



HIDELOW GRANGE SCHOOL

Education Policy

Examinations Policy

Approved by:	Tom Clarke, Executive Headteacher
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Policy author (CareTech):	Laura Dickie / Tonia Lewis
Policy approver (CareTech):	Jo Dunn, Compliance, Regulation and Quality Director
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 September 2026

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1. Local school profile

Hidelow Grange School is an independent SEMH day school in Acton Beauchamp, Herefordshire, educating pupils aged 7–16 with social, emotional and mental health needs. We are registered with and inspected by Ofsted and operate under the Independent School Standards. Qualification pathways are tailored to individual need and typically include functional skills, entry-level qualifications and GCSEs where appropriate. The school follows an England-only statutory framework. Assessment and examination delivery reflects our trauma-responsive ethos, with individual access arrangements in place for the majority of pupils.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out how Hidelow Grange School plans, delivers and quality-assures examinations and assessments so that every pupil can show what they know and can do. It is for the staff team,

senior leaders, pupils and, where relevant, any contractors who support the running of assessments.

In practice, this means we organise examinations with integrity, put reasonable adjustments in place early and communicate with clarity. For pupils under 18, we involve parents, carers and social workers appropriately. For pupils over 18, we work directly with the learner while offering advocacy where needed. In all cases, we protect dignity, privacy and safety, and we run a consistent process that can be relied upon.

3. Scope

This policy applies across all assessment activity at Hidelow Grange School: general qualifications, vocational and technical awards, on-demand digital tests, practical work, portfolios, controlled assessments and non-examined assessments. It covers assessments delivered on-site and those undertaken off-site where the school registers or supports pupils.

4. Policy statement and principles

Assessment at Hidelow Grange School must be valid, reliable and fair. The pupil experience must be safe, respectful and trauma-responsive.

- Integrity and compliance: we protect exam security, follow instructions precisely and prevent malpractice or maladministration
- Fairness and inclusion: we identify access needs early, evidence them appropriately and implement approved adjustments faithfully, without undermining assessment validity
- Trauma-responsive practice: we reduce uncertainty, offer familiarisation and choice where feasible, keep environments calm, and ensure all adults involved can recognise and respond to heightened stress
- Pupil voice: we involve pupils in decisions about how support is delivered. For under-18s, parents and carers are engaged appropriately; for 18+ learners, the learner leads, with advocacy if needed
- Privacy and dignity: we handle personal information with care and keep sensitive processes discreet
- Transparency: we publish what pupils, parents, carers and placing authorities reasonably need to know

5. Legal and regulatory context

Hidelow Grange School operates within the statutory duties, safeguarding requirements and inspection arrangements applicable to independent schools in England. The standards in this policy are applied in line with the legal and regulatory framework set out in Appendix A.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher (B. Neasom)

Owns this policy, sets expectations and ensures resources and training are in place.

Examinations Lead

Plans and runs the operational cycle: entries, timetables, secure storage, materials, staffing and liaison with awarding bodies. The Examinations Lead role is held by the Deputy Headteacher, J. Smith, with administrative support from the school office.

Access Arrangements Lead / Inclusion Lead

Coordinates identification, evidence, applications and the delivery of agreed adjustments and assistive technology.

Teachers and tutors

Ensure pupils are taught the assessment objectives, authenticate pupil work and meet deadlines.

Invigilators

Create and maintain the right conditions in the examination room, follow scripts accurately and apply adjustments as approved. Invigilators are trained and refreshed annually.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Available for advice and action where safeguarding issues arise around assessment.

Multi-agency team

Therapists, clinicians, social workers or advocates contribute insight and evidence, and help plan trauma-responsive approaches.

Pupils

Commit to exam conduct, use agreed supports appropriately and tell us promptly if they are unwell or anxious.

Parents, carers and social workers

Help ensure pupil readiness and share relevant information early.

7. Qualifications and assessments covered

Hidelow Grange School runs a range of general and vocational qualifications tailored to individual pupil need. These typically include entry-level qualifications, functional skills in English and mathematics, and GCSEs for appropriate pupils. Some are examination-heavy; others rely on portfolios, practical work or synoptic tasks. We also deliver on-demand digital tests where appropriate. This policy covers both externally assessed examinations and internal assessment components that contribute to external awards.

Awarding bodies used include NCFE, Pearson Edexcel and AQA, depending on the qualification. Assessment windows are confirmed annually and communicated to pupils, parents and carers at the start of each academic year.

8. Planning cycle and entries

Each year we map the curriculum to assessment objectives and windows, and hold termly readiness reviews that bring together mock data, professional judgement and pupil wellbeing information. We make entries by published deadlines and communicate them in writing. For pupils under 18, parents, carers and social workers are informed; for pupils over 18, communication is direct with the learner.

Fees and resit arrangements are set out clearly. Timetabling and rooming prioritise calm, accessibility and security, with contingency built in should things change at short notice.

9. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

Our aim is to remove unnecessary barriers. We identify needs early, build a balanced evidence picture including normal way of working, and apply for approval where required. Once approved, we implement adjustments consistently. These may include extra time, a reader or scribe, supervised rest breaks, assistive technology, specialist furniture, small rooms or sensory supports, always in ways that protect the validity of the assessment.

We embed trauma-responsive practice throughout: pre-examination familiarisation, visual schedules, predictable routines and the option to sit in a preferred location where feasible. Invigilators are briefed on individual considerations and how to de-escalate whilst maintaining exam conditions.

For pupils under 18, parents and carers are engaged. For pupils over 18, we plan in partnership with the learner and their chosen advocate. Access arrangements are submitted to the relevant awarding body in line with JCQ AARA requirements.

Quiet room locations: the school has a designated examination room. Small-group and individual sittings are arranged for pupils with approved access arrangements, using available classroom space subject to room availability confirmed by the Examinations Lead.

10. Learner preparation and communication

We make the examination process clear and confidence-building. Pupils receive plain-language information about formats, timings, conduct, permitted materials and where to go. Mock examinations mirror live conditions and incorporate agreed adjustments so nothing is new on the day.

We teach simple regulation strategies including breathing, grounding and movement breaks, and publish clear contact points for questions or concerns. For pupils under 18, we provide information for parents, carers and social workers so adults in the pupil's network can support preparation.

11. Timetabling, rooming and resources

We use rooms that are quiet and predictable, with good signage, visible clocks and minimal visual clutter. Seating plans are designed discreetly so pupils who need particular positions can have them without drawing attention. Small-group or individual sittings are provided where justified.

Invigilation ratios are appropriate to the assessment, and supervision arrangements are respectful and safe. For digital examinations, we test the network and devices in advance, confirm readiness and plan failovers.

12. Secure materials and confidentiality

Security is non-negotiable. Confidential materials are stored in approved secure conditions with a clear chain of custody. We log receipt, opening, distribution and return; materials are never left unattended. Coursework and portfolios travel by secure methods, and we record every handoff. Secure storage is in the Headteacher's office safe, with key access restricted to the Headteacher and Examinations Lead.

13. Invigilation and conduct of assessments

Invigilators set the tone: calm, consistent and reassuring. They are trained and refreshed annually and follow scripts word for word. We check pupil identity using an approved verified list. We display permitted materials and manage prohibited items discreetly. Any incident is recorded in real time and escalated promptly.

14. Coursework, NEA, controlled assessment and portfolios

Internal assessment is handled with the same rigour as external examinations. Pupils and teachers sign authentication statements, and we use both professional judgement and appropriate tools to guard against plagiarism or collusion. Supervision levels match task requirements, and we schedule checkpoints so problems surface early. Internal standardisation ensures marking is consistent before anything is submitted. Storage is secure and digital backups are maintained.

15. Plagiarism, malpractice and maladministration (including AI misuse)

We teach pupils what good academic practice looks like and are explicit about risks: plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration, improper use of calculators or devices, and misuse of digital or AI tools. If concerns arise, we investigate promptly, fairly and confidentially. Pupils can be supported by a trusted adult or advocate. We keep clear records, notify awarding bodies where required and communicate outcomes in writing.

16. Conflicts of interest

Staff declare any actual or potential conflict, such as assessing or invigilating a close relative. We record declarations and put mitigation in place. The register is reviewed by the Headteacher annually and ahead of each examination series.

17. Special consideration (illness, bereavement, significant distress)

If a pupil is unwell or experiences significant distress at or near the time of an assessment, we consider whether a special consideration application is appropriate. We gather evidence sensitively, involve the pupil and their network, and explain the options clearly, including any limitations. Decisions are recorded and communicated promptly.

