



# Contingency plan

## 2025/26

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

**Approved by**

Name: Ms S Dangerfield

Title: Head of Centre 18324

**Date of next review**

**20/01/27**

## Key staff involved in contingency planning

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>
Exams officer line manager Senior Leader	<b>Samantha Dangerfield</b>
Exams officer & Senior Leader	<b>Karla King</b>
ALS lead/SENCo & Senior Leader	<b>Nicky Austin</b>
Senior Leader(s)	<b>Sian Jones</b>
	<b>Mark Pinsent</b>

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## Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process at All Saints School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the **Ofqual** Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in the document *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**

This plan also confirms All Saints School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 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), All Saints 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.*

*All Saints 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.*

*All Saints School must ensure 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. 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 All Saints 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 / senior leader 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**

#### 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

- Regular meetings with SLT to advise current stages of exam planning
- Exams officer Handbook and key dates available for staff to follow in EO absence
- Another member of staff trained to carry out duties if EO absent – Ms Dangerfield or Mrs Berryman and Ms Austin (access arrangements)
- Written record of monthly plan of key dates, tasks and instructions
- Pool of trained staff to step in as invigilators/support as required

- Exam room/s planned in advanced to plan room usage/requirements
- Results day planned in advance
- Ms S Dangerfield has access to lock/up and exams office
- Exam Policy checked annually
- Record of all despatched coursework (securely sent & dates/address recorded)
- NEA Policy checked annually and checklist signed by subject teachers
- Contact each exams board where each subjects exam are registered with

## 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 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 officer is familiar with all SENCo responsibilities and would pick this role up.
- All Saints School now has a full time and a part-time SENCo available (where needed part-time SENCo would be ask to undertake additional hours) in order to support the Exams officer with all SENCo related duties.
- Contact Philippa Baillie (specialist teacher) at the Dyslexia Outreach Service, in which we are a member, based at Taverham High School authorised and qualified to apply for access arrangements (especially for those students without EHCPs).

## 3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) 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 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

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO monitoring NEA and samples being sent to moderator by secure postage
- EO to work with departments to complete exam entries or NEA submissions
- Deputy Head (curriculum manager) would be able to step in due to having an 'oversite' of all areas within the curriculum/each stage during KS4.
- We have appointed another teacher to 'team teach' alongside our core subject leaders in order for him to cover wherever necessary
- Good connections with other link departments (within other schools) therefore (if needed) we would be able to work alongside them. Currently centre staff are working closely with external staff to 'check moderation' where we have no other teacher of this subject onsite (for example Art, PE and History)

#### **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

- Invigilator provision checked annually
- Recruitment and training annually
- 3 sets of mocks for all invigilators to practise / support within their allocated areas
- Invigilator meetings before each season and after results
- Pool of trained staff to step in as invigilators/support as required (all support staff able to step in where required as they are all trained).

#### **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 days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

##### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Regular meetings with SLT during exam planning to ensure adequate exam rooming and facilities
- Emergency rooming available (school house side) if unexpected incident at exam time
- External sites available locally if necessary (Lessingham village hall) in which we already have access to and is within walking distance from the centre.

##### **Alternative site details:**

1. Lessingham Village Hall, School Road, Lessingham, NR120DJ

Centre already familiar with site due to having regular weekly bookings for PE and Drama lessons (tables, chairs, access to toilets, water etc... already available) – School hold a key for venue and is a 2-minute walk from the centre.

In the event where our first alternate site is unavailable or having to relocate due to unforeseen circumstances – Stalham Academy have agreed to accommodate.

2. Stalham Academy, Old Yarmouth Road, Stalham, NR12 9PS (contact: Trust Executive Principal, Mr Glenn Russell or Head of School Miss Ella Barnes) - Tel: 01692 580053 - Email: [office@stalhamacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@stalhamacademy.co.uk)

Centre already familiar with location, 5-minute drive from All Saints, school cars would be used to transport and/or taxi drivers/home informed of where to drop students off. Students would complete exams within the community building, situation within the Academy grounds. Tables, chairs, access to toilets, water etc... already available) – centre to report to Academy office upon arrival.

