

LEARNING SUPPORT ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the progress made in the provision of support for students at Worcester Sixth Form College who have learning support needs. It summarises the support given to those students this academic year, many of whom have required the services of the Learning Support Department: -

- with physical disabilities
- having sensory impairment
- having mental health issues
- with specific learning difficulties
- with English as an additional language
- requiring learning support/study skills
- requiring assessment for examination considerations
- requiring special examination considerations

It also acknowledges the changes in departmental staff and concludes with recommendations for the 2025/2026 academic year.

DEPARTMENT CHANGES

New staff 2024/2025:

Adam Redmond – Learning Support Assistant (Level 2)

Barrett Viljoen – Learning Support Assistant (Level 2)

Dan Hodgson – Learning Support Assistant (Level 2)

Shelley Morgan – Learning Support Assistant (Level 2) & Impact Co-ordinator

Anne-Marie Mead – Teacher MFL, has contributed to the supervision of a number of Impact sessions this academic year.

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE (EHC) PLAN PROVISION

The process of responding to the Local Authority “Request for a Placement” within a fifteen-day period remains the same. In this period the Learning Support Manager gathers information from both the Case Worker and current SENCo to establish suitability of a place of the individual request. This information is then emailed to the Case Worker on their proforma, where we decide if we feel we are able to offer a place of study.

We currently have 14 students who have an EHC plan and annual reviews are carried out with both student and parent/guardian attending and submitted to Local Authority within 14 days. There are three Local Authorities who we have liaised with in terms of current students and potential new starters. When reviews are completed, teachers are notified of any changes to the student’s individual needs via the portal and progress is closely monitored and shared with SLT termly.

This academic year we have seen an increase in placement consultations, we have currently received 31 requests for a Placement directly from the Local Authority, compared with 19 last year, with at least 4 further consultations anticipated. The Local Authority often consults with us as a college in their process of ruling out suitability of mainstream settings, hence the recommendation that we are unable to meet certain applicant’s individual needs. As in previous years it is likely these will not be the only students applying to college who have an EHCP. Some applications are submitted by students with EHCPs without prior consultation from the Local Authority. If this is declared on application, a second interview is arranged to allow the Learning Support Manager to contact the Local Authority and school SENCo.

In order to ensure a smooth transition between school and college, the Learning Support department plays a crucial role. Every student that applies to the college has the opportunity to declare if they have a learning need, a disability, or a medical condition that may affect their learning, when completing their application form. If a learning need or disability is declared it will be arranged for the prospective student’s interview to be with the Learning Support Manager or Assistant Learning Support Manager, so their needs and the suitability of their desired programme of study can be discussed further. For those who do not explicitly disclose information of a learning need, they may have this included on the school reference where the school makes that disclosure. Helen Wright who works within Admissions is very thorough and communicates this to the Learning Support Manager along with the reference, so we have a record. Initial admission interviews are continuing to take place remotely via telephone. For some applicants there have been requests for either in person or Teams interviews and these needs have been accommodated by the Learning Support Manager and the Assistant Learning Support Manager. For some students needing that extra transition support, they have been offered a visit to the college to meet with the Learning Support Manager in the Summer term 2025.

The annual transition event for those students needing that additional support will be taking place on Monday 30th June 2025 & Tuesday 1st July. Email invitations will be sent out to the 78 students identified to date.

LEARNING NEEDS OF STUDENTS:

NEURODIVERGENT CONDITIONS

The support that students require with neurodivergent conditions (inc. ASD) can be complex, as no two students have the same support requirements. These needs are assessed with both the student and their parents/ guardians at the point of interview, so arrangements can be put in place for the September start. EHC plans also assist with ensuring that the transition is as smooth as possible and ensuring that required provision is put in place prior to enrolment.

In line with the increase nationally, we have seen an increase in requests from parents/students for referrals to be assessed for ADHD and/or Autism. This academic year we have responded to 10 referral requests with information from teachers, this is an increase from 6 last year.

The process for making NHS referrals has changed during the academic year, we have supported parents to navigate the process and provided the required information to support referrals. The waiting lists for ADHD assessment and Umbrella Pathway assessment are still lengthy meaning some students may complete their programme of study without obtaining a diagnosis. We have liaised with parents and students to identify areas of need and discussed available support and classroom adaptations.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

The numbers of students who suffer with anxiety/mental health issues continues to rise, and this has a significant impact on learning support and other pastoral services within college.

