Media Encryption

Centre Guidance Academic Year 2025-2026

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Introduction and purpose

This document is designed to assist you with all queries associated with encryption before you send your USB to AQA.

Support from AQA

AQA support two methods of encryption:

- BitLocker, a default program for Windows operating systems
- 7-Zip, a free file archiver available online. FAQs and instructions are available here or found later in this guide

Any other methods of encryption may cause delays or require resubmission if we are unable to access the device.

If you experience any difficulties with encryption, please email our Media Support team at mediasupport@aqa.org.uk. Please include your centre number, component code, and the number of students for which this issue applies, and details of any steps you have already taken to encrypt the media.

Please note that AQA do not support encryption queries associated with Apple software.

Components requiring encryption

The table below shows all media components which must be encrypted. If your component does not appear in the table there is no requirement for student assessments to be encrypted.

To locate your password, please find the Centre Password List document available on Centre Services.

If your school or college requires encryption of media, please use the relevant password for the level and series of the component found on the Centre Password list on Centre Services, and include a note when posting the media that you have used the relevant password.

Components requiring encryption for the academic year 2025-2026	
Subject	**Component Code**
A-level Dance – Examined Performance	7237/X
A-level Drama and Theatre Studies – Examined Performance	7262/X
A-level Physical Education	7582/C
Projects Level 3	7993
GCSE Drama – Examined Performance	8261/X
GCSE Physical Education	8582/C

Using BitLocker to encrypt a device

BitLocker is the default Windows operating system encryption program. It cannot be downloaded and is a default program installed on computers when manufactured.

BitLocker will not decrypt or encrypt CDs or DVDs. You will need to use 7-Zip or a similar program to encrypt media of this type if you receive it.

This is a step-by-step guide for the BitLocker encryption process. **If the program does not appear after step 2, you will need to use 7-Zip to access the materials.**

If you experience any difficulties with encryption, please email our Media Support team at mediasupport@aqa.org.uk. Please include your centre number, component code, and the number of students for which this issue applies, and details of any steps you have already taken to encrypt the media.

1. Plug the USB or media device into your computer.

2. Click on **My Computer** on your desktop. If you're unable to find this, click on the Windows icon in the bottom left of your screen and then click **Computer**.

   In the image in step 3 you can see the drive is called **Removable Disk.** Yours could be labeled differently, but if you plug in the drive after opening the **My Computer** screen, you will see it appear.

   If you're unsure, double click the icon and check the files inside to confirm.

3. Once you're sure that it is the correct drive, right click on it. A list of options will appear. Click on **Turn on BitLocker.**

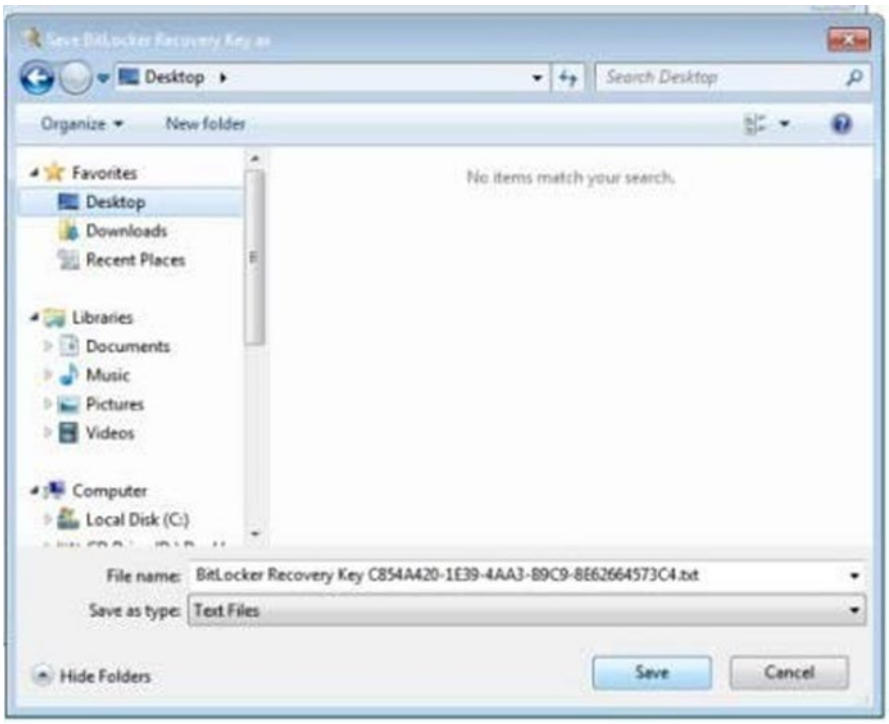
4. A dialogue box will open, tick the box in the top left hand corner that says **Use a password to unlock the drive.**

