# Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

# Exams Access Working Group

Exams Access Guidance for Young People

Who Rely Upon AAC

## Key Stage 1 and 2 National Curriculum Testing

March 2024

For the academic year 2023/24

**Foreword**

This document has been created to support the Exam Access of students using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) within formal testing at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

This document will be reviewed annually inline with the Standards and Testing Agency's (STA) *Access Arrangements Guidance*. The *Access and Arrangements Guidance* is usually update in October for that academic year's testing.

This document was written collaboratively and led by a core group of professionals including;

- Marcin Zielonka, Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service
- Saffron Murphy-Mann, Saff Mann AAC
- Owen Burson, New Forest Care
- Katy Leckenby, Ace Centre
- Meaghan Ebbage Taylor, Ace Centre
- Rebecca Day, Rett UK
- Laura Baggley, AAC Teacher Coordinator/Assistant Head of Education, CandLE

In addition, Communication Matters have been supporting this project.

Special thanks go to a range of other people from across the UK for their contributions through their personal experiences and/or their field of work.

# Contents

# Introduction

This document is for parents, guardians, and professionals as well as classroom teachers, SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) and Exams Officers in schools.

This guidance has been developed by the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Exams Access Working Group and **must** be used in conjunction with the Standard and Testing Agency's (STA) guidance documents. The STA is the exam board for Key Stage 1 and 2 tests in England.

The aim of the document is to provide an overview on how best to support a person who uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to appropriately access testing and exams in the primary classroom.

The setting must put forward evidence of the *Normal Classroom Practice* for the exam board and the access arrangements **may** need to be agreed with the exam board in advance of the examination and in line with the timescales outlined in the exam board's criteria. Schools must make an application to the STA to request permission in advance for some arrangements. Some arrangements do not require permission, but schools must notify STA of their use once all tests have been administered. Other arrangements may be used without prior approval, or the need to notify STA, provided they reflect *Normal Classroom Practice*.

It is worth noting that not all exam board staff will be familiar with bespoke and specific access arrangements used by students who rely on AAC.

## What is the AAC Exams Access Working Group?

A group of professionals, parents/carers, and suppliers of AAC equipment from across the UK, who have experience of AAC exams access arrangements across a range of key-stages.

The group meets 2-3 times annually to discuss best practice and to develop guidance for parents/carers and educational settings on requesting exams access arrangements for those young people using any form of AAC for communication and to access the curriculum. Guidance and case studies are provided based on previously agreed access arrangements with a variety of exam boards.

## Why is the AAC Exams Access Working Group Needed?

Every young person should have the right to demonstrate their academic ability using the most suitable access method.

Students using AAC may require independent access to tests and exams using a variety of access adaptations. The adaptations required will be unique to each individual student and must be reflect their *Normal Classroom Practice* in the classroom.

This working group has begun to look at how these needs should inform exams access provision under the STA's Access Arrangements Guidance.

The group is considering all other national testing guidelines and the impact they have on the young person on the access to all exams and testing from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4.

## What is AAC?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) supplements or replaces speech or writing for communication. AAC can take the form of paper-based communication systems such as pen and paper, objects, signing and books with pictures or symbols.

High-tech communication systems include systems that need some sort of power to work, for example, single or multiple message devices that you can record on to as well as other devices such as computers and tablets that can convert symbols, text or pictures to a voice output.

AAC is the tool to support communication and access to the curriculum. An AAC user **may** have other needs or disabilities such as;

- A physical impairment

- A learning difficulty

- Autism

- A sensory impairment (e.g. A hearing or visual impairment).

An AAC user may have all or none of the above.

Some examples of conditions that may require AAC may include but are not exhaustive: Cerebral Palsy, Motor Neuron Disease, Autism Spectrum Condition, or an Acquired Brain Injury.

## What Needs to be Considered When Supporting a Person Using AAC to Access Exams?

- A robust and accurate Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) from as early in the person's academic career as possible

- Established and documented N*ormal Classroom Practice* for that individual throughout their education and staring as early as possible. For more information on *Normal Classroom Practice* please refer to that section within this document.

- *Normal Classroom Practice* and adaptations need to ensure that the integrity and security of the examinations are not affected.

- Training and up-skilling of support staff in modifying approaches to enable the person to access the curriculum. This may also include training those staff to invigilate examinations that the person will be taking. This will apply to all ages right from Early Years onwards to ensure that *Normal Classroom Practice* is established for the young person. Transitions from setting to setting are particularly important to ensure any new staff are upskilled as quickly as possible in providing the adaptations needed for the young person.

- Education Health and Care Plan to be reviewed often considering the training staff have taken, taking into consideration the preferences of the student around their *Normal Classroom Practice*.

- Relevant therapists and professionals working with the person to review the physical environment that the exams will be taking place in. This will ensure things like the table height, light, acoustics and positioning of any equipment is thought out and planned for in advance. This must include practical accommodations such as a room with sockets to plug in communication aids, or enough light for a device to pick up the eye movements of a student using eye gaze technology. Although not exhaustive, some examples of therapists that may be involved with supporting adaptations to the environment may include condition-specific specialists (such as professionals in autism), Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, AAC professionals, professionals in physical impairments.

- Consideration needs to be taken around having spare communication aids and other IT equipment on standby for the timing of the examination. This would mean there would be 'back up' device available for that student should something go wrong with the equipment they are using during the examination.

- Evidence gathering around *Normal Classroom Practice* and adaptations that may need to be requested by the setting. Gathering evidence may require timing the young person during mock tests, measuring their energy levels and gaining evidence from professionals around accommodations. Please see the appendix of the document where you can find an 'KS1/KS2 *Normal Classroom Practice* Evidence Collection Form' that will guide your evidence collection.

- Reasoning given for why a reasonable adjustment is not being made in reference to the Equality Act.

- Always keep a paper-trail of communications between the setting, professionals recommending *Normal Classroom Practice* and the Standards and Testing Agency (if applicable).

> It's never too early to begin thinking about and planning for access to key stage national testing!

# Normal Classroom Practice

Whilst the term Normal Ways of Working is used for examinations for Key Stage 3 and above it is a useful term when thinking about *Normal Classroom Practice*. The STA use the terminology *Normal Classroom Practice* to describe the access arrangements the student uses in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. *Normal Classroom Practice* needs to be embedded well in the classroom before those approaches can be used in test conditions.

The STA in their Key Stage 2 Access Arrangements Guidance describe some access arrangements that may be considered for students with specific needs. The STA also state "Due to the diversity of pupils' needs, this guidance does not list every circumstance where it may be appropriate to use access arrangements." (Key Stage 2 Access Arrangements Guidance, October 2023, section 1.1)

Students who use AAC will need additional and very bespoke access methods which may not be outlined in the Access Arrangements Guidance document. You will need to provide a case to show what the *Normal Classroom Practice* is for that individual and why.