Due to the nature of one-to-one support and the professional rapport that develops, learning support assistants are increasingly on the receiving end of some very sensitive student disclosures. Having a designated Safeguarding Officer in college has made the process for reporting concerns and getting advice clearer. The involvement of the Learning Support department within safeguarding is recognised by college and the Learning Support Manager continues to act as one of the four Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads.

EXAMINATIONS

Jayne Gould, Exam Access Arrangement Co-ordinator takes responsibility for the coordination of access arrangements for exams. The positive relationship with Exams remains and we have continued to strengthen the communication between the departments. Andy May and Claudia Cole

are instrumental in aiding Alison Finch (Exams Manager) to develop the process of allocating alternative rooms for candidates and staff invigilation. Kirsty Amoli, Exams Assistant, was appointed in January 2025 and works with the team to ensure correct set up of smaller rooms.

There are 546 students this year having access arrangements compared to 495 last year (including illness and injury), which is a substantial increase. The number of students requiring support with exams continue to rise and this is a trend that will continue and can be partly attributed to the increasing number of examined units in vocational subjects, the requests for provision of “smaller rooms” due to mental health conditions, and a positive increase of awareness of various learning difficulties and ASD.

Applied subjects continue to require significant involvement from the Learning Support department who have considerable involvement in formal exams and assessments throughout the year in addition to support provided during internal assessment weeks. Due to ongoing support required for high needs learners, providing support for students in exams and assessments has increased pressure on the department staffing resources.

Assistive Technology provision is being reviewed and discussions with other members of the MAT have taken place and a trial of DocsPlus software is currently underway. The Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator and Exams Manager have delivered training to the invigilation team to increase their skill set and enable them to invigilate smaller rooms and facilitate Exam Access Arrangements that were previously fulfilled by Learning Support staff, to meet increasing demands.

APPLYING FOR ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXAMINATIONS

In addition to supporting students with their individual learning needs, a substantial part of the work of the Learning Support department is to conduct assessments for students who may need an application for exam access arrangements. Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for students based on evidence of need and their normal way of working within college. Access Arrangements fall into two distinct categories: arrangements are delegated to centres, and arrangements that require prior JCQ awarding body approval.

Access Arrangements allow candidates/learners with special educational needs, disabilities, medical conditions, or temporary injuries to access exams/assessments without changing the demands of the assessment. For example, readers, scribes and modified question papers. These arrangements will differ for each student depending on their individual needs.

The upward trend in the number of students requiring assessment for exam access arrangements continues; this comprises two groups:

1. Students who have a record of approved exam access arrangements at their previous setting, who need to be reassessed due to valid Form 8 paperwork not being received from previous setting, or previous assessments no longer being valid.

2. Students who have self-referred or been referred by their teachers who require access arrangements to be put into place following assessment.

The provision of exam access arrangements enables these students to access assessments without being disadvantaged by their learning needs. Teacher feedback is requested prior to assessments being conducted in order to establish the picture of need of the student's difficulties.

Sacha Elsey continues as our Exam Access Arrangements Assessor. Sacha is assisted by Amelia Brayford, Receptionist/Admin with arranging and confirming the Exam Access Arrangements assessments with students.

In person assessments have been carried out up to the March deadline for submitting applications for exam access arrangements set by JCQ for the Summer 2025 exam series. Assessments of Year 1 students who are sitting exams in the next exam series are scheduled to take place during the summer term. The increase in assessments being carried out this academic year remains possible to manage with a full-time assessor within the department.

Vocational subjects with examined modules continue to contribute to the increase in the numbers of students being referred for assessment for exam access arrangements. Increasing awareness of specific learning difficulties is also leading to a rise in the number of students requiring assessment for exam access arrangements.

The assessment list continues to be staggered across the year, prioritising those students who have examined modules on vocational courses, and GCSE resit exams for assessment in the Autumn term, with students sitting exams in the Summer series being assessed during Spring term.

