2026/2027

# Contingency Plan

Luke Thompson (CNS)

St John Henry Newman Catholic School

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**Contingency Plan**

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|---|---|
| Centre name | St John Henry Newman Catholic School |
| Centre number | 20420 |
| Date plan first created | 24/09/2024 |
| Current plan approved by | Sam McDonnell |
| Current plan reviewed by | Sam McDonnell |
| Date of review | 03/03/2026 |
| Date of next review | 03/03/2027 |

**Key staff involved in the plan**

| **Role** | **Name** |
|---|---|
| Head of centre | Emma O'Connor |
| Senior leader(s) | Sam McDonnell, Thomas Lowe, Cheryl Chester, Mark Franzoni, Kelly Perkins, Sarah Scanlon, Alanna Nardiello, Alex Heyes. |
| Exams officer | Luke Thompson |
| SENCo (or equivalent role) | Hayley Bevington |
| Other staff (if applicable) | |

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that contingency planning at St John Henry Newman Catholic School is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

## Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process.

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on processes at St John Henry Newman Catholic School.

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 details how St John Henry Newman Catholic School complies with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (5.3 *Centre management*) by having in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre:

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

**Contingency arrangements**

The centre **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.

The centre **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.

The centre **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. (GR 3.17-19) **Operating across more than one centre**

This does not apply to this centre.

**National Centre Number Register and other information requirements**

The head of centre will ensure that the centre 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. (GR 5.3)

**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 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. Exams 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 post-results services Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- **Planning** Experienced
  exam officer in place
  All exam
  board key dates to be printed and kept up to date to plan deadlines Ensure
  that any new data and examinations staff are trained in all aspects of exam
  administration New year
  set up to include qualification, QAN & awarding body checks on individual subjects supplied
  by HOD.

- **Entries** Calendar
  dates of exam board entry deadlines/estimates etc

  Pre-Exams
  Invigilators emailed at start of year with
  new ICE booklet, Training Session dates, availability and allocation identified.

- **Pre – exams** plan made to know what to set up and when by.
  Candidates
  given candidate timetable at least 2 weeks before exams start Confidential
  work stored in double locked room and exam material stored in double locked room in exam
  safe

  Communicate
  with teachers about deadlines and process

- **Exam**
  **Time**

  Invigilators
  properly trained how to ensure exams taken correctly – following in house invigilator induction,
  Safeguarding.

  Ensure

  two people check report and both make sure it is sent as top priority

  Two members
  of staff to package any scripts that get returned as soon as they come to the office.

The Data
and Exams Manager is fully experienced in all aspects of exam administration and can
ensure the above are actioned in the absence of one of the examinations team. MHK to
replace LTN

**2. SENCo** (or equivalent role) **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 other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre will:

- **Planning**

SENCo to create a list of all students that require assessing before the deadline in February.

Exams Office are made aware of qualifying candidates from SENCo and will identify any needs for the candidate during the exam process.

Access arrangements for students with evidence, will be applied for with aid of written evidence from the assessor.

Exams Office will retain completed approved application sheets and maintain a hard file containing the testing documentation and evidence of need.

- **Pre-Exams**

SENCo will have a list of all students that have had approved Access Arrangements.

Staff are made aware of any centre-delegated arrangements for students – I.E laptops from IT

SENCo will have identified this need and will make Exams Office aware. Exams office will check deadlines and make a note of important dates.

SENCo lead will ensure a

minimum pool of staff are trained to carry out Access Arrangement duties. They will train any new staff that show interest before the exam series start and will record evidence of training. Exam office to inform SENCo of how many students are requiring staff support.

- **Exam time**

Exams office to supply Access

Arrangement briefing sheet for SENCo staff that details students/exams/requirements/rooms and timings.

In the absence of the SENCO (HRY),

The Send provisions Manager (JHL) and HLTA for SEN (SSH) and the Data and Examinations Manager (MHK) will deputise to ensure that the above are actioned in a timely manner and that candidates are not disadvantaged

**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 tasks (including controlled assessment and coursework) 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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre

will:

- Staff made aware of estimated entry deadline in timely manner (SLT link)
- Staff are made aware of final deadline dates in December, and a record of students/exam entries are made to know who is missing entries. Staff are chased on this well before final deadline (SLT link)
- Staff are made aware of submission deadline and shortlists are made of staff who need to input data
- Heads of Department and the Senior Leadership Team will be able to provide the above information in the absence of teaching staff
- If Department Head is unavailable the second in line will oversee.

