EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY INTRODUCTION

This is intended as a guidance document with teachers and parents being the target audience.

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with additional learning needs (ALN), including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).The policy forms an integral part of our teaching and learning philosophy, which seeks to create a learning environment whereby every individual student may fulfil her potential.

DEFINITIONS
The term Additional Learning Need is used as an umbrella term to incorporate ALL students known to be receiving intervention Learning Support provision including those pupils identified as having SEND.

DISABILITY
Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a ‘physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on someone’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities’.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A candidate has “special educational needs” as defined in the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

WHAT ARE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind access arrangements is to meet the particular needs of a 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’.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend upon a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate’s mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination/assessment requiring authoritative support and at the discretion of the examining body.

Access Arrangements at Ashley High School

Ashley High School aims to ensure that all students have equal access to examinations and are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged over their peers by any long term, substantial SEND/or ALN which fall into the following four categories: -

1. Communication and interaction.
2. Cognition and learning.
3. Social, emotional and mental health.
4. Sensory and/or physical needs.

We will do this by applying the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines. These are updated every year on the 1st September and run through until 31August. The currently released document will always be the first reference point in determining the correct access arrangement for a student. We believe it is important to abide by the JCQ regulations, so that there is parity in how access arrangements are awarded throughout a student’s secondary schooling.

What evidence is needed to apply for EAA?

There are a number of pieces of evidence that can be used to apply for EAA to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ):

•Form 8 report from a Specialist Teacher or Specialist Assessor completed no earlier than the beginning of year 9

•Subject teachers – examples of work as appropriate

•Results of baseline tests e.g. reading/comprehension age, writing tests, standardised psychometric testing

How are Exam Access Arrangements applied for?

Students are tested at each Key Stage for EAA. Just because they were entitle to EAA at KS3 does not automatically entitle them to it at KS4 or KS5 (Sixth Form).

The member of staff qualified to assess for access arrangements will use a variety of nationally recognised tests such as:

* Comprehension
* Spelling
* Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH)

This is not an exhaustive list, and is subject to change, as the assessments are replaced/updated periodically in line with current practice. The test that the assessor uses depends very much upon the type of barrier to learning that the student may have. Should the student need further testing to assess for other learning issues or further EAA, the assessor will arrange this. Following a report produced by the assessor an application is made to the Awarding Bodies for permission to implement the specified arrangement(s).

There are some considerations with this access arrangement application:

* The authorisation granted by the Awarding Bodies lasts 26 months, therefore it is prudent to assess and apply for EAA in the May/June of Year 9 in order that any permitted exam access arrangements are in place for the full GCSE period of both Year 10 and 11.
* A reapplication must be made in Year 12 in order to cover Year 12 and 13. Per the JCQ guidelines, it is possible to “roll forward” the application for EAA, however the student ideally should be re-assessed to provide up to date information for the Examinations Officer, to be considered alongside history of need when considering the case for reapplication.
* There is a deadline imposed by the Awarding Bodies for when exam access arrangements can be applied for in the academic year the candidate is sitting the qualification before 21st February.
* “Normal way of working” is a very important principle, sometimes even considered the most important. An application for EAA made late in Year 11 or Year 13 lacks validity as there is little evidence of whatever EAA is granted being the “normal way of working”. However, within this concept, Manchester High School for Girls does recognise that the atypically high ability profile of our students, in terms of the national context, does mean that many learning difficulties can be far less apparent, and significant concerns raised in Year 11 or Year 13 will still be investigated. In these situations, greater weight will be given to in-school evidence such as Teacher Referrals and academic and EAA assessment results. While Parental Referrals are valuable, the phenomenon of issues being suddenly and unexpectedly raised in the weeks and months before external examinations is a valid concern.

What are the procedures for processing an application?

Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the tester the Examinations Officer then applies to the Awarding Bodies. The feedback is instant at this point the EAA is added to the SEN list and the parents are informed of the EAA.

The application will require evidence of need, and the centre needs to hold evidence in its files that can be inspected at short notice. This can include:

* Recommendations by teachers
* Educational psychologists’ reports
* Letters from outside agencies such as CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), hospitals or doctors
* Statement of Education Need or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)
* Permission from the Awarding Bodies for the arrangement(s) requires:
* A signed copy of the Form 8 report by the designated tester
* A data protection form signed by the student
* For Extra Time – history of evidence of need in the form of copies of work where a student has regularly used more than the allotted time.

Deadlines for submitting applications for access arrangements and modified papers on-line for GCSE and GCE qualifications

Access arrangements may cover the entire course and for GCSE and GCE qualifications must be processed using access arrangements online as early as possible.