Under JCQ regulations for exam access arrangements, all assessments are required to be conducted by a qualified assessor with a Level 6 qualification who determines the appropriate assessments to be conducted. This year we continue to use the Exact online screening tool as part of the assessment process, although other paper-based assessments have been carried out which has reduced the number of students screened using Exact on an individual basis.

Those WSFC students who intend to apply for university, or HE courses, require a more detailed assessment report that includes an assessment for underlying ability as well as the range of assessments that are carried out for exam access arrangements. We no longer offer this assessment in college and students will need to access this externally. However, the Learning Support team sends out information advising students about this on request.

Access arrangements must be applied for online by the JCQ deadlines and include:

- Reader

- Scribe
- Additional time of 25%
- Additional time of 10% for use of bilingual dictionary (but must show that the learning difficulty exists in student's first language and is not due to poor English language skills)
- Additional time of more than 25% and up to 50%
- Additional time of more than 50% (must be applied for directly to the relevant awarding body, with a detailed 'picture of need' to substantiate the application)
- Practical Assistant
- Oral language modifier
- Modified papers

The following centre delegated exam access arrangements can be put in place without making an on-line application:

- Use of a word processor
- Supervised rest breaks
- Prompter
- Smaller room and a separate room owing to anxiety/medical conditions
- Cerium overlay
- Fidget toys
- Ear defenders (without Bluetooth enabled)
- Modified papers

These arrangements are subject to our existing exam policies and supporting evidence must be held on file for inspection purposes.

The JCQ requirements are reviewed and amended each year, so it is important that the assessments carried out meet the current criteria when submitting applications.

The need for supporting evidence from subject staff regarding usual way of working and picture of need continues to be a requirement for all applications for exam access arrangements. Requesting and collating the supporting evidence and overseeing the completion of the Form 8 for each student, as well as scheduling and conducting the assessments has meant additional demands on the time of the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator and Assessor. The new system for booking assessments and sending out invitations to students is working well this year, however due to a significant number of assessments needing to be rebooked due to student non-attendance continued efforts to improve attendance to assessments is required.

A Form 9 is the requirement to record arrangements where a Form 8 or 8RF is not applicable. This form requires in-depth information to be included and must outline the evidence of need and the arrangement(s) required for the candidate. The Exam Access Arrangement Coordinator is responsible for the process of completing the paperwork and submitting online applications where required.

*Please see table further down for academic year figures

LEARNING SUPPORT

One-to-one learning support continues to be offered to students who have an identified need. Learning Support Assistants provide regular timetabled support sessions. The duration of the sessions allocated varies from 45 minutes up to 1 hour 10 minutes. This provision continues to be reduced this year on previous years because of changes to the timetable structure and fewer Learning Support Assistants on the team at the start of the academic year. Due to staffing demands of IMPACT sessions and timetable structure we have been unable to offer lunchtime drop-in support sessions this year.

Referrals for support are made to the Learning Support team by Pastoral Tutors, Teachers, Heads of Department, and Heads of Year, with details of the individual areas of support required. Need for support is also identified as part of the interview process. Occasionally students self-refer for support sessions if they feel they need additional support. To manage the increasing number of referrals received last academic year, a new online referral form was added to the staff portal at the start of this year. This enables Learning Support to assess need at time of referral, and to continue to track student progress and attendance more effectively.

Support sessions are allocated based on priority of need; using information provided to us in student applications, diagnostic and medical reports, and summary assessment feedback.

Learning Support Assistants keep a record of attendance, and the support provided at each session, individual learning plans are created, targets set, and feedback provided for EHCP reviews and Heads of Year meetings. LSAs liaise with teachers, parents and other college departments regarding student targets and any issues identified in sessions. They also work with the Learning Support Manager and Assistant Manager to update teachers regarding classroom adaptations.

In contrast to previous years, we have seen a decrease in the number of students referred for support this year, with 192 students on the list for additional support; 140 students have been allocated regular sessions at least once a week, we have also provided additional support to students within department workshops.

Attendance overall remains good, but as sessions do not appear on student timetables, many still require regular reminders of their allocated sessions.

ADMISSION INTERVIEWS

All applicants declaring a learning support need or exam access arrangements on their application form are booked in for interview with Sara Payne, Emma Duell, or Jayne Gould. Interviews are conducted on the telephone or in person depending on individual student needs. We liaise with Helen Wright, Admissions Coordinator regarding interview bookings. Being involved in the interview process enables us to get to know prospective students and keep an accurate record of their support needs; this helps with planning resources for the next academic year. We have seen an increase in the number of interviews with the team required for students applying for the next academic year. Additional interview slots have been made available by the team to meet demand.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANS

Emma Duell continues to have responsibility for overseeing the creation and implementation of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for students with a disability that may affect them in an emergency. This year 12 students requiring a PEEP have been identified.

Lift passes continue to be issued centrally by Nikki Pearson, Tutorial Hub Administrative Assistant/Receptionist, who records details of student need on a spreadsheet which is regularly reviewed to ensure we are aware of any students who may require assistance in an emergency/a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.

Emma continues to liaise with Chris Hart, Premises & Estates Manager, regarding plan content and notifying of any issues identified during practice evacuations.

AREAS IN LEARNING SUPPORT

We continue to use rooms 1.17 and 3.11 which are vital to the department as quieter study areas for students and are used for one-to-one support sessions. The Study Centre (room 1.17) remains very busy and a few of the vulnerable students use the student area on a daily basis. This space has evolved into an additional social space that some of our students access between lessons and is also used as a smaller exam room during external and internal exams and assessments. A small number of vulnerable students have been granted permission to use room 3.11 as a quiet space to study or to consume cold food and drinks.

IMPACT SESSIONS & INDEPENDENT STUDY

Each student is timetabled to attend one impact session a week. A Learning Support Assistant is allocated to register and deliver each session in rooms 1.24 and 1.25. The sessions are a valuable additional opportunity for LSAs to check in with students who are being supported by the department.

Impact sessions have been successfully researched and planned collaboratively, input made by Tutors, Student Services, Progression department and Learning support team. Our Impact Co-ordinator prepared the visual slides for the Learning Support Assistants to deliver in Impact sessions. We have recently received positive and constructive feedback on these sessions following a student survey, some of the highlights being the introduction and use of Unifrog, support and guidance with personal statements, work experience and the opportunity to work toward an OSA Online safety certificate. Students have also enjoyed guest speakers and the opportunity to work on independent study.

Independent Study

Students register their attendance for Independent Study this year by scanning the QR code in the LRC.

LEARNING RESOURCES CENTRE

There are 104 computers, 64 seats in the group study area and 16 seats in the silent study area. Usage of each of these areas for each timetable block continues to be monitored this academic year to identify busier periods when additional staff may be required. Temporary use of a laptop trolley has increased student computer access by enabling students to work online in the Silent and Quiet study areas in the LRC where there are currently no PCs.

This year eBook usage is down by 7%. This is due to a very large drop in the usages of Criminology textbooks (approximately 5000 less than in the previous academic year). Other eBook use has increased by around 2500 downloads/views.

Behaviour in the LRC remains good and is monitored throughout the day by Learning Resource Centre staff and Learning Support Assistants, who are also on hand to provide support to students. Students require regular reminders regarding mobile phone use and in some instances, students have been referred to their Tutor/Head of Year for breaching the Student Code of Conduct.

Demands on social space within college continues to put pressure on the LRC. In some lessons students may struggle to find a place to study, especially when timetabled groups are booked in on the computer bays. We aim to limit class bookings in the computer bays to one group per session to limit impact on students seeking to study independently during their free periods. Some students continue to bring food and drink into the study areas despite reminders that it is not allowed.

Soft seating in the Reading Area has been removed from the LRC this academic year to encourage use of the area for study rather than as a social space.

This year several competitions were held in the LRC, including a reading challenge, Easter activities, and a Christmas Quiz. Displays of resources and information are updated throughout the year to reflect national/international awareness days, celebrations, and specific points in the academic year, such as preparation for the transition to university and living away from home.

Current stock inventory is continually reviewed; outdated or damaged resources are removed to ensure the usefulness and modernity of the LRC stock. Students continue to be asked for their recommendations for new resources, with new stock displayed in the quiet reading area.

GENERAL INFORMATION (LRC)

LRC Opening Hours (Term time)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday – 8.30am - 4.30pm

Wednesday – 8.30am - 4.10pm

The LRC is also staffed during some holidays to allow students to continue with revision/study.

