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Wolverhampton Information, Advice and Support Service

Access Arrangements - Support in Exams

What is an access arrangement?

Put simply, access arrangements remove the barriers towards completing tests and exams, without giving an unfair advantage. It is important that these arrangements are planned for and organised well in advance.

Access arrangements allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to complete a test to the best of their ability, without compromising the integrity of the test.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which the examination bodies comply with their duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

What is a reasonable adjustment?

The Equality Act 2010 requires examination bodies (awarding bodies) to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled student would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. An example of reasonable steps to overcome a disadvantage might be providing a paper with enlarged font for a visually impaired candidate.

My child has support in class. Can they have the same support in exams?

Your child's 'normal way of working' is important. This is evidence that a specific type of support is necessary for them to access the curriculum and learn. Teachers will use evidence of 'normal way of working' to apply for access arrangements for individual students.

The rules for applying for access arrangements are more stringent for year 11 examinations and beyond, so building a history of need is very important.

For some access arrangements teachers may have to arrange for additional standardised tests to be completed during the school year. These standardised scores in reading, for example, together with 'normal way of working' may provide the evidence required to claim access arrangements.

How will I know if my child is entitled to support with their exams?

If you are not sure whether your child is eligible for access support during examinations, you should speak to their class teacher or the SENCO.

A student does not need to have an EHCP, be receiving 'SEN Support' or even have a diagnosis of anything specific, to be given access arrangements. It is the identification and effect of any difficulty in accessing the test, which is important. It may be that access arrangements are only needed for one particular test.

Teachers should talk to you about which arrangements are best for each of the tests your child is taking. Though not an exhaustive list, access arrangements might be used to support pupils who:

- Have difficulty reading
- Have difficulty writing

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- Have difficulty concentrating
- Have processing difficulties
- Use sign language
- Have a hearing impairment
- Have a visual impairment

In all the above cases the difficulty should be significant, persistent and it should have a substantial adverse effect on learning.

There are many sorts of access arrangements. Some of these are listed below:

- Additional time
- Reader (*human or computer e.g., reader pen*)
- Access to a laptop
- Scribe
- Practical assistant
- Enlarged papers
- Rest breaks
- Smaller/individual room
- Modified paper (*colour, font size, braille, language etc.*)

The access arrangements must be appropriate to the exam and the student. For example, a student with dyslexia may require additional time for a written exam, but not for a practical one.

My child has a reader for exams. Is this cheating?

No, it can be a 'reasonable adjustment' and used as part of access arrangements. There are strict rules that readers and scribes must follow during exams (at year 11 and beyond). This is to make sure no unfair advantage is given. Exam inspectors can make unannounced visits to schools to check the rules are being followed.

In class the use of a reader or scribe will be less formal, so your child will need to practice using a reader or scribe under exam conditions. For national curriculum assessments (often referred to as SATs), the support will seem to the child to be less formal, but adults providing the support will, nevertheless, be aware of guidelines they must follow.

Details of the current Access Arrangements for special needs candidates in national curriculum assessments can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency>

Full information of Access Arrangements for examinations is available <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/>

Please contact us if you require further information, advice or support.

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