Derbyshire information Advice & Support Service for SEND

Providing impartial advice for special educational needs and disability

Special Arrangements for External Tests and Examinations

What is an external test or examination?

Currently formal testing begins with SATs in Year Six and continues through to college. These examinations or tests can be used to provide you, your child, and staff at their usual place of education with information about progress or can lead to a qualification. E.g., SATs, GCSEs, AS and A levels, NVQ, ASDAN awards, City and Guilds etc. The tests referred to in this information sheet are those which are set and marked by organisations outside your child's usual place of education.

What are "special arrangements"?

"Special arrangements" mean that some students will be allowed to have help that other students do not. This means that students can show what they know without changing the demands of the examination or test. What is given will depend on your child's needs. "Special arrangements" fall into four main groups:

Things – for example, computers, coloured overlays, bi-lingual dictionaries, magnifiers, large print exam papers etc.

Time – for example, extra time to complete the examination or test, and/or supervised rest breaks.

People – for example, someone who can read the paper out loud to the student or write down their answers.

Place – for example, being able to sit the examination or test in a different room to the other students, either in school or somewhere else.

Will my child with special educational needs be expected to take tests or examinations?

Most students in education will be expected to take tests or examinations at some time. Students who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not excluded from these tests but may need some extra help with them.

If you feel your child shouldn't take these tests or examinations, you should speak to the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and/or Examinations Officer responsible for your child's usual place of education who should discuss your concerns with you and your child. It may be possible to withdraw your child from the test or examination or to put in place a "special arrangement" which may provide a solution for you.

How do I make sure that "special arrangements" are made for my child?

You should speak to the SENCO and/or the Examination Officer responsible for your child's usual place of education. They should know what needs to be done, and what information they need to give the examination board when asking for the "special arrangements". The people responsible can, for some tests and examinations, decide for themselves whether to provide "special arrangements". For others, they may need to apply to the examining body or authority and provide evidence. This evidence could be a medical report, an assessment from an educational or clinical psychologist, or proof from another professional that this is the student's usual way of working. E.g.: a student who uses Braille, uses a laptop, or uses a lip reader or signer.

Where can I get information about special arrangements?

- Your child's school, college, or university
- Joint Council for Qualifications
- Elective Home Education Service for children educated by parents
- "Education Otherwise", for children educated at home by their parents
- OOST (Out of school tuition) or independent providers – speak to the tutor.

How soon do applications for "special arrangements" need to be made?

These requests are usually made well in advance of the examination but can vary depending on what "special arrangement" is needed and the month of the examination. E.g. – for a student sitting a GCSE exam in June, the request may need to be made as early as January of the same year. However, under unforeseen circumstances e.g. – fracture of the hand, arrangements may be able to be made at short notice. Speak to the person responsible at your child's usual place of education about this.

Who is eligible for special arrangements?

Anyone who has an Education, Health Care plan may be able to have “special arrangements” made for them.

Students who do not have English, Welsh or Irish as their first language may be able to have some “special arrangements” made for them.

Who is protected under the Special Educational Needs and Equalities Act?

The Equalities Act says a person who has a disability is someone who has a physical or mental impairment (difficulty) which has a substantial, long-term, and harmful effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to- day activities. The law says that a child should not be treated unfairly or placed at “an unfair disadvantage” because of their disability. This would include being unable to take examinations unless reasonable help is provided. If you feel your child is being discriminated against you can contact:

The Equality Advisory Service
Freephone Telephone: **0808 800 0082**
Text phone: **0808 800 0084**

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal now part of Her Majesty’s Court and Tribunal Service.

SEN & DDA 01325 392760

Information included in this fact sheet is taken from the Joint Council for Qualifications publication *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration* and may be subject to change.

See our website for other factsheets.

Who can I contact if I need further help or advice?

DIASSSEND Advice line
01629 533668
Monday – Friday 9.30am - 3.00pm
Email:ias.service@derbyshire.gov.uk

Messages can be left outside this time and all calls will be returned as soon as possible

Derbyshire Information, Advice AND Support Service for SEND website.

Or use the online contact form, accessible via our website.

If you, or someone you know, would like a copy of this information sheet in large print, an audio version or in languages other than English, please contact us.