*Normal Classroom Practice*, also known as *Normal Ways of Working,* apply to all key-stages and may change over time due to changes in needs of the person as well as changes in access to technology. **Normal Classroom Practice includes reasonable adjustments as required by the Equality Act (2010).**

### Evidence Collection on *Normal Classroom Practice*

*Normal Classroom Practice* must be established as early in advance of the testing as possible and forms part of good practice in settings. It is best practice and strongly advised for the setting to collect and keep evidence of the *Normal Classroom Practice* happening for the student. This may be needed from the STA before, during or after the testing has taken place.  Record any and all accommodations you make for the student, including things that other students also access as standard.

The STA may not request all of the evidence you have collected; however it is best to have this level of evidence available as it will help your negotiations around accessing the testing.

For best practice, evidence could include:

- An introduction or summary of the person's needs. This may include pictures, videos and transcripts
- Summary of practice papers using their *Normal Classroom Practice* including;
  - What adaptions were used?
  - What extra time was needed for the person to complete the paper at their own pace?
  - What breaks were needed such as food or comfort breaks?
  - Where were the examinations conducted/what physical considerations were needed for accommodation?

- Reports from professionals detailing any special considerations needed for the person (e.g. reports from occupational therapist on positioning, doctors' advice on medical needs etc.)
- Results from standardised tests (if relevant) such as reading speed of the person, that will inform exam access arrangements.

Whilst it may be time consuming to collect this data during the academic year, it will give robust evidence should access arrangements be challenged. In addition, this information can then be passed on to secondary level education and provide continuity for the student when they move settings.

There are other types of evidence that can be collected depending on the level of testing being carried out. These will be detailed further on within this document under the relevant sections.

## Other Considerations Around *Normal Classroom Practice*

The student's EHCP must be up-to-date and relevant and include *Normal Classroom Practice*, reasonable adjustments, and exams access arrangements. Each reasonable adjustment and *Normal Classroom Practice* is individual to that student and needs to be reflected in the ECHP accurately. This again can be used as evidence if needed for reporting to the STA but will also provide continuity for the student when they move to other settings.

Care needs to be taken on who will support the person in their examinations to access their *Normal Classroom Practice*. A familiar and qualified person must be identified well in advance and given chance to learn the student's *Normal Classroom Practice*. This may include supporting the young person with their communication, becoming a scribe, or holding the role of a practical assistant (such as turning the page of the paper copy of the paper). They must be extremely confident with any technology the person is using in case of problems with the technology during the tests.

Where possible the student should be supported to complete the exams as independently as possible, and so the staff supporting the student in the testing must be confident with and trained in exams regulations as well as using this approach as normal ways of working before the examinations. The person should also have good subject knowledge, where appropriate, so that they understand the student's work. It is a useful suggestion that the adult supporting the young person in everyday lessons is not the scribe in exams but rather a second familiar person takes up this role in exam conditions. This is to ensure that the familiar adult does not unknowingly give non-verbal prompts to the young person, which could jeopardize the tests.

Quality and consistency of the team around the person is needed. This is to ensure that more than one person is trained up to support during testing in case of illness or unforeseen circumstances.

# Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Testing

Both key stage 1 and key stage 2 examinations are conducted by the STA.

Following the Government's response to the 2017 consultation on primary assessment, on 20 July 2022, DfE announced that assessments at the end of KS1 would become non-statutory from the academic year 2023 to 2024.

There are several tests that happen across the primary age range including:

- The Phonics Screening Check – carried out in Year One. The Phonics Screening Check may be repeated in Year Two with some students if they failed in Year One.
- Key Stage 1 National Curriculum Assessments, also known as Key Stage 1 SATs, are now optional. These are carried out across the month of May.
    - English: Reading
    - English: Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling
    - Mathematics: Arithmetic
    - Mathematics: Reasoning
- Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Assessments, also known as Key Stage 2 SATs. These tests are usually carried out across one week in May.
    - English: Reading
    - English: Grammar, Punctuation, and spelling
    - Mathematics: Arithmetic
    - Mathematics: Reasoning
    - Mathematics: Reasoning (second paper)
    - Multiplication Tables Check (carried out within a 2-week period in June)

The primary level examinations are more relaxed than examinations in secondary or higher-level education. The phonics screening check takes place over a week, and the key stage 1 tests are now optional and are carried out over a month. The school can dictate when they will carry those tests out within those time frames. The key stage one tests need less access arrangements requesting due to the nature of the testing. Many of the tests are adult led at the Key Stage 1 age, encouraging the children to move onto the next question as a whole group. The testing has flexibility where teachers can deliver the testing within some soft parameters but can make allowances for students during the testing.

Key stage two examinations are more formalised and are carried out at specific times. Exam access arrangements may need to be considered and applied for, but some accommodations do not need requesting directly from the STA. It is important to check which arrangements need to be requested in advance.

It is important to note in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 tests, schools should continue to collect and keep evidence of *Normal Classroom Practice* for the student which can be used if

the examinations are moderated as well as provide useful evidence for later examinations in the student's academic career.

All access arrangements that can be requested for the key stage one and key stage two formal assessments are found in the documents;

- *Key Stage 1 Optional key stage 1 tests guidance (ARA) (STA)*
- *Key Stage 1:* Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements *(STA)*
- *Key Stage 2 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA) (STA)*
- *Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA)*

All STA documents are updated in October of that academic year for that academic year's series of testing. Changes are made to these documents each year depending on the previous years round of testing so ensure you have the most up-to-date copy. In addition, this document is revised every year on reflection of those changes.

## Evidence Collection and Monitoring Visits

Monitoring visits are often carried out by local authorities (LAs) to check that access arrangements are in line with *Normal Classroom Practice*. Visits can take place before, during and after the testing period. There is specific guidance on monitoring visits provided by the STA available online. It will detail elements like when early opening of papers is permitted for individual adaptations, and what information needs to be provided to the visit leader such as access arrangements agreed for individuals. This is why it is important to have evidence ready showing the *Normal Classroom Practice* for students using AAC.

> "During a monitoring visit, local authorities may ask to see evidence that any support provided to pupils in the tests is regularly provided as part of normal classroom practice. Schools must ensure they have documentation available to demonstrate that a pupil is eligible for access arrangements. Evidence will vary according to the type of support and may include:
>
> • notes recorded in teaching plans
> • individual pupil support plans
> • a pupil's classwork"

(*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October2023*)

In addition to some of the suggestions above, annotated practice papers, examples of independent learning and a document 'painting the picture of need' are also recommended pieces of evidence that schools should have.

# Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Arrangements

The following access arrangements can be requested for both key stage 1 and key stage 2 Examinations:

- Additional time
- Early opening to adapt a test paper
- Compensatory marks for spelling
- Scribe
- Transcript
- Word processor or other technical or electronic aids
- Written or oral translations
- Readers
- Rest breaks
- Prompters and keeping students focussed
- Accessibility objects in mathematics tests
- Highlighter pens
- Alternative locations

# Phonics Screening Check Arrangements

All pupils who have reached the age of 6 by the end of the academic year must take the phonics screening check.

"Pupils should not take the check if any of the following apply:

- they have shown no understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences
- they have not completed the first year of the KS1 English programme of study
- they have recently moved to the country and are unable to understand letters and sounds in English
- they use British Sign Language or other sign-supported communication, such as communication boards, to spell out individual letters
- they are non-verbal, or selectively mute

- they have been absent during the check window – if a pupil does not take the check during this period and returns to school after Friday 23 June, they must be recorded as absent"

(Assessment and reporting arrangements (phonics screening check)*(ARA) (STA) October 2023)*

Under this guidance, students using AAC in any form are not expected to take the phonics screen.

In some cases, students using AAC may wish to complete an adapted version of the test however this cannot be recorded towards school results. There is a case study at the end of this document showing how one pupil accessed an adapted phonics screen using their access method of eye-gaze. Please note the student asked to complete a test and was not required to complete an adapted version.

# Specific Key Stage 1 Arrangements

Please note that the access arrangements in this document are not exhaustive. There are other access arrangements available to students not included in this guidance. This guidance only includes the access arrangements relating to AAC use for students who require the use of AAC for communication.

> "Schools do not need to make applications or notifications for access arrangements in the optional KS1 tests.
>
> If any of the access arrangements are likely to disturb others in the cohort, we recommend that schools consider making arrangements for pupils to complete the test separately."
>
> (Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

This optional will highly likely be needed for those using AAC due to the nature of communication aids and the complex access arrangement which will likely include screens, a reader and other arrangements.

Schools need to be fully aware that not having evidence that access arrangements used in the tests reflect normal classroom practice may subject them to maladministration and an investigation.

This is why evidence collection on *Normal Classroom Practice* is crucial despite it not being a requirement to notify the STA of those access arrangements.

## Additional Time

As the tests at Key Stage 1 are not precisely timed, schools have the flexibility to give as much time is needed for the student to complete the tests. Consider how much additional time the student needs before the tests start. You may wish to time some practice tests so that you know how much extra time is needed for the tests.

It is highly likely that students who use AAC will need longer to complete the tests as it takes much longer to communicate an answer with AAC that it does with verbal speech. If a student also has a working memory difficulty and/or physical access needs too, then the time needed to complete tests will be greater still.

## Rest Breaks

Rest breaks can be coupled with extra time during testing, and this is something to consider for students using AAC in their tests. Rest breaks are used when students become fatigued or lose

concentration. Rest breaks can also be used to split up sections of a test which means students should be refocussed when returning to the next section of the test.

> "Most pupils should be able to complete the optional tests without a break. However, rest breaks may be helpful for pupils who find it difficult to concentrate or experience fatigue. Rest breaks may also be beneficial to pupils who use modified versions of the tests. "
>
> (Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

In exceptional circumstances tests can be split up further alongside additional time and taken over several days. Schools do not need to notify the STA of doing this but we would recommend keeping evidence of why this decision may have been made for the individual student.

## Adaptations to Test Papers and Early Opening

Whilst the STA produce some modified test papers, schools should consider if students using AAC need access to an electronic version of the paper, particularly if they use eye-gaze or switch access methods. Schools are free to make their own adaptations to the tests papers as they see fit for the student without changing the content of the questions, texts and other information. Schools can open the test papers at any point before the test to adapt them as long as it is within that Key Stage 1 test period. Whilst there is no stipulation within the guidance document (Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)* around keeping the questions secure, good practice would be to ensure the person adapting the test is alone in a room and papers are signed in and out.
Schools can modify downloadable versions which are available on the Primary Assessment Gateway during the test period.

## Compensatory Marks for Spelling

Compensatory marks for spelling are only available to students 'with a profound hearing impairment and who do not lip read or use a signing system' at this time.

## Scribes

A scribe is permitted in test conditions if it is part of the student's *Normal Classroom Practice*. The limitations on what a scribe can and cannot do are listed below. Please note that the scribe must follow the student's precise instructions for drawings and labels, and again this needs to be assessed as *Normal Classroom Practice*. Scribes can be support assistants but be mindful that support assistants need to be fully aware of these limitations within tests and should replicate these limitations within the normal classroom day.

"We recommend that a scribe is used when a pupil is:

- unable to use a word processor
- unable to write or has difficulty writing

- known to experience fatigue

If schools are using a scribe to support a pupil, we recommend that they:

- work at the pupil's pace and not hurry them if they need time for reflection, rest or reading
- have a working knowledge of the subject
- follow the pupil's instructions precisely to draw or add to diagrams, charts and graphs in the mathematics tests
- only make a correction on a test script if asked to do so by the pupil"

(Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

It is worth noting that as the student progresses through their academic career, other testing (such as Key Stage 2 tests and Key Stage 3 and above exams) has a preference of electronic means over a human scribe. If a student can type an answer rather than communicate to a scribe it is quicker and more accurate. Therefore, encouragement to type own answers using the student's preferred access method should be fostered and developed in the classroom at the earliest opportunities, such as within Key Stage 1.

## Word Processors and Other Technical or Electronic Aids

Equipment used in tests should be used independently by the student. Schools are expected to test and be sure of the technical ability of the equipment using practice papers before the testing period begins. Any functionality that would allow the student an advantage within the test must be turned off. If it cannot be turned off, another method must be sought.

Please remember to save the work of the student regularly and manually during the test. After the test is complete, schools are expected to print the work to be included with the completed test papers.

There are restrictions for electronic equipment in some tests and these are included below.

"**English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics**
We recommend that the equipment should not:
- read mathematical symbols in the mathematics test
- read punctuation in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test
- have any spell-check, grammar check or predictive text functionality turned on

**English reading**
If schools are administering under test conditions, readers or other electronic aids which provide reading support should not be used. Such equipment would invalidate the test, which is designed to assess pupils' ability to read and comprehend the texts and questions."

(Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

These limitations provide some challenges for AAC users. At this time electronic aids are not permitted to read out information within the reading test. In addition, as using an AAC device is proven to tax a student's working memory more than someone who has access to verbal communication, turning off spell check when having to type every letter within a sentence and with complex access needs is problematic.

## Readers

Human readers can be used in Key Stage 1 testing for students who have 'a considerably lower age than their actual age. (Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

Students who are able to read the test materials should not have access to a human reader.

"We recommend that reading assistants:
• understand the test format
• are familiar with the recommended guidance for each test
• understand any subject-specific issues that might occur

Schools may also wish for the reader to act as a scribe if the pupil is not writing for themselves (see section 2.4)"
(Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

Some AAC users may qualify for a human reader but be aware that the restrictions on a computer reader are different to a human reader. Please see the section on *Word Processors and Other Technical or Electronic Aids* for more information.

There are specific requirements on human readers in Key Stage 1 tests which vary depending on the test type. For example, mathematical symbols cannot be read aloud in the maths tests, and only instructions can be read aloud in the reading paper.

Please ensure you are fully aware of the limitations across the different test papers on what can be read and what cannot. There is also an additional document named noted for readers in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests that you need to be familiar with if using a reader in tests.

## Keeping Pupils Focussed

This accommodation is to support students who lose concentration easily or who us unable to focus independently. If part of the student's *Normal Classroom Practice* an adult can refocus the student in an agreed way such as saying their name or tapping the desk. There is also scope under

this access arrangement to cover questions so that the student can focus on one question at a time.

> "To enable pupils to stay focussed, we recommend that you agree the best way to focus the pupil before the test begins (this includes ways to draw the pupil's attention back to the task."

> (Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements guidance, *(STA) October 2023)*

## Alternative Locations

A student can take a test at an alternative location such as the student's home if there is a need to do so. In these cases, the Headteacher of the school would take responsibility for security and confidentiality of the test and ensure the test is delivered as per the test administration guidance.

An AAC user may need to use an alternative location if they require significant extra time within the tests and/or have medical needs that cannot be provided for in the setting for the extended length of time needed to complete the tests.

# Specific Key Stage 2 Arrangements

Please note that the access arrangements in this document are not exhaustive. There are other access arrangements available to students not included in this guidance. This guidance only includes the access arrangements relating to AAC use for students who require the use of AAC for communication.

> "Schools must make an application to the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) to request permission in advance for some arrangements (section 2). Some arrangements do not require permission, but schools must notify STA of their use once all tests have been administered (section 3). Other arrangements may be used without prior approval, or the need to notify STA, provided they reflect normal classroom practice (section 4).
>
> *(Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023)*

If arrangements are needed for students that may disrupt the rest of the class and other students, the school should consider administering the test in a separate room from other students. This optional will highly likely be needed for those using AAC due to the nature of communication aids and the complex access arrangement which will likely include screens, a reader and other arrangements.

It is also worth noting that students using AAC within testing have significant and complex access arrangements. Whilst the guidance provided by the STA covers most access arrangements needed for most students, it is not exhaustive. We recommend that if further arrangements may be needed for students to liaise directly with the STA along with the evidence you have collected on the student's *Normal Classroom Practice*.

> "Due to the diversity of pupils' needs, this guidance does not list every circumstance where it may be appropriate to use access arrangements."
>
> *(Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023)*

Schools need to be fully aware of maintain testing security and therefore it is key to evidence access arrangements a student may need.

> "Schools could be subject to a maladministration investigation if they fail to use access arrangements appropriately.
> This includes:
> - failing to make the relevant application or notification, where required
> - early opening of test materials without permission from STA
> - unauthorised additional time

- inaccurate transcription of pupil's work
- not having evidence that access arrangements used in the tests reflect normal
- classroom practice

A maladministration investigation may lead to the pupil's result being amended or annulled."

*(Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023)*

This is why evidence collection on all *Normal Classroom Practices* for the student is crucial even if all arrangements do not require evidence submitting before the testing takes place.

## Additional Time

Schools must apply to STA in advance for permission to use this access arrangement beyond the time they are automatically granted as below. The STA may request further information before providing the outcome of an application.

In Key Stage 2 tests;

"Pupils automatically qualify for:

- up to 25% additional time if they have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- up to 100% additional time if they use the MLP or braille versions of the tests

Schools do not need to complete an application for these pupils. Pupils who are automatically allowed additional time may also use other access arrangements if this reflects *Normal Classroom Practice*.

Additional time to complete the tests may be appropriate for other pupils who:

- require additional time under test conditions to properly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, this may include pupils who are unable to work at the same speed as their peers due to a specific need
- are waiting for confirmation of an EHC plan

Schools should consider whether supervised rest breaks during the tests would be more beneficial to pupils than additional time. Rest breaks can be used together with additional time to prevent pupils suffering from fatigue"

(*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

It is likely that the student who relies on AAC will need more than the automatically granted time to complete papers. A request will need to be made to the STA with evidence showing why this is the case, such as speed of typing/writing messages using the device, working memory difficulties

and/or other challenges the student faces in their *Normal Classroom Practice*. It is always helpful to have timed a student completing a practice paper under test conditions to ensure you are requesting the correct amount of time.

If requesting extra time, you will also need to consider applying for supervised rest breaks as the timings of the examinations will be longer and therefore students will need to be supervised during breaks so that the integrity of the test is maintained. There is an evidence collection form in the appendix of this document that can help record the time it takes to complete practice test questions.

**Early Opening of Papers**

Schools must apply to STA in advance for permission to use this access arrangement. The STA may request further information before providing the outcome of an application.

The early opening of papers may be needed to adapt the papers to become accessible for students.

In key stage 2, if early opening is needed, it must be requested in advance via the Primary Assessment Gateway with strict rules to ensure the test remains secure.

> "Schools may open test papers up to one hour before a test is due to start, to make adaptions or preparations, without seeking permission from STA. This flexibility is designed to help schools that need to:
>
> - photocopy test papers onto coloured paper
> - enhance diagrams
> - enlarge text
> - prepare a translator or signer
> - prepare equipment"
>
> If you need to open test papers (including modified test papers) more than one hour early to make more complex adaptations, you must have an approved application for early opening. If you are planning to make the same adaptations for more than one pupil, and you require the same amount of time, you can include multiple pupils on the same application form. STA will only allow schools to open standard test materials more than one day before the scheduled test date, or modified materials more than 2 days before the scheduled test date, in exceptional circumstances."
>
> (*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

Please note that if a student needs to use assistive technology to record their learning such as eye-gaze technology and needs the test papers adding to their software, this should be classed as

'exceptional circumstances' and therefore a significant amount of evidence will be needed to request early opening of the paper more than one day in advance. This time will be needed for a professional to convert the questions in the paper into an accessible form that the student uses as their *Normal Classroom Practice*. There is a case study at the end of this document demonstrating how a student could access the test after adaptation into an accessible form with agreed early opening.

