



# Holy Cross

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

## **Exam Access Arrangements Policy**

*'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John: 10:10)*

Date policy last reviewed:	September 2024
Date policy last updated:	January 2025
SENDCo	Mrs E Dempsey
Signed by Headteacher (Mr G Lindley) Date 14 February 2025	
Signed by Chair of Governors (Mrs H Lunn) Date 25 February 2025	

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## Statement of intent

At **Holy Cross Catholic High School**, we are fully committed to ensuring that education is accessible to all. We recognise that some pupils may require support and additional arrangements to be able to access and undertake exams. This policy outlines the school's procedures for identifying and applying for access arrangements before an exam and the reasonable adjustments that will be put in place as required.

**Access arrangements** are agreed before an assessment. They allow identified candidates with specific needs, eg SEND or temporary injuries, to access the assessment and demonstrate what they 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. The school will apply access arrangements in line with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments. This is where reasonable steps are taken to overcome a substantial disadvantage that a candidate who is disabled faces in comparison to a candidate who is not disabled. Whether an adjustment will be considered will depend on several factors and must be evidence-based. The final decision lies with the Head of Centre.

## **1. Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE and Department of Health and Social Care (2015) 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years'
- DfE (2015) 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions'
- Equality Act 2010
- JCQ (2024) 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Equality Policy
- Privacy Notice for Pupils and their Families
- SEND Policy

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

The Headteacher will be responsible for:

- Ensuring exam arrangements are compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and no pupil is discriminated against
- Ensuring that access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are based on firm evidence of a barrier to assessment, and adhere to JCQ guidelines and those of the relevant exam board
- Ensuring a person appointed to facilitate an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment, eg a Communication Professional or scribe, is a responsible adult, appropriately trained and fully understands the rules of the arrangements

The SENDCO will be responsible for:

- Leading on the process for identifying and securing access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- Working with teaching and support staff and exams office personnel to ensure approved arrangements are in place for all exams
- Working with teaching and support staff to ensure a clear picture of need and normal way of working is clearly outlined and adhered to
- Working with teaching staff to identify the most appropriate published format of modified papers to enable the candidate(s) to access exams
- Ensuring that the proposed access arrangement or reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate
- Assessing the need of candidates and processing applications accordingly

Teaching staff will be responsible for:

- Supporting the SENDCO in identifying, determining and implementing appropriate access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

The Exams Officer will be responsible for:

- Ensuring all access arrangements are in place for each external exam eg GCSE exams
- Ordering and organising any modified papers and/or any specialist equipment required
- Liaising with invigilators regarding pupils with access arrangements

In addition, the Headteacher, SLT, the Exams Officer and SENDCO will familiarise themselves with JCQ's 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' guidance each academic year.

### 3. Identifying pupils' needs

Pupils with SEND or a temporary impairment or injury may have additional needs requiring a range of adjustments which will fall into the following four categories:

- Cognition and learning needs, eg Dyslexia
- Communication and interaction needs, eg Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Sensory and physical needs, eg Multi-sensory Impairment
- Social, emotional and mental health needs, eg Attention Deficit Disorder

Pupil's needs will be identified and accommodated for in line with the school's SEND Policy.

**Identification of such need is always on a needs basis, not based on a diagnosis.** It is important to note that any letter detailing a diagnosis must be from a consultant and it is the responsibility of the parents to share that letter with the SENDCO. A diagnosis **does not** guarantee an exams access arrangement.

The Headteacher will ensure effective screening and monitoring systems are in place to enable the SENDCO to gather an appropriately detailed idea of a pupil's needs and normal way of working during **Years 7 to 9**. Teaching and support staff will be made aware of the referral procedure to the SENDCO where they have concerns about a pupil's development. An outline of the procedure can be found in Appendix A.

Internal school tests will be used to help identify pupils who need to be assessed for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. Where a pupil experiences a problem during timed assessments, the SENDCO will consider if further investigation is necessary.

Arrangements in place for an exam **must** reflect the candidate's normal way of working and the support normally provided for them in school, eg in the classroom, when working in small groups for reading and writing, and in internal tests and mock exams. This may not be the case where there is a late diagnosis of a disability, or late manifestation of an impairment or a temporary injury or impairment; **however, the evidence of need will still be required to the same standard as early applications and the SENDCO must still be able to evidence the candidate's normal way of working.**

Pupils' needs will be assessed by an assessor with the necessary qualifications appointed by the Headteacher, in line with JCQ requirements.

