

**UNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP**

**Castle Manor Academy**

**CONTINGENCY PLAN**

**2024/25**

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| **Date approved** |  |
| **Signed** |  |
| **Name** |  |
| **Date of Next Review** |  |

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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 Castle Manor Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be followed in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual *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 Castle Manor Academy’s 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 examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.

**National Centre Number Register and other information requirements**

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Castle Manor Academy 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**

In accordance with our escalation process, if the HoC is absent at this time the member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination administration will be responsible (deputy head L Cassels). This will be supported by the Director of Secondary Education from Unity Schools Partnership.

Causes of potential 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 and trained

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
	+ each academic year a deadline for tier entries is provided by the EO

Pre-exams* + exam timetabling, rooming allocation, and invigilation schedules not prepared
	+ candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
	+ 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
	+ approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
	+ modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
	+ invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams

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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
	+ candidates’ scripts not dispatched as required to awarding bodies
	+ access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Results and post-results* + access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
	+ the facilitation of the post-results services

**Centre actions:*** Head of Centre to appoint member of administrative staff to take over responsibilities should absence of EO have the potential to affect the meeting of deadlines.
* Staff member to work closely with EO to ensure they are up to date with the exam cycle and responsibilities at each point in time. This will be done under the supervision of the Deputy Head and Head of Centre.
* EO to ensure access arrangements are in place by the Spring term of Year 10 for all students where possible.
* EO to plan access arrangements for exam days in advance of the Summer series, in consultation with SENCo

SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**Criteria for implementation of the plan*** Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:
* Planning
	+ candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements
	+ centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
	+ evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated
* Pre-exams
	+ staff providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained
* Exam time
	+ access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

**Centre actions:**Head of centre responsible for ensuring position is filled should absence have the potential to disrupt exam preparation. J Jacobs will be the second should SENCo be absentTeaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**Criteria for implementation of the plan*** Key tasks not undertaken including:
* Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
* Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in:
	+ candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late
	+ late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
* Internal assessment marks and candidates’ work not provided to meet submission deadlines
* Non-examination assessment (including controlled assessments and courswork) 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

**Centre actions:*** EO responsible for ensuring deadlines are met for estimated entries. Any omissions to be referred to Head of Centre.
* Head of Centre responsible for ensuring the priority for teaching is the examination cohort and staff will be covered in good time, by trained professionals, in all circumstances.

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:*** EO responsible for recruitment of invigilators in the Autumn term of the summer series. Advance planning required to ensure enough are available for the sittings.
* Head of Centre to be informed if recruitment necessary.
* Cover supervisor, TA’s, SLT for EO and Examinations Administrator Staff to also receive up dated exam invigilator training to ensure back up is available in case of invigilator absence.

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 expected incident at exam time

**Centre actions:*** EO responsible for ensuring planning of rooms is completed by the end of the Spring term to identify potential rooming issues.
* Alternative venues within the school to be made available by teaching staff in the event of an unexpected incident.
* Head of Centre to liaise with EO to ensure no disruption due to room shortages.

Failure of IT systems **Criteria for implementation of the plan*** MIS system failure at final entry deadline
* MIS system failure during exams preparation
* MIS system failure at results release time
* IT system corruption affecting candidates’ work

**Centre actions:*** EO to contact awarding bodies directly to arrange alternative methods of information exchange.
* 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.
* Head of Centre to be informed.

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:*** Head of Centre responsible for finding alternative venues/methods of learning.
* Priority given to exam cohort.
* Centre to communicate with parents and students.

Centre may not be able to open as normal during the exams period  **Criteria for implementation of the plan*** Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations
* 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.

**Centre actions:*** Open for candidates only if possible.
* Use alternative venue, (Burton End and/or Place Farm Primary Schools) in agreement with awarding organisations.
* Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria.
* JCQ have contingency dates set. Candidates will be informed to keep these available.

Candidates may not be able to take examinations – centre remains open **Criteria for implementation of the plan*** Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

**Centre actions:*** Procedures for absence outlined to students in examination booklet information given each year.
* EO to liaise with student and parents to find alternative venue/advise on next opportunity to sit the examination/apply for special consideration as required.
* Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (6.2 JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations)
* The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

 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:*** EO to communicate with awarding bodies to provide electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.

 Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts  **Criteria for implementation of the plan*** Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

**Centre actions:*** Where examinations are part of the national ‘yellow label’ service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions.
* Examinations where we make our own collection arrangements, we would investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication ‘Instructions for conducting examinations’ we will ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible.

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:*** EO to communicate with awarding bodies immediately.
* Student marks to be submitted based on appropriate evidence.

Centre unable to distribute results as normal**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:*** EO and Head of Centre to assess alternative arrangements for issuing results with the regulators, this would involve accessing results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
* Access to post results services at an alternative site.
* Head of Centre to inform transition schools, students and parents about delay as soon as possible.

Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)Criteria for implementation of the plan* Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

**Centre actions:*** Head of Centre to authorise external evacuation. The assembly point will be directly outside the examination hall in tutor group order, or the top field (dependent upon level of threat).
* If an internal evacuation is required, students and staff should remain in the exam rooms. Doors should be locked and blinds/curtains closed. In the main hall, students **should** sit against the wall and the steps at the back of the main hall. Those in the gym to sit against the far wall away from the main door.

**Cyber-attack**Criteria for implementation of the plan* Where a cyber attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

 Centre Actions* EO to contact awarding bodies directly to arrange alternative methods of information exchange.
* Head of Centre to be informed.
* Trust IT team to restore IT services asap with a particular focus on getting the MIS available for the EO
* Also complying with (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
9. Reporting any actual or suspected compromised of an awarding body’s online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies’ multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements. |
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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

Ofqual

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| What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted**Contingency planning**Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties (Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.General contingency guidance* Emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England
* School organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England
* Opening schools in extremely bad weather guidance for schools from the Department for Education in England
* 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
* you may also wish to see the JCQ’s notice to entries on exam contingency plans and JCQ’s notice on preparing for disruption to examinations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications with its scope

**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.Schools must speak to the relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments**In the event of disruption**1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ’s [**‘Centre emergency evacuation procedure’**](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/centre-emergency-evacuation-procedure).
6. Communicate with students, 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**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**1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

**After the exam**Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students: for example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.**If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption**If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects, depending on their specific policies.See also:* [JCQ’s guidance on special consideration](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](http://ccea.org.uk/) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.The DfE in England, the DfE in Northern Ireland and the [Welsh Government](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 / assessments**As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for examinations and assessments, including exam timetables.In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements. As in 2023, Ofqual has provided guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system for students entering GCSEs, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.The DfE has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days, and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools must speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.**General contingency guidance*** Emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children’s social care settings from the DfE in England
* Handling strike action in schools from the DfE in England
* Protective security and preparedness for education settings from the DfE
* Police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
* Cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre
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| 15. CONTINGENCY PLANNING15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates. Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/> 15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams 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 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/examsystem-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland 15.6 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. 15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2025, 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 was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body.15.8 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 JCQ *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2024-2025* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, **Contingency planning**]

*JCQ Joint Contingency Plan* http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

*General Regulations for Approved Centres* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance notes on *Alternative Site* arrangements http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes concerning transferred candidates http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ online-forms

*Instructions for Conducting Examinations* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023)

[http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations%205)

[5](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations%205) tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/

GOV.UK

*Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption;* [www.gov.uk/](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings)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 Cyber Security Centre**

Cyber Security for Schools <https://www.mcsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>

Cyber security training for school staff <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools>