or raise concerns i.e. handwriting, concentration/focus and needs pertaining to reading. The gathered evidence in held on their file and implemented through lessons and all examinations.

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

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 the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's confirmed normal way of working within the centre. Evidence is required in all cases.

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 separate invigilation) within the centre will be made by the SENCo.

The decision will be based on:

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