**In the event that either alternative site is required, the exams officer will inform the relevant awarding body and request approval for a change of examination site in accordance with JCQ regulations.**

## 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

As a centre we ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training – completed annually (evidence via whole school spreadsheet and certificates held in individual files) also apart of 'new staff induction training' link to training used: [https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools?\\_cldee=DJiSknXl4Xx4q74tJ979X3aZGY-2gufuciQUUxAVzIQ\\_LBBcuZ6YnfGzQfdQ86KMVUoumbDFa416faoPHD7UmQ&recipientid=contact-82375acb174be911a84a000d3a45a06f-45be917ddaee46418185f8a41e89d81a&esid=dc784f68-9c1b-f011-998a-7c1e5273da1c](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools?_cldee=DJiSknXl4Xx4q74tJ979X3aZGY-2gufuciQUUxAVzIQ_LBBcuZ6YnfGzQfdQ86KMVUoumbDFa416faoPHD7UmQ&recipientid=contact-82375acb174be911a84a000d3a45a06f-45be917ddaee46418185f8a41e89d81a&esid=dc784f68-9c1b-f011-998a-7c1e5273da1c)

The training includes:

- 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.
- A comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre is maintained and updated – all staff aware of this and further 'in-house' training (including GDPR) is held annually.
- As a centre we implement and enforce 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.
- Centre staff update any passwords that may have been exposed
- Systems are in place for secure account recovery where needed.
- reviewing and managing connected applications
- The monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required – completed annually by the exams officer / or when a member of staff no longer works for the centre
- 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' MFA requirements – reviewed annually / when a member of staff no longer works for the centre.

- reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

## 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
- Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test
- MIS system failure at results release time

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- All examination-related IT systems (including networks, servers, and exam delivery platforms) are regularly tested and maintained.
- Exams officer can work from home if MIS system fail in school for entries / release of results. Back up files already in place via school G-Drive in the event of needing candidate details.
- In the event of a power outage, our alternative sites would be used and exam board informed.

### **During an IT system failure**

- In the event of IT failure during a computer-based assessment, candidates' work is saved automatically at regular intervals.
- In the event of a power outage, our alternative sites would be used and exam board informed. Candidates always remain under supervision while the issue is resolved.
- No candidate is permitted to access other applications, the internet, or external storage devices.

### **Protection and recovery of candidates' work**

- Backup copies of candidates' work are stored securely and are only accessible to authorised staff.
- Access to backed-up work is logged and restricted.
- Where work cannot be recovered, the awarding body is contacted immediately for guidance, exam officer to investigate special consideration for the candidate/s

### **Post-incident actions**

- Any IT failure affecting the security or integrity of candidates' work is reported to the awarding body without delay.
- An incident log is completed detailing the nature of the failure, actions taken, and outcome.

(GR 3.19) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that 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.

## 8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room/s (or centre lockdown)

### 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

- Invigilators and SLT to ensure emergency evacuation plan is followed maintaining integrity of exam
- Ensure that all exam staff are familiar with the emergency evacuation policy
- Candidates to be held separately, avoiding contact with other students, and ensuring they do not talk to one another; candidates to another venue (village hall/Stalham Academy) wherever possible
- Exam boards to be advised as appropriate alongside special consideration being applied for each candidate.

### **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

- 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. Parent/carer e-mail addresses also held on file so that teachers are able to continue to send work and give feedback. All students have access to online daily teaching via Teams/Google Meet (alongside using Google Classrooms) in which work can be set and instant feedback given
- All laptops / Chromebooks will be provided to all candidates (along with internet connection where needed) dongle sticks will be provided to support this.

