



Cleveland School

EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

2024/25

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Jim Smith – Head Teacher	
Date of next review	01/12/2025

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Mr Jim Smith – Headteacher, Mr S Kent – Head of School
Exams Manager line manager (Senior leader)	Miss N King – SLT Lead for Exams
Exams Manager	Mr D Jones
ALS lead/SENCo	Mrs Rhian Iredale – SENCO Mrs Martine Burns – Asst SENCO
Senior leader(s)	Mrs Kathryn Hutchings – DSL & Assistant Headteacher Mr Chris Sherring – Assistant Headteacher Ms Emma Norman – Assistant Headteacher Mr Paul Greenup – Director of Maths Mrs Claire Murray – Assistant Headteacher Mr C Blake – Head of Sixth Form
Data & Exams Assistant	Mrs Anna Hanson
IT Manager	Mr Simon Pow

Contents

Key staff involved in the plan	2
Purpose of the plan.....	4
Operating across more than one centre.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
National Centre Number Register and other information requirements	4
Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle	4
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process	4
1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle	4
2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	5
3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	6
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence	6
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice	6
6. Cyber-attack	7
7. Failure of IT systems	7
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown).....	8
9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period	8
10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open.....	8
11. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period	9
12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers.....	9
13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts.....	10
14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked	10
15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services	10
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	12
DfE	12
Ofqual	12
JCQ.....	14
GOV.UK.....	15
Wales.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Northern Ireland	Error! Bookmark not defined.
National Cyber Security Centre	15

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Clevedon 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 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 2023).

This plan also confirms Clevedon School's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) 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 manager 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, 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 Clevedon 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.

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

Where 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.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam Manager 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

- HOC, SLT Lead for exams and Exams Assistant to liaise and organise existing priorities, deadlines, task setting, allocation of responsibilities.
- Notify the Exam Boards and set up additional permissions on secure websites for Anna if needed.
- Consideration of enlisting the help of the more experienced Invigilators.
- Data Manager able to enter/submit/amend entries.
- SENCO/Asst SENCO to advise on EAA seating and SS students rooming and EAA Facilitators/Invigilators.
- SLT to nominate a 'deputy' to cover a role/task

2. 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

- Martine Burns, Asst Senco and Debra Torrington (Assessor) to plan and prioritise around the absence.
- Enlist additional help/support from part-time members of the Student Support Team to backfill where appropriate.

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 Manager on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the Exams Manager 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

- Exam Manager to flag approaching deadlines, critical areas outstanding to N King.
- SLT/Curriculum Leaders and second in Department to implement a plan of action. Review priorities, timescales and deadlines.

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

- Annual recruitment ongoing during the academic year to enable interviews/meetings to take place in time for annual mandatory Invigilator training and testing in October 2025 (inc Safeguarding Training).
- Invigilator contacts who are retired/part-time and recommended/suitable for the role.
- Use of support staff, part-time Student Support staff who will need to be trained, and SLT (not of the subject being examined) as a last resort.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams Manager 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

- Exam Manager to escalate to SLT for exams, SENCo and head of sixth form as soon as an issue is identified to enable a plan and release of other rooms to be put into place.
- Notify Site Team and other relevant colleagues.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

- Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

Alternative venue details:

- Potential to use local Primary School in Trust

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

- See Cyber Attack Response Plan/Data Security Statement of Hosted Service Applications Service/Trust-wide Cyber Attack Response Plan provided by IT Network Manager.
- Immediately notify the Exam Boards if Exams Manager, Exams Assistant, Deputy Headteacher or any Centre User with access to the Exam Boards secure websites are hacked or compromised.
- Where candidates produce work electronically, ensuring their work is backed-up regularly and stored securely on the centre's IT system / Ensuring protection of the candidates' work from corruption and considering the risks and implications of any cyber-attack. See "Policy on Handling Secure Electronic Materials".
- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Invoking actions as detailed in statutory guidance / Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Promptly reporting any incidents to the relevant awarding body/bodies which might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery such as a cyber-attack
- Following and regularly reviewing National Cyber Security Centre advice for support in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work / Using the NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services to help protect from cyber-attacks
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption (and detail on the method(s) of communication)

