



OCTAVIA HOUSE

Sector-Leading Therapeutic Schools

Examinations policy for Octavia House Schools, Essex

Independent School Standards: those in Part 1 and para.34.

Last external review	N/A
Next external review	N/A
Latest update	September 2026

INTRODUCTION

Octavia House Schools, Essex, are independent therapeutic special schools, working with pupils placed by their local authorities. The South Woodham school caters for pupils in years 7–11. There are currently 31 pupils in the entire school. Provision in all respects is therefore personalised.

The purpose of this exams policy is to ensure the planning and management of exams is conducted efficiently and in the best interests of candidates; and to ensure the operation of an efficient exams system with clear guidelines for all relevant staff.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the centre's exam processes to read, understand and implement this policy. Where references are made to JCQ regulations/guidelines, further details can be found at www.jcq.org.uk.

Exam responsibilities

The head of centre (the school's headteacher, Ashley Witherington):

- has overall responsibility for the school as an exams centre and advises on appeals and re-marks
- is responsible for reporting all suspected or actual incidents of malpractice (please refer to the JCQ document *Suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments*).

The exams officer (the school's head of administration, Steven Guy):

- manages the administration of all external exams
- advises staff on annual exams timetables and procedures as set by Pearson
- oversees the production and distribution, to all centre staff and candidates, of an annual calendar for all exams and communicates regularly with staff concerning imminent deadlines and events
- ensures that candidates and their parents are informed of and understand those aspects of the exams timetable that will affect them
- checks with teaching staff that the necessary coursework and/or controlled assessments are completed on time and in accordance with JCQ guidelines
- provides and confirms detailed data on estimated entries
- maintains systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their exams
- receives, checks and stores securely* all exam papers and completed scripts and ensures that scripts are dispatched as per the guidelines.

As per regulatory guidance, all examination materials are stored in a lockable filing cabinet (featuring a security bar), which is affixed to the wall within a lockable room. Both the cabinet and the room are used solely for the storage of examination materials and the keys to both are held only by the head of centre and exams officer.

- administers access arrangements and makes applications for special consideration following the regulations in the JCQ publication *A guide to the special consideration process*
- identifies and manages exam timetable clashes
- ensures candidates' internal assessment marks are submitted, and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule
- tracks, dispatches, and stores returned internal assessments
- arranges for dissemination of exam results and certificates to candidates and forwards, in consultation with the LT, any post results service requests.

The head of centre is responsible for:

- guidance and pastoral oversight of candidates who are unsure about exams entries or amendments to entries
- accurate completion of entry and all other mark sheets and adherence to deadlines as set by the exams officer
- accurate completion of coursework / controlled assessment mark sheets and declaration sheets
- decisions on post-results procedures
- identification and testing of candidates' requirements for access arrangements and notifying the exams officer in good time so that they are able to put in place exam day arrangements
- processing any necessary applications in order to gain approval
- working with the exams officer to provide the access arrangements required by candidates in exams rooms.

Teachers are responsible for:

- supplying information on entries, coursework and controlled assessments as required by the head of centre and/or exams officer.

Invigilators (teachers and therapists) are responsible for:

- assisting the exams officer in the efficient running of exams according to JCQ regulations
- collection of exam papers and other material from the exams office before the start of the exam
- collection of all exam papers in the correct order at the end of the exam and ensuring their return to the exams office.

Candidates are responsible for:

- confirmation and signing of entries
- understanding coursework / controlled assessment regulations and signing a declaration that authenticates the coursework as their own
- ensuring they conduct themselves in all exams according to the JCQ regulations.

Qualifications offered

The types of qualifications offered include:

GCSEs in English, mathematics, science and art and design

Functional Skills qualifications in English and mathematics

Entry level certificate in science

WJEC entry level in humanities

NCFE IT user skills

NCFE award in personal & social development

NCFE creative craft award (Construction and Art & Design)

NCFE technical award in music technology

NCFE certificate in food and cookery skills

NCFE certificate in sport

NCFE certificate in interactive media

The subjects and qualifications offered in any academic year may be found online at ohs.uk. Final decisions on whether a candidate should be entered for a particular subject will be taken by the head of centre in consultation with the candidate, parent or carer and teachers.

Exams

Internal exams are held under external exam conditions.

The head of centre decides which exam series are used in the centre.

The centre offers some assessments, such as functional skills, on an on-demand basis. If offered, on-demand assessments can be scheduled only in windows agreed between the head of centre and exams officer.

Exam timetables

Once confirmed, the exams officer will circulate the exam timetables for external exams at a specified date before each series begins.