During Easter, the LRC was open for 4 days 9am-4pm. This was well received by students with 15-20 students using the facility each day. Student feedback was positive with requests for opening during May half-term as it is felt that the LRC is a good environment to complete revision for their exams.

STUDY SPACE (LRC)

The LRC is the largest study area within college and the main port of call for those students wanting to complete work in their free periods. It is supervised by the LRC Co-ordinator and Learning Support Team.

- Computer area – 104 pcs
- Quiet Study - 16 tables with 4 chairs at each (64 seats)
- Silent Study – 16 tables (1 student per table)
- Quiet reading study area – 2 tables with 4 chairs at each (8 seats), 2 low upholstered chairs and low table

RESOURCES (LRC)

Overall, we have over 17000 resources in the LRC, consisting of:

Books 15592
DVD 1052
Music CDs 480
VLe Books 117

We currently subscribe to 40 periodicals and 8 online databases of a variety of resources with Jstor, Hodder Education Magazines. Dancing Times journal has ceased publication.

E-resources are accessed via links on Moodle or the Portal and some teaching departments also embed links onto their own pages.

We provide charging lockers for those students who want to bring in their own devices for use at college.

INDUCTIONS (LRC)

LRC inductions for groups of students are available upon request from teaching staff and offer both general information about use of the LRC and subject specific information. We also visit various classes throughout the academic year including EPQ groups to present information and advice about resources, research and referencing.

Please see below figures for Academic and Learning Support for this academic year:

SUPPORT AREA	Figures for 24-25	Figures for 23-24	Figures for 22-23	Figures for 21-22
ASSESSED EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS	126	85	57	105
CERIUM OVERLAY ASSESSMENT	42	36	9	8
EXACT SCREENING ASSESSMENT	40	185	129	30
ONE TO ONE SUPPORT	140*	192*	204*	145
SPECIAL EXAM ARRANGEMENTS	574	495	421 Including illness and injuries	398 Including illness and injuries
FULL-TIME IN CLASS STUDENT SUPPORT	6	5	4	2
PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANS (PEEPS)	12	4	-	-

**Please note that this figure includes students who have been contacted and offered one to one sessions who have not engaged with support.*

FUNDING

The funding Worcester Sixth Form College receives will be based on a national funding formula for its core provision, and additional funding will be for those with special educational needs. The funding is not ring-fenced and included with the main allocation in a 'single line' budget. For students requiring support exceeding the nationally prescribed threshold, the Local Authority should provide additional top-up funding. Students with an EHC plan will have a particular level of funding assigned to them and this can be obtained through the Local Authority as requested.

TARGETS FOR 2025/26 ACADEMIC YEAR

- Continue to ensure that all relevant student information is uploaded to the portal prior to students enrolling, and that all staff are aware of where to access individual student and group information.
- To continue to liaise with the Learning Support and Library teams within the MAT to share good practice and resources.
- Continue to work with Student Services and Pastoral Team to develop of programme for IMPACT sessions to support students to fulfil their progression aspirations.
- To commence work with the Mason Foundation to support students and families with the ADHD/Autism assessment referral process and to improve support for SEND students into adult life after college through the 'Propel' project.
- To investigate replacement of end-of-life laptops in consultation with IT Support to enable students to work flexibly with the LRC.
- Create a neurodiverse friendly study area within the LRC.
- Continue to explore assistive technology options such as Docs Plus/Claro Software (speech to text software) to trial for student use in exams and assessments.
- Access Arrangement Co-ordinator to continue to define a clear process and time frame for access arrangement assessments and documentation and to track status via portal to ensure all student exam access arrangements are reviewed in time for their first external exams/assessments.
- To continue to obtain data regarding learning support provision via student feedback at regular points throughout the year. Use of SISRA to monitor student progress within departments in order to target support.
- Ongoing liaison with teaching departments regarding Quality First Teaching practices to support students with SEND that will also benefit other students in their lessons. Learning walks will be undertaken to monitor this.
- Learning Support Manager to complete NPQ SENCo qualification.

The Learning Support department continues to be conscious of the ever-expanding specific needs of the students, and endeavours to be efficient and use innovative practice to ensure it is cost effective. The college will meet the changes in education by tailoring the support offered and making it relevant to current legislation.

Sara Payne
Learning Support Manager
May 2025