ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

2026/27

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulationsi

Approved/reviewed by	
Caren Urbani	
Date of next review	September 2027

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
SENCo (or equivalent role)	**Caren Urbani**
Senior leader(s)	**Adam Palmer, Hannah Austin, Roisin Still, Simon Ralph**
Head of centre	**Adam Palmer**
Exams officer	**Jocelyn Watson**
Assessor(s)	**Rachel Irvine, Diploma for Teachers of Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties**
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	**N/A**

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Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name
Exams officer	Jocelyn Watson
ALS lead/SENCo	Caren Urbani
Senior leader(s)	Louise Baker Hannah Austin, Rosin Still, Simon Ralph
Head of centre	Adam Palmer
Other staff (if applicable)	Not Applicable

This policy is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that access arrangements process at St Michael's Catholic School is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

References in this policy to GR, ICE and AA refer to the JCQ publications **General Regulations for Approved Centres, Instructions for conducting examinations** and **Acesss Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**.

References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

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. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AARA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AARA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that St Michael's Catholic 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**, 5.4)
This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by SENCo (or equivalent role) 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 (or equivalent role) 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. ([1]AARA 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document '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, to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (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 a disabled candidate.
>
> The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, **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.
>
> Applications should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working.
>
> 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 is available on our school's website

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 7.3.

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

Rachel Irvine, Diploma for Teachers of Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties

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)

The head of centre/senior leadership team will have a **written** process in place to check the qualification(s) of their 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)

The Head of Centre/ Senco will verify that assessors are appropriately qualified and hold a Level 7 qualification in access arrangement assessment or an equivalent qualification. This will be done by requesting the assessors Certificate of Qualification

The head of centre **must** ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) must be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo. (AARA 7.3)

Make full reference to AARA 7.3 (Appointment of assessors) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Reporting the appointment of assessors

Evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements (AA 7.3.4) This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate (AA 7.3.4)

A photocopy of the assessor's certificate(s) (or a printout of screenshot of HCPC or SASC registration, or screenshot of other relevant qualification listing) is kept on file (AA 7.3.1, 7.4.1)

The assessors qualification is kept in the Access Arrangements folder which is kept under lock and key in the SEND Office

The names of all other assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications as covered by AA must be entered into Access arrangements online to confirm their status (AA 7.4.3)

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

Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional (AA 7.5.5)

The assessor must carry out tests which are relevant to support the application. (AA 7.5.6)

A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access arrangements online. (AA 7.3.6)

Relevant staff working within the centre should always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the centre and ultimately assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated (AA 7.3.6)

The correct procedures are followed as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (GR 5.4)

Picture of need/normal way of working

St Michael's Catholic School confirms that our centre has a process for painting a 'holistic picture of need' and gathering evidence to confirm normal way of working for a candidate requiring access arrangements.

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted, as required in Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal wayof working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor must be approved b the head of centre to assess the candidate. All candidates must be assessed in the 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 person appointed in the centre. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the centre. (AA 7.5.3)

The SENCo and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process... (AARA 7.5)

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 your process that reflects the requirements.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. (Refer to AARA 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and 6 (Modified papers).

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

AAO is accessed through the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used. The accessing of the JCQ Portal and processing of online applications is undertaken by the Senco. Deadlines apply for each examination series for submitting applications for approval using AAO.

All evidene of on line applications is kept in a students electronic file. If an online application does not gain approval, this will be sent to the relevant awarding body/ bodies

Candidates **must** be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using *Access arrangements online*, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The SENCo **must** 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);
- evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA 8.6)

Make full reference to AARA 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments), 6 (Modified papers) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

Decisions relating to the approval of centre delegated arrangements/adjustments are made by the SENCO . Appropriate evidence, where required by the arrangement, is held on file by SENCO/Interventions lead .

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 normal way of working within the centre.

St Michaels has its own Word Processor Policy that details the criteria that St Michaels Catholic School specifically uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments.

A member of the centre's senior leadership team has produced a word processor policy, specific to the centre, which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments. This policy **must** and is be available for inspection. (AARA 5.8)

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 will be made by the SENCo (or equivalent role).

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 5.16)

The Exams Policy details the criteria St Michael's Catholic School uses to award separate invigilation within the centre. Alternative rooming arrangements **must** reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

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

The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation **must only** 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 5.16)

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 (AA 6.1)
- Modified papers are individually prepared for candidates for whom other adjustments are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore centres are required to provide the awarding bodies with early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper. (AA 6.1)
- Modified papers must not be ordered for candidates unless the centre intends to enter them for the relevant examination series (AA 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 his/her first examination (AA 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. (AA 4.2.13)

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. (AA 4.2.13)

It is the responsibility of:

SENCO to collect a candidate's consent (a completed candidate Personal data consent form) to record their personal data on-line through AAO

SENCO to complete the Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo, prior to the processing of the online application, which must be retained for 26 months from the date of the online application being approved SENCO to submit applications for approval using AAO

SENCO to hold the file/e-folder for each individual candidate containing a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and a signed candidate personal data consent form (AA 8.6)

SENCO to submit applications for approval directly to an awarding body for any qualification that does not fall within the scope of AAO

The Exams Officer to order modified papers