EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

2026/27

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Date Approved: **January 2026**

Date of Next Review: **January 2027**

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Ms K Stevenson
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Mrs C Devereux – Deputy Headteacher
Exams officer	Miss S Caldwell
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Dr K Laxton (Head of Inclusion)

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examinations and assessment process at Swakeleys School for Girls. 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 - **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the document *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the JCQ document **preparing for disruption to examinations.**

This plan also confirms Swakeleys School for Girls compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place:

- The centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre... a contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery
- The centre's contingency planning **must** include succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.31-36), Swakeleys School For Girls **must** have in place, and at all times comply with, 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 or alternative sites which can be used 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.

Swakeleys School For Girls **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.

Swakeleys School For Girls **must** ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud. 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 Swakeleys School for Girls has a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only and responds to the awarding bodies request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff. This ensures 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. The head of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide the support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself.

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

Where the head of centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examinations cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centres written escalation process. The Deputy Headteacher (Achievement & Curriculum) in charge of exams, can deputise in the absence of the head of centre for examination purposes.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. **Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage in 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

- All training will be done in advance
- All tasks possible will be completed in a timely manner
- EO will ensure DHT and Exams Assistant have sufficient knowledge of above processes
- A link with another centre is in place for expert advice if required

2. **SENCo extended absence at a critical stage in the exam cycle**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- Candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements
- Centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the equality act 2010
- Evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

Pre-exams

- Approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
- Centre-delegated arrangements not put in place
- Modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- Staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time

- Access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- All training will be done in advance
- All tasks possible will be completed in a timely manner
- The EO has knowledge of above processes
- A link with another centre is in place for expert advice if required

3. **Teaching staff** (or other key staff essential to the examination process) **extended absence at a critical stage in the exam cycle**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Department processes ensure another teacher can administer key tasks as required

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

- Timely and over-recruitment of invigilators
- Cover supervisors trained as back-up

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Working closely with Oakwood School and can re-room classes to 6th Form
- Exams Officer has access to the free rooms timetables

6. Cyber Security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- EO will work with IT and make contact with the relevant awarding body to seek further guidance
- LG will monitor the situation and take any action required as directed by the Awarding Bodies

a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must include:

- the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
- keeping all account details strictly confidential;
- the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
- how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;
- an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
- the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

A record of completed cyber security training must be held on file for inspection. This record could take the form of a certificate, a paper checklist, a spreadsheet-based checklist or a Learning Management System (LMS) report.

Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies;

c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
   - where available, MFA must be used for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data; Where MFA is not available on the centre's systems, an equivalent multi-layered security approach must be in place. For example, strong log-in controls, access and monitoring controls and secure storage so that exam-related data is protected in line with cyber security best practice.
   - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices;

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- MIS system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS system failure during exams preparation
- Technical failure or Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination
- MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exams Officer will look at alternative site to submit entries to the Awarding Bodies and see guidance where applicable
- (GR 3.19) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that it is backed-up on 2 devices including one off-site back-up via the Cloud (Google Classroom)
- Room changes via the timetabler's manual spreadsheet and use alternative software
- Results accessed directly from the awarding bodies extranet site from an alternative site where necessary

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

- Emergency procedures policy is implemented and is played in all exam venues

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 the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- In the case of unitised courses, the centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series
- The centre should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning)

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

- (The centre's contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)
- Consider the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*)
- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations
(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

- The Centre woll inform each Awarding Body with details of which examinations are due to be taken as soon as possible. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for a venue to open lies with the Head of Centre. The Head of Centre is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether we are able to open

- Centre to open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible.
- Centre to use alternative venues in agreement with relevant Awarding Bodies (e.g, Oakwood School which is on the same campus)
- Centre may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed in the next series.
- Centre to apply to awarding bodies for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements
- Implement alternative arrangements for the conducting of exams and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service or an alternative site by submitting the online form using the Centre Admin Portal

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 bodies to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. We will ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding bodies to provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances. As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.

13. 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

- We will contact the Awarding bodies as the examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service.
- We will ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection and investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the JCQ – ICE Following advice from the Awarding bodies

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.

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: we will make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- We will make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
- We will share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
- For the facilitation of post results services we will make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
- We will contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible

Alternative venue details: Oakwood School (same campus)

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 Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers. DfE Cyber Security Guidance

What a Swakeleys School For Girls should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

Steps you should take: checklist

In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open
- 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
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure
- Communicate with students, parents, carers and students 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

After the exam

- 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
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions
- 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

Exam planning

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

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications
- 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)
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence
- 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

Useful links to support contingency plans:

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examination**s 2025-2026 http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations, section 15, Contingency planning)

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 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; revised July 2025) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

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: Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

ProtectUK

www.protectuk.police.uk

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 risks to schools and ways to prevent it
7. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK