



5.1.9 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Skills Department supports pupils with specific learning difficulties to achieve their potential in public exams and become successful independent learners.

Pupils receive support and teaching programmes dependant on their needs. This might include in class support, literacy programmes, numeracy programmes, specific subject support or study skills.

Identifying need

- When prospective parents visit Stowe, any known learning difficulties and future support requirements of their child are discussed
- Parents are asked to supply copies of any Educational Psychologists' Assessments and specialists' reports, where appropriate
- Prep schools are contacted to discuss the needs of the pupil further
- Common entrance or other entry papers provide additional information
- All new pupils entering the Third Form are 'screened' during their first two months. MidYis/CATs test indicate underlying ability, whilst reading, spelling and writing speed tests indicate level of skill. Currently used are the Vernon spelling test, the Edinburgh Reading Test, and the DASH 10 minutes free writing test.
- The publication of the Academic Progress Grades (APGs) after five weeks of term also indicates pupils who are struggling. In addition, staff may refer a pupil who is displaying learning difficulties
- Once a pupil is identified, further testing may be carried out to ascertain the impact of their specific learning difficulty and Skills lessons to aid remediation are discussed with the pupil. Parents are contacted. Once lessons begin targets are set with the pupil and recorded on Apollo

Lessons

Stowe offers its pupils a continuum of provision. Which provision a pupil will access is based on identified need. An individual programme will be drawn up for each pupil which will include some, or all, of the following:

- In class support to enable enriched access to the curriculum
- Small group lessons focusing on developing individual skills where needs arise. These will often be taught outside the teaching timetable, during activities or prep time.
- For some pupils with individual specific needs, a course of one to one lessons takes place to overcome this difficulty.

The provision a pupil receives will be reviewed regularly and will be discussed with parents via letter, email and at parent teacher consultations. Where a pupil is deemed to have made sufficient progress in overcoming the problems caused by their learning difficulty, support will cease.

All lessons and timetables are organised by the Head of Department in conjunction with individual teachers in the department. Pupils' other commitments are taken into consideration where possible.

Special considerations in exam

The criteria for awarding special access arrangements in exams, such as extra time and word processing is subject to JCQ regulations and restrictions, which the school is annually inspected on. For access arrangements to be given, the school must provide sufficient evidence. The emphasis is placed on evidence from the pupil's school career at Stowe that the arrangement awarded is warranted. In addition an assessment must be carried out by school staff or a school approved educational psychologist. No assessment conducted by an



educational psychologist not on the school list can be taken into consideration. Assessments conducted by medical practitioners still need to include the school based evidence criteria. The evidence must then be submitted by the school to the JCQ who have the authority to award access arrangements.

Access arrangements in examinations for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities

Rest Breaks and Extra Time Policy

Regulations governing access arrangements are issued by the Joint Council of Qualifications. They regulate all schools on their applications for access arrangements and carry out regular detailed inspections to ensure our compliance. Legal guidelines are laid down in the legislative Code of Practice for SEN professionals in schools, attached to the Disabilities Act. The Equality Act also governs this area.

Principles

The key responsibilities of schools and examination boards in making decisions about access arrangements in both internal and public examinations are to ensure that no child is unnecessarily disadvantaged in an examination by a disability or learning difficulty, but also to ensure that unfair advantage is not given by the award of a concession. Schools must consider the individual needs of students, but also their responsibilities as examining centres in maintaining fairness.

It is the responsibility of the school to decide if a pupil should have rest breaks or extra time. When making an application to JCQ for an access arrangement for a pupil in UK exams, we are agreeing that the evidence it holds complies with the current JCQ regulations. Failure to comply with the regulations will be considered as (at best) centre maladministration, which may result in disqualification from the examination for the pupil.

Criteria for extra time

Criteria which must be met include

1. **School based evidence that a pupil underperforms when working with time restrictions.** Without information from teaching staff an application cannot be made. Section A of the form 8 must be completed prior to the assessment. At A'level the JCQ want confirmation that the requirements of a much narrower set of subjects still result in difficulties that might have been experienced at GCSE.
2. **A candidate must have speed related assessment scores that fall into the 'below average' range (ie standardised scores beneath 85 in tests that assess reading speed, writing speed, processing speed or working memory).** These assessment scores can be used to support an application, but not to drive one. This screening must date from year 9 onwards only, assessments completed prior to this will not be accepted by the JCQ. It would be anticipated that a pupil with below average scores would attend Skills lessons to try to improve their areas of deficit

Procedure

1. A pupil is identified by school staff who note that a pupil finds it difficult to complete work and tests in the given time.
2. The school complete part A of the JCQ form 8 before any assessments take place, in accordance with JCQ regulations.



3. The pupil is assessed by the Skills Department or one of our nominated Educational Psychologists to see if they fit the JCQ criteria. The JCQ will only accept reports from Stowe by an external assessor who has an established relationship with the school. The names of these assessors must be submitted to the JCQ by Stowe.
4. If relevant scores are achieved the pupil will be noted on Apollo as having extra time for internal exams. Further in class evidence can then be collected for the perusal of the exam inspector
5. If sufficient evidence is gained, an application for extra time can then be made to the JCQ. The pupil will be informed of the outcome.

Criteria for rest breaks

The JCQ state that the school “must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties. (The candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act)*

During a supervised rest break the candidate cannot have access to the question paper or answer booklet. Furthermore the JCQ state that the duration of the rest breaks should be determined prior to the start of the exam series.

*The Equality Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Word Processing Policy

For a pupil to be given permission to word process their exams, the JCQ regulations need to be followed. There are two parts to the process:

1. A ‘need’ has to be identified which would be solved by word processing. This ‘need’ would normally be identified by staff within school although occasionally an educational psychologist may be involved.

Pupils will be allowed to word process where they have an identified:

- learning disability which has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to write legibly
- medical condition
- physical disability
- sensory impairment
- illegible handwriting



- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand.

The JCQ will not allow pupils to use a word processor simply because he/she prefers to type, works more quickly on a keyboard, or because she/he uses a laptop for prep.

2. The pupil must word process as their normal way of working, this would include within tests and exams in school and would be documented so that this evidence is available for the exam inspector.

A pupil may use a word processor on a temporary basis as a consequence of a **temporary injury**.

Stowe School procedure:

1. A pupil who might need to word processes is identified by a member of staff
2. The pupil is assessed in the Skills Department to see if they meet any of the above criteria, as well as to ascertain their typing speed and accuracy
3. Where appropriate, the pupil is allowed to type their tests and exams so that evidence can be collected for the Exam Inspector.
4. If a pupil meets the criteria, but is poor at typing, they attend typing club (Friday 6.00 in Skills)
5. The pupil will then be timetabled to a typing room for their external and internal exams.
6. A pupil has the right to decline the concession. If they do this they will be required to sign a document to this effect and none of their exams will be word processed.
7. Some subjects do not lend themselves to word processing and therefore will have to be handwritten.

Addendum:

Clarification issued by Nick Lait, Head of Examination Services at JCQ (27/03/2015) on assessments by external professionals:

In rare and exceptional circumstances where a privately commissioned report is accepted, i.e. an educational psychologist's report, Form 8 must be completed. The educational psychologist would have to complete Section C of Form 8. Their report could not be presented for inspection purposes. Your head of centre or a member of the senior leadership team would have to produce a written rationale as to why the report was accepted. This would be in addition to the fully completed Form 8 (Sections A, B and C). Additionally you would have to have evidence of the psychologist's qualification, e.g. he/she is registered with the HCPC, and your head of centre or a member of the senior leadership team would have to have a written rationale as to their appointment as an assessor for your centre. The educational psychologist would have to be named on Access Arrangements Online as an approved assessor for your centre.

In terms of medical documentation, such as a letter from a clinical paediatrician or a hospital consultant, this is of course just one part of the equation. The letter or indeed an e-mail message from a clinical paediatrician or a hospital consultant would not in its own right be enough to award an access arrangement such as 25% extra time. As a centre you would have to produce centre based evidence, as per for example page 26 of the JCQ regulations. Where a candidate has a formal medical diagnosis the centre would have to address all six bullet points on centre headed paper, signed and dated by the SENCo in order to award 25% extra time.