7. Failure of IT systems

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

- Simon Pow, IT Manager to liaise with Bromcom to seek solution.
- Use of Exam Board secure websites to make and submit entries if necessary.
- Exam Manager to contact Exam Boards and follow advice.
- Moving off-site to another location where IT connectivity may be operational.
- Temporary installation of generator to power laptops/computers in IT rooms.
- Special Consideration to be investigated and applied for where necessary.
- Early notification to students/parents/carers of any delays with issuing results.
- Contact UCAS and Local Authority if Results are affected at release time.
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption.

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

- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to our Emergency Evacuation Process.
- Head of Centre to nominate/allocate a dedicated member of SLT to assist and give instructions to Exam Team.
- Ensure the Exam Room Incident Log is fully completed and all details gathered from the Invigilation Team.
- Ensure all confidential materials are placed in secure storage.
- Report immediately to the Exam Board(s) and complete a Special Consideration Group application with full details.
- HoC to notify parents/carers of incident and actions taken by the Centre along with possible outcomes.
- Special Consideration to be investigated and applied for where necessary.
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption.

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 examinations.
- In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit exams in an alternative series.
- Centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning ie remote learning plans activated.
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption.

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

(This must focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)

- Depending on the situation, number of candidates and evidence, students may be able to sit exams at their home or at an alternative site – usually an application via CAP has to be made in advance for this arrangement to be provided. Contact the Exam Board for urgent advice and approval.
- Depending on the nature of their situation, if appropriate medical evidence is provided, students may be able to have an application made for Special Consideration as an Absent Candidate if the exam cannot be taken despite attempts to organise this.
- Apply for transferred candidate arrangements if another local centre/HES can accommodate.

- If possible, students to enter for another series if they are not certificating in Summer 2025.
- If the situation involves large-scale traffic disruption and students are unable to get into the school, follow the JCQ Very Late Arrival guidance and contact the Exam Board for advice.
- If going off site to an Alternative Site, ensure all exam materials are kept confidential at all times.
- If going to a student's home to conduct an exam, ensure a Risk Assessment and home visit is carried out beforehand by SENCO/DSL/Exams Mgr to identify any potential issues and outline arrangements.
Two members of staff attend to conduct the exams: *One member of staff plus one trained Invigilator.*

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

- **(This must focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)**
- Emergency Alternative site sought ie, local primary school within the Trust. Approval required by 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).
- If possible, transfer some candidates to another local Centre if they can accommodate them by contacting Exam Boards.
- If possible and if there is still access to the secure storage, set up an emergency alternative site arrangement and transfer exam papers to the new site. Ensure papers are kept confidential at all times.
- Contact the Exam Board/JCQ for advice if a local JCQ approved Centre can help.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors and Invigilation Team regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.
- Enter students for the next available assessment opportunity if possible and if not certificating in Summer 2025.
- Explore Special Consideration if applicable.
- Communication with students/parents/carers and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption and any mitigating action/outcomes.
- Posting information on the centre's website & Social Media feeds; updates on local radio etc.

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.
- Notifying students/parents/carers of any disruption and keeping them informed of solutions.
- Contact Exam Boards for advice & following any advice given.

13. 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

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- for any examinations where centres make their arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*.
- centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.
- Contact Exam Boards for advice.

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
- Use of securely saved typed scripts for those students with an EAA of Word Processor.

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 issue results electronically via school emails or access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
- Centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services electronically using school email accounts or from an alternative site.
- Centres 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 electronically via school email accounts or make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
- Centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible
- IT to leave Year 11 and Year 13 student email accounts activated after they leave until the New Year.

- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption.

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](#)

[Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges - Filtering and monitoring standards for schools and colleges - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

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).
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](#)

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** (last updated 5 October 2023) <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 Managers 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, summer 2024. 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 in summer 2024, 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.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations** 2023-2024

<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

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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/

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

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](#)