### **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 because of a crisis.

#### 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.
- External sites available locally if necessary (Lessingham village hall & Stalham Academy).
- Any transport related disruptions, SLT are able to collect candidates from home using school cars
- Start time of examination would be implemented for all candidates to support the crisis (where appropriate). All relevant exam boards would be contacted.

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

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

#### 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

- A centre which is unable to open as normal for examinations must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible. EO to inform.

- External sites available locally if necessary (Lessingham village hall/Stalham Academy) in which we already have access to. Exams officer to notify JCQ Inspection Service of the alternative site by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).
- Centre to communicate with parents, carers, candidates and staff regarding alternative arrangements

*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 details:**

1. Lessingham Village Hall, School Road, Lessingham, NR120DJ – key held at centre.
2. Stalham Academy, Old Yarmouth Road, Stalham, NR12 9PS (contact: Trust Executive Principal, Mr Glenn Russell or Head of School Miss Ella Barnes) - Tel: 01692 580053 - Email: [office@stalhamacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@stalhamacademy.co.uk) – access via school office

**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**

- Exam log to confirm receipt, frequent checks of deliveries of examination papers are made
- If not received, EO to contact awarding bodies and act on advice provided by Examination boards (for electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network) – secure systems already in place with EO already having access to secure areas (also familiar with each login system).
- EO to confirm all electronic copies are received and stored under secure conditions (access to secure printer, with lockable door already in place).
- As a last resort EO would be prepared (if instructed by awarding originations) to consider scheduling the 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**

- Where examinations are part of the national ‘yellow label’ service or where awarding bodies arrange collection, Exams Officer should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions
- Completed examination scripts to be stored securely according to JCQ regulations until as close to the collection time as possible
- If alternative secure delivery options are advised, proof of postage is obtained
- EO and Head of Centre available at all times to support the above actions

**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

- EO contacts HOC responsible for exams
- Contact Examination Board and parents/carers immediately on discovery of the issue
- Examination Board instructions are distributed to the Exams Officer, Head of Centre, Curriculum Manager, Subject Co-ordinators, Parents/carers and students

**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

- Centre to contact awarding organisations about alternative options (for example downloading results from awarding body secure websites)
- External sites available locally if necessary (Lessingham village hall/Stalham Academy) in which we already have access to. Centre to communicate with parents/carers and students giving updates of alternative arrangements and to be shared on school website/texting system
- The secure release of results to candidates (for example, via encrypted email) would be implemented.”.
- Alternative arrangements for post-results services to be communicated to parents, carers, students and school staff – this would be completed by the EO via a secure / password protected way.

Alternative site details:

1. Lessingham Village Hall, School Road, Lessingham, NR120DJ
2. Stalham Academy, Old Yarmouth Road, Stalham, NR12 9PS (contact: Trust Executive Principal, Mr Glenn Russell or Head of School Miss Ella Barnes) - Tel: 01692 580053 - Email: [office@stalhamacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@stalhamacademy.co.uk) – access via school office

**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

**Ofqual**

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted  
Centre to 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
- [exceptional closure days](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [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 student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student'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 students 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 students, parents, carers and students 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 students' 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 students, 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**

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
2. 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, students 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 students, 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 students. 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 students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption**

If some of the students 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 consideration](#)

#### **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 [Department of Education 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.

In December 2022, Qualifications Wales published [guidance for contingency assessment arrangements](#) for GCSEs, AS and A levels and Skills Challenge Certificates in the event that a national decision is made to cancel exams. This guidance is still relevant for the current academic year.

The Department for Education 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
- [exceptional closure days](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools, childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings](#)- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government
- [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

(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 7 May 2024) <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 or 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 JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2025-2026

<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](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

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

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

Guidance notes concerning transferred candidates <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

Instructions for Conducting Examinations <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

A guide to the special consideration process <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) Revised July 2025) [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://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/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/)

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## 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](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service)

## ProtectUK

[www.protectuk.police.uk](http://www.protectuk.police.uk)

## 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>

*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](#)*