## Compensatory Marks for Spelling

Schools must apply to STA in advance for permission to use this access arrangement. The STA may request further information before providing the outcome of an application.

Compensatory marks for spelling in testing beyond Key Stage 2 can be agreed for a variety of reasons such as using word prediction in examinations when this is *Normal Classroom Practice.*

> "Pupils with a profound hearing impairment and who do not lip read or use a signing system, or can only use fingerspelling signing, may not be able to access the spelling paper of the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. Raw scores from both English grammar, punctuation and spelling papers are needed to give an overall scaled score. Awarding compensatory marks allows these pupils to receive an overall test outcome for the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. Compensatory marks are based on the average raw score achieved by pupils who take the test."
>
> (*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

Whilst it does not specifically state other reasons for requesting compensatory spelling, the AAC Exams Access Working Group would advise to liaise with the STA should there be another need for compensatory spelling marks, such as working memory difficulties, when working memory is relied upon for the use of an AAC device, coupled with spelling words whist navigating high-tech AAC, if applicable.

## Scribes

Settings do not need to make an application for this access arrangement, but they must notify STA about their use once all tests have been taken.

Scribes should be used when a student is unable to write or type answers independently. Most exam boards encourage word processor use if this means a scribe is then not needed. Many students who rely on AAC can use a word processor or other electronic software with their access

method, meaning they are more independent and then do not require the use of a scribe if it is embedded in their *Normal Classroom Practice*.

> "A scribe is a writing assistant who writes out answers dictated by the pupil during the test. Schools can provide a scribe if other options to enable the pupil to work independently are not appropriate, and the use of a scribe reflects normal classroom practice.
>
> A scribe can be used when a pupil is:
>
> - unable to use a word processor
> - unable to write or has difficulty writing
> - known to experience fatigue
>
> The scribe must:
>
> - work at the pupil's pace and not hurry them if they need time for reflection, rest or reading
> - have a working knowledge of the subject
> - follow the pupil's instructions precisely to draw or add to diagrams, charts and graphs in the mathematics tests
> - write precisely what the pupil instructs and only make a correction on a test script if asked to do so by the pupil
>
> If a pupil is eligible for up to 25% additional time solely because they have difficulty writing, they may be given either additional time or a scribe, but not both."
>
> (*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

There are specific restrictions on the scribe when it comes to scribing within the English: Grammar, Punction and Spelling paper. Please see the Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance for more information.

**Word Processors and Other Electronic Aids**

Settings do not need to make an application for this access arrangement, but they must notify STA about their use once all tests have been taken.

Students must be able to use electronic equipment independently to be granted access to them during the tests. The student must work in a separate room to use this type of equipment to ensure it does not disturb other students. An electronic communication aid would come under this access arrangement, as would any laptops or other electronic devices used.

"Schools should ensure that pupils regularly save their work. Pupils cannot restart a test, and STA will not compensate or give special consideration if any work is lost. Any partially completed test scripts must be sent for marking.

After the test, the pupil's work should be printed and attached to their test script and returned in the bag for modified scripts. Schools should ensure that any test content is removed from the equipment."

(*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

For English: Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling, and Mathematics tests the equipment must not read mathematical symbols, read punctuation in the English: Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test or have any spell-check grammar check or predictive text functionality turned on.

The Exams Access Working Group strongly feels access to word prediction for students that have complex communication and access needs is essential for timely recording in *Normal Classroom Practice* and in testing conditions.

In addition to word prediction being restricted it is stated "Word processors or other technical or electronic aids may not be used to record pupils' answers in the English reading test." However, this may be the only way a student who relies on AAC can record their answers independently.

## Readers

Human readers can be used in Key Stage 2 testing for students who have are unable to read the test paper questions and instructions themselves.

*Readers must not be used by pupils who can read the test materials themselves.*

"*Readers:*

- *do not need to be specialists in the subject being tested*
- *must understand the test format*
- *must know what may or may not be read to a pupil in particular tests*
- *must understand any subject-specific issues that might occur*
- *may also act as a scribe if the pupil is not writing for themselves (section 3.1)*"

(*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

Some AAC users may qualify for a human reader but be aware that the restrictions on a computer reader are different to a human reader. Please see the section on *Word Processors and Other Technical or Electronic Aids* for more information.

There are specific requirements on human readers in Key Stage 2 tests which vary depending on the test type. For example, mathematical symbols cannot be read aloud in the maths tests, and only instructions can be read aloud in the reading paper.

Please ensure you are fully aware of the limitations across the different test papers on what can be read and what cannot. There is also an additional document named noted for readers in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests that you need to be familiar with if using a reader in tests.

**Rest Breaks**

Rest breaks can be used for students that experience fatigue. As AAC users may have complex access needs, rest breaks should be considered. During rest breaks, students must be supervised under test conditions, this is to ensure the integrity of the tests. If rest breaks are required as *Normal Classroom Practice*, adults may wish to split the tests up into sections with scheduled rest breaks in between. If a test is split into sections, there are some restrictions on how this should be done.

"If a school decides to split a test, they should:

- divide the test into sections, or plan when the pupil will have a break, during the hour before it is due to start
- keep the questions in the same order
- give the pupil an opportunity to attempt all parts of a paper, so that the outcome of the test accurately reflects their knowledge and understanding"

(*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

**Keeping Pupils Focussed**

During the tests if part of a student's *Normal Classroom Practice*, an adult know to them can redirect the student's attention to keep them focussed on the test. The suggested ways in the *Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA)* are to tap on the table or say the student's name. The person supporting the student to stay focussed must not aid the pupil in any other way and that is why it must be agreed in advance between the student, the person supporting their focus and the SENCo what this strategy will be.

"To enable pupils to keep focussed you should:
- agree the best way to focus the pupil before the test begins (this includes ways to draw the pupil's attention back to the task)
- be known to the pupil

- support the pupil on a one-to-one basis

You must not:

- do anything that could be interpreted as over-aiding the pupil
- advise the pupil which questions to answer or when to move on to the next question
- advise or guide the pupil about the order in which they should attempt the questions"

(*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA) October 2023*)

It is also possible for schools to hide subsequent questions in the paper using sticky notes or a blank piece of paper so that the student can focus on one question at a time. If this strategy is used the whole question must be uncovered, rather than only parts of the question.

## **Alternative Locations**

A student can take a test at an alternative location such as the student's home if there is a need to do so. In these cases, the Headteacher of the school would take responsibility for security and confidentiality of the test and ensure the test is delivered as per the test administration guidance.