**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 other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre

will:

- We aim to have 10 invigilators at the minimum, but advertising is always sent out and new recruits are always welcome. New invigilators are trained and given a copy of the ICE booklet.
- Pre-allocation and availability charts created with sufficient staff to allow for possible shortage.
- Back up "availability rota" to hand for sudden absence on the day. (Exam team support)

**5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) 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 other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- **Alternative site**(s) details:

- At the earliest possible time during the planning of examinations any room requirements that are extraordinary will be identified and raised with Senior Leadership Team.
- Students will be isolated and have two sittings of the same exam with staggered starts if there are insufficient rooms on the day. Students will be kept away from other students taking the exam and mobile phones internet access etc. will be prohibited.
- Where appropriate timetabled classrooms will be used for examinations and classes moved.
- Alternative site(s) details: Mac Site- Bishop Ullathorne – New sports hall/other venues within.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
- Students may be notified through Head of Year, Tutor time notifications, Assemblies, Parents may be contacted through text message home.
- ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration Other centre actions:
- No other actions identified

**6. Cyber security**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre will:

(This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)

(GR 3.21)

Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret
- providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/ phishing attempts
- enabling additional security settings wherever possible
- updating any passwords that may have been exposed
- setting up secure account recovery options

- reviewing and managing connected applications
- monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- 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.
- reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body
- St John Henry Newman operates with tangible papers, should an online examination be affected, arrangements would be sort to obtain a paper copy of the examination or students would be accommodated within the MAC.

**7. Failure of IT systems**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidates' work
- MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work) (GR 3.19)
- Ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.
- School IT Department to be on site at the critical times for examinations to ensure that systems are fully operational and act quickly in the event of a server failure.
- Contact Mac for Support
- Contact Board to inform
- Implement if necessary, the contingency plan for movement to another site within the MAC should online exams be affected.

**8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (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 Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre will:

- refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its (exams) lockdown policy)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration Other centre actions:
- No other actions identified

**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 Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre will:

- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- facilitate alternative methods of learning
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning
- **Communication** details:
- Students may be notified through Head of Year, Tutor time notifications, Assemblies, Parents may be contacted through text message home.

- take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations

- advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date

Other centre actions:

- The centre may revert to online teaching if advised by the Department for Education.

**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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document *Preparing for disruption to examinations*)
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
- Students may be notified through Head of Year, Tutor time notifications, Assemblies, Parents may be contacted through text message home.
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration Other centre actions:
- The centre will make necessary arrangements to take examination scripts to other locations in order for the candidate to sit the examinations, in compliance with the JCQ Regulations for Alternative Site for the conduct of examinations.
- Priority will always be given to candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they cannot take their examinations as planned.
- Where necessary Transfer Candidate Arrangements will be made with the awarding organisations for candidates to sit at alternative centres.
- The Data and Examinations team will ensure that any special consideration applications for the candidate are submitted in a timely manner.

- Follow all national/local guidance (of the day).

- Contact parents/carers to inform of the procedures.

**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 Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre will:

- focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations
- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions (This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
- Bishop Ullathorne - MAC venues
- **Communication** details:
- Students may be notified through Head of Year, Tutor time notifications, Assemblies, Parents may be contacted through text message home.
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration Other centre actions:
- No other actions identified

**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 Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure conditions
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue Other centre actions:
- The examinations team will identify papers that have not been received

**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 Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible Other centre actions:
- If a collection is missed the exams team will take parcels directly to Parcel Force to ensure a timely return of completed exam scripts.

**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 Other criteria:
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- liaise with the awarding body to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series Other centre actions:
- No other action identified

**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) or facilitate post-results services**

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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative venue
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
- within the MAC.
- make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
- contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services
- **Communication** details:
- Students may be notified through Head of Year, Tutor time notifications, Assemblies, Parents may be contacted through text message home. Other centre actions:
- No other actions identified

**16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process** Cause of

disruption

- No further causes identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Not applicable.

## Changes 2025/2026

(Changed) Under heading **Contingency arrangements** slight change of wording to reflect GR 3.17-19.

(Changed) Under heading **National Centre Number Register and other information requirements** slight change of wording to reflect GR 5.3.

(Changed) Heading **Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**.

(Changed) Heading **3. Teaching staff** (or other key staff essential to the examination process) **extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

(Changed) Heading **6. Cyber security** and amended criteria for implementation of the plan.

(Changed) Heading **11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations**

(Updated) Under heading below **Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning**, relevant links and information has been updated and outdated links/information removed.

## Centre-specific changes

Upon review in March 2025, Senco name update. No other changes were applicable to this document.

Upon review in March 2026 No other changes were applicable to this document.

## 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

Ofqual guidance extract 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**
www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northernireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted

"This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should 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.

**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**

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- 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.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure
- Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

**After the exam**

- 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.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- 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**

- Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- 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**

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- 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 DfE 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 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.

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: Northern Ireland 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
- protective security and preparedness for education settings from the DfE
- 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"

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-2026section 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: www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-englandwales-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* - 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 that there is 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 was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling 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. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course."

**Links to other JCQ documentation**

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan

Preparing for disruption to examinations

General Regulations for Approved Centres

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements

Guidance notes for transferred candidates

Instructions for conducting examinations

A guide to the special consideration process

Guidance for centres on cyber security

**GOV.UK**

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning

**Wales**

School closures: examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather

**Northern Ireland**

Exceptional closure days - Northern Ireland

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools

**National Cyber Security Centre**

Cyber Security for Schools

Cyber security training for school staff

July 2026 School Name updated.