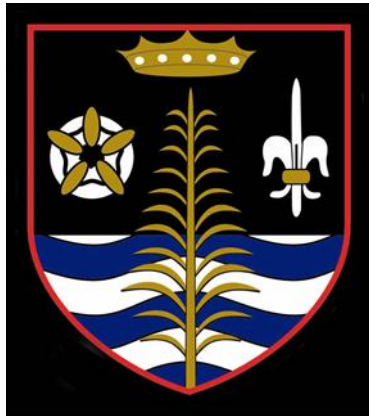


# **BLESSED ROBERT SUTTON CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY**



## **Access Arrangements Policy 2024/2025**

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

## What are Access Arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

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<sup>1</sup>, 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<sup>1</sup>, 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 Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Voluntary Academy (BRS) has a written record which clearly shows that the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements. (JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres**, section 5.4) This publication is further referred to in this policy as [GR](#)

The policy is maintained and held by the SENCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENCo (or equivalent role) is storing documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. (<sup>1</sup>[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**' (further referred to in this policy as AARA).

## General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, who will coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, candidates for whom English is an additional language, as well as those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (section 4.2). These include:

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within the centre, must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

A centre **must** make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course.

Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.

The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre.

The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination.

## Equalities Policy (Exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy (Exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams (see separate policy).

**The head of centre/senior leadership team will** recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private candidates, as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010<sup>†</sup>. This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates.

The Access Arrangements Policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

## The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor appointed by the head of centre who is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA 7.3.

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

SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) from the British Dyslexia Association

### 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 **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 section 7.3)

### Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

The SENCo and the Exams Officer hold the evidence which shows that the assessor is suitably qualified and will present this to the JCQ Centre Inspector as part of the SEN inspection and/or a general examinations inspection.

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

The specialist assessor working in the centre will follow the procedures set out in Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* assessing a candidate's learning difficulties.

**Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo must provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as per Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.**

**An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed.**

**All candidates must be assessed in 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 SENCo. The responsibility to request access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENCo. (AARA 7.5)**

Subject teachers, Teaching Assistants and the Exams Officer will provide feedback to the SENCo to help establish a normal way of working within the centre and to help paint a "holistic picture of need." The process that reflects the requirements will be fully recorded for inspection purposes.

## 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, (chapter 8) **Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments** and (chapter 6)

#### Modified papers)

AAO is accessed within 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. 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).

**The SENCo is responsible for submitting applications, supported by the Exams Officer**

**The SENCo must keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file.** This includes a copy of the **Candidate Personal data consent form**. The SENCo must complete the Data Protection confirmation prior to the processing on any online application and this must be retained for 26 months from the date of the online application being approved.

The SENCo will also keep a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and all relevant paperwork will be available for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service. (AARA Section 8)

### Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

The SENCo will also retain any relevant supporting evidence for any centre delegated arrangements (those arrangements which may be granted by the centre and appropriate evidence held on file or those arrangements that do not need to be recorded).

### 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.

Please see separate **Word Processor Policy Exams 2024/2025** which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations. (AARA Section 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.

The decision will be based on:

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

The candidate's difficulties must be established within the centre and known to the Form Tutor, Head of Year, SENCo and the pastoral team. For example, a long term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.

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.**

1:1 invigilation and the use of an alternative room would 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)