5. When prompted, type the corresponding password that can be found on the Media Password list on Centre Services. If you're unable to locate this, please email mediasupport@aqa.org.uk.

6. You will need to enter the relevant password for the series and level twice for verification, once in the **Type your password** box and then a second time in the **Retype your password** box. When complete click **next** in the bottom right of the window

7. The next window will ask you if you want to save or print your recovery key file. At this stage you should click **Save the recovery key to a file**.

8. Once you've named the recovery file and decided where to store it, click the **save** button. We recommend saving this somewhere like My Documents. The recovery key file is used if you mistyped the password to the device and can no longer access it. If this occurs, please e-mail mediasupport@aqa.org.uk.

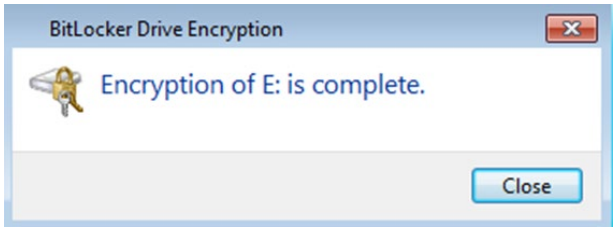


9. You'll then be brought back to the window shown in step 3. At this stage click the **next** button in the bottom right hand side of the window. The window below will appear detailing what will happen once you have encrypted the USB. Once you've read the information then click on **Start Encrypting**.

10. Once the encryption has started, a dialogue box will appear on screen detailing the progress of the encryption. This may take several seconds or minutes depending on how much information is on the USB drive.

Please ensure you do not remove media devices while encryption or decryption is occurring, as this may corrupt the media device and the files.

11. Once the encryption is finished, another window will appear informing you that the process is complete. Your USB is now fully encrypted using BitLocker.



12. You can check whether your password is correct by opening the file. Double click the files and you will be prompted to enter the password that you selected during encryption. Click **Unlock** and the device should unlock giving you full access to your USB and the files stored within it.

13. When you have finished using your USB, right click on the media device and select eject, once the device is removed it will lock itself automatically.

Using BitLocker to access an encrypted device

This is a step-by-step guide to accessing an encrypted device with BitLocker.

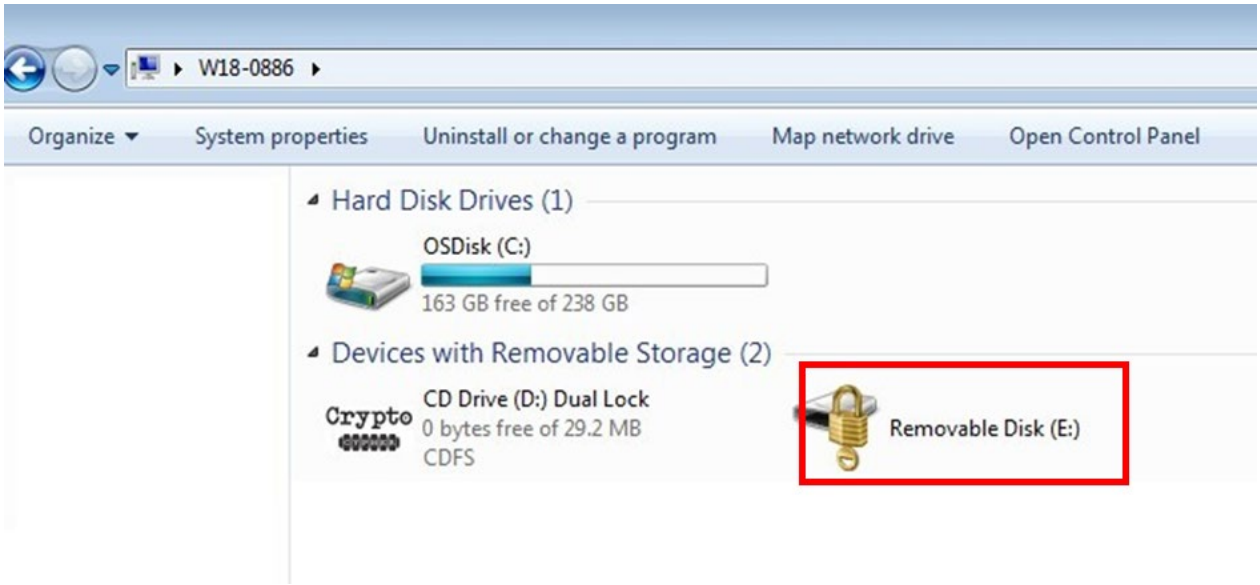
If you experience any difficulties with encryption, please email our Media Support team at mediasupport@aqa.org.uk. Please include your centre number, component code, and the number of students for which this issue applies, and details of any steps you have already taken to decrypt the media.

1. Insert the USB or media device into your computer.

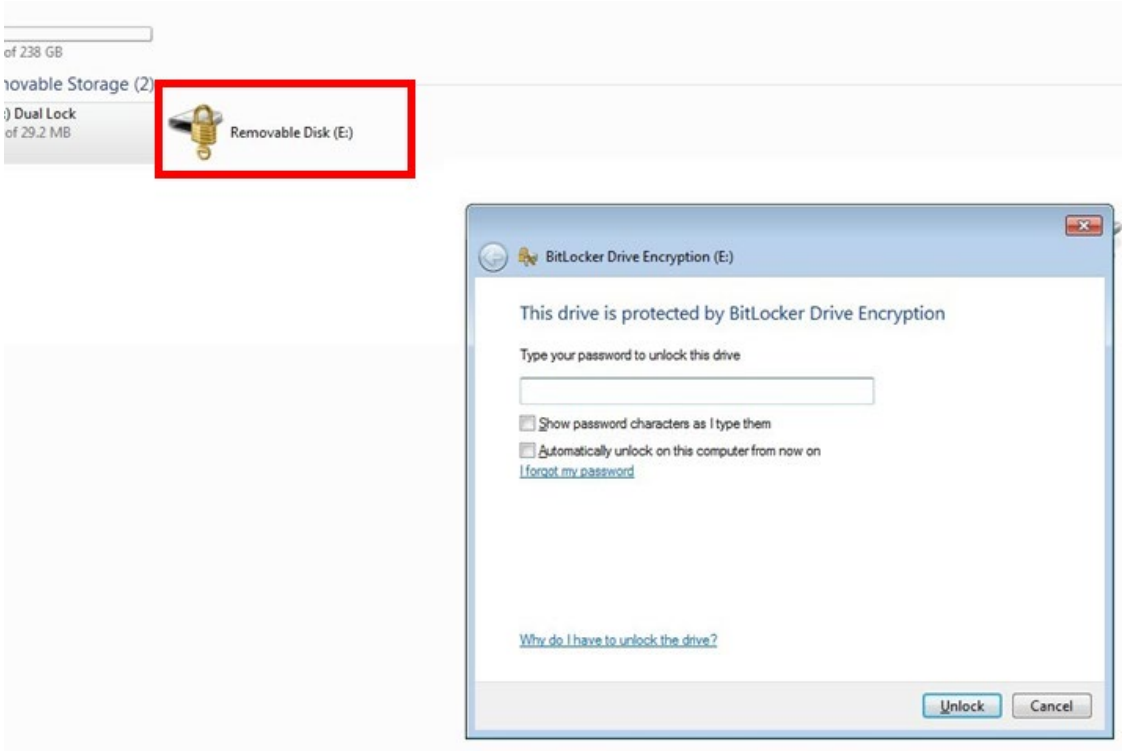
2. Click on **My Computer** on your Desktop. If you're unable to find this, click on the Windows icon in the bottom left of your screen and then click on Computer.

