



Sherburn High School



Achievement for all

Examinations Contingency Plan

Adopted/Reviewed: April 2026

Date of Next Review: April 2027

Signed:
(Head Teacher)

Date:

Signed:
(Chair of Governors)

Date:

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Key Personnel in Examinations Process

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Matt Gill
Examinations officer line manager (Deputy Headteacher)	John Ralphs
Examinations Officer Data & Curriculum Coordinator	K Meadley R Bradley
SENCo Assistant SENCo	C Isaac N Caldwell

Any potential disruption would be discussed with the Chief Education Officer of Yorkshire Learning Trust to gain advice on alternative arrangements.

Purpose of the plan

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

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if Examinations or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan also confirms Sherburn High School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place:

- 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, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that Tadcaster Grammar School as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff. Heads of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself.

Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Where the head of centre may be 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.

Causes of potential disruption to the exam process

1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (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 Examinations 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 Examinations/assessment*
- *awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred*

Pre-Examinations

- *invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting Examinations*
- *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

- *Examinations/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:

- The Data and Curriculum Officer and Examinations Officer is trained in all aspects of the Examinations Officer job and they will follow the procedures and practices within the Examinations Officer remit. Assistance from Senior Leadership Team and the Office Manager as required.
- Examinations Officer to ensure essential information is available to the Deputy Headteacher (Raising Standards).
- Examinations Officer to ensure examination cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times.

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in 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-Examinations

- *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:

- The Assistant SENCo is trained up, who will follow procedures and practices within the SENCo remit.
- Examinations Officer to ensure essential information is available to Raising Standards Leader (RSL) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Examinations Officer to ensure examination cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times

3. Heads of Department (or other key staff essential to the examination process) extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

Early/estimated entry information not provided to the Examinations officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the Examinations officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for Examinations/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies

Non-examination assessment 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:

- Deputy Headteacher to ensure departmental continuity by requesting an alternative member of the Senior Leadership Team takes responsibility for the actions above.

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 Examinations

Invigilator shortage on peak exam days

Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Centre actions:

- Examinations Officer to maintain a short list of suitable candidates.
- Examinations Officer to ensure that capacity is never exceeded on any one day.
- Examinations Officer to review training procedures regularly and put in place additional training as required.
- Examinations Officer to ensure a specific Examinations Day Contingency Plan is in place (Appendix 1).
- Examinations Officer to ensure a specific Emergency Evacuation Plan is in place (Appendix 2)
- Examinations Officer to ensure an Incident Log is in place (Appendix 3).

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Examinations officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during Examinations timetable planning

Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions:

- Pre-planning at all stages is essential.
- Raising Standards Leader and Examinations Officer to continually review all stages of the process.
- The Gymnasium to be the first option as an alternative venue for emergency accommodation, followed by the Main Hall.
- Emergency Evacuation plan should be in place (Appendix 2)

6. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during Examinations preparation

Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions:

- Deputy Headteacher and Examinations Officer to contact in-house IT department and School Business Manager
- Examinations Officer to contact all Examination Boards (see Appendix 1 for telephone numbers) for alternative route for dissemination of results.

7. Disruption of teaching time – 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:

- The centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this (via website / SMS / twitter).
- Alternative venues to prioritised for students with imminent Examinations.
- Examinations Officer to advise the Examination Boards as appropriate.
- In extreme circumstances advise candidates they may need to sit Examinations in the next available series.

8. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal.

Centre actions:

- 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.
- Centre to liaise with Exam Boards to sit Examinations at a different venue in extremis.
- Should a significant number of candidates need to be isolated due to sickness, use the new Gymnasium and request a member of the trained medical staff to be on hand.
- If a small number (less than 5) are affected, isolate students in the school staff room with separate invigilators
- Apply for Special Consideration for those affected to the appropriate examination boards.

9. 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:

- The centre to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers.
- Arrange with Examination Boards for alternative means of receiving papers either electronically, or alternative courier.
- Examinations Officer to ensure papers are kept securely until needed.

10. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Centre actions:

- The centre to communicate with relevant Exam Boards at the outset to resolve the issue.
- Alternative transport should only be used with the agreement of the relevant Examination Boards.
- Scripts must be stored securely until such time transport is confirmed.

