



Hillside High School – Examination
Contingency Plan
March 2026

Related Documents include:

- Examination Policy.

Legal

- To meet the requirements of the Ofqual Joint Contingency Plan.
- To meet the requirements of the Joint Qualifications Council (JCQ).

Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Principal.
- The Principal will undertake a formal annual review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.
- The next official date for review is March 2026.

Prepared by: Examinations Manager (March 2026)

Reviewed by: Executive Principal (March 2026)

Approved by: Local Governing Body (March 2026)

Hillside High School
Examination Contingency Plan

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Aims of the Examination Contingency Plan

The Examination Contingency Plan is designed to ensure a consistent and effective response in the event of major disruption to the examination/assessment system at Hillside High School affecting candidates across several awarding organisations.

All awarding organisations are required to have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to such disruptions. This Examination Contingency Plan considers these processes and procedures and is designed to complement them, not replace them. This also applies to all other qualifications at Hillside High School.

The plan will be implemented in the event of major disruption to the system, such as widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures. Any action taken will be subject to the advice of the official agencies dealing with the specific circumstances being faced. For example the Police, Environment Agency or Health Protection Agency.

Implementing the plan will safeguard the interests of candidates while maintaining the integrity of the examination system and safeguarding qualification standards.

The priority when implementing contingencies will be to maintain three principles:

- Delivering assessment to published timetables
- Delivering results to published timetables
- Complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment, marking and standards.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

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

Communications

In the event of local disruption, communication to teachers and pupils will take place through the Exams Manager following agreement with the Principal.

In the event of major disruption, details of specific contingencies agreed across organisations involved in the examinations process will be confirmed on the Ofqual website and proactively communicated to relevant stake holders.

This includes communications between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as Centres, candidates, parents or guardians and the public.

www.ofqual.gov.uk/

The organisations involved in this Joint Contingency Plan are committed to:

- Sharing timely and accurate information as required to meet the aims of the plan.
- Communications with stakeholders so they are aware of disruption to the exams, the contingency measures being implemented and any actions required of them as a result.
- Ensuring that any messages to the public are clear and accurate.

1. Disruption of teaching time – school closed for an extended period

If Hillside High School is closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provisions of normal teaching and learning, it is the responsibility of the School to prepare pupils, as usual, for examinations.

- In the case of modular courses, candidates should sit the examinations in the next available series.
- The school should plan to facilitate teaching and learning by an alternative method or alternative location.

Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather, is available on the Department for Education website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings>

2. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

If the distribution of examination papers to Centres in advance of Examinations is disrupted

- The awarding organisation to source alternative couriers for delivery of hardcopies.
- The awarding organisations would provide the school with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Awarding organisations would email examination papers to Centres if possible. The Exams Manager must ensure that copies are received, made and sorted under secure conditions.

3. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – Centres remain open

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

If candidates are unable to attend the Centre to take examinations as normal, for example in the case of a sickness.

- The school can liaise with candidates to identify whether the examinations can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations. JCQ guidance on alternative site arrangements can be accessed through the JCQ website –

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

- The school can offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.

- The school can apply to awarding organisations for special considerations 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.

JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/>

4. Centres are unable to open as normal during the examination period

If Hillside High School is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations it must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as possible.

The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the school to open lies with the Principal (Head of Centre). The Principal is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open.

- The school should open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible.
- The school should use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g share facilities with other Centres – local primary schools – Bedford Road/Christchurch, or use other public building, if possible).
- The school may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- The school can apply to awarding organisations for special considerations for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.

5. Delay in collection arrangements of completed examination Scripts

If there is a delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

- The school will seek advice from awarding organisations and normal collection agency regarding collection. The school must not make arrangements for transportation without the approval from awarding organisations.
- The school must ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.

6. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

If due to large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked.

- The awarding organisation should generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations in consultation with the regulators.
- The candidates should retake affected assessment at a subsequent assessment window.

7. Disruption to the scanning process – where completed examination scripts are being scanned in preparation for onscreen marking

If the examination boards scanning process is disrupted, resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

- The award organisations should implement their existing contingency plans for disruption to on-screen marking process.
- The awarding organisations should revert to traditional form of marking.
- The awarding organisations should recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers.

8. Markers unable to mark examination scripts according to marking schedules

If the examination board markers are unable to mark examination scripts resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

- The awarding organisations should re-allocate scripts to available markers.
- The awarding organisations should recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers and prioritisation of marking to be based on results dates.

