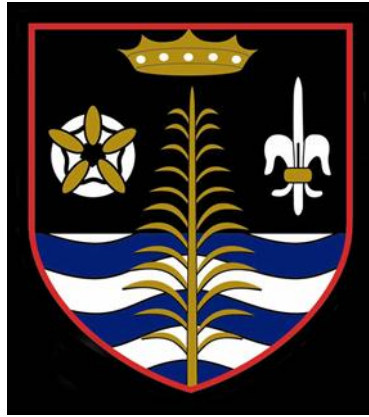# BLESSED ROBERT SUTTON CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

Contingency Plan Exams 2024/2025

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Head of Centre
SLT Members
Exams Officer
Data/MIS Manager
SENCo

Exam Contingency Plan – Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Voluntary Academy (BRS). By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.
Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual "*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*" 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 1st September 2024).

This plan also confirms BRS is compliant with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) and that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually:

- a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment and delivery.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that BRS responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year 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 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 officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>
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

<u>Centre Actions</u>
- All tasks to be undertaken by the Data Manager under the direction of the member of SLT responsible for examinations and additional tasks to be delegated to SLT if required
- Advice to be sought from Exam Boards, Entrust and from Burton Examination Officers Consortium
- Lead invigilator to be office based and to assist in the running of exams

2. SENCo 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 with 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 providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time
- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre Actions
- Exams Officer to work with SENCo Administrator and SLT to provide cover.
- Advice to be sought from JCQ

3. Teaching staff 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 officer on time; resulting in pre -release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not b entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged 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

Centre Actions
- Subject Leaders and SLT to keep Exams Officer informed
- Exams Officer to advise Awarding Bodies

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
- Emergency requests to be made to any invigilators not working on allocated day
- In case of absence, ask TA's, administration staff or teaching staff not associated with subject exams to invigilate

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan
- Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam day
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre Actions
- SLT advised and alternative internal venues investigated including the use of main hall and classrooms.

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan
- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre Actions to mitigate the impact of disruption

In line with GR 3.21 the ICT Network Manager, under the direction of the Head of Centre will ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

a) providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret
b) providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/ phishing attempts
c) enabling additional security settings wherever possible
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.

The Exams Officer will report any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

- In line with GR 3.19 BRS has a cloud back-up for all servers. If candidates work was lost for any reason, work would be restored very quickly.
- In the event of an incident impacting the servers, there is a contingency plan in place which would allow examinations to run as normal in the short term.
- Trust-wide cyber security policy to follow.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan
- IT system corruption affecting candidates work
- Arbor system failure at final entry deadline
- Arbor system failure during exams preparation
- Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test
- Arbor system failure at results release time

Centre Actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
- Contact Arbor and Exam Boards if applicable for advice
- In the case of entry deadlines, make paper entries to avoid late fees and keep on file in the exams office
- BRS has a cloud back-up for all servers. In the event of an incident impacting the servers, this would be restored in line with the IT contingency plan which would allow examinations to run as normal in the short term.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan
- Whole centre evacuation or lock down during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed or complete their exams.

Centre Actions
- See BRS Evacuation Policy and Lockdown Policy.
- Ensure all Invigilators are aware of emergency evacuation procedures
- Invigilators and Exam officer(s) to ensure that the security of the exam is maintained
- Exam Boards to be contacted if students are unable to re-start
- Following the exam consider any requests for special consideration for affected students

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
- Inform SLT and Exam Boards and seek advice
- SLT in communication with parents, carers and students and website updated regularly
- Consider any requests for special consideration
- *Reference Ofqual's Joint contingency plan for the examinations systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (below)*

10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan
Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal
Centre Actions
- Exams officer to inform Exam Boards and seek advice
- Priority will be to get the candidate into school whilst keeping the student isolated
- In the case of a delayed start to the examination, inform the exam board of the delay and the procedures followed to ensure student was kept isolated
- Following the exam consider any requests for special consideration for affected students
- *Reference Ofqual's Joint contingency plan for the examinations systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (below)*

11. Centre unable to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan
Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations
Centre Actions
- Exams officer to inform Exam Boards and seek advice as to whether the centre is able to re-open and whether in the first instance, the Sports Hall can be used as an alternative venue.
- If the whole of the Sutton block only is affected consider, in conjunction with advice from the exam boards, moving exams into the unaffected block, maintaining security of examination materials at all times. In this scenario (as it is highly unlikely that both buildings would be affected), students from other year groups not sitting exams would be sent home, ensuring all exam season candidates can be seated in the Sherwin Block.
- If the entire school site is affected, the first alternative venue would be Stanton village hall, in agreement with the exam boards, and arrangements put in place to ensure secure transportation of examination materials to and from the venue.
- A further option to consider would be to work with Paulet school (main hall not used for exams), in agreement with the exam boards, and arrangements put in place to ensure secure transportation of examination materials to and from the venue.
- SLT to communicate with parents, carers and students and website updated regularly
- *Reference Ofqual's Joint contingency plan for the examinations systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (below)*

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 and/or incorrect entry made resulting in examination papers being incorrect.
Centre Actions
- Exams Officer to maintain checks on receipt of exam papers and to contact exam boards in good time for any missing papers.
- Subject Leaders and teaching staff to sign off all entries before the entry deadline
- If necessary, as a last resort, electronic access to examination papers can be implemented in conjunction with the relevant exam boards, ensuring that any copies are printed and secured under normal secure exam conditions.

13. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan
Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts
Centre Actions
- Exams officer to inform Exam Boards immediately
- Exams officer to ensure completed scripts are kept in secure storage until the situation is resolved

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 or assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations.
Centre Actions
- Exams officer to inform Exam Boards and seek advice
- SLT to communicate with parents, carers and students
- Consider any requests for special consideration for those who may have lost their work.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (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
- Exams officer to inform Exam Boards and seek advice
- SLT to communicate with parents, carers and students
- If results can still be processed, consider distributing results to candidates at an alternative venue e.g. Stanton village hall and keep parents, carers and students informed.
- Ensure that post results requests can be made electronically

16. Resilience arrangements

All teaching staff are familiar with the regulators' guidance on ensuring resilience in the qualifications system. A full suite of mock examinations will take place annually and kept securely in line with the published guidance.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-collecting-evidence-of-student-performance-to-ensure-resilience-in-the-qualifications-system

Additional Information

DfE
Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges
Cyber security standards for schools and colleges

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.

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools

Cyber security training for school staff https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools

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: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

JCQ Contingency days

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2025, 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.

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 arrangements. 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 examination**s 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/