

BISHOP'S HATFIELD GIRLS' SCHOOL

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND AVOIDANCE OF DISCRIMINATION with reference to examinations

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School Based Policy	

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Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) places a duty on us to avoid discrimination against a disabled person:

“A person has a disability that is covered by the Act if s/he has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on her/his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This policy is concerned with the avoidance of discrimination in examination situations within this school, both internal and external. The aim of this policy and the actions it specifies is to enable an individual to perform as well as she is able in an examination context – stressing her abilities, not her disabilities. It should be noted that this is not only in the best interests of the student but also of the school. It should also be noted that examinations do not happen in isolation, they are rather the culmination of years of preparation. Hence this policy is based on and develops from the normal working practices of the school.

This policy is also informed by the JCQ booklet: “Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration”. When deciding on entitlements and adjustments the SENCO and the Examinations Officer will be guided by this booklet.

Invigilators

Invigilators are employed, from a pre-approved panel, on an ad hoc basis. The suitability of an individual to invigilate in a particular situation must always be considered on a case by case basis. A person’s disability will make no difference to this process, except in as much as “reasonable adjustments” will be made wherever possible.

Invigilator training will incorporate the principles of the DDA and make reference to specific situations they may encounter in this school. It will also cover the need for confidentiality and sensitivity.

The Examinations Officer or his assistant will issue specific information and instructions to invigilators on a session by session basis.

Any person deemed to be a Senior Invigilator will need to have demonstrated competence and awareness in their dealings with and attitudes towards disabled people.

Candidate Applications

The examination entries for internal candidates are a matter for the subject staff concerned. The examination team will fully support any internal candidate that the school chooses to enter for an examination.

Applications to sit an examination are not normally accepted from external candidates unless they have a close and recent connection to the school. The Examinations Officer does not accept applications unless he is satisfied as to the adequacy of the prospective candidate's academic preparations. Payment (including administration charges) is always required in full in advance from external candidates. Providing the preceding criteria are met, the school is committed to making reasonable adjustments to facilitate a disabled person's application.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed before an examination. They allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the examination. They should allow candidates to show what they know and can do without changing the demands or integrity of the assessment. All access arrangements and the circumstances and criteria under which they may be granted for an examination are clearly laid out in the current JCQ booklet "Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration".

A candidate may only take their examinations under separate invigilation within the centre where he/she has **an established difficulty**.

Physical Disabilities

Much of the school is not well-adapted to people with physical disabilities. Our main examination area (the Gym) is wheel-chair accessible in both its main and fire exits. So too is the PSC. Candidates with mobility difficulties will generally be examined in one of these two rooms.

Candidates who have physical difficulty in writing – eg a broken arm – will be provided with a scribe. The new access arrangements website supports emergency applications in circumstances such as a broken arm (but see "reasonable notice" below).

The Examinations Officer will discuss arrangements for a physically disabled candidate with that candidate and any relevant specialists or carers. There is a presumption that, in routine cases such as a person on crutches or in a wheel chair, physical access to the examination room will not be problematic for the candidate concerned. Procedures in the event of emergency evacuation will be written on a case by case basis but should, in general, include the provision of an assistant dedicated to ensuring the safe evacuation of the disabled candidate.

Candidates who become physically ill during an examination, whether from a pre-existing condition or not, should always:

- be allowed to leave the examination room under supervision (with timing of the examination stopped);
- be given the opportunity to recover;

- be allowed to complete the examination when they are recovered;
- be given the full examination time once re-started, ie full compensation for the amount of time they have missed;
- be supervised in such a way that the security or integrity of the examination is not breached and so that their paper is not invalidated.

Note

In all cases where a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities – eg a scribe or simple alterations to an examination room can easily be provided with 24 hours notice. It may not be possible to provide a scribe or change seating or access arrangements if the request is made with no notice.

Learning Difficulties

The school begins the identification of pupils who may have learning difficulties before girls join us in Year 7. It is the responsibility of the SENCO, in consultation with carers, teaching colleagues and support staff, to develop teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the needs of individual pupils. Towards the end of Year 9, the SENCO will assess each identified pupil according to the rules outlined in the JCQ “Pink” book.

At the start of Year 10 (or earlier if necessary), the SENCO will follow JCQ procedures to apply for access arrangements for all entitled students in the year group. These arrangements must be in place by the end of the Autumn Term and will be applied in Year 11 mock examinations as well as public examinations.

The SENCO (or approved specialist teacher) is responsible for the analysis of a pupil’s need, the JCQ application and the appropriate storage of all data to do with a pupil’s need for support. The SENCO must make this material available to the JCQ inspection service in response to any reasonable request. The Examinations Officer must structure the examination process to allow pupils to receive the support to which they are entitled. The Examinations officer will also respond positively to any reasonable request from the JCQ inspection service. The school will endeavour to ensure that sufficient staff are available to meet the entitlements of pupils. Details of the arrangements will be delegated to the SENCO and/or the Examinations Officer.

Emotional/Psychological Difficulties

Examinations are innately stressful. Teaching colleagues, support staff, carers and the candidates themselves all have a duty and a right to inform the Examinations Officer if there is a long-term or temporary reason why adjustments should be made for a specific candidate. Some candidates, for example, may need to be seated near a door or may require a break if they find the situation difficult. Some candidates may need to be examined in a less intimidating environment than the gym. The Examinations Officer has a duty to make special arrangements to accommodate these difficulties wherever possible.

Candidates who become distressed during an examination, whether from a pre-existing condition or not, should always:

- be allowed to leave the examination room under supervision (with timing of the examination stopped);

- be given the opportunity to recover;
- be allowed to complete the examination when they are recovered;
- be given the full time of the examination with time re-started from when stopped;
- be supervised in such a way that the security or integrity of the examination is not breached and so that their paper is not invalidated.

Note

In all cases where a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities – eg alterations to a seating plan can easily be made with 24 hours notice. It may not be possible to change seating arrangements if the request is made with no notice, although the school should always listen sympathetically to any request.

Special Consideration

The circumstances under which special consideration will be granted by examination boards are clearly identified in the JCQ booklet: “Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration” (chapters 13 – 15). It should be noted that special consideration:

- involves only a “minor adjustment” to examination marks – the maximum allowance is 5%;
- applies to severe emotional trauma, recent events or flare ups of long-term conditions, not to the long-term conditions themselves. For example, there is no consideration for asthma unless an attack happens during or shortly before an examination.

Many decisions concerning an application for special consideration are entirely at the discretion of the Examinations Officer who needs to exercise his judgement as to how severely something has affected a candidate. There is a need to balance the problems of an individual candidate with the maintenance of fairness to the vast majority who neither claim nor receive special consideration.

The Examinations Officer will always make an application when there is supporting medical evidence, a witness statement from a colleague or relevant information of a personal nature from a colleague.