An AAC user may need to use an alternative location if they require significant extra time within the tests and/or have medical needs that cannot be provided for in the setting for the extended length of time needed to complete the tests.

In one case we are aware of, a student took tests at home as they required significant (300%) extra time which then had an impact on administering all the exam papers in the allocated time. Keeping the student at home meant they had no time pressures on school closing for the day, or opportunities for the student to discuss the test with other students.

## **Other Access Arrangements**

To the AAC Exams Access Working Group's knowledge, there have been several access arrangements agreed across England for candidates who rely on AAC that fall outside the scope of what is described in the documents *Key Stage 1 Optional Key Stage 1 tests guidance (ARA)* and *Key Stage 2 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA)*.

These included:

- Modified phonics screen which was loaded onto a device accessed through eye gaze. Although this could not be submitted to the STA, the student was able to practice her access arrangements and her teacher gain valuable evidence of the student demonstrating her skills.

- Key stage 1 tests added to a student's AAC device within Grid 3 to enable her to independently access and answer the questions within the test using her eye-gaze access method, which is her *Normal Classroom Practice*
- Key stage 2 tests being carried out at the student's home, with 500% extra time, rest breaks and physical prompter.

New accommodations are being requested and developed each year for individuals and so this list of accommodations for exam access will grow over time.

# Roles and Responsibilities of People Involved

Various professionals should be involved in ensuring the young person can access examinations, and at various points in the young person's academic career.

Figure 1. Shows a list of professionals that could be involved in supporting the young person's access arrangements.

*Figure 1.*

*Access to Exams for Students Who Rely on AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)*

*The People Involved.*

| Home | Day to day in School | School Management | External | Supporting Exams |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student | Student | Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) | Educational Psychologist (EP) | Reader |
| Parents | Peers | Headteacher | Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) | Scribe |
| Extended family | Teaching Assistants (TA) | Specialist Advisory Teacher/AAC Teacher Coordinator | Occupational Therapist (OT) | Communication Professional |
| Professionals supporting in the home | Subject Leads | | Suppliers of AT (Assistive Technology) and AAC devices | Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) |
| Personal Assistants in the home (PA) | AAC Teacher Coordinator | | STA Representative | Teaching Assistants (TA) |
| Private Tutor | Class Teacher | | Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist | |
| | | | Relevant professionals from the Local Authority (LA) | |

Figure 2 shows the roles and responsibilities of those professionals involved with AAC exams access and considerations that may need to be made from an early stage.

*Figure 2.*



Class teachers understand and provide planning to support

AAC Expert, e.g. AAC coordinator or adviser (if applicable) in collaboration with therapists/specialists

Specialist Advisory Teacher/AAC Teacher Coordinator, Class Teacher, SENCo/Headteacher

Teachers and support assistants implement

Decision to take exams

Student and Family

SENCO and Headteacher kept informed

Developing normal way of working

**Roles and Considerations**

Training

Support in Exams

AAC knowledge

LA/school/other providers and supports access with AT/AAC

Familiar with student

Familiar with subject

Headteacher/SENCo knowledge of access arrangements

Producing Evidence

Test Access Arrangements Agreed

SENCo

STA Approval

Educational Healthcare Plan (EHCP) coordinated by SENCo

Reports (SALT, EP, AAC Specilaists, other specialists)

Student and Family agreement

Classroom staff, SENCo and Headteacher agreement

Assessments (EP, OT, SALT +classroom assessments)

# Testing Timelines

Below are the important timeframes for STA testing for 2023/24 and 2024/25 rounds of testing.

| Academic Year 2023/2024 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Stage 1** | **Optional Key Stage 1 tests** | May 2024 |
| | **Phonics screening check week** | Week commencing Monday 10 June 2024 |
| **Key Stage 2** | **English grammar, punctuation, and spelling papers 1 and 2** | Monday 13 May 2024 |
| | **English reading** | Tuesday 14 May 2024 |
| | **Mathematics papers 1 and 2** | Wednesday 15 May 2024 |
| | **Mathematics paper 3** | Thursday 16 May 2024 |
| | **Multiplication tables check** | within the 2-week period from Monday 3 June 2024. |
| Academic Year 2024/2025 | | |
| **Key Stage 1** | **Optional Key Stage 1 tests** | May 2025 |
| | **Phonics screening check week** | Week commencing Monday 10 June 2024 |
| **Key Stage 2** | **English grammar, punctuation and spelling papers 1 and 2** | Timetabled from Monday 12 May to Thursday 15 May 2025. |
| | **English reading** | Timetabled from Monday 12 May to Thursday 15 May 2025. |
| | **Mathematics papers 1 and 2** | Timetabled from Monday 12 May to Thursday 15 May 2025. |
| | **Mathematics paper 3** | Timetabled from Monday 12 May to Thursday 15 May 2025. |
| | **Multiplication tables check** | Within the 2-week period from Monday 9 June 2025. |

# Key Additional Information and Documents

Assessment and reporting arrangements (phonics screening check) (ARA) (STA)

*Key Stage 1 Optional key stage 1 tests guidance (ARA) (STA)*

*Key Stage 1:* Optional key stage 1 tests: access arrangements *(STA)*

*Key Stage 2 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA) (STA)*

*Key Stage 2: Access Arrangements Guidance (STA)*

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **AAC** | Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a range of strategies and tools to help people who struggle with speech. These may be simple letter or picture boards or sophisticated computer-based systems. AAC helps someone to communicate as effectively as possible, in as many situations as possible. |
| **Access Arrangements** | Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and *Normal Classroom Practice*. Access Arrangements allow candidates/learners with special educational needs, disabilities, or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment. In this way Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments.' |
| **Eye- Gaze** | Eye Gaze technology replaces the mouse or touching the screen so you can use your eyes to control a computer, tablet or communication aid.<br>The technology tracks your eye to see where you are looking.  To click or select, you can hold your gaze steady for a short time (called the 'dwell delay') and the system will click for you; or you can blink your eyes; or you can use a separate switch to click.<br>Eye gaze is used by people who cannot use their hands or other means to access the device or find other access methods slow or difficult. |
| **Key Stage 1** | Key Stage 1 (KS1) is the first key stage of primary school, a phase of education for 5-7-year-old children in England. Year 1 and Year 2 make up KS1. |
| **Key Stage 2** | In England, Key Stage 2 (KS2) is the term used to refer to the second stage of a child's primary education. It includes the class years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Children are typically aged between 7 and 11 years old in KS2. |
| **Normal Classroom Practice** | The term used by settings and the STA to describe accommodations made in the classroom for a student so they are able to access the learning in the classroom. |
| **Normal Ways of Working** | The term used by settings and exam boards in replace of *Normal Classroom Practice* for Key Stage 3 and above. |
| **Standards and Testing Agency (STA)** | The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is responsible for developing and delivering all statutory assessments for school pupils in England. |

**Appendix 1** KS1/KS2 *Normal Classroom Practice* Evidence Collection Form

This form can be used by the student's teacher(s) to record the support the student needs in their lessons. There is a space for observations made. This document could be used as evidence on *Normal Classroom Practice*.

