

Exam Access Arrangement and Special Considerations Policy

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This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Child Protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Helm Academy documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

Policy Issues and Updates

Version Number	Created/ Reviewed/ Amended By	Date Created/ Reviewed/ Amended	Comment	Next Review Date
1	E. Bartlet	April 2026	Policy implemented	April 2027

Contents

Legal framework.....	5
Roles and responsibilities	5
Identifying pupils' needs	6
Applying for access arrangements	6
Evidencing applications	8
Preparing for an assessment	8
The use of word processors	9
Maintaining records	9
Monitoring and review.....	9

Statement of intent

At Helm Academy, 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 without being disadvantaged. 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 candidates with specific needs, e.g. SEND or temporary injuries, to access the assessment and demonstrate what they can do without changing the demands of the assessment. Access arrangements are the main way through which the school will make reasonable adjustments, in line with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

A **reasonable adjustment** 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.

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 (2021) '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
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Records Management Policy
- SEND Policy

"The school has due regard to the annually updated Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments guidance applicable to each academic year."

Roles and responsibilities

The Head of School 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, e.g., a Communication Professional or scribe, is a responsible adult, appropriately trained and fully understands the rules of the arrangements.

The SENCO 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 staff to identify the most appropriate published format of modified papers to enable the candidate(s) to access exams.
- Working with specialist advisory teachers, educational psychologists, and medical professionals where appropriate.
- 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 SENCO in identifying, determining, and implementing appropriate access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

In addition, the Head of School, SLT and SENCO will familiarise themselves with JCQ's 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' guidance each academic year.

Identifying pupils' needs

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

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

Pupil's needs will be identified and accommodated for in line with the school's SEND Policy. The Head of School will ensure effective screening and monitoring systems are in place to enable the SENCO 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 SENCO where they have concerns about a pupil's development.

Internal school tests and mock exams 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 an exam, the SENCO will consider if an assessment is necessary.

Arrangements in place for an exam will reflect the candidate's normal way of working and the support normally provided for them in school, e.g., in the classroom, when working in small groups for reading and writing, and in internal tests and mock exams. This will 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.

Pupil's needs will be assessed by an assessor with the necessary qualifications appointed by the Head of School, in line with JCQ requirements.

The SENCO 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.

Applying for access arrangements

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will be applied for by the SENCO in line with the JCQ guidelines for the relevant academic year. These will be applied for at the start of each course, e.g., 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, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after a course begins, access arrangements will be applied for as soon as is practicable.

The SENCO 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, e.g., due to a temporary injury arising after this date, the SENCO 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 SENCO believes that access arrangements for a pupil are no longer the pupil's normal way of working within this period, e.g., a pupil whose reading has improved to the extent they may no longer meet the exam board criteria for a reader, they will consider whether it is appropriate to withdraw permission for it. Where permission is withdrawn, written confirmation will be sent to the pupil's parents, or those with parental rights e.g., social workers or carers.

A pupil will have the right to not make use of the access arrangement or reasonable adjustment should they not wish to do so. The SENCO 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 normally be possible where it compromises the assessment objectives of the relevant specification, e.g., a practical assistant will normally not be allowed when practical skills are being tested, although there may be requirements for specific support, e.g., removing items from an over where they may be a physical impairment. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and discussed with the relevant board.

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

The following arrangements will not need to be processed online:

- Amplification equipment
- Bilingual dictionary
- Braille transcript and brailers
- CCTV
- Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind.
- Coloured overlays
- Communication Professional for candidates using Sign Language
- Examination on coloured/enlarged paper.
- Live speaker for pre-recorded exam components
- Low vision aid/magnifier
- OCR scanners
- Prompter
- Read aloud, including an exam reading pen.
- Separate invigilation within the centre
- Supervised rest breaks
- Word processor

Where a case contains individual needs which are not covered by the online system for applications, the SENCO will contact the relevant awarding body at the earliest opportunity to discuss the candidate's needs. A written record will be kept of any discussions.

Privately commissioned reports

Where a parent produces a privately commissioned report on their child's needs without prior consultation with the school, this will not be able to be used to process an application. Where the school is consulted beforehand, the SENCO will provide the parent's chosen assessor with Part 1 of [Form 8](#) from the JCQ. Once a report is submitted to the school as evidence that the pupil requires access arrangements, e.g. extra time, the Head of School will decide whether to accept it and use it to form

part of an application. If it is rejected, the Head of School will provide a written rationale supporting the decision to the parent/carer.