9. Difficulty in meeting planned schedule or unable to issue results

Inability of awarding organisations (including the case of a single awarding organisation) to either meet planned schedule for issue of results, or to issue results as planned due to a systems failure. If the awarding organisation(s) face delay in meeting the planned schedule for issuing results:

- The awarding body should establish priorities for processing results, implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the schedule for issuing results.
- If awarding organisation(s) face difficulty in issuing results as planned due to a system failure, it should, in consultation with regulators, assess the level of disruption and consider alternative options for issuing results dependent upon the nature of the particular systems failure, the awarding organisations and regulators to liaise with relevant organisations (i.e. UCAS, CAO) regarding process of candidate progression to further and higher education.

10. Awarding organisations unable to issue accurate results

If due to system error/failure or attack on systems a significant number of results cannot be validated as accurate or are issued and found to be inaccurate.

- The candidates, school and stakeholders will be informed of any incorrect results.
- The awarding organisations will re-validate results.
- The awarding organisations will re-issue results, via alternative format if necessary.

11. Centres are unable to distribute results as normal

If the school is unable to access or manage the disruption of results to candidates, or facilitate post results services.

The school should contact the awarding organisations about alternative options:

- The school will make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site.
- The school will make arrangements to coordinate access to post result services from an alternative site.
- The school will share facilities with other Centres where possible.

Summary of School responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations.

- Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of Centre's general emergency planning.
- Preparing candidates for examinations.
- Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations.
- Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions.
- Deciding whether the Centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the Centre is unable to open.
- Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the Centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations.
- Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers.

This plan will be reviewed annually by the Full Governing Body.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

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 and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance:

General contingency guidance

1. [Emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England.
2. [Handling strike action in schools](#) from the Department for Education in England.
3. [Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England.

2. 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 pupil misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the pupil's control.

3. Steps you should take

3.1 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.

3.2 In the event of disruption

- 3.2.1** Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- 3.2.2** Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your Centre is able to open.
- 3.2.3** 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.
- 3.2.4** Where accommodation is limited, prioritise pupils whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- 3.2.5** In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's [centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
- 3.2.6** Communicate with parents, guardians and pupils any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- 3.2.7** Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

3.3 After the exam

- 3.3.1** Consider whether any pupils' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.

- 3.3.2** Advise pupils, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- 3.3.3** Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- 3.3.4** 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.

4. Steps the awarding organisation should take:

3.4 Exam planning

- 3.4.1** Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- 3.4.2** 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.

3.5 In the event of disruption

- 3.5.1** Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- 3.5.2** Provide effective guidance to any of their Centres delivering qualifications.
- 3.5.3** Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, pupils complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- 3.5.4** Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on pupils, standards or public confidence.
- 3.5.5** Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple Centres or a wide range of learners.

3.6 After the exam

- 3.6.1** Consider any requests for special consideration for affected pupils. 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.

5. If any pupils miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the pupils 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.

See also: [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

6. 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 pupil progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

7. Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations / assessments

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education 2022/23 has returned to normal. Schools are open and examinations will go ahead in summer 2023

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.

The Department for Education 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 should speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

We will update this page as necessary should national disruption occur with any further relevant links.

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 pupil 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.

(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 (updated 18 January 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

1. The qualification 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.

Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

2. In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that Exam Managers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.
3. 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.

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.
5. The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency days' for examinations, summer 2023. 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 days' 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 2023, 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. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

(JCQ guidance taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2022-2023

<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 (Effective from 1 September 2022) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam 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
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Procedures for handling bomb threats www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats

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:

[Cyber Security Standards for schools and college](#)

[Cyber-crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers](#)

[DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023](#)

[More ransomware attacks on UK education - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

[Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](#)

[Offline backups in an online world](#)

[Backing up your data](#)

[Practical resources to help improve your cyber security](#)

[Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it](#)

[School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

Useful information

AQA <http://www.aqa.org.uk/>

JCQ www.jcq.org.uk

CCEA www.rewardinglearning.org.uk

Ofqual www.ofqual.gov.uk

City & Guilds www.cityandguilds.com

DfE www.education.gov.uk

Edexcel www.edexcel.com

DfE – Exams Delivery Support

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/resources-to-help-support-exams-officers-in-their-roles>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/additional-support-materials-for-gcse-exams-in-2024>

OCR www.ocr.org.uk

UCAS www.ucas.ac.uk

VTCT www.vtct.org.uk

Welsh Government <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>

WJEC www.wjec.co.uk

JCQ – A guide to the special consideration process <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance/a-guide-to-the-special-considerationprocess>

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

DfE Guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather>