Chelmsford County High School

Examinations Contingency Plan

2023-24

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These procedures are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre Headteacher	**Mr S Lawlor**
Exams Officer Line Manager Deputy Headteacher	**Mrs J Cross**
Exams Manager	**Mrs F Hassan**
SENCo	**Miss H Pocock**
SLT member(s)	**Mrs Jo Cross, Deputy Headteacher** **Mr Adam Selby, Assistant Headteacher** **Dr M Palmer, Assistant Headteacher / Head of Sixth Form** **Miss F Harrison, Deputy Headteacher** **Mrs M Mulgrew, Business Manager**

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Chelmsford County High School for Girls.

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 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 and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan also confirms Chelmsford County High School for Girls compliance with the **JCQ's General Regulations for Aproved Centres regulation** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place

- 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 where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. 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.

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Operating across more than one centre

As the head of centre and/or examinations officer operates across more than one centre, the head of centre will ensure there is suitable senior leadership team support in place, so they can meet their obligations across all centres for which they are responsible in relation to ~~the~~ recruitment, selection, ~~and~~ training and support of staff ~~across the centres for which they are responsible~~. The arrangements covered in this contingency plan relate to venues local to the school in Chelmsford.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that Chelmsofrd County High School as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff. Heads of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. **Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

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Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- *annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered*
- *calendar 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*
- *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

- Head of Centre to appoint Examinations Assistant to take over responsibilities should absence of EO have the potential to affect the meeting of deadlines.
- Examinations Assistant to always work closely with EO to ensure they are up to date with the exam cycle and responsibilities at each point in time. This will be done under the supervision of the Deputy Head and Head of Centre.

2. **ALS Lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

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Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Head of Centre responsible for ensuring position is filled should absence have the potential to disrupt exam preparation.
- SENCo/EO to ensure access arrangements are in place by the end of the Summer Term of Year 9 for all students where possible.
- EO to plan access arrangements for exam days in advance of the Summer series, in consultation with SENCo.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

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Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken 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

- Class/course data in SIMs is correct and up to date to ensure correct entries.
- EO to collate entry information as early in the academic year as possible with Subject Leader.
- EO to forward all centre assessed marks in writing to candidates within the School deadline.
- Head of Centre responsible for ensuring the priority for teaching is the examination cohort and staff will be covered in good time, by trained professionals, in all circumstances.

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

- EO responsible for recruitment of invigilators in the Autumn term of the summer series. Advance planning required to ensure enough are available for all sittings.
- Head of Centre to be informed if recruitment necessary.

- Cover Supervisor and Examinations Administrator Staff to also receive updated exam invigilator training to ensure back up is available in case of invigilator absence.

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

- EO responsible for ensuring planning of rooms is completed by the end of the Spring term to identify potential rooming issues.
- Alternative venues within the school to be made available by teaching staff in the event of an unexpected incident.
- Head of Centre to liaise with EO to ensure no disruption due to room shortages.

6. Cyber-attack

R:\Staff\Miscellaneous\Policies\1 - Policies - Staff Related

- Passwprd [policy
- Patch Management Policy
- Ransomeware Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Data Breach Policy

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

- EO to contact awarding bodies directly to arrange alternative methods of information exchange.
- Head of Centre to be informed.

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

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Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

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Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Examination staff (including invigilators) to follow either the Evacuation or Lockdown procedures found in the exam room.

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 ▶ Head of Centre responsible for finding alternative venues/methods of learning. ▶ Priority given to exam cohort. ▶ Centre to communicate with parents and students.

10. **Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open**

Criteria for implementation of the plan *Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal*
Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption ▶ Procedures for absence outlined to students in examination booklet information distributed to students during their Examinations Assembly. ▶ EO to liaise with student and parents to find alternative venue / advise on next opportunity to sit the examination / apply for special consideration as required.

11. **Centre at risk of being unable may not be able to open as normal during the examination period**

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Criteria for implementation of the plan *Candidates at risk of being may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal*
Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption ▶ Open for candidates only if possible. ▶ Head of Centre responsible for finding alternative venue in agreement with awarding organisations. ▶ Offer students the opportunity to sit the next series.

Deleted: *Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations*

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 ▶ EO to communicate with awarding bodies for approval of alternative delivery of papers. ▶ If examination papers are received electronically via a secure external network, EO to ensure copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions. ▶ If an awarding body should consider scheduling the examination on an alternative date, the school will inform students and parents accordingly.

13. **Disruption to the transportation of 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 organisation arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body for any examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations*. centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.)

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EO to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers 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 ▶ EO to communicate with awarding bodies immediately. ▶ Student marks to be submitted based on appropriate evidence. ▶ Candidates offered the opportunity to retake in subsequent series.

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

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:* EO and Head of Centre to assess alternative arrangements for issuing results including an alternative site. ▶ *Facilitation of post result services:* EO and Head of Centre to assess alternative arrangements for making post results requests including an alternative site. ▶ Head of Centre to inform students and parents about alternative arrangements as soon as possible.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges
Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers
DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023 ~~(As exam season approaches the Department for Education is reminding schools and colleges to review their cyber security and backup policies)~~

Ofqual

General contingency guidance

- emergency planning and response (www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings) from the Department for Education in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England (www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools)
- exceptional closure days (www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools (www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)from the Departmentof Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct (www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-terms-and-school-closures)
- opening schools in extremely bad weather (https://gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools) - guidance forschools from the Welsh Government
- bomb threats procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office(www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/bomb-threats)

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

ee also the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/jcq-jointcontingency-plan/)

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

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

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- 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).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- 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 2021/2022 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.

(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 5 October 2023) 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)

Deleted: 30 September 2021

JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding body 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 All centres must have 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 where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the examination contingency 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 sessions' for examinations, summer 2024. 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 sessions' 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 2024, 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 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 this contingency arrangement so that they may take it into account when making their plans for the summer.

Deleted: 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. ¶

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(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for Conducting Examinations** 2023-2024http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations, section 15, Contingency planning)

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

JCQ notice - Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

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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; Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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 and extreme hot weather: guidance for schools gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

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.

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. Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK
1. Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks
2. Offline backups in an online world
3. Backing up your data
4. Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security
5. Building Resilience: Ransomware, the the risks to schools and ways to prevent it
6. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK

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