

Exam access arrangements

School audit: Self-assessment tool

This school audit was developed as part of the PAASS research project. The PAASS project was funded by the Nuffield Foundation and conducted by Dr Emma Sumner, Dr Catherine Antalek and Dr Amelia Roberts, at University College London, IOE Faculty of Education and Society.

The PAASS project engaged with key stakeholders (i.e., SENCos, Specialist Assessors, and secondary pupils with literacy difficulties), surveying and interviewing these groups about their experience of access arrangement provision in secondary schools in England. In addition to capturing practice, the team conducted efficacy studies to test how students respond to common access arrangements. The findings are included in full in the project report and can be accessed [here](#).

The school audit is based on the themes that emerged from the survey and interviews – specifically, areas that key stakeholders were reporting often need further attention to enhance optimal use of exam access arrangements. The themes have been translated to actionable 'domains' for practitioners working in the field of exam access arrangements. The audit also incorporates some key takeaways from the efficacy study findings. Specifically, these emphasised the need to take an individual approach and, importantly, to monitor how students respond to access arrangements that are put in place – in case another approach might be needed.

The audit is designed to help schools review their policies, practice and provision to support students to make best use of their exam access arrangements. Schools are encouraged to use each domain to reflect on their own school context. The illustrative criteria provide examples of focus areas but are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. Prompts are provided for practitioners completing the audit.



Practice Around Access Arrangements for Students with SpLD



**IOE – Faculty of
Education and Society**



Domains: Whole school context	Illustrative criteria	Reflections and Next Steps
<p>Inclusive ethos</p> <p>[Aim to reduce stigma around using access arrangements]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School regularly accommodates individual pupils' personalised access and learning needs • The school community values diversity • Students are aware of the purpose of access arrangements • Use of an access arrangement does not disadvantage students in other ways (e.g., missing break times, etc) • whole school behavioural policies encourage and support staff in open and positive communication with students • Opportunities for staff training, collaborative problem-solving and reflective practice are provided 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Aims:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>

<p>Resourcing and capacity building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENCO and other staff involved in exam access arrangements receive relevant training. • Schools have a designated and protected Access Arrangements Coordinator role (allocated time within their workload). • School-wide training: staff receive regular training and research updates on how to identify needs early. • SEN budget review ensures appropriate budget is allocated to provision of materials/people enabling exam access (e.g., laptops, scribes). • Collaborating with teaching teams: When reflecting on how to train students to use access arrangement, drawing upon different subject teacher expertise. Subject leads may be involved in developing some tips in how to use, for instance extra time, for different exam papers (e.g., multiple choice vs. extended writing). 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
--	---	---

<p>Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for differentiated approaches to learning and assessment is embedded within school culture as normal practice. • Exam access arrangements are talked about in general terms and 'normalised' (linked to inclusive ethos domain). • Roles and responsibilities are identified, agreed upon, and clearly articulated. For instance, who is responsible for identifying students that need further assessment? Who is responsible for training students to use their granted arrangement? • Staff (including senior leaders) are aware of the process of applying for access arrangements to prevent any misunderstanding about their purpose (e.g., knowledge of evidence required, when this needs to be done, what this enables, and who this does not apply to). • Timely and accessible bi-directional communication with relevant professionals, pupils and parents/carers about exam access arrangements is undertaken early in the process. • Students understand why they have an arrangement in place. • 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
-----------------------------	--	---

<p>Assessment and monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil voice/input from family is regularly sought and acted upon. • An Assessment and Monitoring policy includes policy on the school processes for pupils who may need access arrangements. • Specific times are scheduled in the school year to identify use of arrangements (e.g., around school assessment points). • School has good tracking processes in place to identify if students are using their access arrangement. • If no use is recorded, then a follow-up with the student is scheduled. • Relevant policies are understood and implemented by all staff • Formative assessment on pupil response to typical access arrangement activities such as typing and use of extra time is used to build a profile of pupil support needs. • The identification of specific characteristics that underpin a pupil's SpLD profile (e.g., spelling difficulties; writing fluency; breadth of vocabulary; processing speed and working memory) are known and taken into account in lesson planning/individual goal setting. 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
---	---	---

Training to use access arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff are involved in developing resources to support the use of different arrangements (e.g., extra time, word processor, scribe, reader, etc).• Specific policies are written related to training expectations. For instance, if students are using a laptop, they receive touch-typing support and it is clearly articulated the minimum requirement of support and how this is then evaluated.• Staff are also sufficiently trained. For instance, those acting as scribes have touch-typing instruction to be able to transcribe students' ideas at an adequate pace.	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
--	--	---

Domains: Individual pupil	Illustrative criteria	Reflections and Next Steps
Access to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam Access arrangements are properly funded, including equipment and relevant staff training • Appropriate literacy interventions are in place when needed. These are implemented with fidelity, including training in delivery and programme monitoring. • Opportunities to learn skills associated with Access Arrangements and practice these are timetabled. 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>

Accurate pupil profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils with literary difficulties have a clearly identified profile, including spelling, reading fluency, reading accuracy, working memory, vocabulary, processing speed, non-verbal reasoning, writing speed and typing speed. • This profile is used to inform planning for Access Arrangements, including how accommodations are introduced and taught. • The profile informs lesson and curriculum planning. • Staff have the opportunity to ask questions about pupil profiles. • Pupil voice is reflected in the profile around perceptions of accommodations (preferences and how to enhance self-esteem related to use of these arrangements). 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
Lesson planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school fosters a 'literacy-rich' environment where language is used to help 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p>

	<p>pupils understand the world and express their ideas confidently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons encourage active learning and peer collaboration. • Lesson activities are inclusive and build skills relevant to pupil's literacy targets. • Skills underpinning successful use of exam access accommodations are woven into lesson activities (e.g., proofreading, re-reading questions, planning a writing task, decision-making on when to move on to next question, laptop skills, dictation skills etc). 	<p>Targets:</p> <p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
Individual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated person discusses Access Arrangements and associated issues with pupil. 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of emotional wellbeing, such as anxiety, lack of confidence at using accommodation or poor peer support/stigmatisation. • Allocated person ensures equipment/resources are available for practice sessions as well as exam. • Timetabled opportunities (including staff) are provided to learn use of technology. • Timetabled opportunities to practice skills are provided. 	<p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
Access Arrangements route-map: overview of steps to take	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain stakeholder support for access arrangements (home and school) • Ensure resources/enablers in place • Understand views of pupil • Support/mentoring available if needed 	<p>Circle: Needs attention / Progress already made</p> <p>Targets:</p>

<p>[See infographic linked here]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching training where relevant• Plan opportunities to practice access arrangements• Teach access arrangements related skills (e.g., checking, rethinking question, avoiding over-correction etc).	<p>Actions needed:</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>How to assess impact/change:</p> <p>Whose responsibility is it:</p>
---	---	--