   In the image below you can see the drive is called Removable Disk. Yours may be labelled differently, but if you plug in the drive after opening the My Computer screen, you will see it appear.

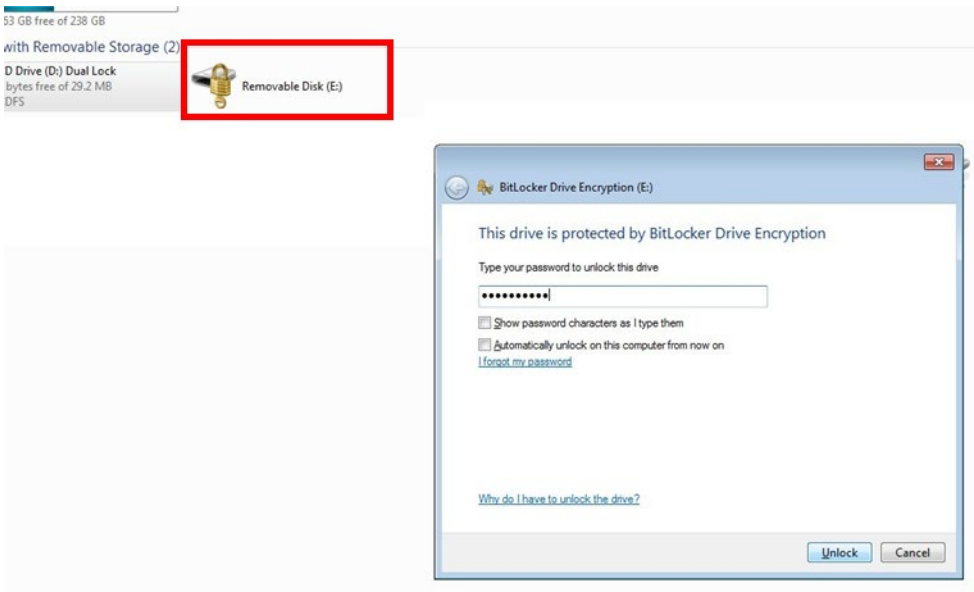
   You will also see that there is a gold padlock displayed on the drive – this means it is currently locked.



