



9th September 2025

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Dear Parent / Guardian,

I am writing to you with information regarding your child's previous Access Arrangements as they continue their studies in Year 11. Since joining the school, your child has received 25% Extra Time and/or Separate Invigilation as their 'normal way of working' in all class tests. At Key Stage 3, Access Arrangements are provided at the discretion of the school and informed by difficulties raised by primary school or class teachers.

When pupils begin Year 11, their access arrangements are governed by guidelines laid out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). Schools have a statutory duty to follow the guidelines which clearly stipulate the following:

- **25% must be the pupils 'normal way of working' and the school must first prove that supervised rest breaks are not sufficient for the pupil.**
- **Pupils must have evidence (mock examinations and feedback from teachers) which clearly shows the use of 25% extra time.**
- **Pupils must have two below average scores in tests of reading, writing or processing speed.**

JCQ have indicated that supervised rest breaks are often more appropriate for pupils without a diagnosed learning difficulty. Supervised rest breaks present an opportunity for a pupil to pause an exam for a short period of time and step away from their paper. This allows them time to calm their mind and settle down before restarting their time. The document states:

Supervised rest breaks are often more effective and appropriate than 25% extra time for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties. They may better address the needs of neurodivergent candidates, such as those with ADHD or ASD, as well as candidates with medical conditions or mental health needs. For a candidate who tires easily or struggles to concentrate over an extended period, supervised rest breaks will be more appropriate than 25% extra time.

Allocating extra time simply extends the period a candidate must remain in a potentially stressful environment, which can intensify anxiety and reduce productivity. Moreover, 25% extra time may not address the underlying issue, which is often related to difficulties with attention or emotional regulation. In contrast, supervised rest breaks allow the candidate to step away from the exam setting, use structured self-regulation strategies and return when they are calm and better able to focus. This targeted approach can lead to more effective exam performance while also supporting the development of long-term self-management skills. Teaching candidates how to use these strategies equips them to advocate for themselves in further education or the workplace, fostering independence and resilience.



Principal: M.Allen B.Ed. (Hons), P.Q.H.N.I.
Vice Principals: C. Johnston B.Ed (Hons), P.Q.H.N.I. **R. Mullan** B.A. (Hons), P.Q.H.N.I.



INVESTORS IN PUPILS

The new guidance has a number of implications for schools going forward in ensuring pupils are provided with the correct arrangements and that evidence is on hand to support any application. Therefore, the following steps will be taken:

- Your child will be provided with rest breaks (instead of extra time) to determine the impact on their examinations and to determine if this arrangement is not sufficient
- Your child will be tested to determine if they have scores which may contribute to evidence for extra time
- Discussions with class teachers and evidence gathering for individual subjects to determine a genuine need for extra time.
- Review after mock examinations to determine if extra time is needed

I appreciate this may cause some concern for you and your child, however, supervised rest breaks can often be much more beneficial than the application of extra time. As highlighted above, the guidelines are very strict and failure to comply could result in an inspection of potential malpractice on the school's behalf.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact myself via the school office and I would be more than happy to talk you through the results and guidelines in greater detail.

Kind Regards,

Mr Steven McFaul – Assistant Learning Support Co-ordinator