11. 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:

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre (Headteacher) to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers.
- The Exam Boards may generate candidate marks for the affected assessments based on other evidence, as defined by the Exam Boards and the regulators.
- It may be necessary for the candidates to retake the assessment at the next available opportunity.

12. Centre unable to distribute results as normal

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:

- Centres to contact awarding organisations about alternative options.
- Arrange to access results at an alternative site.
- Inform staff, students and parents as soon as possible of the change in distribution of results.

13. 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

- Examinations Manager/Headteacher to inform each awarding organisation as soon as possible with which examinations are due to take place
 - Examinations Manager to look at an alternative venue locally
 - Examinations Manager/Office Manager to inform students, parents, carers via email, SMS, Facebook
- Alternative venue details: Tadcaster Grammar School – agreement in principle in place.
Eversley Centre, Old Girl's School

14. 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

- Immediate Action & Reporting: Notify the Head of Centre and IT team to assess the impact. Immediately contact Awarding Bodies for advice.
- External Reporting: Inform authorities such as the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Action Fraud, and the Department for Education (DfE) if data is compromised.
- Containment & Recovery: Isolate affected parts of the network to prevent further damage. Restore data from recent backups, ensuring all systems are secure before resuming use.
- Exam Continuity Measures:
 - Paper-Based Alternatives: Switch to paper-based exams if digital systems (computer science, online tests) are down.
 - Alternative Venues: If the centre's infrastructure is completely compromised, transport students to alternative sites with working IT systems i.e Tadcaster Grammar School
 - Rescheduling: Work with awarding bodies to reschedule exams to the designated contingency days if necessary.
- Preventative Measures: Maintain up-to-date offline backups, enforce multi-factor authentication (MFA), and conduct staff training to detect phishing.
- Specific Exam Day Procedures

Student Communication: Clearly communicate with students and parents regarding any changes to exam dates or procedures.

Data Integrity: If student work or results are lost, refer to the awarding body's policies for special consideration or alternative evidence submissions

Appendix 1 Examinations Day Contingency plan

Exam Item	Location/ Holders Name	Responsibility
Keys to Secure Storage for exam papers and exam stationery	KMY main key holder. RBY holds spare set.	KMY / RBY (reserve)
Examinations Office – Centre Timetable	Examinations Office on separate key and locked at all times during exam season. Timetable widely published	KMY / RBY (reserve)
Seating plans	In Examinations office (cupboard A).	KMY / RBY (reserve)
Exam cards / setting out of exam rooms / notices etc.	On desk. Attendance sheets in cupboard A. Official ones in locked exam cabinet	KMY / RBY (reserve)
Invigilators	KMY to organise	
Access Arrangements (incl. Cover sheets)	H2L have separate attendance sheets. Papers taken to H2L in secure envelope and handed over to nominated staff	KMY / RBY (reserve)
Script envelopes / Examiner address labels	In cupboard B	KMY / RBY (reserve)
Exam clashes	Instructions given to Invigilators at the start of the exam	KMY
Collection of scripts	Invigilators	Invigilators
Collation of scripts	KMY to check against official attendance registers and the official attendance sheets	KMY

	completed before posting	
Completion of proof of posting form / posting scripts	Complete the Exam Dispatch log. Keep in Examinations office until Parcel force arrive	KMY
Awarding Bodies Tel, no: WJEC AQA OCR Pearson CIE	02920 265 000 0800 197 7162 01223 553 998 08444 632 535 01223 553 554	

Appendix 2

Policy for Severe Disruption/Evacuation during External Examinations

Possible Causes

- Unreasonable noise disruption
- Fire/Bomb/Flood Alert during an Examination

1. Unreasonable noise disruption

In the event of a severe disruption in an externally set examination, invigilators are advised to stop the examination, tell the candidates to close their answer books, make a note of the time and summon help (Examinations Officer/Senior Leadership Team/ Main Office/Headteacher) to sort out the problem. Examination room conditions must be maintained.

When the disruption has been resolved the candidates can resume their examination and the time taken to resolve the issue added on at the end of the examinations. The candidates must be supervised at all times and thus the break in the examination can be regarded as 'a supervised rest break'.

An incident log (Appendix 3) must be completed with the times of the disruptions noted. The Examinations Officer to make Examining Bodies aware of the disruption if necessary.

2. Fire/Bomb/Flood Alert during an Examination

In the event of a fire alarm or bomb alert sounding (or any other emergency situation arising) during an examination, the first priority of the invigilators is to preserve life. The next priority is to ensure the security of the examination.

The invigilator should summon assistance, if there is time and it is appropriate, via the Examinations Officer who will confirm if immediate evacuation is necessary and the school Office who will call the reserve invigilator and notify the Senior Leadership Team. A decision will be made as to whether a full evacuation is necessary.

If the emergency is over quickly, the candidates should resume the examination. A careful note of the time of resumption must be noted and the full time allocated for the examination given to complete the examination, ignoring the interruption.

An incident log (Appendix 3) must be completed with the times of the disruptions noted and a special

consideration form will be filled in so as not to disadvantage the candidates.

Procedure for Emergency Evacuation from an Examination

If it is necessary to evacuate the building, the lead invigilator should then stop the examination taking a note other members of staff will be needed to help police this.

In the event of an emergency requiring candidates to evacuate buildings during an examination the following areas should be used but the candidates **must** be kept at a distance and in silence from the main body of pupils.

Students are requested to stand in the tennis courts behind the Sports Hall. This is away from the main body of school. Should the Sports hall be compromised then students should move onto the grassed area near the Sixth Form Centre. Invigilators should supervise students along with the Examinations Officer and a member of the SLT. In the first instance this should be the Raising Standards Leader.

At all times, invigilators must act in accordance with section 16 of the 'Instructions for conducting examination' booklet. They should also summon assistance immediately an emergency arises. Silence should be maintained during the time the candidates are outside the examination room. Section 16 of 'Instructions for conducting examination' booklet states:

The invigilator **must** take the following action in an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert.

- Stop the candidates from writing.
- Collect the attendance register and evacuate the examination room in line with the instructions given by the appropriate authority.
- Advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room. Candidates should leave the room in silence.
- Make sure that the candidates are supervised as closely as possible while they are out of the examination room to make sure there is no discussion about the examination. Make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted.
- Allow the candidates the full working time set for the examination.
- If there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking the candidates (with question papers and scripts) to another place to finish the examination.
- Make a full report of the incident and the action taken (Appendix 3) and send to the relevant awarding body.

Appendix 3

Exam Room Incident Log

This incident log is for the Examinations officer or invigilator(s) to use to record any irregularities¹ that may happen in the exam room at the point of occurrence.

All irregularities¹ must be recorded.

An exam room incident log should be used to record any irregularities. [JCQ ICE 13]

Exam date/session: AM/PM	Exam room:	Exam(s):
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In order to avoid potential breaches of security, care must be taken to ensure the correct question paper packets are opened. An additional member of centre staff must check the time, date and any other paper details before a packet is opened. [JCQ ICE 1, 11]

Prior to opening the above exam paper packets provided by the Examinations officer, I confirm that I have checked against the timetable that the date, session and paper details are correct.

Signature of member of centre staff to confirm the above statement:

.....

Time Incident description
Recorded by:

	Recorded by:
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After the exam(s) in this room have concluded, incidents recorded here will inform required follow-up actions or reports to awarding bodies. The incident log will be affixed to the seating plan, copy of the attendance register(s), and exam room checklist for this exam room session.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

<p>Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023</p>

Ofqual

<p>What schools and colleges and other centres should do if Examinations or other assessments are seriously disrupted</p> <p>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),</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Contingency planning</p> <p>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 Examinations and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.</p> <p>Disruption to assessments or Examinations</p> <p>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</p>
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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 Examinations 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 and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors 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 are able to 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 Examinations 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 Examinations. 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 Examinations 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 as well as 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 Examinations or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated 5 October 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-Examinations-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>)

JCQ

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 Examinations officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/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 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body 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 2024. 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>

The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2024, 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.

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 arrangements. 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 **Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-2026** <http://www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/other-documents

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/general-regulations/
General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations
www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process
www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-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/Examinations-office/general-regulations/

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! www.jcq.org.uk/Examinations-office/blogs/

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

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning
www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather:
www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days
Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School - exceptional closure of schools
www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

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](#)

New for 2025-26

Cyber Security for Schools www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools

Cyber security training for school staff www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools