Bowbrook School

EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

2026/27

THIS POLICY IS REVIEWED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS

Y STAFF INVOLVED IN THE PLAN

Role	Name(s)
Head Of Centre	C Allen
Exams Officer	J Ironside
SENDCo	L Kimberlee
Senior Leader(s)	R Mills A Farr
Head of IT	D Bell

CONTENTS

KEY STAFF INVOLVED IN THE PLAN 1

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN 1

NATIONAL CENTRE NUMBER REGISTER AND OTHER INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS 1

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DISRUPTION TO THE EXAM PROCESS 1

1. Exam Officer Extended Absence at a Critical Stage of the Exam Cycle 1
2. SENDCo Extended Absence at a Critical Stage of the Exam Cycle 2
3. Teaching Staff Extended Absence at a Critical Stage of the Exam Cycle 2
4. Invigilators - Lack of Appropriately Trained Invigilators or Invigilator Absence 3
5. Exam Rooms - Lack of Appropriate Rooms or Main Venues Unavailable at Short Notice 3
6. Cyber-Attack 3
7. Failure Of IT Systems 4

Centres must follow JCQ and NCSC guidance: implement offline backups, multi-factor authentication, and maintain resilience against ransomware. 4

9. Emergency Evacuation of The Exam Room (Or Centre Lockdown) 4
10. Disruption Of Teaching Time in The Weeks Before an Exam – Centre Closed for An Extended Period 5
11. Candidates May Not Be Able to Take Examinations - Centre Remains Open 5
12. Centre May Not Be Able to Open as Normal During the Examination Period 5
13. Disruption in the Distribution of Examination Papers 6
14. Disruption to Transporting Completed Examination Scripts 6
15. Assessment Evidence is Not Available to Be Marked 6
16. Centre Unable to Distribute Results as Normal or Facilitate Post Results Services 7

DfE 7

Ofqual 7

JCQ 10

GOV.UK 11

Wales 11

Northern Ireland 11

NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY CENTRE 12

CANDIDATE COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST (EMERGENCY): 12

APPENDIX A - AWARDING BODY CONTACTS 13

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Bowbrook House 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. **Summer 2027 JCQ Contingency Days: 23rd June 2027.**

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 exams 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 2024).

This plan also confirms Bowbrook House School's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** 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 SENDCo 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 Bowbrook House School has 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.

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DISRUPTION TO THE EXAM PROCESS

1. Exam 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 the post-results services*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- If the EO is absent for an extended period, the Head of Centre (C Allen) in conjunction with the Deputy Head of centre (R Mills) would either take over the role or another member of staff would be appointed to take over. Both named above have secure EO level access to the exam boards' web sites.

2. SENDCo 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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- If the SENDCo is absent for an extended period, other members of the SEN team, in co-ordination with the Head of Centre and EO would take over the role. If required a new SENDCo would be appointed.

3. Teaching Staff 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 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- If a subject teacher or Head of Department is absent, the Head of Centre will appoint a suitable replacement if necessary. The EO will liaise with a current or new member of staff regarding NEA (non-examination assessment) planning and marking.

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Head of Centre will appoint replacements from the existing staff body, bearing in mind the JCQ INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDUCTING EXAMS (Instructions for Conducting Examination) rules that don't permit a subject teacher or a teacher who has overall responsibility for the subject to be used. The EO will ensure the member of staff is briefed about their role.

5. Exam Rooms - Lack of Appropriate Rooms or Main Venues 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- If the school hall is out of action, we would use the rooms of the Schofield Block with the 'retractable walls' used to enlarge the space to an appropriate size.
- Barring that, we could use an alternative venue such as the local village hall.
- Further still, we could have the marquee erected earlier on in the summer term than usual. In all these instances, we would first consult with the awarding bodies.
- We would communicate with parents, carers and students accordingly.

6. Cyber-Attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Head of IT (D Bell) to ensure school IT systems are secure with updated systems protection against possible cyber-attacks
- Exam admin (e.g., candidate entries etc) can be undertaken by EO using IT not connected to school systems

7. Failure Of IT Systems

Centres must follow JCQ and NCSC guidance: implement offline backups, multi-factor authentication, and maintain resilience against ransomware.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

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

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- As yet, the school does not use an MIS for exam entry/retrieval purposes. If the IT system at school failed, the EO or another member of staff, can enter/retrieve details from a computer not on the school site/system.
- If this failed, we would consult with the awarding bodies.