The SENDCO will recognise that access arrangements and reasonable adjustments may differ for a pupil depending on each assessment's specification, and arrangements will be considered on a subject-by-subject basis. **The final decision on access arrangements will be made under the professional judgement of the SENDCO, which is in line with JCQ guidelines.**

### **External agency advice and reports (including those privately commissioned)**

Where a parent produces advice or report on their child's needs, school must follow the guidelines of JCQ 4.2.1:

*"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 times assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENDCO to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations".*

### **Dealing with cases of anxiety (including exam anxiety)**

At Holy Cross, we understand that most pupils will experience some form of anxiety associated with tests and exams. Along with our teaching staff, we have a supportive and experienced pastoral team, who can provide effective strategies to help manage the symptoms and effects of anxiety. We foster and maintain a supportive and positive environment that aims to motivate pupils to achieve and be resilient. Access arrangements cannot be awarded for anxiety, unless there is a medical diagnosis from a consultant, and/or if the pupil is taking prescribed medication for the condition. It is important to note that any letter detailing a diagnosis and/or medication must be from a consultant and it is the responsibility of the parents to share that letter with the SENDCO. For any access arrangements to be awarded to pupils with anxiety, there must still be evidence of normal way of working prior to the exam period.

## **4. Applying for access arrangements**

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will be applied for by the SENDCO in line with the JCQ guidelines for the relevant academic year. These will be applied for at the start of each course, eg at the start or during the first year of a two-year GCSE course, based on the school's knowledge of a pupil's needs and normal way of working.

Where there is a temporary injury or impairment, access arrangements will be applied for as soon as is practicable.

The SENDCO will complete all necessary paperwork and ensure all applications have regard for the relevant exam board's deadline. Where an application is processed after the deadline, eg due to a temporary injury arising after this date, the SENDCO will ensure the appropriate paperwork is on file and available for inspection. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will only be put in place for exams where they have been approved.

Applications processed and approved online will be valid for 26 months from the date of processing the application. Where the SENDCO believes that access arrangements for a pupil are no longer the pupil's normal way of working within this period, eg a pupil whose reading has improved to the extent they may no longer meet the exam board criteria for a reader, they have the right to withdraw permission for it. Where permission is withdrawn, written confirmation via the [send@holycross.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:send@holycross.lancs.sch.uk) email will be sent to the pupil's parents.

A pupil can choose whether to make use of the access arrangement identified. The SENDCO will consider removing the access arrangements in cases where a pupil repeatedly chooses not to make use of them.

Candidates will never be charged any fee in relation to an adjustment or aid made to meet the

school's duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will not be possible where it compromises the assessment objectives of the relevant specification, eg a practical assistant will normally not be allowed when practical skills are being tested.

**Extra time applications will only be made after the SENDCO has considered and thoroughly exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks.**

## **5. Evidencing applications**

The online application process will provide prompts as to the evidence required. Evidence and history of need and provision will be provided by the SENDCO as required for each access arrangement applied for. Evidence will be stored for inspection purposes in line with JCQ guidance. Core evidence required will typically include, but is not limited to the following:

- EHC plans
- Pupil Passports
- Fully completed Form 8 with an assessment carried out by an assessor confirming a learning difficulty
- Where applicable, qualifying scores from a recognised test carried out by a suitably qualified assessor
- Teaching staff testimony about a pupil's difficulties and evidence of normal way of working
- Specialist evidence when appropriate
- History of support and provision in place for the pupil in line with the requested access arrangement or reasonable adjustment

## **6. Preparing for an assessment**

Once an access arrangement has been approved, the school will:

- Inform the pupil's parents in writing via the [send@holycross.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:send@holycross.lancs.sch.uk) email
- Inform the pupil
- Inform the exam officer and make an access arrangement list available to them
- Ensure all staff are aware of which pupils have had approved access arrangements via Synergy

Where a candidate requires access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, appropriate opportunities to practise using them will be provided. The school will be particularly mindful of the need to practise using their access arrangements, prior to an exam.

For internal assessments, teaching staff will inform the SENDCO well in advance of the assessment date, to allow sufficient time for access arrangements to be prepared.

Pupils will be informed to raise any concerns or questions with the SENDCO about their access arrangements before an exam, and what to do if they encounter any issues during an exam.

## **7. The use of word processors**

Pupils who normally work with a word processor will use it in exams where appropriate. A word processor will also be used where necessary due to a temporary injury or impairment. In most



cases, word processors will have the spelling and grammar check disabled.

The SENDCO will consider if a word processor would benefit a pupil where an additional need is identified. Word processors will only be used where they meet an additional need and will not be permitted simply because a pupil prefers it or can work faster using one.

The SENDCO will prepare and produce a statement for inspection purposes which details the school's criteria for awarding and allocating word processors for exams.

## **8. Maintaining records**

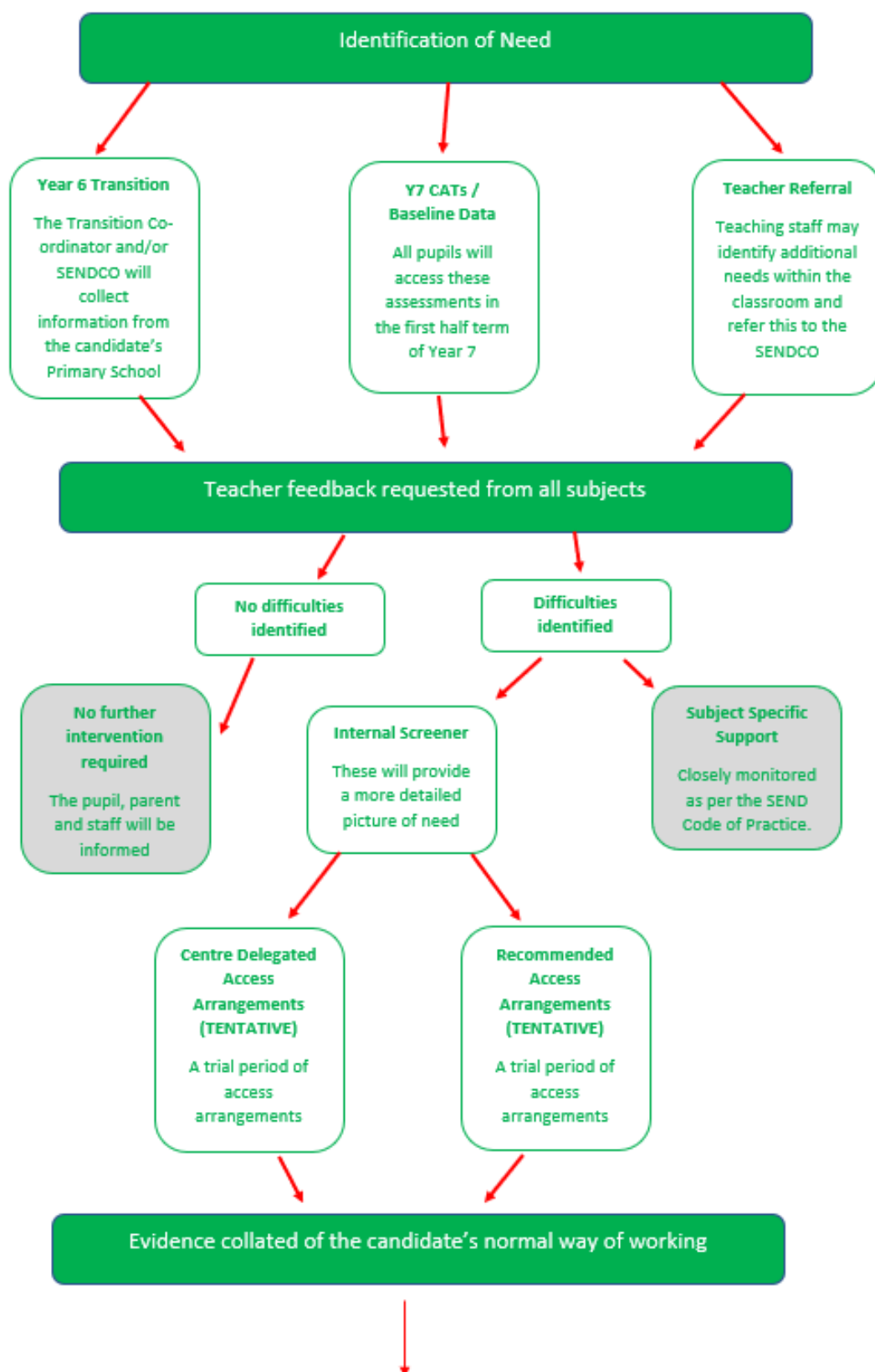
The SENDCO will keep detailed records of all essential information on file for an application. This will include a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need as required and a signed candidate personal data consent form. All personal data will be treated confidentially and handled in line with the Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice for Pupils and their Families.

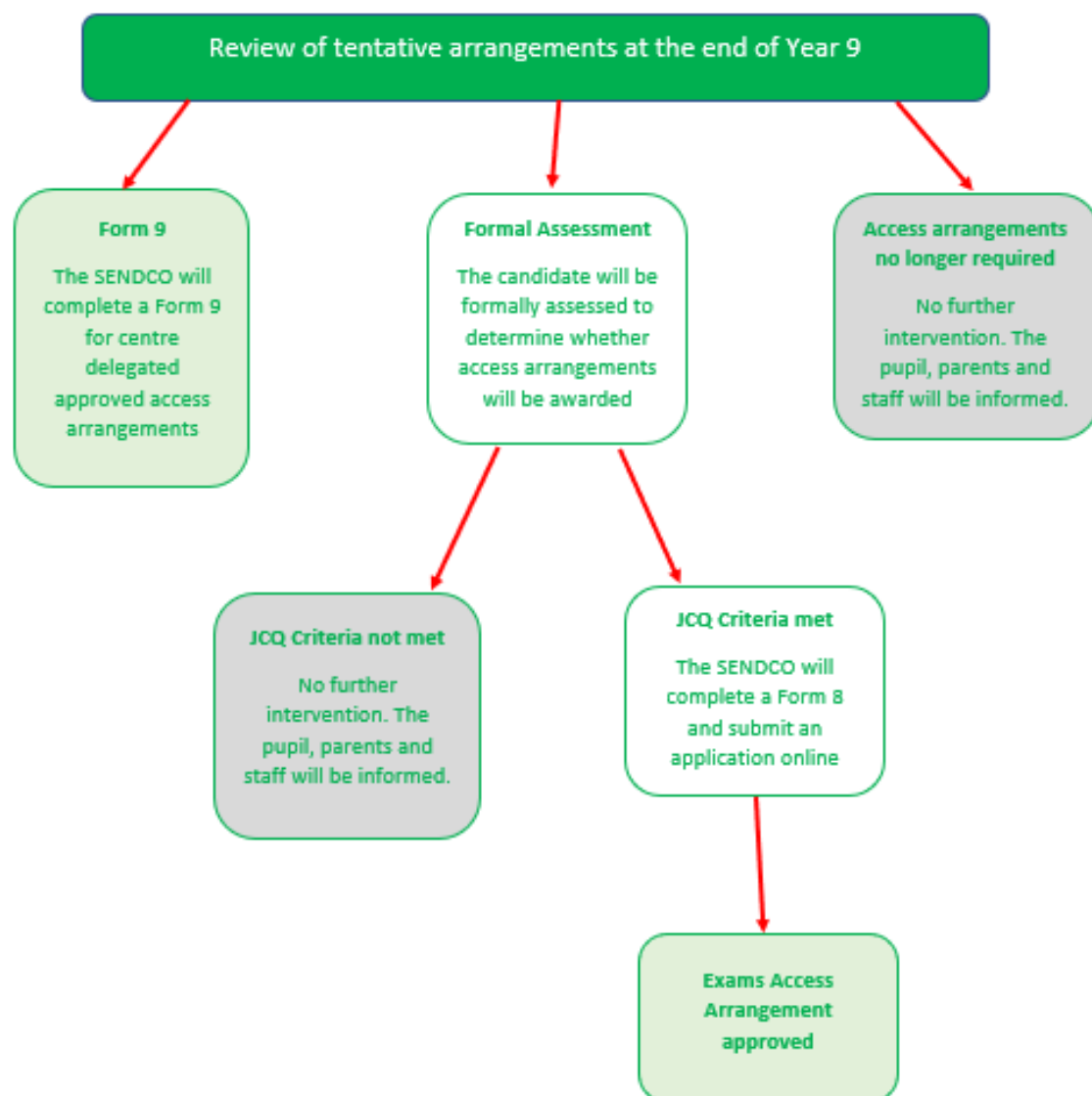
## **9. Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher, SENDCO, Governing Body and exam officer on an annual basis, in line with JCQ regulations.

The scheduled review for this policy is September 2025.

## Appendix A





\*Please note: no alterations will be made to exams access arrangements after December in Year 11\*