The SENCO will, however, in all cases, consider whether any privately commissioned report contains information to merit instigating the process of the school assessing the pupil's needs internally. If a parent contacts the school asking for their child's needs to be assessed, the SENCO will decide whether it is appropriate to undertake this.

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 SENCO 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.
- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)
- Fully completed [Form 8](#) with an assessment carried out by an assessor confirming a learning difficulty.
- Where applicable, a qualifying score from a recognised test carried out by a suitably qualified assessor.
- Teaching staff testimony about a pupil's difficulties
- Specialist evidence, e.g., a report or letter from a medical consultant
- History of support and provision in place for the pupil in line with the requested access arrangement or reasonable adjustment

Preparing for an assessment

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

- Inform the pupil's parents / those with parental responsibility, in writing.
- 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.

Where a candidate requires access arrangements or reasonable adjustments before their first assessment, appropriate opportunities to practice using them will be provided. The school will be particularly mindful of the need to practice prior to an exam where the following are used:

- Computer reader
- Modified enlarged papers.
- A scribe
- Speech recognition technology
- Word processor

For internal assessments, teaching staff will inform the SENCO at least two weeks 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 SENCO about their access arrangements before an exam, and what to do if they encounter any issues during an exam.

The use of word processors

Pupils who normally work with a word processor will use it in exams where appropriate, or they will use a scribe where necessary, e.g., in maths and science. A word processor will also be used where necessary due to a temporary injury or impairment. Word processors will have the spelling and grammar check disabled or enabled in line with the exam's specifications.

A word processor will be considered for pupils where they have:

- SEN which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly.
- A medical condition.
- A physical disability.
- A sensory impairment
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand.
- Poor handwriting.

The above list is not exhaustive; the SENCO will consider if a word processor would benefit a pupil where an additional need is identified. Word processors will only be used where it meets an additional need and will not be permitted simply because a pupil prefers it or can work faster using one.

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

A word processor cover sheet will be completed where required by the relevant awarding body for an exam.

Maintaining records

The SENCO 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 Records Management Policy.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of School, SENCO, governing board, and exam officer on an annual basis.

The scheduled review for this policy is April 2027

Safeguarding and Ofsted Toolkit Assurance Statements

Purpose:

These statements ensure that exam access arrangements and special consideration processes align with safeguarding responsibilities, statutory guidance and Ofsted expectations.

Safeguarding Through Equity:

Access arrangements are recognised as a safeguarding and inclusion measure, ensuring that pupils with SEND, medical needs or temporary impairments are not disadvantaged.

Risk and Vulnerability:

Leaders recognise that examination pressure, unmet needs or inequitable arrangements may increase safeguarding risk, particularly for pupils with SEMH, trauma or anxiety.

Consistency of Practice:

Arrangements reflect the pupil's normal way of working and are implemented consistently to reduce distress and promote safety.

Staff Competence:

Only appropriately trained and briefed staff support pupils during examinations, maintaining dignity, confidentiality and safeguarding awareness.

Leadership and Governance:

Leaders and governors monitor exam access arrangements to ensure lawful, fair and safeguarding-led practice.

Review and Assurance:

Arrangements and outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure safeguarding effectiveness, equity and continuous improvement.

Working Together to Safeguard Children – Assurance Update

Multi-agency working:

Where exam access arrangements intersect with medical, psychological or safeguarding needs, the school works with health professionals, social care and external specialists.

Early help and prevention:

Identification of access needs supports early intervention to reduce stress, anxiety and disengagement.

Child-centred approach:

Decision-making prioritises the pupil's wellbeing, voice and lived experience.

Information sharing:

Relevant information is shared appropriately and proportionately to safeguard pupils and ensure lawful exam practice.

Contextual safeguarding:

Leaders consider wider contextual factors, including attendance, wellbeing and home circumstances, when planning exam arrangements.

Leadership accountability:

Leaders ensure exam access arrangements remain aligned with statutory safeguarding duties and are reviewed annually.

Legislative Currency Check (2026)

This policy has been reviewed against current legislation and statutory guidance and is compliant as of 2026.

Key references include:

- Equality Act 2010; SEND Code of Practice (0–25 years);
- JCQ 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties';
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Earlier JCQ guidance references have been superseded by the current annual JCQ publication.