

**CONTINGENCY PLAN**

2024/25

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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| Approved/reviewed by | |
| C Skinner | |
| Date of next review | November 24 |

Key staff involved in the plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Role | Name(s) |
| Head of centre | **Mark Cooper** |
| Exams officer | **Joanne Hargrave** |
| SENCo (or equivalent role) | **Nick O’Brien** |
| Senior leader(s) | **Donna Chadwick** |
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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at Mount St Marys 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 process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (andNorthern 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 Mount St Marys Catholic High Schools 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), Mount St Mary’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.

Mount St Mary’s Catholic High School **must** have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

Mount St Mary’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

The head of centre will also ensure that Mount St Marys Catholic High School as 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.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

* In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Mount St Mary’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
* 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

### Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

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| 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   * Work alongside SLT to ensure key tasks are communicated and shared at appropriate stages to ease transition if absent. Work closely with an assistant who would step across to fill the gap. |

### SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

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| 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   * works closely alongside EO for transition if absent to fulfil roles at critical stages of exam cycle. |

### Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

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| 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   * CL and Head of centre will prioritise the cover of classes preparing for examination teachers and will endeavour to cover with specialist teachers. |

### Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

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| 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   * EO recruitment and training is undertaken in advance to cover Mock examination periods to ensure sufficient provision and knowledgeable invigilators. * Have a bank of in school support staff who join the annual Invigilator training who can be used to support on peak exam days. * Invigilator absence can be covered by the support staff bank, and where necessary in-house cover supervisors. Teaching staff where a conflict of interest is not an issue will only be deployed where very necessary. |

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

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| 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   * Have a policy where examination take precedent and we decamp whole curriculum areas to create an examination space for external examinations. * Have several large spaces which can be made suitable if the Sports Hall was out of action – Assembly Hall or Performing Arts and Large drop-down classroom spaces. * Alternative venue details. Local high schools are a possibility or the local sporting facilities John Charles. |

### Cyber-attack

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| 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   * (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:   1. providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret 2. providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/ phishing attempts 3. enabling additional security settings wherever possible 4. updating any passwords that may have been exposed 5. setting up secure account recovery options 6. reviewing and managing connected applications 7. monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required 8. 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.   * reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body’s online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body |

### Failure of IT systems

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| Criteria for implementation of the plan  *IT system corruption affecting candidates’ work*  *MIS system failure at final entry deadline -* Use Synergy which has stand-alone access to exams.  *MIS system failure during exams preparation –* Exams Assist – keep paper copy of entries, work off site to access WiFi.  *MIS system failure at results release time –* Stand-alone Wifi or hotspot, connect to each Awarding body to manually download result files. Create mail merge and source offsite printing. |
| Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption   * (This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates’ work)   (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.   * EO make entries manually directly to the board using stand-alone Wifi or Modem. Exams no and group list collated from Synergy. * At time of Exam delivery. Any devices used for GCSE exams are not attached to any network or the internet and as a consequence not hackable. * EO from Admin point of view would be able to hotspot and access online Exams Assist module. * Printing of exam despatch labels would be sourced offsite. * For courses that include online assessments to be completed such as BTECs. Explore if switch to paper-based exam is possible. Use laptops with mobile WiFi |

### Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

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| 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   * See Emergency Evacuation Policy * See Lock Down Policy |

### Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period

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| 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 necessary candidates may sit examinations at the alternative centre. Alternative online methods of Learning are the normal way of working for candidates who are unable to be present in the centre – Google Classroom based learning. |

### Candidates not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

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| Criteria for implementation of the plan  *Candidates 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  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   * Can the candidate transfer to another centre? * Can the candidate have at home Invigilation under special circumstances? * If unable to attend Special Consideration after consultation with the Awarding Body may be sought |

### 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)

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| 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:  Head of centre will consult with the relevant Awarding Bodies to enable candidates to sit examinations alternative venues will be made available we have an arrangement that we could be housed to sit examinations at the alternative venue Ruth Gorse Academy, Black Bull Street, Leeds, LS10 1HW. |

### Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

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| 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   * Recording of papers being delivered to centres should ensure time to enquire with the relevant awarding body to ensure papers are delivered on time. * Where this fails electronic downloading and in house printing of examination papers would take place * Alternatively Awarding Body guidance will be sought where they may consider scheduling on an alternative date on the contingency days. |

### Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

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| 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   * As part of the national ‘yellow label’ service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, we will contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and will not make our own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body. * Ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection. |

### Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

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| 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 |

### 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)

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| 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: will make arrangements to access results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation * Decide to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site * Decide 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 venue details. Local high schools Ruth Gorse or the local sporting facilities John Charles |

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

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| **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges**  [Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges)  [Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-potential-fraud-learning-institutions/guide-on-cyber-crime-and-cyber-security-for-education-providers)  [DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023](https://www.theexamsoffice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DfE-Cyber-Security-Guidance-March-2023.pdf) |

Ofqual

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| **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted**  **Contingency planning**  You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.  **General contingency Guidance**   * Emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England * Handling strike action in schools from the Department for Education in England * School organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England * Exceptional closure days from the Department for Education in Norther Ireland * Checklist – exceptional closure of schools from the Department for Education in Norther Ireland * School terms and school closures from NI Direct * Opening schools in extremely bad weather – guidance for schools from the Welsh Government * police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats   **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   See also the [JCQ’s Joint Contingency plan](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/) for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.  **Steps you should take**  **Exam planning**  Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation’s requirements.  **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](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/centre-emergency-evacuation-procedure). 6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue. 7. Communicate with any external assessors, Invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.   **After the exam**   1. Consider whether any students’ ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply 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 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.  See also [JCQ’s guidance on special consideration](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance)  **Wider communications**  The regulators, [Ofqual](https://www.gov.uk/ofqual) in England, [Qualifications Wales](http://qualificationswales.org/) in Wales and [CCEA Regulation](http://ccea.org.uk/) 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 Norther Ireland and the [Welsh Government](http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en) 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](https://www.ucas.com/) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](http://www.cao.ie/) (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](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ensuring-the-resilience-of-the-qualifications-system). As in 2023, Ofqual has provided [guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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](https://qualificationswales.org/media/ldvluwdf/contingency-assessment-arrangements-guidance-nov-22-final-eng.pdf) 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-guidance-for-responsible-bodies-and-education-settings-with-confirmed-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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings) from the DfE in England * [handling strike action in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools) from the DfE in England * [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools) from the DfE in England * [reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-guidance-for-responsible-bodies-and-education-settings-with-confirmed-raac#full-publication-update-history) from the DfE in England * [exceptional closure days: Northern Ireland](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland * [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland * [school terms and school closures](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-terms-and-school-closures) from NI Direct * [opening schools, childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather](https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government * [emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Femergency-planning-and-response-guidance-education-and-childcare-settings-html&data=05%7C01%7Ckerry.davies%40qualifications.wales%7C988cb09a35794a65070308dbbb6b0b5e%7Ccd0829ca1f5841edb91a95e07f55e7f0%7C1%7C0%7C638309840679786571%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=fNS3u2m9HRFaeWyV2UUK6sesh2Mf0AHlvdVpmueAUBc%3D&reserved=0)- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government * [protective security and preparedness for education settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-security-and-preparedness-for-education-settings) from the DfE * [police guidance](https://www.protectuk.police.uk/) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats   [cyber security guidance for schools and colleges](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools) 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

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| **15 Contingency Planning**  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.  15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/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 centre’s contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre’s alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.  15.5 The awarding bodies will designate ‘contingency sessions’ for examinations, summer 2025. 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 examination**s 2024-2025 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/](http://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](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Guidance notes for transferred candidates [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Instructions for conducting examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations)

A guide to the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance)

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](https://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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service)

Wales

School closures: examinations [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](https://gov.wales/school-closures-examinations)

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather: [www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather](http://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather)

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days [www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School - exceptional closure of schools [www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free [Web Check](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/web-check) and [Mail Check](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/mailcheck) 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](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/cyber-tools-for-uk-schools).

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](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-targeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector)
2. [Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks)
3. [Offline backups in an online world](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world)
4. [Backing up your data](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data)
5. [Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/school-staff-offered-training-to-help-cyber-defences)