

2025/2026



Examinations Contingency Plan Policy

Reviewed	Autumn 25
Date of next Review	Autumn 26

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre / Headteacher	Kate Beale
Deputy Headteacher	Julie Coombs (SENCo)
Assistant Headteacher	Ian McMahon Simon Richardson Courtney Ballard
Exams Manager	Andrew Jacques
Directors of Learning	Andrew Jacques

Contents

Key staff involved in contingency planning	2
Purpose of the plan	4
Contingency arrangements	4
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process.....	5
1.Exam Manager 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.....	6
3.Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) extended (all qualifications) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	6
4.Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence	7
5.Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice.....	7
6.Cyber security	7
7.Failure of IT systems.....	9
8.Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)	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	10
11.Centre may not be able to open for examinations	10
12.Disruption in the distribution of examination papers	11
13.Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.....	11
14.Assessment evidence is not available to be marked	11
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)	12
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	14
DfE.....	14
Ofqual	14
JCQ	16
GOV.UK	17
National Cyber Security Centre.....	17
APPENDIX 1	18
EXAMS ESCALATION PROCESS 2025-26	18

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at Lindsworth School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam 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 publication '*What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*' and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2024).

This plan also confirms Lindsworth School is compliant 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 a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Lindsworth 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.

Lindsworth 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.

Lindsworth School **must** ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that candidates' work 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 Lindsworth 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

Where the Head of Centre may absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam Manager 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

- ▶ *Head of Centre and Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher (Line Manager to Exams*

Manager) made fully aware of requirements and criteria for each stage of examination cycle (relevant document created / regulations and processes shared for information). To include internal deadlines and awarding body deadlines and all processes for exam days. Assistant Headteacher to take over role in Exam Manager's absence.

- ▶ Required documentation made available in the shared area

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

- ▶ Exams Manager ensures Head of Centre, Assistant Headteacher and relevant Assessors are made fully aware of all requirements and deadlines to ensure all criteria are followed to ensure successful implementation of Access Arrangements assessments and procedures.
- ▶ Headteacher to undertake role of SENCo if required
- ▶ Exams Manager and Assistant Headteacher aware of all requirements and are able to process and implement all arrangements put in place

3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) extended (all qualifications) 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 office on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the exams manager 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

Vocational qualification requirements not carried out as required at any stage

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ HR Manager informed of importance of relaying absence information of key staff members to all Key Staff involved
- ▶ Assistant Headteacher with Directors of Learning ensures that Cover Staff are fully briefed on requirements.
- ▶ Directors of Learning to provide guidance for correct delivery of specification.
- ▶ Awarding Body deadlines and criteria fully adhered to.
- ▶ Directors of Learning responsible for ensuring candidates are made aware of centre assessed marks
- ▶ Directors of Learning fully briefed on BTEC / Vocational delivery / assessment / verification requirements
- ▶ Exam Manager to contact awarding body immediately should there be any requirements not being met

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

- ▶ Only internal staff are used for invigilation duties
- ▶ Additional staff to that required are trained to be able to cover in case of emergencies

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams Manager 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

- ▶ The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.
- ▶ Contingency plan in place to use alternative buildings on school site in liaison with BSM.
- ▶ Alternative exam accommodation sourced before timetabled examinations
- ▶ Open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible.
- ▶ Alternative Site arrangements applied for with relevant awarding body – Springfield House School. (pre-arranged – pupils would be escorted with Invigilators via school minibus under examination conditions to alternative venue.)

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

- ▶ (This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)
(GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:
 - a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must 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 must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

- b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies;
- c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
 - mandatory MFA for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data;
 - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices
- d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed
- e) setting up secure account recovery options
- f) reviewing and managing connected applications
- g) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- h) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*
Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements.
- i) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body
 - ▶ IT Manager has contingency plan in place in case of emergencies to deal with whole school system failure / system hacked – full school server system is backed up daily (end of day). This ensures that minimum amount of data (if any) is lost.
 - ▶ Back Ups are held off line
 - ▶ The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.
 - ▶ Alternative site arrangements applied for with relevant awarding body – Springfield House School (pre-arranged – pupils would be escorted with Invigilators via school minibus under examination conditions to alternative venue).
 - ▶ Test recovery of system has been held
 - ▶ Incident is reported to National Cyber Security Centre - [NCSC](#)
 - ▶ Local Law Enforcement Action Fraud should be contacted – [National Fraud and Cyber Crime](#)
 - ▶ Inform the Department of Education by emailing direct on:
sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk

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

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ (This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work)

(GR 3.19) Ensure that 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. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

- ▶ Head of Centre to ensure ICT Manager on site on specified dates – especially outside term-time.
- ▶ Laptop with mobile internet connection made available to Exams Manager to allow Exams Manager to use awarding body websites / secure platforms for required task
- ▶ Secure list of awarding body passwords (non-electronic)
- ▶ Head of Centre has access to awarding body secure platforms
- ▶ Keep IT Manager's phone number non-electronically in case of need of emergency contact
- ▶ All actions made well in advance of AB deadlines to avoid potential issue. In case of IT failure contact AB for guidance; an extension may be given

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

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

- ▶ All candidates provided with Pupil Exam Handbook that includes evacuation procedures
- ▶ Emergency evacuation plan / Lockdown policy created, updated and implemented.
- ▶ All centre staff aware of policy
- ▶ All staff aware of Fire Safety Bell and Lockdown warning
- ▶ Procedures communicated to pupils and staff during mock examinations
- ▶ Seek advice from awarding body
- ▶ Students kept under examination conditions in line with awarding body requirements
- ▶ Consider Special Requirements

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

- ▶ Where there is disruption to teaching time and pupils miss teaching and learning, Lindsworth School remains responsible for providing continuous education and preparation, as usual, for examinations
- ▶ If school closed teachers utilise online learning platforms; work prepared on an ongoing basis
- ▶ Online pupil work closely monitored by Teaching Staff and Directors of Learning
- ▶ Practical elements of qualifications managed in line with AB guidelines
- ▶ Inform awarding body as soon as possible
- ▶ Centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this.
- ▶ Alternative teaching accommodation previously sourced for future use used.
- ▶ Alternative method of learning – online (in line with recommendations GOV.UK)
- ▶ Prioritise candidates that are taking examinations

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- (Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)
 - Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
 - Be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
 - Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*)
 - The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required
- ▶ Provide candidates with Pupil and Parent/Carer handbook with full rules, regulations and expectations.
 - ▶ Consider alternative site / residential address / hospital depending on reason
 - ▶ Dependant on reason consider Special Consideration application
 - ▶ Advise awarding body
 - ▶ Provide written evidence confirming the need for an Alternative Site arrangement to a JCQ Inspector on request

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

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

- (Centres' contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal)
- ▶ Centre to open for examinations and candidates only, if possible
- ▶ Supervise candidates until a decision can be made
- ▶ Stagger exams within the accommodation available
- ▶ Advise awarding body
- ▶ Use pre-sourced alternative accommodation in agreement with awarding body – Springfield House Special School – informing AB of arrangements and completion of Alternative Site

application made with awarding body

- ▶ Implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).
- ▶ The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue.
- ▶ The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue
- ▶ Apply to awarding body 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 / needed
- ▶ The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies - Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria - The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

Alternative site(s) details: Springfield House Special 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

- ▶ Expected exam paper delivery checklist created. Triggers call to awarding body if papers not received in good time.
- ▶ Source alternative couriers for delivery of hard copies with support of awarding body
- ▶ Arrange for access to electronic examination papers via a secure external network (normal conditions for secure storage followed)
- ▶ Awarding Bodies would provide support and guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- ▶ As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding bodies to consider scheduling of examination on an alternative date

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

- ▶ In the first instance, seek advice from awarding body and their normal collection agency regarding collection
- ▶ Centre will not make arrangements for transportation without approval from awarding body
- ▶ Centre to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection in exams secure storage facility as normal
- ▶ Alternative despatch option must comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instruction for Conducting Examinations

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

- ▶ It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding body and subsequently to candidates and their parents or carers
- ▶ Awarding bodies generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement, as defined by the awarding bodies in consultation with the regulators
- ▶ Candidates retake the assessment that has been affected at a subsequent assessment window, if possible / needed
- ▶ Create backup copies on secure fileserver and have hard copies
- ▶ Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

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

- ▶ Notify awarding body immediately and take advice
- ▶ SLT and Exams Manager have ability to access results from laptops off site and are able to contact parents / carers and pupils from school mobile phones
- ▶ Make contact with parents / carers and candidates to inform of situation and provide regular updates
- ▶ Results sent to candidates electronically if possible
- ▶ Note of all awarding body passwords kept securely by Exams Manager (non-electronic) to enable on line access to results
- ▶ Make arrangements to access results at an alternative site in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- ▶ Share facilities with other schools and colleges if possible in agreement with the relevant awarding body – Springfield House School
- ▶ Facilitation of post results services – centre to contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post results requests are not possible