**Normal Classroom Practice Evidence Collection Form**

| Student Name | | Academic Year | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | | Teacher(s) | |
| Class | | Support Staff | |

| Additional Needs | *Please use **X** to indicate answer.* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No concerns | Requires occasional support | Requires continuous support | Not applicable |
| **Concentration:** Staying on task, ignoring distractions, focusing on the teacher, remembering instructions etc. | | | | |
| **Organisational Skills:** Physical organisation of self and equipment, planning ahead with work, thinking about consequences before actions etc. | | | | |
| **Speech and Language:** Understanding their first spoken language, acquiring new vocabulary, ability to express themselves clearly in sentences etc. | | | | |
| English / Literacy — **Reading:** Ability to read a paragraph or more with ease and fluency. | | | | |
| English / Literacy — **Spelling:** Ability to consistently spell common words and make a good attempt at unfamiliar words. | | | | |
| English / Literacy — **Extended Writing:** Ability to write a correctly punctuated paragraph or more with ease and fluency. | | | | |
| English / Literacy — **Handwriting:** Ability to write legibly, with ease and at a pace equivalent to peers.( If needs support, complete the Handwriting Legibility Scale (HLS) form and speak to class OT) | | | | |
| **Word Processor:** Does the pupil need/use a computer for typing during regular lessons? | | | | |
| **Numeracy/Maths:** Demonstrating a basic grasp of number, algebra, data, shape / space and measure etc. | | | | |
| **Physical/Hearing/Visual:** Ability to access all activities despite physical, hearing or visual difficulty etc. | | | | |
| **Social:** Forming and maintaining positive relationships, conforming to social norms etc. | | | | |
| **Emotional:** Showing awareness of own feelings and that of others, managing feelings, confidence etc. | | | | |
| **Tests:** Ability to prepare for and sit an exam without close adult support. | | | | |

**Overall, how well is this student progressing in lesson/s?** (please include targets & current attainment where possible)

Does the student need additional access arrangements to access formal testing as part of *Normal Classroom Practice*?      **YES/NO**

If yes, show through evidence in class why and how the student needs access to this arrangement. Use the observation forms below to detail what is required.

| Observation | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lesson Subject | | Date/Time | | | |
| Summary of Lesson/Task (e.g. student needed to complete a writing task including…) | | | | | |
| Detail the difficulty the student is experiencing and what support was put in place to overcome this (e.g. adult refocussed the student, laptop was provided, one question provided at a time, separate, distraction-free room) | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Which additional access arrangements are required? (must be linked to observation/evidence above) *Please use ✔ to indicate answer.* | | | | | |
| Additional time beyond 25% | | Reader | | Scribe | |
| | | | | Rest breaks | | Separate room | |
| Early opening of papers to adapt them | | Word processor or technical aid | | Adult prompting for focus | | Alternative location (other than school) | |
| If so, how early? | | If so, what specifically? | | If so, what agreed approach? | | If so, where? | |
| Any additional access arrangements needed, not listed above? | | | | | |

**Appendix 2 –** Practice Tests Observation Form- Rest Breaks and Extra Time

This form can be used to record the time it takes to complete questions within practice papers and any rest breaks/extra time needed.

| Student Name | | Date | | Time Start | | Time Finish | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practice Paper Subject/ Name | | | | Location of Test | | | |
| Summary of Arrangements (e.g. scribe/reader/ word processor) | | | | | | | |

| Question Number | Type of Question (e.g. multiple choice/open answer/matching) | Time Needed to Complete Question | Rest Break Needed After This Question? (✔ or X) | Comments  (e.g. pupil is fatigued/distracted….) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
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| | | | | |

| Question Number | Type of Question (e.g. multiple choice/open answer/matching) | Time Needed to Complete Question | Rest Break Needed After This Question? (✓ or X) | Comments (e.g. pupil is fatigued/distracted….) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
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## Appendix 3 – Key Stage 1 SATs Case Study

**Case Study Number 1**
**Accessing KS1 SATs**

| Background Information |
| --- |
| Pupil M uses high-tech AAC in the form of an eye gaze access method to control a GridPad 13 on long-term loan from a hub. The device cannot yet be mounted to her chair due to the larger distance needed from the camera to her eyes.<br><br>She uses WordPower for some communication but as her literacy is growing is also using a keyboard Grid and prediction to quicken her communication. She will progress onto text-to-speech in due course.<br><br>Pupil M was in year 2, in a mainstream classroom. The school have made adaptations by providing an adjustable height table, and pupil M is positioned in the class so she can see the board and use her device at the same time. Her device is always positioned on her desk, she uses the device for communication and the recording of learning tasks through various grids which allow her to access word documents, PowerPoint and view PDF files. The student can print from her device, and save her work to the network for her teacher to view and assess electronically.<br><br>The pupil is achieving in line with her peers, and the school have had support from the council AAC Adviser in assessing her skills.<br><br>Recently the pupil sat her Key Stage One exams using her device. Although the Key Stage One SATs are seen as 'less strict' in reporting access arrangements, the school and AAC Adviser all agreed to work as if it was a Key Stage Two SATs pupil, thereby practicing the approach needed as the pupil gets older and supports the pupil's normal ways of working/normal classroom practice. |
| **Preparation for the Tests** |
| <ul><li>The AAC Adviser met with the support assistant, SENDCo and Key Stage One Lead in the school in September of that year to plan what needed to happen and by whom. The pupil was already heavily reliant on using the device to record learning however it was agreed that the format should change so that the pupil could be 'used to' the format before the day of the examinations. This was because due to a range of functions being inaccessible when having to skip between a PDF or paper test paper, a PDF or paper reading booklet, an additional screen to type answers into word. The team explored the use of Grid 3 instead as the pupil was already familiar with navigation cells on this programme (used for communication) and would allow one click between the test paper with questions and space for answers and the test paper booklet with reading material. The student could then access the test paper, reading booklet, write answers and communicate her needs with minimal effort and maximum speed without the use of an additional screen.</li><li>A document was drafted that shows the pupil's **normal classroom practice**. This did not need to be submitted to the exam board at Key Stage One, but would have done if the pupil was sitting Key Stage 2 SATs or above.</li><li>The AAC Adviser drafted up practice and previous SATs papers within the Grid in a format the pupil would need to get used to. This was supported by colleagues across the UK sharing their creations in converting exam papers to an accessible electronic format.</li><li>The support assistant amended other grids used for recording of learning to look similar to the exams access format. The reason for this is that at Key Stage 2, there is very little change that can be made to the questions and how they look, therefore the pupil needed to get used to this format to ensure she could access the examinations now and in future.</li></ul> |

- The pupil practiced the format and the practice papers when her peers also did so in addition to using the programme for other lessons and recording learning in other ways pulling from her communication grids and/or keyboard.
- The support staff were given specific training on how to edit the templates for lessons, meaning that the student could regularly access lessons in this way, gaining evidence as Normal Classroom Practice.

## Examples of the access arrangements put in place (Assistive Technology/Communication)
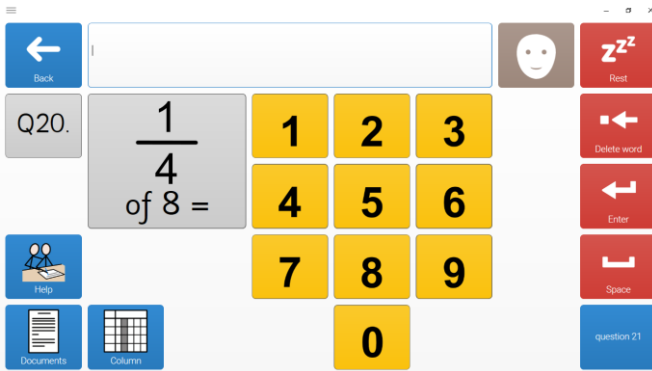


Example of maths test paper showing the question number, link to ask for help, link to mathematics working out grid pages and ability to answer the question on the page.

Accessing the test paper this way meant that a scribe was not needed, and sped up the time taken to complete the paper. If a scribe was used, student M would still need to click to communicate the answer for the scribe, but the scribe would then need to write it down.



Example of the reading paper showing a multiple choice answer question type. The image and text from the paper was translated across into the software. Student M would simply read all the answers on screen, then select the correct one. The correct answer would go up the box at the top which can be saved and printed as a word document file. Student M was encouraged in preparation for the test to click the question number first, then the answer so when printed the answer will be visible next to the question number.
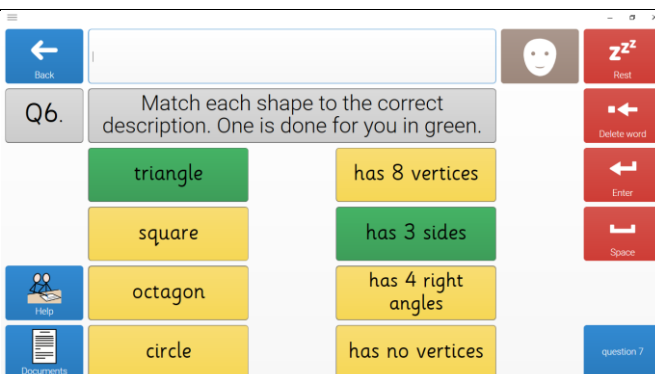


Example of a question asking to match the name of a shape and its features. The green coloured cells had already been matched as an example on the test paper.

## Preparing for the Tests

- The papers could be accessed from the 1st May with all students to have taken the tests before the end of May at a time of the school's choosing. The school took the tests later on in that month which allowed the AAC Adviser some time to convert the papers.

- The AAC Adviser opened each paper and took a one copy of each answer booklet and each paper to be scanned in electronically.
- The AAC Adviser was escorted in accessing the papers and was required to note down what was taken and dates and times the papers were taken and returned from the secure location
- The AAC Adviser used a laptop that was not networked and did not have access to Wi-Fi. This was to prevent any accidental human error in publishing the papers somewhere inadvertently.
- Once the papers had been scanned and returned, the AAC Adviser spent two days in a locked room in the school, converting the exam papers into the accessible format needed using a copy of the software the pupil was using. Each working copy was saved on an encrypted USB stick rather than on the laptop which was taken away from school.
- Once all the papers have been converted and tested by the AAC Adviser, the encrypted USB stick was locked away with the exam papers and access was granted by emailing the password to the examinations lead.
- Instructions were sent to the school on how to get each grid (paper) off the USB stick and onto the pupil's device. This was done one at a time, when the paper was being sat by the pupil.
- The AAC Adviser had offered to come in to show the support assistant how to do this before the first exam, however the support assistant had practiced this before the first exam, so the AAC Adviser was available by telephone to assist if necessary.
- The exams were chosen to be done when the teacher felt the class was ready to do so, so things like fatigue were factored in to when the exams took place.
- Once each paper was completed, the grids and text boxes were printed. The grids were saved onto the encrypted USB stick and the papers removed from the student's device.

## Time Management Strategies

- M was granted extra time to complete some of the papers that required longer answers due to the time it took to type. This was based on some practice papers where types of questions were timed along with the timing to complete the whole paper.
- M was given regular rest breaks which was agreed as a team before the test day

## Room Requirements

- The pupil uses VOCA, therefore, was allowed a separate room from her peers.
- The speech output was turned off for the pupil as she wanted (and could) sit the papers in the classroom with her peers. Whilst the cells were programmed as read-only within the tests (not spoken aloud), the sound was turned off on her device in case any cells were missed.

## Outcome of Assessments

- M sat and passed all of the Key Stage 1 tests. The school were not asked to provide any further evidence regarding access arrangements but did keep evidence of everything needed.

## Key Lessons Learned

- The AAC Adviser set aside **three whole days in advance** to edit the papers in the school.
- It would have been impossible for the AAC Adviser to be there at each exam, especially as they are not scheduled like Key Stage 2 SATs papers, therefore it is essential that the young person has someone working with them that has the **necessary IT skills** to transfer the papers.
- The speech output was turned off for the pupil as she wanted (and could) sit the papers in the classroom with her peers.
- Fatigue was factored into the time allowed to complete the papers. Breaks were had by the pupil when she needed.

- The pupil needed to practice the style of the exam papers by accessing mock exams, just like her peers did, therefore in advance the pupil needed access to multiple converted past papers that were created by the AAC Adviser. This meant the pupil could also tell the AAC Adviser if something in the format was not working well for her.
- Some things, particularly in maths examinations, **do not translate well into the electronic format**, for example the paper may ask the pupil to draw lines between words, highlight text, circle the right number, draw a graph. These are all difficult to translate into a format that works in the software. The AAC Adviser worked with the software developers to find solutions to specific questions in the papers and workarounds were found.