

DATA PROTECTION POLICY (Exams) 2025/26

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
P Wheatley	
Date of next review	September 2026

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	F Turnbull
Exams officer	C Crabtree
Senior leader(s)	P Wheatley, S Maher, L Wood, D Crosland
IT manager	Aspire
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Purpose of the policy

This policy details how Whickham School, in relation to exams management and administration, ensures compliance with the regulations as set out by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The delivery of examinations and assessments involve centres and awarding bodies processing a significant amount of personal data (i.e. information from which a living individual might be identified). It is important that both centres and awarding bodies comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 or law relating to personal data in any jurisdiction in which the awarding body or centre are operating.

In JCQ's [General Regulations for Approved Centres](#) (section 6.1) reference is made to 'data protection legislation'. This is intended to refer to UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and any statutory codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner in relation to such legislation.

Students are given the right to find out what information the centre holds about them, how this is protected, how this can be accessed and how data breaches are dealt with.

All exams office staff responsible for collecting and sharing candidates' data are required to follow strict rules called 'data protection principles' ensuring the information is:

- used fairly and lawfully
- used for limited, specifically stated purposes
- used in a way that is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- kept for no longer than is absolutely necessary
- handled according to people's data protection rights
- kept safe and secure

To ensure that the centre meets the requirements of the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR, all candidates' exam information – even that which is not classified as personal or sensitive – is covered under this policy.

Section 1 – Exams-related information

There is a requirement for the exams office(r) to hold exams-related information on candidates taking external examinations. For further details on the type of information held please refer to Section 5 below.

Candidates' exams-related data may be shared with the following organisations:

- Awarding bodies
- Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)
- Department for Education
- Local Authority

This data may be shared via one or more of the following methods:

- hard copy
- email
- secure extranet site(s) –AQA Centre Services; OCR Interchange; Pearson Edexcel Online; WJEC Secure Website
- Management Information System (MIS) provided by ESS SIMS
- sending/receiving information via electronic data interchange (EDI)
- using A2C (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/about-a2c>) to/from awarding body processing systems

This data may relate to exam entries, access arrangements, the conduct of exams and non-examination assessments, special consideration requests and exam results/post-results/certificate information.

Section 2 – Informing candidates of the information held

Whickham School ensures that candidates are fully aware of the information and data held.

All candidates are:

- informed via electronic communication
- given access to this policy via centre website

Candidates are made aware of the above, by teachers, at the start of a course leading to a vocational qualification, or, where candidates are following GCE and GCSE qualifications.

At this point, the centre also brings to the attention of candidates the annually updated JCQ document **Information for candidates – Privacy Notice** which explains how the JCQ awarding bodies process their personal data in accordance with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR (or law relating to personal data in any jurisdiction in which the awarding body or centre are operating).

Candidates eligible for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments which require awarding body approval using *Access arrangements online* are also required to provide their consent by signing the GDPR compliant JCQ candidate personal data consent form before approval applications can be processed online.

Section 3 – Hardware and software

The table below confirms how IT hardware, software and access to online systems is protected in line with DPA & GDPR requirements.

Hardware	Protection measures	Warranty expiry
Desktop computer	Hardware is checked on an annual basis. Software is checked on a weekly basis with updates installed remotely as soon as they become available.	N/A

Software/online system	Protection measure(s)
SIMS	Protected usernames and password protected
Awarding bodies secure sites	Protected usernames and password protected
Network	Protected usernames and password protected

Section 4 – Dealing with data breaches

Although data is handled in line with DPA/GDPR regulations, a data breach may occur for any of the following reasons:

- loss or theft of data or equipment on which data is stored
- inappropriate access controls allowing unauthorised use
- equipment failure
- human error
- unforeseen circumstances such as a fire or flood
- hacking attack
- 'blagging' offences where information is obtained by deceiving the organisation who holds it

- cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections

If a data protection breach is identified, the following steps will be taken:

1. Containment and recovery

Data Protection Officer will lead on investigating the breach.

It will be established:

- who needs to be made aware of the breach and inform them of what they are expected to do to assist in the containment exercise. This may include isolating or closing a compromised section of the network, finding a lost piece of equipment and/or changing the access codes
- whether there is anything that can be done to recover any losses and limit the damage the breach can cause. As well as the physical recovery of equipment, this could involve the use of back-up hardware to restore lost or damaged data or ensuring that staff recognise when someone tries to use stolen data to access accounts
- which authorities, if relevant, need to be informed

2. Assessment of ongoing risk

The following points will be considered in assessing the ongoing risk of the data breach:

- what type of data is involved?
- how sensitive is it?
- if data has been lost or stolen, are there any protections in place such as encryption?
- what has happened to the data? If data has been stolen, it could be used for purposes which are harmful to the individuals to whom the data relates; if it has been damaged, this poses a different type and level of risk
- regardless of what has happened to the data, what could the data tell a third party about the individual?
- how many individuals' personal data are affected by the breach?
- who are the individuals whose data has been breached?
- what harm can come to those individuals?
- are there wider consequences to consider such as a loss of public confidence in an important service we provide?

3. Notification of breach

Notification will take place to enable individuals who may have been affected to take steps to protect themselves or to allow the appropriate regulatory bodies to perform their functions, provide advice and deal with complaints.

4. Evaluation and response

Once a data breach has been resolved, a full investigation of the incident will take place. This will include:

- reviewing what data is held and where and how it is stored
- identifying where risks and weak points in security measures lie (for example, use of portable storage devices or access to public networks)
- reviewing methods of data sharing and transmission
- increasing staff awareness of data security and filling gaps through training or tailored advice
- reviewing contingency plans

Section 5 – Candidate information, audit and protection measures

For the purposes of this policy, all candidates' exam-related information – even that not considered personal or sensitive under the DPA/GDPR – will be handled in line with DPA/GDPR guidelines.

An information audit is conducted annually.

The table below details the type of candidate exams-related information held, and how it is managed, stored and protected

Protection measures may include:

- password protected area on the centre's intranet
- secure drive accessible only to selected staff
- information held in secure area
- updates undertaken every month (this may include updating antivirus software, firewalls, internet browsers etc.)

Section 6 – Data retention periods

Details of retention periods, the actions taken at the end of the retention period and method of disposal are contained in the centre's Exams Archiving Policy which is available/accessible from the school website in the Exam Policies and Procedures area.

Section 7 – Access to information

(With reference to ICO information <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/schools/exam-results/>)

The GDPR gives individuals the right to see information held about them. This means individuals can request information about them and their exam performance, including:

- their mark
- comments written by the examiner
- minutes of any examination appeals panels

This does not however give individuals the right to copies of their answers to exam questions.

Requesting exam information

Requests for exam information can be made to the Data Protection Officer in writing/email, including ID, such as passport or photo drivers licence, to verify that the correct information is given to the individual.

The GDPR does not specify an age when a child can request their exam results or request that they aren't published. When a child makes a request, those responsible for responding should take into account whether:

- the child wants their parent (or someone with parental responsibility for them) to be involved; and
- the child properly understands what is involved.

The ability of young people to understand and exercise their rights is likely to develop or become more sophisticated as they get older. As a general guide, a child of 12 or older is expected to be mature enough to understand the request they are making. A child may, of course, be mature enough at an earlier age or may lack sufficient maturity until a later age, and so requests should be considered on a case by case basis.

A decision will be made by Deputy Headteacher as to whether the student is mature enough to understand the request they are making, with requests considered on a case by case basis.

Responding to requests

If a request is made for exam information before exam results have been published, a request will be responded to:

- within five months of the date of the request, or
- within 40 days from when the results are published (whichever is earlier).

If a request is made once exam results have been published, the individual will receive a response within one month of their request.

Third party access

Permission should be obtained before requesting personal information on another individual from a third-party organisation.

Candidates' personal data will not be shared with a third party unless a request is accompanied with permission from the candidate and appropriate evidence (where relevant), to verify the ID of both parties, provided.

In the case of looked-after children or those in care, agreements may already be in place for information to be shared with the relevant authorities (for example, the Local Authority). The centre's Data Protection Officer will confirm the status of these agreements and approve/reject any requests.

Sharing information with parents

The centre will take into account any other legislation and guidance regarding sharing information with parents (including non-resident parents and a local authority (the 'corporate parent'), as example guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding parental responsibility and school reports on pupil performance:

- Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility
www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility/understanding-and-dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility
(Updated 24 August 2023 to include guidance on the role of the 'corporate parent', releasing GCSE results to a parent and notifying separated parents about a child moving school)
- School reports on pupil performance
www.gov.uk/guidance/school-reports-on-pupil-performance-guide-for-headteachers

Publishing exam results

Whickham School will publish exam results to the media or within the centre (e.g. on an honours board) in line with the following principles:

- Refer to guidelines as published by the Joint Council for Qualifications
- Act fairly when publishing results, and where people have concerns about their or their child's information being published, taking those concerns seriously
- Ensure that all candidates and their parents/carers are aware as early as possible whether examinations results will be made public and how this will be done
- Explain how the information will be published. For example, if results will be listed alphabetically, or in grade order

As Whickham School will have a legitimate reason for publishing examination results, consent is not required from students or their parents/carers for publication. However, if a student or their parents/carers have a specific concern about publication of their results, they have the right to object. This objection must be made in writing to the Deputy Headteacher, who will consider the objection before making a decision to publish and reply with a good reason to reject the objection to publish the exam results.

Section 8 – Table recording candidate exams-related information held

For details of how to request access to information held, refer to section 7 of this policy (**Access to information**)

For further details of how long information is held, refer to section 6 of this policy (**Data retention periods**)

Information type	Information description (where required)	What personal/sensitive data is/may be contained in the information	Where information is stored	How information is protected	Retention period
Access arrangements information	Information about the nature of the exam access arrangement	Candidate name Candidate DOB Gender Data protection notice (candidate signature) Diagnostic testing outcome(s) Specialist report(s) (may also include candidate address) Evidence of normal way of working	Access Arrangements Online MIS Lockable metal filing cabinet	Secure user name and password Secure username and password In secure office (SENCo)	To be kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Alternative site arrangements	Information about the address and exams being sat off site.	Candidate number Address	Access Arrangements Online MIS	Secure user name and password Secure username and password	To be kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Attendance registers copies	Information about candidates and their exam access arrangements.	Candidate name Candidate number Exam access arrangements	MIS Paper copies filed in exams cupboard	Secure username and password. Lockable room.	To be kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.

Information type	Information description (where required)	What personal/sensitive data is/may be contained in the information	Where information is stored	How information is protected	Retention period
Candidates' scripts	Completed scripts	Candidate name Candidate number	Completed scripts are stored in the exam cupboard in the secure storage until collection by ParcelForce	The secure storage and exams cupboard are both locked.	Until the next ParcelForce collection but no more than 4 days.
Candidates' work		Candidate's name	On the work	Kept in locked cupboards	Until the end of the academic year. Then it is given to the candidate.
Certificates	Exam certificates	Candidate name Date of birth Grades obtained	The certificates are kept in a locked filing cabinet.	The filing cabinet is kept locked when not in use.	Certificates are kept for up to five years and then confidentially destroyed or returned to the awarding body as required.
Certificate destruction information		Candidate name	Network	Secure username and password	Up to five years
Certificate issue information		Candidate name	File kept in the filing cabinet with the certificates	Filing cabinet is kept locked when not in use.	Up to five years
Conflicts of interest records		Staff names Candidate names	On the Google Drive	Secure username and password	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Entry information	The information about which subjects the candidate will sit in the season.	Candidate name Candidate number	MIS Exam cupboard	Secure username and password	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been

Information type	Information description (where required)	What personal/sensitive data is/may be contained in the information	Where information is stored	How information is protected	Retention period
					completed, whichever is later.
Exam room incident logs	Information about incidents during exams	Candidate name Candidate number	Exam cupboard	Locked when not in use	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Invigilator and facilitator training records	Certificates and attendance registers for training completed by invigilators.	Invigilator names	Exam cupboard Network	Locked when not in use. Secure username and password	Kept until the start of the new academic year when update training is completed.
Overnight supervision information	Details of where the candidate will be staying between clash exams.	Candidate name Candidate number Address of accommodation	Network Exam cupboard	Secure username and password. Locked when not in use.	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Post-results services: confirmation of candidate consent information	Details of written requests from candidates for post results services.	Candidate name Candidate number Email address Telephone number	Exam cupboard Google sheet	Locked when not in use. Username and password protected	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Post-results services: requests/outcome information	Outcomes of post results services.	Candidate name Candidate number Candidate results	Exam cupboard Google sheet SIMS	Locked when not in use.	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been

Information type	Information description (where required)	What personal/sensitive data is/may be contained in the information	Where information is stored	How information is protected	Retention period
				Username and password protected Username and password protected	completed, whichever is later.
Post-results services: scripts provided by ATS service	Candidate scripts	Candidate name Candidate number	Exam cupboard (hard copies) Google sheet Network	Locked when not in use. Username and password protected Username and password protected	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Post-results services: tracking logs		Candidate name Candidate number	Google sheet	Username and password protected	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Resolving timetable clashes information		Candidate name Candidate number	Exam cupboard (hard copies) Google sheet Network	Locked when not in use. Username and password protected Username and password protected	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Results information		Candidate name Candidate number	SIMS Google Sheets	Username and password protected	Until candidate details removed from school MIS system.

Information type	Information description (where required)	What personal/sensitive data is/may be contained in the information	Where information is stored	How information is protected	Retention period
		Candidate results	Exam cupboard (hard copies)	Username and password protected Locked when not in use.	
Seating plans		Candidate name Candidate number	SIMS Exam cupboard (hard copies)	Username and password protected Locked when not in use.	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Post-results services: scripts provided by ATS service	Candidate scripts	Candidate name Candidate number	Exam cupboard (hard copies) Google sheet Network	Locked when not in use. Username and password protected Username and password protected	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Special consideration information		Candidate name Candidate number Candidate address Other sensitive information	Awarding body's secure site. Google Sheets Exam cupboard (hard copies)	Username and password protected Username and password protected Locked when not in use.	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Suspected malpractice reports/outcomes		Candidate name Candidate number Other sensitive information	Awarding body's secure site. Google Sheets	Username and password protected	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results

Information type	Information description (where required)	What personal/sensitive data is/may be contained in the information	Where information is stored	How information is protected	Retention period
			Exam cupboard (hard copies)	Username and password protected Locked when not in use.	enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Transferred candidate arrangements		Candidate name Candidate number	Awarding body's secure site. Google Sheets Exam cupboard (hard copies)	Username and password protected Username and password protected Locked when not in use.	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.
Very late arrival reports/outcomes		Candidate name Candidate number	Awarding body's secure site. Google Sheets Exam cupboard (hard copies)	Username and password protected Username and password protected Locked when not in use.	Kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.