



THOMAS BECKET CATHOLIC SCHOOL

EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN 2018-19

Approved/reviewed by	
Head of Centre, SLT, EO - November 2018	
Date of next review	November 2019

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Mr M McLaughlin/Mr C Stapleton
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader)	Mrs CM Curtis
Exams officer	Miss A Hewitt
SENCo	Mrs S Shah
SLT member(s)	Mrs CM Curtis, Mr D Shirley, Mrs K Riddles, Mrs K Page, Miss S Moore

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Thomas Becket Catholic 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 *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*.

This plan also confirms that Thomas Becket Catholic School is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, *General Regulations for Approved Centres 2017-2018*) 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 staff absence.*

Possible causes of 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 exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines*
- ▶ *sufficient invigilators not recruited and trained*

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*
- ▶ *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

- ▶ Assistant Exams officer is fully trained in all aspects of Exam management, including the Results process.
- ▶ Assistant Exams Officer to deputise for Exams Officer, under the guidance of a member of SLT
- ▶ Other support staff to provide assistance as necessary
- ▶ Data Manager to provide support for the role, particularly during Results and Post-Results

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-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

- ▶ SLT to nominate a deputy to cover the role/tasks of SENCO.
- ▶ Testing of candidates takes place at pre-arranged dates with a Specialist SEN assessor
- ▶ SEN and Exam Department work closely to ensure all information is shared
- ▶ SEN and Access information is electronically stored on Centre's MIS system
- ▶ All access applications are jointly made by the SENCO and Exam Officer
- ▶ All Learning Support Assistants and Invigilators have been jointly trained on the provision of Access Arrangements to candidates.
- ▶ The Exam Team paperwork ensures all access arrangement requirements are shared with Invigilators and Senior Leadership Team
- ▶ Ensure TAs have reasonable up to date training to support candidates during exams

3. Teaching staff 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 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

- ▶ SLT to nominate alternative teaching staff to cover the role/tasks
- ▶ Exam Team request early exam forecast entry information from Curriculum and Subject Leads at the start of the Academic Year.
- ▶ Exam Team attend Curriculum Leader meetings and communicates key information to Heads of Department and Senior Leadership Team to ensure all deadlines are adhered to and where this is not possible, the Exam Officer will liaise with the relevant Awarding Body and act upon advice received.
- ▶ Exam Team attend Senior Leadership Meeting to de-brief staff on key exam processes

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

- ▶ Examinations Officer will review the invigilation staffing at the start of each academic year to ensure sufficient staff are recruited and trained in a timely fashion.
- ▶ Members of the Admin Team and Learning Support Team are trained as invigilators and can be called upon in the event of an emergency
- ▶ Exams Officer / Assistant Exams Officer to invigilate as necessary
- ▶ In an emergency, train additional support staff in invigilation if the lack of invigilators is ongoing

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

- ▶ All exam rooms are booked by the Exam Team in liaison with the Assistant Headteacher
- ▶ Rooming provision is detailed on the Master timetable that is circulated to all Senior Leadership members, Admin team and Invigilators. By sharing this key information any issues are flushed out before the start of the exam series
- ▶ In the event of the main exam hall not being in use alternative internal venues would be investigated. The school Gym and school Hall could accommodate the cohort of exam students.
- ▶ In the event of these venues not being available an alternative venue would need to be found. The Head Teacher in agreement with Awarding Bodies would seek alternative accommodation.

- ▶ SLT to make final decisions on any major rooming problems. This may involve discussion with other local schools

6. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ SIMS is backed up daily on a separate back up device on site and a second back-up is kept off-site.
- ▶ Exam Team to inform the relevant Awarding Body
- ▶ All entries could be submitted directly onto awarding body websites or IT facilities at another school could be used
- ▶ Senior Leaders to be informed
- ▶ Results may also be accessed directly from the Awarding Bodies. At all times during the system failure the Exams Officer will liaise with the Awarding Bodies to minimise disruption and costs incurred

7. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) 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 school has detailed evacuation and lockdown procedures which are available in all exam rooms
- ▶ Invigilators are given a copy of these procedures as part of their training, and these are explained in detail to them during their training
- ▶ Advice will be taken from SLT, local government, emergency services as to what action should be taken.