Internal Governance arrangements

As stated in the JCQ [General Regulations for Approved Centres 2025-26 \(5.3d\)](#)

d) has in place a written escalation process should the head of centre, or member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination administration, be absent;

e) has in place a member of the senior leadership team who will provide support and guidance to the examinations officer and ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher / Assistant Headteacher absent at a critical stage of the exam cycle

See Appendix 1 – School Escalation Process

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](#)
[Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers](#)
[DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023](#)

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 Contingency Plan, we will follow guidance for local and national school preparations and contingencies. We will 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.

General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [handling strike action in schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

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 candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate'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 candidates 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 candidates, parents, 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 candidates' 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 candidates, 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

Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.

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, candidates are able 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 candidates, 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 candidates. 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 candidates miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the candidates 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 considerations](#)

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 [DfE 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.

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
- [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

This information will be updated as necessary

(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 **5 Oct 2023**) <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/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*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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. 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** 2024-2025 (<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

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for Conducting Examinations 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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) 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/

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

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the [NCSC website](#).

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

1. [Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)
2. [Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks](#)
3. [Offline backups in an online world](#)
4. [Backing up your data](#)
5. [Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security](#)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

EXAMS ESCALATION PROCESS 2023-2024

Purpose of the process

To confirm the main duties and responsibilities to be escalated should the Head of Centre, the member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination administration, be absent.

Before examinations (Planning)

In the event of the absence of Kate Beale (Head of Centre) the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Julie Coombs, Deputy Headteacher (SENCo) Senior Leadership Team.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, the following JCQ publications will be referenced:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres
- Instructions for conducting examinations
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
- Instructions for conducting coursework
- Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments
- Suspected Malpractice – Policies and Procedures
- A guide to the special consideration process

Main duties and responsibilities relate to:

- Third Party Arrangements
- Centre status
- Confidentiality
- Communication
- Recruitment, selection and training of staff
- Internal governance arrangements
- Delivery of qualifications
- Public liability
- Conflicts of interest
- Controlled assessments, coursework and non-examination assessments
- Security of assessment materials
- National Centre Number Register
- Centre inspections
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
- JCQ Centre Inspection Service Changes
- Policies – available for inspection
 - Specific JCQ publications for reference:
 - General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)
 - Instructions for conducting examinations (section 25)
 - Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (section 5)
- Personal data, freedom of information and copyright
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
 - Information for candidates – Privacy Notice

Before examinations (Entries and Pre-exams)

In the event of the absence of Kate Beale (Head of Centre) the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Julie Coombs, Deputy Headteacher (SENCo) Senior Leadership Team.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ publications will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)
- Instructions for conducting examinations (sections 1-15)
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (sections 6-8)

Main duties and responsibilities relate to:

- Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- Entries
- Additional JCQ publications for reference:
 - Key dates
 - Guidance Notes for Transferred Candidates
 - Alternative Site guidance notes
 - Guidance notes for overnight supervision of candidates with a timetable variation
- Centre assessed work
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
 - Guidance Notes – Centre Consortium Arrangements
- Candidate information
- Additional JCQ publications for reference:
 - Information for candidates documents
 - Exam Room Posters
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During examinations (Exam time)

In the event of the absence of Kate Beale (Head of Centre) the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity during examinations will be escalated to Julie Coombs, Deputy Headteacher (SENCo) Senior Leadership Team.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ publications will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (sections 3, 5)
- Instructions for conducting examinations (sections 16-31)
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (section 8)
- A guide to the special consideration process (sections 2-7)

Main duties and responsibilities relate to:

- Conducting examinations and assessments
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
 - Guidance Notes – Very Late Arrival
- Malpractice
- Retention of candidates' work

After examinations (Results and Post-Results)

In the event of the absence of Kate Beale (Head of Centre) the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity after examinations will be escalated to Julie Coombs, Deputy Headteacher (SENCo) Senior Leadership Team.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ publications will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)

Main duties and responsibilities relate to:

- Results
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
 - Release of Results notice
- Post-results services and appeals
- Additional JCQ publications for reference:
 - Post-Results Services: *Information and guidance for centres*
 - JCQ Appeals Booklet (A guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes)
- Certificates