St Alban's Catholic High School

Exams Contingency Plan

Approved by Full Governing Body

Recommission Date: September 2027

CONTINGENCY PLAN (Exams)

2026/27

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	**Mr S Corless**
Senior Leader(s)	**Mrs Sarah Morris**
Exams Officer	**Ms Melanie Mattis**
SENCo (or equivalent role)	**Mrs Claire Pickard**

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at St Alban's Catholic High School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

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*, 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 St Alban's Catholic High School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually:

- 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), St Alban's Catholic High School **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 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.

St Alban's Catholic High School **must** have at least one senior member of staff (Sarah Morris) 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.

St Alban's Catholic High School **must** ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. 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 St Alban's Catholic High School responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include 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.

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

When the Head of Centre may absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process, in the first instance to the Deputy Headteacher.

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

A member of the exams team will step in to support the exam process

We have 3 key holders

2. SENCo (or equivalent role) 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

The Assistant SENCO will take over the management and administration of the AA process

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 (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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Another member of the department will undertake key tasks or where there is only one member of department the senior leader who line manages the department will support

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

We begin our recruitment and training for invigilators early in the Autumn term

We will ensure that we have a roving invigilator for all exams to minimise impact of any absences/shortages

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

Rooms will be booked well in advance and information shared with all stakeholders

Alternative site(s) details: in the event of exams not being able to take place in the Centre we will use Rushmere St Andrew Church and Church Hall, Rushmere St Andrew, Ipswich. This has been agreed with church personnel.

We have a second alternative site we can access, Venue 16, Humber Doucy Road, Ipswich. This has been agreed with their events team.

We also have a third venue – St Mary's Church Hall. Woodbridge Road, Ipswich

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

We have a written Exams Cyber Security Policy.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

(This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)

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

a) providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret
b) providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/ phishing attempts
c) enabling additional security settings wherever possible
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' multi-factor authentication (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

This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work) as per below:

(GR 3.19) Ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. 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

School has a written lockdown procedure, and all school personnel rehearse in this process annually

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

Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examination in the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning

Teachers ensure students can access online learning (MS Teams)

10. 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 because of a crisis

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations:

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

11. 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

Centres' contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal

This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).

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

Alternative site(s) details as above

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

Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action.

Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances. As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions

For examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, they should investigate alternative options that comply with the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*

Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the 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

Awarding organisations to 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 affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

Head of Departments are asked to keep mock exam assessments secure in school

15. 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

Distribution of results: centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site or to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.

Facilitation of post results services: centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location. Centre to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible

Alternative site(s) details: as above

16. Resilience and contingency arrangements

The Centre must ensure they are familiar with the regulators' guidance on ensuring resilience in the qualifications system. The Centre has an up to date written contingency plan. The contingency plan covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior Leaders 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 covers the following scenarios: • the Head of Centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo, 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 their contingency plan the centre has identified an alternative site if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address.

17. The centre has in place a process of gathering evidence of candidate performance in line with the published guidance

The Centre refers to the document published by Ofqual: Guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system

All examination candidates sit Pre-Public Examinations (mock exams) in all their subjects.

These exams are conducted in exam conditions with invigilators

Students do not know the questions in the assessment beforehand

Wherever possible, all students sit the examinations at the same time

These scripts are kept securely until the season's EAR deadline has passed.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-collecting-evidence-of-student-performance-to-ensure-resilience-in-the-qualifications-system/guidance-on-collecting-evidence-of-student-performance-to-ensure-resilience-in-the-qualifications-system