8. Security

The Exams Officer maintains offline copies of candidate entries, timetables, seating plans, access arrangements records and awarding body contact details. Multi-factor authentication is enabled on all awarding body accounts wherever available

- offline backups of exam-related data

- MFA on awarding body accounts
- retained paper copies of candidate timetables
- alternative access to award body portals
- emergency contact numbers stored offline
- process for reporting significant incidents to awarding bodies

9. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- If this is short-term temporary evacuation during an exam, we would comply with the JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (as in the INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDUCTING EXAMS booklet) and so, if possible, return students to the exam rooms, or other suitable room(s) e.g., Schofield Block, for the completion of their exams.
- If this is a more protracted evacuation or lock down, guidance will be sought from the awarding bodies at the earliest opportunity.
- We would communicate with parents, carers and students accordingly and in good time.

10. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The school will prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exams when planned
- The school will plan to facilitate teaching and learning by alternative methods or alternative locations e.g., by communicating with parents/carers and students via email, the School website and Bowbrook-Study/Teams/Zoom the required tasks and work to be completed; suggesting textbooks and/or revision guides to acquired and used and keeping them regularly updated regarding solutions to the disruption; sourcing alternative venues/facilities including the local village hall.
- Depending on how long the disruption lasted, we could contemplate the necessity of entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available) or, alternatively apply for transferred candidate arrangements
- We would communicate with parents, carers and students accordingly.

11. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The school's aim would be to ensure the exams were sat by the candidate(s). It would liaise with candidates and parents to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue if e.g., the crisis is due to illness. This could be a different room within the centre to allow separation from 'healthy' candidates or in more extreme cases another venue off the school site (e.g., the village hall) with the agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
- The school can apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.
- The school could offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.

12. Centre May Not Be Able to Open as Normal During the Examination Period

(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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The aim will be to enable candidates to take their examinations.
- The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the school to open lies with the Head of centre. The Head is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open the school.

- If the school is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations, each relevant awarding organisation will be informed as soon as is possible.
- The school could use an alternative venue in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g., share facilities with other centres or use e.g., village hall, if possible), ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to and from the alternative venue.
- The school can apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.
- The school may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- We would communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

13. 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The school will notify and seek guidance from the relevant awarding body as soon as possible, to arrange:

-delivery of the correct examination paper, if there is time

-electronic access to the examination paper via a secure external network

-the exam board to fax the paper if electronic transfer is not possible

14. Disruption to Transporting Completed Examination Scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- As a user of the national 'yellow label' collection service, we would seek advice from the awarding organisation(s). We would not make our own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
- For any examinations where we have to make our own arrangements for transportation, we would investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDUCTING EXAMS (Instructions for Conducting Examinations). Again, we would consult with the awarding bodies.
- We would ensure the secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.

15. 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The School will liaise with the appropriate awarding organisation(s) who could generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake the affected assessment at a subsequent assessment window.

16. Centre Unable to Distribute Results as Normal or Facilitate Post Results Services

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- In consultation with the awarding bodies, the school will access its results and coordinate access to post results services at an alternative site.
- If electronic post results requests are not possible, the School will make direct contact the relevant awarding organisation e.g., by phone, to facilitate the post results services.
- Alternative site options include the village hall

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
- Cyber-crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers
- DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres 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

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). Applications will be submitted within JCQ published deadlines.

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 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

STAFF AWARENESS

Relevant senior leaders, the SENDCo, examinations staff, invigilators and IT staff are made aware of this contingency plan annually.

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

Instructions for conducting examinations 2026-2027

- JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents
- JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/
- JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/

- General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations
- Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms
- Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms
- Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations
- A guide to the special consideration process: www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

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: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; 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

CANDIDATE COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST (EMERGENCY):

- Notify candidates and parents promptly via agreed channels (email, SMS, website, Teams).
- Provide clear instructions on revised exam dates or alternative arrangements.
- Ensure JCQ contingency day information is communicated in advance.
- Maintain records of all communications for audit purposes.

If exams are relocated, complete JCQ Alternative Site Arrangement Form and submit via JCQ portal before the exam.

Centre confirms compliance with DfE RAAC guidance and Ofqual resilience arrangements for building safety and continuity.

APPENDIX A - AWARDING BODY CONTACTS

EXAM BOARDS

- AQA
- Pearson Edexcel
- OCR
- WJEC/Eduqas
- JCQ

Current awarding body contingency contacts are maintained by the Exams Officer and reviewed annually.