18. Emergencies and contingency

We plan for the unexpected: severe weather, transport disruption, power or network failure, staff absence, room issues or cyber incidents. Our contingencies aim to keep assessments safe and fair, continuing where possible and postponing where necessary, always protecting security.

Minimum contingency measures include identified alternative rooms and invigilators, spare devices and charging, an offline plan for digital examinations where permitted, and confirmed procedures for securing scripts in evacuations.

19. Results, post-results and appeals

Results days are planned to be supportive and well-organised. We publish how results will be issued and where to get advice. Post-results services including clerical checks, reviews of marking and access to scripts are explained in plain language with deadlines and costs made clear.

Pupils have the right to request a review or appeal relating to internal assessment decisions or externally assessed examination outcomes. These procedures are published, explained to pupils in advance and applied consistently within published deadlines.

20. Certificates

When certificates arrive, we check, log and store them securely, then issue them promptly. Uncollected certificates are retained for a minimum of one academic year. We signpost pupils and former pupils to replacement routes where needed.

21. Data protection and confidentiality

We collect only what we need, keep it secure and retain it for defined periods. We publish privacy information explaining how assessment data is used and shared with awarding bodies and regulators. Pupils can request accessible versions of information and ask questions about how **their data is handled. Staff follow the school's data protection policy and the Records Management Policy** for all examination-related data.

22. Quality assurance, training and audit

Each year we train invigilators, teachers and the examinations team, with refreshers ahead of every series. We carry out spot checks and observations of live examinations and internal assessment processes, and hold a post-series review to capture what worked and what needs to improve. Actions are tracked to completion and reported to the Headteacher and proprietor.

23. Complaints

Concerns about examination administration can be raised through the school's complaints process. We handle complaints respectfully, quickly and with a focus on learning and improvement.

24. Publishing and ownership

This policy is published on the school's website and provided in accessible formats on request. Learner-friendly information about exam conduct, prohibited items, access arrangements and key dates is shared with pupils directly and with parents, carers and social workers.

Ownership sits with the Headteacher and the Examinations Lead. We invite pupil feedback and review the policy annually.

25. Equality impact statement

This policy has been developed to promote equality, safeguard individuals' rights, and ensure fair and inclusive practice. The potential impact on pupils, families and staff with protected characteristics has been considered in line with the Equality Act 2010. No negative impacts have been identified. Staff must apply this policy with sensitivity to individual need and make reasonable adjustments to ensure equitable access, safety, wellbeing and participation for every pupil.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the school's governance and quality assurance systems. A formal review will be undertaken no later than three years from the date of approval, or sooner if changes in legislation or regulatory guidance necessitate it.

This policy was approved by Jo Dunn (Compliance, Regulation and Quality Director, CareTech) in February 2026. It was adopted and locally adapted for Hidelow Grange School in June 2026 by B. Neasom (Headteacher).

Next review: February 2029.

Appendix A — Legal and regulatory framework (England)

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014	Prescribes the Independent School Standards proprietors must meet. We map examinations policy and evidence directly to relevant ISS parts covering assessment, welfare, health and safety, information, complaints and leadership.
Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2025	Sets how Ofsted inspects independent schools. We maintain an inspection-ready examinations bundle aligned to EIF covering security, invigilation, access arrangements, incidents and post-results.
JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE) 2026–27	The definitive operational rulebook for examination delivery. We deliver to ICE on the day: secure storage, room setup, invigilation scripts, start and finish procedures and incident handling.
JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres 2026–27	The centre-level governance and compliance framework. We maintain annual policy reviews, cybersecurity training certificates and CPD records as required.
JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) 2026–27	National rules for access arrangements and special consideration. We evidence need and normal way of working, obtain awarding body approval and implement adjustments consistently.
Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition	The regulatory conditions for awarding organisations that drive centre requirements on security, confidentiality, access arrangements, malpractice, marking, results and appeals.
Equality Act 2010 (Reasonable Adjustments Duty)	Imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments so disabled pupils are not substantially disadvantaged in examinations. Adjustments are evidence-based, individual and proportionate.
SEND Code of Practice 0–25 (updated 2024)	Statutory guidance requiring early identification and a graduated response. Exam access planning is embedded within SEND processes and reviewed after mocks.
Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR	Sets lawful, fair and secure processing of examination data. We publish privacy information, define lawful bases for sharing with awarding bodies and operate a clear retention schedule.