8. 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ Alternative venues will be considered.
- ▶ St Joseph's will communicate with parents, carers and students about the disruption to teaching time and provide appropriate work via email/post etc. It remains the centre's responsibility to ensure that students are prepared as usual for examinations
- ▶ Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather procedures is available on our website.
- ▶ Relocate to an alternative facility
- ▶ Prioritise teaching for those taking exams imminently
- ▶

9. 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, or complete the examination due to a crisis

- ▶ In assessing whether to allow the examination to take place/continue, the following factors need to be taken into consideration:
 - the length of time that has passed since the official start time
 - whether the minimum time for remaining in the examination has passed to maintain the integrity of the examination
 - the amount of time left to complete the examination(s)
 - whether there is sufficient time to complete the examinations before another session starts
 - whether continuing the examination take candidates over the daily exam time limit, taking particular care to consider candidates with access arrangements which include extra time.
- ▶ The Head of Centre, or their nominated deputy, should decide whether it is appropriate to continue the session using the criteria set out above. In making this decision, the Head of Centre, or their nominated deputy, must be satisfied that communication between candidates has not taken place outside of the examination room. Only if completely satisfied that no communication whatsoever has taken place must candidates be allowed to continue the examination. If the session is to be abandoned, this will be either:
 - because of consideration of the criteria above;
 - because re-entry to the premises cannot be secured; or
 - because the risk of communication between candidates, which would invalidate the examination, cannot be eliminated.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ The Exams Officer will communicate with the relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue.
- ▶ The EO and SLT will liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
- ▶ The centre will offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series (if possible).
- ▶ The centre will apply to the 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. If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons they should be aware that the special consideration rule will not apply.

10. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations (including centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ The Exams Officer will advise each awarding organisation of the problem, and which examinations are affected as soon as possible, and also what the likely solution will be.
- ▶ The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the Head of Centre, who may liaise with relevant local or national agencies.
- ▶ SLT will determine a solution to the issue, which will then be communicated to the exam boards, candidates,

parents and carers. This may involve use of an alternative venue, or offering candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.

11. 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

- ▶ St Joseph's will communicate with the awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers.
- ▶ Consider whether papers can be electronically downloaded from the awarding bodies' web sites if the exam is imminent. Exams Officer to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions.

12. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ Exams Officer will communicate with the relevant awarding organisations at the outset in order to resolve the issue.
- ▶ Completed papers will be securely stored until collection.
- ▶ As a temporary solution the Exams Officer or delegated member of staff will take the exam papers to the Post Office on a daily basis

13. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ Exams Officer or member of SLT will immediately communicate the problem to the relevant awarding body and discuss solutions.
- ▶ Candidates, parents and carers will be advised of the problem immediately, and subsequently contacted once a solution has been agreed upon.

14. 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ St Joseph's will contact the awarding bodies and discuss alternative means of distribution.
- ▶ If it appears to be an internal problem, the Exams Officer will discuss solutions with the IT Technician.
- ▶ Make arrangements to access results at an alternative site if necessary.

Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning

Exam contingency plan

Hyperlinks provided in this document were correct as at October 2017

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

1. Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments as part of your emergency planning and make sure your staff are aware of these plans...

2. Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, the school or college should assume that any exam or timetabled assessment should take place if it is possible for it to do so. This may mean having to locate alternative premises.

If the exam or assessment cannot take place, or if a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency or other event outside the control of the school or college, you should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation.

2.1 The school or college should consider the following steps

Exam planning

1. Review your contingency plan well in advance of each exam series.
2. Ensure that copies of question papers are received and stored under secure conditions.

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 the school or college is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exams when planned.
5. Communicate with parents, carers and students regarding any changes to the exam timetable.
6. Advise students, where appropriate, to sit exams in the next available series.

After the exam

1. Consider whether students may be eligible for special consideration.
2. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
3. 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.

2.2 The awarding organisation should take the following steps

Exam planning

1. Establish, maintain and at all times comply with an up to date written contingency plan.
2. Ensure that the arrangements that are in place with schools and colleges enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with its conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any negative effect, in relation to its qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of its centres responsible for delivering qualifications on its behalf.
3. Ensure that where an assessment is required to be completed under specified conditions, students 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 a negative effect on students, standards or public confidence.

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.

2.3 When a student misses an exam or is disadvantaged by the disruption

If you feel that the performance of all or some of your students has been negatively affected by the disruption you should ask your awarding organisation about applying for special consideration. The decision about what special consideration is,

or is not appropriate, is for awarding organisations to make. Their decisions might be different, for different qualifications and for different subjects. However, we encourage awarding organisations to adopt a consistent approach, including between learners, schools or colleges, and awarding organisations, when dealing with a number of similar cases.

[Ofqual guidance extract taken directly from the *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, sections 1 and 2
<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

Contingency planning

The qualifications regulators, JCQ 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.

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.

Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

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.

Further information may be found at:

<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 guidance taken directly from JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, page iv]

General regulations for approved centres

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance on *alternative site* arrangements

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/forms>

Guidance on *transferred candidate* arrangements

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/entries>

Instructions for conducting examinations

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

A guide to the special consideration process

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Severe weather; Exam disruption

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings>

Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions>

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

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

Statutory guidance on school closures

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>