FURZE PLATT SENIOR SCHOOL

Guidance for Parents:
Exam Access Arrangements

1st September 2026

As a school we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability under the Equality Act of 2010. The school must also uphold the regulations set by the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) on behalf of the exam boards.

Access arrangements are the main way that those adjustments are made in formal GCSE and GCE examinations and associated assessments. Access arrangements may also be made available to students with temporary difficulties, but who do not have a disability – for example, because they have an injury or illness at the time of the assessment.

Not all students with additional needs will require access arrangements. It depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. Additional needs alone do not entitle a student to access arrangements. Access Arrangements allow students to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the exam and under JCQ regulations, only evidence of support from year 9 onwards is admissible for consideration in formal examinations.

The JCQ regulations state that SENCos should trial supervised rest breaks first as "*they may be more effective and appropriate for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties. They may better address the needs of many neurodivergent candidates such as those with ADHD, ASD as well as many of those with a medical condition and mental health needs."*

Every application to the exam boards will need supporting evidence that a student has a disability, or by an assessment which shows you have low scores in a particular area. This assessment will need to be carried out by a suitably qualified assessor or who has liaised with the school's SENCo before the assessment takes place. Independent assessments carried out without the knowledge of our SENCo cannot be used as evidence. Specialists are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are not responsible for decisions about access arrangements.

In year 7 and 8 all student support is given at the discretion of the teachers both in class, tests and end of year examinations. As they get to know the students in the lower years of the school, they are best placed to support the students and help them grow to become independent learners.

Students in year 9, and new students who join via in-year transfer in year 9 and above, are given the opportunity to undertake comprehensive literacy screening tests which can help guide us with considerations for access arrangements. In addition, teachers continuously give feedback to the Learning Support Department, our SENCo and our Access Arrangements Officer.

Access Arrangements are specific to each series of examinations meaning access arrangements awarded for GCSE courses do not automatically roll over to GCE and BTEC courses in Sixth Form.

Attached are further Guidance details from the JCQ, who represent Examination Boards for GCSE and GCE A level qualifications.

Guidance for parents, carers and students about access arrangements

What are access arrangements?

- Access arrangements allow students with specific needs, such as special educational needs and disabilities to access an exam.
- They allow students to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the exam.

How will the process start?

- Parents and carers should let the SENCo know as soon as possible if their child has additional needs. Good and open communication is important.
- Students in Further Education should record their additional needs on the college's enrolment form.
- The SENCo will work with teachers and the student to identify possible arrangements.
- Various access arrangements are available. For example, support for students who have difficulties with reading, writing, speed of working and concentration.
- Not all students with additional needs will require access arrangements. It depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. Additional needs alone do not entitle a student to access arrangements.

Who will make the assessment?

- If a student has learning difficulties, the school or college's appointed assessor must conduct the assessment to determine the need for access arrangements such as 25% extra time.
- If an external assessor diagnoses a learning difficulty (for example, dyslexia, dyscalculia), the assessment can only be used as evidence for access arrangements if the assessor has liaised with the school or college in advance and received the necessary access arrangements paperwork.
- Specialists (for example, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist) are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are not responsible for decisions about access arrangements.
- The school or college must decide which access arrangements a student has for their exams.
- Teachers must give evidence to show that an access arrangement is needed. The school or college will record how effective the arrangement is in the classroom, in internal tests or in mock exams.

What else needs to be done?

- The school or college will have to apply for some arrangements.
- If a student has complex needs, a school or college can discuss their needs with the exam board.

Finally

Schools and colleges must follow the rules. They are inspected and if they are found to be breaking the rules, this will be malpractice.

If you have any questions about access arrangements, please speak to the school / college / SENCo.