Entries, entry details and late entries

- Candidates or parents/carers cannot request a subject entry, change of level or withdrawal
- The centre does not accept entries from private candidates
- The centre does not act as an exams centre for other organisations
- Entry deadlines are circulated via daily briefing meetings
- The head of centre will provide estimated entry information to the exams officer to meet JCQ and awarding body deadlines

- Entries and amendments made after an awarding organisation's deadline (i.e. late) require the authorisation, in writing, of the head of centre (head of centre)
- GCSE re-sits/retakes are allowed
- Functional skills re-sits/retakes are allowed
- Re-sit decisions will be made by the head of centre.

Exam fees

All exam fees of all types are paid by the centre, for all qualifications. This includes late entry, re-sit or amendment fees.

Equality legislation & equal opportunities

All exam centre staff must ensure that they meet the requirements of any equality legislation, as outlined in our equality policy. All our pupils have education, health & care plans for their special educational needs. *All qualifications are available to all pupils.*

The centre will comply with the legislation, including making reasonable adjustments to the service that they provide to candidates in accordance with requirements defined by the legislation, awarding bodies, and JCQ. This is the overall responsibility of the head of centre (head of centre).

Access arrangements

All candidates have special educational needs and an education, health & care plan for their social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and other associated needs.

A candidate's access arrangements requirement is determined by the head of centre. Ensuring there is appropriate evidence for a candidate's access arrangement is the responsibility of the head of centre. Submitting completed access arrangement applications to the awarding bodies is the responsibility of the exams officer. Rooming for access arrangement candidates will be arranged by the exams officer. Invigilation and support for access arrangement candidates, as defined in the JCQ access arrangements regulations, will be organised by the exams officer and head of centre.

The following criteria are used to identify candidates who would benefit from the use of a word processor:

- the use of a word processor is always considered as a preferred option for candidates who may have been considered for using a scribe but are confident and competent in using a word processor (with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled i.e. switched off)

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to write legibly
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- poor handwriting. A decision regarding any illegibility is made using the following evidence: evaluating work in their books; discussions with the student; discussions with teaching staff and access arrangements assessor
- a candidate who has below average free writing speed and who would qualify for extra time. The use of a word processor would therefore be appropriate and 25% extra time applied for in exams
- a candidate with a medical diagnosis that requires access to a computer where it is written in their EHCP or their speech and language therapist, occupational therapist or educational psychologist report.

Contingency planning

Contingency planning for exams administration is the responsibility of the exams officer.

Contingency plans are available via daily briefing meetings and are in line with the guidance provided by Ofqual, JCQ and awarding organisations.

Estimated grades

Teachers are responsible for submitting estimated grades to the exams officer when requested.

Managing invigilators

External staff are not used to invigilate examinations.

Internal staff who invigilate do so by agreement.

Malpractice

The head of centre is responsible for investigating suspected malpractice.

Exam days

The exams officer will book all exam rooms after liaison with other users and make the question papers, other exam stationery and materials available for the invigilator.

The head of centre will start and finish all exams in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

Subject staff may be present at the start of the exam to assist with identification of candidates. Any staff present must be in accordance with the rules defined by JCQ concerning who is allowed in the exam room and what they can do.

In practical exams, subject teachers' availability will be in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

Exam papers must not be read by subject teachers or removed from the exam room before the end of a session. Papers will be distributed to the exams officer in accordance with JCQ's recommendations and no later than 1 hour after candidates have completed them.

After an exam, the exams officer will arrange for the safe dispatch of completed examination scripts to Pearson, working in conjunction with the head of centre.

Candidates

The centre's published rules on acceptable dress and behaviour apply at all times. Candidates' personal belongings remain their own responsibility and the centre accepts no liability for their loss or damage.

In an exam room, candidates must not have access to items other than those clearly allowed in the instructions on the question paper, the stationery list, or the specification for that subject. This is particularly true of mobile phones and other electronic communication or storage devices with text or digital facilities. Any precluded items must not be taken into an exam room.

Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Candidates are expected to stay for the full exam time at the discretion of the head of centre.

Note: candidates who leave an exam room must be accompanied by an appropriate member of staff at all times.

The head of centre is responsible for handling late or absent candidates on exam day.

Clash candidates

Though this situation arising should be fairly impossible, the head of centre would be responsible as necessary for supervising escorts, identifying a secure venue and arranging overnight stays.

Special considerations

Should a candidate be unable to attend an exam because of illness, suffer bereavement or other trauma, be ill or otherwise disadvantaged or disturbed during

an exam, then it is the candidate's responsibility to alert the centre's exams officer to that effect.

The candidate must support any special consideration claim with appropriate evidence within 2 days of the exam.

The exams officer will make a special consideration application to the relevant awarding body within 3 days of the exam.

Internal assessment

It is the duty of teachers to ensure that all internal assessment is ready for dispatch at the correct time. The exams officer will assist by keeping a record of each dispatch, including the recipient details and the date and time sent.

Marks for all internally assessed work are provided to the exams office by the head of centre. The exams officer will inform staff of the date when appeals against internal assessments must be made by. Any appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the centre's appeals procedure (below).

Results

Candidates will receive individual results slips on results days in person at the centre. The results slip will be in the form of a centre produced document. Arrangements for the centre to be open on results days are made by the head of centre. The provision of the necessary staff on results days is the responsibility of the head of centre.

Enquiries about Results (EAR)

EARs may be requested by centre staff or the candidate following the release of results. A request for a re-mark or clerical check requires the written consent of the candidate, a request for a re-moderation of internally assessed work may be submitted without the consent of the group of candidates.

The cost of EARs will be paid by the centre. All decisions on whether to make an application for an EAR will be made by the head of centre.

If a candidate's request for an EAR is not supported, the candidate may appeal and the centre will respond by following the process in its appeals procedure (below). All processing of EARs will be the responsibility of the exams officer, following the JCQ guidance.

Access to Scripts (ATS)

After the release of results, candidates may ask subject staff to request the return of written exam papers within 5 days of the receipt of results.

Centre staff may also request scripts for investigation or for teaching purposes. For the latter, the consent of candidates must be obtained.

An EAR cannot be applied for once an original script has been returned.

The cost of requesting ATS will be paid by the centre.

Processing of requests for ATS will be the responsibility of the exams officer.

Certificates

Candidates will receive their certificates in person at the centre.

Certificates can be collected on behalf of a candidate by third parties, provided they have written authority from the candidate to do so, and bring suitable identification with them that confirms who they are.

The centre retains certificates for 5 years.

A new certificate will not be issued by an awarding organisation. A transcript of results may be issued if a candidate agrees to pay the costs incurred.

Complaints

Anybody can raise a complaint as per our standard complaints procedure, which is available to all, including on our website. As the appeals procedure (see below), anybody making a complaint is encouraged to do so informally as a first step.

Recruitment, registration, certification & recognition of prior learning

All pupils are 'recruited' and 'registered' internally.

Most pupils have been placed with us at young ages for therapeutic, special school placements. They typically transfer to South Woodham into Year 10 from their Year 9 placements at our Great Baddow site. There is therefore no recognition of prior learning/credit transfer etc, that is applicable in our context.

Risk Assessments, Health & Safety & Safeguarding

Clear risk assessments are in place for use of the school building, all pupils and specific curriculum activities, such as use of the construction workshop and catering facilities. A health and safety policy specific to the South Woodham site is also available and adhered to by all users of the building. Full public liability insurance is in place for all school sites at Octavia House Schools, Essex. CCTV is in operation throughout the school building, including in all classrooms, as per our CCTV policy.

Pupils are supported exceptionally closely and supported as part of a commitment to very high ratios of staff to pupils. Our health and safety lead is Jamie Tempest.

Safeguarding is an especially significant part of the work we do as therapeutic special schools. Our robust safeguarding policy and clear procedures are available to all, including on our website, and are overseen by our head of safeguarding, Joanne Evans.

Emergency evacuations

In the event that it becomes necessary to evacuate an examination room, whether due to a fire alarm, bomb alert or any other urgent safety concern, the invigilator must take the following action:

- Stop the candidates from writing and make a note of the time of the interruption.
- Advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room.
- Collect and check the attendance register (in order to ensure all candidates are present) and evacuate the examination room in line with the site's fire evacuation plan.
- Make sure that the candidates are supervised as closely as possible while they are out of the examination room to ensure there is no discussion about the examination.
- If it is only the exam room that needs evacuating, consider the possibility of taking the candidates (with question papers and scripts) to another room to finish the examination.
- Make a note of the total duration of the interruption lasted so as to allow the candidates the full working time set for the examination, once resumed.
- Make a full report of the incident and of the action taken, and send to the relevant awarding body.

Centre contingency and adverse effects

In the exceptionally rare case of any adverse effect due to any unavoidable circumstance, the centre will arrange alternative arrangements with another centre, in Essex.

Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual, or organisation, has competing interests or loyalties. In the case of an individual, the conflict of interest could compromise or appear to compromise their decisions if it is not properly managed. The most important feature of the policy is the requirement that **an individual disclose any activity that might give rise to a potential conflict of interest**. If there is any doubt whether or not it represents a conflict of interest, it must be reported.

