



# BHWS CONTINGENCY POLICY (EXAMS) 2025-26

**GB Committee Responsible:**

**Reviewed by:**

**Review Date:**

**Approved by Committee:**

**Ratified by LC:**

**Next Review Date:**

**Curriculum and Achievement**

Frances O'Sullivan (AHT)

January 2026

20<sup>th</sup> January 2026

24<sup>th</sup> February 2026

January 2027

# **Exam Contingency Plan**

Centre Name: Bentley Wood High School

Centre Number: 12706

Date plan reviewed: January 2025

## **Key staff involved in exam contingency planning**

Head of Centre: Naseema Akbar

Senior Leader: Francis O'Sullivan

Exams Office: Alpa Shah

SLG Lead and Senco: Francis O'Sullivan and Sarah Newman

Operations Manager: Paola Boyadjian

This plan is review and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Bentley Wood High 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 exam process.

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 at Bentley Wood High 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'* 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**.

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

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

### Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Bentley Wood **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.

Bentley Wood **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.

Bentley Wood **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.

### National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Bentley

Wood responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (such as 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.

These contacts are the Head of Centre, Naseema Akbar, and Francis O'Sullivan, Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for exams.

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

If the Head of Centre is absent, her role as Head of Centre will be delegated to Lawrence Viala, Deputy Headteacher.

#### *Confirmation of Internal Governance Procedures, Escalation Process:*

As stated in the "JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres 2025-26", this statement confirms escalation procedures as follows:

- should the head of centre (Naseema Akbar) be absent, then any queries will be escalated to Lawrence Viala (Deputy Headteacher)
- should the member of the SLG with oversight of examination administration (Francis O'Sullivan) be absent, then any queries will be escalated to Lawrence Viala (Deputy Headteacher)

## Possible causes of disruption to exam process

### 1. Exams officer extended absence at a critical stage 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

### **Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above**

The Head of Centre and SLG will identify alternative members of staff to complete any outstanding processes.

This may require training for certain specialised tasks, for example, training a member of staff in downloading results on results days, assigning seating, planning and creating timetables, and so forth.

### 2. Head Teacher, SLG Lead, & SENCO extended absence at 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 listed above**

The Centre will:

SLG to identify suitable alternative member/s of staff to complete any outstanding processes, such as Kieran Robinson (Deputy Headteacher), or Sarah Howell (assistant to the SENCo)

### **3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) extended absence at key points in the exam process (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 (*including controlled assessments and coursework*) 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

Other criteria: no other criteria identified.

#### **Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above**

The Centre will:

SLG to identify suitable alternative member/s of staff, such as use of long-term supply teachers to cover extended teacher absence.

#### **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:

- Exams Officer to make sure adequate invigilators are available in advance of all exams.
- Utilise other appropriate staff where required in an emergency, e.g. absence of invigilators, e.g. trained Science Technicians, Cover Supervisors, and Teaching Assistants.
- Regularly advertise for invigilators to keep our invigilator pool maintained
- Regularly review and maintain rates of pay which are competitive with local schools, to mitigate national shortages of invigilators, and to aid retention of experienced colleagues.

#### **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

##### **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 venue details:

To be confirmed locally with alternative High School (e.g Whitmore High School) when urgent need is identified.

- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or venue

Communication details: Messages will be sent via Email and/or Arbor.

- 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

## 6. 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Contact Head of IT, AIT, and Arbor Support to meet, mitigate and address.

(GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must include:

- i. the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
- ii. keeping all account details strictly confidential;
- iii. the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
- iv. how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;
- v. an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
- vi. the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

- b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies;
- c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
  - a. mandatory MFA for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data;
  - b. regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices;
- d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed
- e) setting up secure account recovery options
- f) reviewing and managing connected applications
- g) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- h) 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' MFA requirements.
- i) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

## 7. Failure of IT systems

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*IT system corruption affecting candidates' work*

*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 listed above

The Centre will: Contact Head of IT, AIT, and Arbor Support to provide an alternative solution.

(GR 3.19) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that 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... Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

## 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

### **Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption**

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

## **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

### **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: Messages will be sent out by email and/or Arbor.

- 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

## **10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis - Centre remains open**

### **Criteria for implementation of the plan**

- Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

### **Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above**

The Centre will:

- Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document

### *Instructions for conducting examinations)*

- Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*)
- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required.

Communication details: Messages will be sent out by email and/or Arbor.

## **11. Centre may not be able to be open for examinations**

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Communication details: Messages will be sent out by email and/or Arbor.

- The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria
- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

### Other Centre actions:

- We will ascertain whether the Sports Hall can be used as an alternative venue, as it is some distance from the main school site.
- Precluding this, we will arrange to use the facilities of a nearby school, e.g. Whitmore High, and use their facilities if available.
- In such a case, we will notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).
- In the final resort, the AHT, Mr O'Sullivan, or the Headteacher and Head of Centre, Ms Akbar, will contact Harrow Council to see whether they can provide a venue for the exams. At each stage, we will be in contact with JCQ to ensure the moves and locations are suitable.

## **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

### **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

### **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 bodies arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding bodies and not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- 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's Instructions for Conducting Examinations
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to collection time as possible

### **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

#### **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

## 15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal 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

### 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 venue details: To be confirmed

- 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: Messages will be sent out by email and/or Arbor.

## Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning (updated October 2023 – Ofqual)

### **DfE**

#### **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges**

[Cyber security standards for schools and colleges](#)

### **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 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' ([www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice--instructions-for-conducting-examinations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice--instructions-for-conducting-examinations/)).
6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators, 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 appropriate awarding body 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**

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**

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 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 considerations ([www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/)).

## **Wider communications**

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The Department for Education in England, the Department of Education 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 / 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 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.

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.

(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** (last updated 7 May 2024) <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 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](#).

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 of 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 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.

15.8 Where candidates chose 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.

## Links to other JCQ documentation

- (JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-2026 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)
- JCQ Joint Contingency Plan [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)
- JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)
- General Regulations for Approved Centres [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)
- Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)
- Guidance notes for transferred candidates [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)
- Instructions for conducting examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://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](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-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/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)
- 5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)

Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools -  
[gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools](http://gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools)

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

# **National Cyber Security Centre**

Cyber Security for Schools [www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools](http://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](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools)