



Staffordshire University Academy		Academy Policy Document			
Approved by:	LAC	Issue date:	Sept 2023	Review date:	Aug 2024
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Audience:	Staff	LAC	Volunteers		

Examinations

Contingency Plan

2023-2024

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	

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Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Mrs R Hillier
Strategic Lead	Mr T Holdway
Exams Officer	Mrs D Bate
SENCo	Mrs L Sinclair
IT Manager	Mr S Walker



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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Staffordshire University Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan also confirms Staffordshire University Academy's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place:

- a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

The following are key tasks required in the management and administration of the examination cycle which would not be undertaken if the Exams Officer was absent:

Planning

- *Annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered*
- *Annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines*
- *Sufficient invigilators not recruited*

Entries

- *Awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff*
- *Candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment*
- *Awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred*

Pre-exams

- *Invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams*
- *Exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared*
- *Candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates*

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- *Confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions*
- *Internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators*

Exam time

- *Exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies*
- *Required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration*
- *Candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies*

Results and post-results

- *Access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates*
- *The facilitation of the post-results services*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- **The Exams Coordinator (Mrs S Jones) will be nominated to cover the exams role and tasks with the support of the Strategic Lead (Mr T Holdway)**
- Additional support could be called up from members of the administration team and/or experienced exam invigilators
- Records of all tasks to be kept for the return of the Exams Officer

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

The following are key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process which would not be undertaken if the SENCo was absent:

Planning

- *Candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements*
- *Centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010*
- *Evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated*

Pre-exams

- *Approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body*
- *Centre-delegated arrangements not put in place*
- *Modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline*
- *Staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained*

Exam time

- *Access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms*

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Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Senior Leadership Team to appoint an Acting SENCo to cover the role and tasks
- Acting SENCo to liaise with Exams Officer regarding examination arrangements
- Records of all tasks to be kept safe for the return of the SENCo

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken if a member of teaching staff were absent, including:

- *Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received*
- *Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies*
- *Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled*
- *Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking*
- *Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Subject leads (or Director where required) will take responsibility for exam entries and non-assessment marks and procedures in the absence of a member of staff
- Controlled Assessments are planned for by Subject leads (or Director where required)
- Subject leads (or Director where required) will ensure the internal appeals procedure is followed and all internal deadlines are met.

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams

Invigilator shortage on peak exam days

Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Check availability of other invigilators
- Check with SENCo for any support staff who may be available

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- Liaise with SLT for available academy staff with training provided where needed prior to the exam
- SLT to invigilate where necessary

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning

Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Room bookings to be made in advance to ensure there are sufficient rooms for exam students
- Contact SLT for any available rooms
- Update seating plans and inform students to avoid late candidates
- Ensure additional exam rooms have posters and signage
- Refer to SLT or the Head of Centre for further advice where needed

6. Cyber attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Contact the IT manager immediately for assistance
- Refer to the Risk Protection Arrangement Cyber response plan
- Exams office to inform the relevant awarding organisation of the incident
- If required standalone laptops can be implemented in a need arises.
- Ensure paperwork is printed in advance i.e. seating plans and Access Arrangements
- Keep IT managers phone number non-electronically in case of emergency contact

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

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- Contact the IT manager immediately for assistance
- All exams entries should be made well in advance of the deadline to avoid the issue. If the entries are left to the last minute and there is an IT failure, firstly ring the relevant awarding organisation to explain the situation: an extension may be given
- Ensure paperwork is printed in advance i.e. seating plans and Access Arrangements
- Try to access Sims through another computer i.e. from home
- Inform IT support of the pre-release results days and results days to ensure no updates or changes to the system are planned and a member of IT is available
- Ensure all necessary passwords are kept non-electronically
- Keep IT managers phone number non-electronically in case of emergency contact

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Invigilators to follow the Emergency Evacuation Procedure
- Advise candidates to leave all papers and follow the invigilators to the relevant meeting points if they are to be evacuated
- Candidates to be supervised throughout the evacuation and all timings to be recorded
- Exams office to inform the relevant awarding organisation of the incident

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of Staffordshire University Academy to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series
- If the academy was closed or a Year Group taking examinations was absent from academy due to a lockdown, teachers would utilise online learning Microsoft Teams
- Practical elements of qualifications would be managed in line with guidance from awarding organisations

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10. Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations– centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Centre to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations
- Centre to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- Centre to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons they should be aware that special consideration rules will not apply. (This must focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)

11. Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Alternative venue details: Staffordshire University Academy has a reciprocal arrangement with other local high schools

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Centre to open for examinations and candidates only, if possible.
- In the event that the Head of Centre decides the academy site cannot be opened, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding organisations will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting exams that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.
- Centre to use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible).
- Centre may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- Centre to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.
- Special Consideration can be used where candidates are unable to achieve a result due to one of the above factors.

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- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. The academy would ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- As a last resort awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, the academy should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- For any examinations where the academy makes our own collection arrangements, investigation into alternative-options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations*.
- The academy to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

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- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Distribution of results:
 - Arrangements should be made to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
 - Coordination of access to post results services from an alternative site should be arranged
 - The academy to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- Facilitation of post results services:
 - Arrangements should be made to make post results requests at an alternative location (Staffordshire University Academy has a reciprocal arrangement with other local high schools, which would be communicated if/when the need arises)
 - Contact should be made with the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England

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- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [exceptional closure days](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [bomb threats](#) procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

See also the [JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

In the event of disruption

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's [Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
4. Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

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Exam planning

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

Wider communications

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA Regulation](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [Department for Education](#) in England, the [Department of Education](#) in Northern Ireland and the [Welsh Government](#) will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](#) (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education should continue in 2021 to 2022 with schools remaining open and that examinations and assessments will go ahead in both autumn 2021 and summer 2022.

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for exam timetables.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur.

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(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (updated 30 September 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>)

JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.

15.3 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency days' for examinations, summer 2023. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of 'contingency days' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2023, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2021-2022** <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ notice - Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective from 11 October 2021) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents



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JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam disruption www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergencyplanning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>

Wales

School closures: examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather: guidance for schools gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School - exceptional closure of schools www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the [NCSC website](#).

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

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Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

1. [More ransomware attacks on UK education - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)
2. [Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](#)
3. [Offline backups in an online world](#)
4. [Backing up your data](#)
5. [Practical resources to help improve your cyber security](#)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)