Any conflict of interest, or potential conflict of interest, must be disclosed to a member of the leadership team without delay.

NCFE qualifications

Assessment

Internal Assessment is defined as the process where staff make judgements on evidence produced by pupils against required criteria for NCFE qualifications. All school devised assessment materials must be internally and/or externally verified before being issued to students.

- Completed pupil assignments will be assessed internally, be subject to internal verification and external moderation by the awarding body
- Pupils must be left in no doubt that any grade awarded will be subject to internal moderation and that ultimately the final decision rests with the awarding body
- The assessor is responsible for ensuring that assessment processes are consistent and transparent, that evidence is valid, sufficient, authentic and that judgement of evidence is valid and reliable
- Pupils will be given an interim deadline for each assignment. Following feedback, a new deadline will be set after which the work is assessed and the outcome recorded. The assessment decisions are then internally verified according to the procedure outlined below. There is a further opportunity to improve assignments before the final deadline
- All coursework must be handed in on the stated date. If work is handed in late, a decision about whether it should be marked will be taken by the head of centre.

Role of the Assessor

The role of the assessor is to:

- Set tasks which allow pupils to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do so that they have opportunities to achieve the highest possible grades on their NCFE courses
- Ensure that pupils are clear about the criteria they are expected to meet in their assignments and that they are fully briefed on the skills which need to be demonstrated in the coursework / portfolio components of a subject
- Encourage pupils by giving detailed feedback and guidance on how to improve work
- Set interim deadlines for coursework and advise pupils on the appropriate amount of time to spend on the work, ensuring it is commensurate with the credit available
- Mark and return drafts within one week of submission
- Adhere to the Awarding Body's specification in the assessment of pupils' assignments
- Record outcomes of assessment using appropriate documentation. Outcomes will be held securely for 5 years, measured from the point of certification. Associated IV records will also be kept, to support and verify the decisions that were made for the cohort
- Ensure each candidate signs to confirm that the work is their own and that it is endorsed by the teacher after marking the work. A completed original document must be securely attached to the work of each candidate and to that of each sample request.
- Provide accurate records of internally assessed coursework marks to the exams officer in a timely manner for transfer to the awarding body.

Internal Verification

The Internal Verifier is at the heart of quality assurance on NCFE and BTEC programmes. In our small school, teachers of NCFE qualifications will internally verify each other's NCFE qualifications, as multiple subject specialists of the same subject are obviously not available. The role is to ensure that internally assessed work consistently meets national standards but can also lead to staff development and quality improvement.

- Each course will have an identified Internal Verifier (IV) who is not otherwise involved in the assessing or setting of work which he or she is asked to verify

- Internal Verifiers will have the knowledge and qualifications relevant to the qualification(s) and other competence-based award(s) for which they are responsible to enable accurate judgements to be made regarding candidate performance in relation to competence criteria.

The role of the internal verifier

The internal verifier should:

- not verify their own work or assignments
- ensure that all assignment briefs are verified as fit for purpose prior to their being circulated to pupils. They should enable pupils to meet the unit grading criteria
- make recommendations to the assessor on how to improve the quality of the brief if necessary
- make all IV evidence available to the external verifier
- consider the assessment decisions of all units and all assessors to judge whether the assessor has assessed accurately against the unit grading criteria
- verify 50% of the sample for National Standards Sampling (NSS), though this proportion could be higher, particularly for assessors who are new to NCFE.
- maintain secure records of all work sampled as part of their verification process using a standard template
- if a concern is raised the IV should discuss this with the assessor prior to the final confirmation of the marks for all the pupils taking the assignment. As a result of the IV process it may be necessary for the assessor(s) to reconsider the marks awarded for the entire cohort of pupils and, as a consequence, to make changes either to all marks or to some marks
- where re-sampling is necessary the work should be verified again before being sent to the EV and records kept.

Malpractice (pupils)

This can include (this list is not exhaustive):

- plagiarism – presenting material from secondary sources as original, e.g. unacknowledged copying and pasting from the internet, copying. Pupils should be taught an appropriate format of referencing to ensure they do not inadvertently commit plagiarism. This includes coursework
- copying others' work
- deliberate destruction of another's work
- fabrication of results or evidence, e.g. making false claims about having participated in a practical activity
- false declaration of authenticity, e.g. claiming work of another pupil, declaring collaboratively produced work as own etc.

Octavia House Schools, Essex, aims to:

- identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by staff or pupils
- respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively
- standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness
- impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on pupils or staff where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice are proven
- protect the integrity of this centre and all qualifications.

In order to do this, the centre will:

- seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period and ongoing personalised support to inform pupils of the centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice. Pupils should be made aware of what constitutes plagiarism
- show pupils the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources
- ask pupils to declare that their work is their own. Pupils must sign declarations for each assignment submitted
- ask pupils to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used
- ensure that staff are aware of what constitutes assessment malpractice
- conduct an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation (any such investigation will be supported by the head of centre and all staff linked to the allegation).

Malpractice procedure (pupils)

Minor concerns about authenticity, e.g. work which has been poorly referenced through neglect (not deliberate deception) should be dealt with by the assessor in the first instance. Where an assessor has serious concerns about the authenticity or validity of a piece of work (e.g. deliberate deception, repeat offence) he/she should immediately inform the head of centre.

The procedure

To be led by the head of centre:

1. inform the pupil of the alleged malpractice
2. give the individual the opportunity to respond to the allegations made
3. inform the individual of the avenues for appealing against any judgment made
4. document all stages of any investigation.

Where malpractice is proven, the school will inform the pupil's parents. They will work with the pupil's head of centre to apply an appropriate consequence, which

may include:

- application of schools' behaviour policy
- individualised arrangements for supervision
- other agreed actions.

Malpractice (staff)

This can include (this list is not exhaustive):

- improper assistance to candidates
- inventing or changing marks for internally assessed work
- where there is insufficient evidence of the candidates' achievement to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made
- failure to keep candidates' work secure
- fraudulent claims for certificates
- inappropriate retention of certificates
- assisting pupils in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves centre staff producing work for the pupil
- producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the pupil has not generated
- allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the pupil's own, to be included in a pupil's assignment/task/portfolio/coursework
- facilitating and allowing impersonation
- misusing the conditions for special pupil requirements, for example where pupils are permitted support, such as an amanuensis, this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment
- falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud
- fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the pupil completing all the requirements of assessment.

Where staff malpractice is suspected, you must:

- inform the staff member's leadership team line manager
- the alleged malpractice will then be investigated as per the school's procedure, as per the disciplinary & conduct procedures
- any malpractice or attempted malpractice must be recorded and Edexcel must be informed.

Appeals

The aim of Octavia House Schools', Essex, appeals procedure is to:

- enable the pupil to enquire, question or appeal against an assessment decision

- attempt to reach agreement between the pupil and the assessor at the earliest opportunity
- standardise and record any appeal to ensure openness and fairness
- facilitate a pupil's ultimate right of appeal to the awarding body, where appropriate
- protect the interests of all pupils and the integrity of the qualifications.

In order to do this, the centre will:

- inform the pupil at the start of their course the appeals procedure
- record, track and validate any appeal
- forward the appeal to the awarding body when a pupil considers that a decision continues to disadvantage her/him after the internal appeals process has been exhausted
- keep appeals records for inspection by the awarding body for a minimum of 18 months
- have a staged appeals procedure (below)
- will take appropriate action to protect the interests of other pupils and the integrity of the qualifications, when the outcome of an appeal questions the validity of other results
- monitor appeals to inform quality improvement
- retain records for at least 18 months.

Responsibilities

Pupil: responsible for initiating the appeals procedure, in the required format, within a defined time frame, when s/he has reason to question an assessment decision.

Assessor: responsible for providing clear achievement feedback to pupils. If assessment decisions are questioned, the assessor is responsible for processing the pupil's appeal within the agreed time.

Internal verifier/lead internal verifier/leadership team: responsible for judging whether assessment decisions are valid, fair and unbiased.

Head of centre: responsible for submitting an appeal in writing, to Edexcel if the pupil remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the centre's internal appeals procedures.

Appeals procedure

Stage 1

Informal discussion with member of staff assessing. If a resolution is found, the member of staff should record the discussion for reference only, as part of best practice. If a resolution is not achieved, the discussion should be formally recorded and passed on to the head of centre.

Stage 2

Formal review. Head of centre and internal verifier review the assessment decision. A written reply and/or feedback meeting will be given to/held with the pupil within 2 school weeks.

Stage 3

Appeal hearing. The pupil must apply to the head of centre in writing within 4 school weeks of the initiation of the stage 2 formal review. An appeal panel, appointed by the head of centre, will meet and review the evidence. A formal response will be given to the pupil.

Stage 4

External appeal. The grounds for appeal and any supporting documentation must be submitted by the centre to Pearson within 14 days of the completion of Stage 4.