The dates are set by the JCQ and we will endeavour to test students after the dates published but they will not receive dispensation for that period. This is due to allocation of time to test late entries.

From referral to point of access arrangements being awarded takes up to 4 weeks with Pearson (formerly Edexcel). Other Awarding Bodies tend to respond more quickly.

The deadline set by the JCQ is final, late entries may incur further inspections by the JCQ.

The decision to apply for access arrangements is based upon evidence of a history of need, history of provision and a specialist assessor access arrangements report.

APPENDIX 1
Common access arrangements

Seating – generally students with access arrangements are seated at the back of the drama room, this ensures minimal disruption at the end of the main examination, as the rest of the students are dismissed towards the front of the room. Some students, who do not have access arrangements, may be seated strategically at the back, but this is rare. Students with rest breaks will be seated close to a door in case they need to leave and stand out in the corridor.

An explanation of assessment scores - In the following arrangements, when scores are referred to, these are the standardised scores from testing for access arrangements. Access arrangements are considered for students with a score of 84 or below.

Where possible, these scores will be obtained and put onto Form 8 via testing in school from a qualified assessor teacher. The school will also accept scores from external assessors, provided they have been correctly obtained and the assessor has maintained contact with the school as outlined in the main policy.

Where possible the scores should have confidence intervals. For example, a score of 89 may have an interval from 83 to 95. This would imply that on a “bad day” the student will experience difficulties similar to someone with a score of 84 or less, but the majority of the time we would not expect to see this. These scores must be presented as a 95% confidence interval i.e. we are 95% confident that the true score for the student lies in that range.

* 25% Extra Time – the student is granted an additional 25% extra time for the examination, usually to compensate for a below average processing, reading or comprehension speed (a score of 84 or less in appropriate standardised testing). This is evidenced by Form 8 and work gathered in school to demonstrate the normal way of working. This arrangement can also be granted by medical evidence or other evidence from appropriate third parties, such as CAMHS. In these cases, the student does not require the Form 8, but does require a signed, authorised letter (i.e. on headed paper) from the representative of the agency making the request.
* 50% Extra Time – the student is granted an additional 50% extra time for the examination, to compensate for very low standardised scores (69 or less) in two or more assessed areas. This is evidenced in the same manner as 25% extra time.
NB: Prior to September 2016, only one standardised score needed to be below the given threshold. Any students who already had this arrangement in place continue with it to the end of their exam tier.
* Rest breaks – these are non-evidenced. The student is allowed to “pause” the exam for brief periods of time. This is often to compensate for physical issues (e.g. a recently sprained wrist causing discomfort when writing), calming down (e.g. if the student is prone to panic attacks, or suffers from ADHD and needs to re-focus) or extreme cases of exam anxiety. Generally the school will limit the student to 6 minutes every half an hour of the exam, but this is adaptable to the student’s needs. This access arrangement is discretionary and can be withdrawn at any time.
* Separate invigilation – the student is invigilated separately from the rest of the students sitting the exam. While it is very common for educational psychologists to recommend this, it is viewed as a “last resort” option, due to the impact upon rooming and staffing. Students who have been granted this arrangement have received it due to medical issues (e.g. visual impairment requiring specific environmental adjustments), and specific learning needs (e.g. complex combinations of multiple severe learning needs such as ADHD, ASD and OCD). Separate invigilation will not be considered in the vast majority of cases as very often the student will be sitting normal internal assessments with their classmates, and therefore the evidence of need and evidence for “normal way of working” is not there.
* Use of assistive technologies In all cases, the student must be used to using the assistive technologies, and must ideally have started no later than the beginning of Year 10. It is envisioned that where possible, the provision for the use of assistive technologies is in place from Year 9 onwards.
* Reader Pens - if “reader pens” are to be used, they must be of a type approved by the JCQ. Currently the preferred option is the “C-Pen” reader. Students using this are allowed to plug headphones in so that the pen “reads” the words to them without disturbing others. As such, they are allowed to use it in the main exam hall.
* Laptops – if a student uses a laptop in her day to day lessons then it is her normal way of working and she may be allowed the use of one in an examination. The laptop will not be her “usual” one and will be provided with a “clean” image, with external communications disabled, and spelling and grammar checking disabled.
* Scribes and Readers – these are very often recommended by external educational psychologists, however, they are increasingly being discouraged as an examination access arrangement. Both arrangements require a degree of familiarity between the student and the scribe/reader and need to be in place from Year 9 onwards at the very latest in order to be effective. There is also the concern that there is an implication for marks that are based on quality of communication, which are generally not attainable for the users of these arrangements.