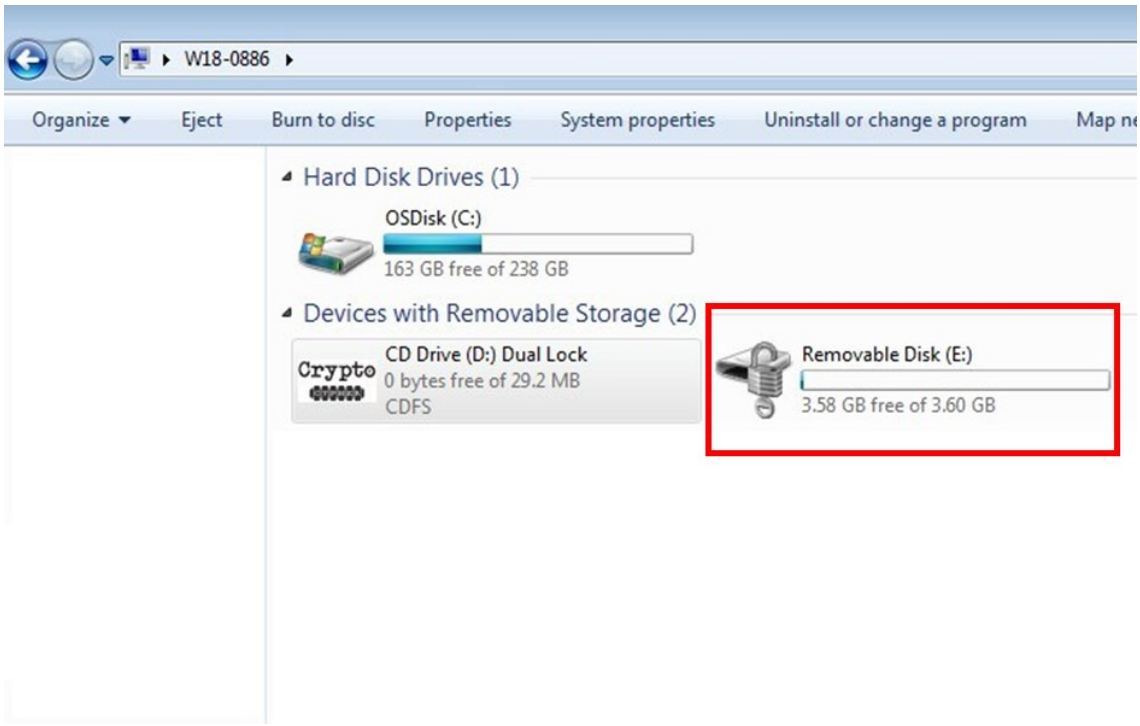
3. Double-click on the drive with a padlock and it will bring up the following screen.



4. In the field, type in the password provided. You can click on the box which states *Show password characters as I type them* if you need to check that you're typing in the correct password. Once you've done this, click **Unlock.**



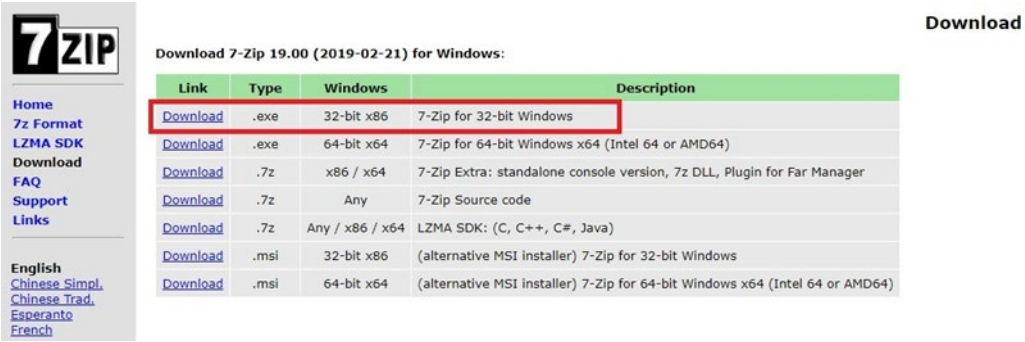
5. If the password is correct, the drive will be unlocked and it will appear as the following screenshot with the padlock now being open. You now have access to the media device. The drive will stay unlocked until you remove it from your computer - or until you turn your computer off. Once this occurs, the drive will lock and you will need to enter the password again.


W18-0886
Organize
Eject
Burn to disc
Properties
System properties
Uninstall or change a program
Hard Disk Drives (1)
OSDisk (C:)
163 GB free of 238 GB
Devices with Removable Storage (2)
Crypto
CD Drive (D:) Dual Lock
0 bytes free of 29.2 MB
CDFS
Removable Disk (E:)
3.58 GB free of 3.60 GB

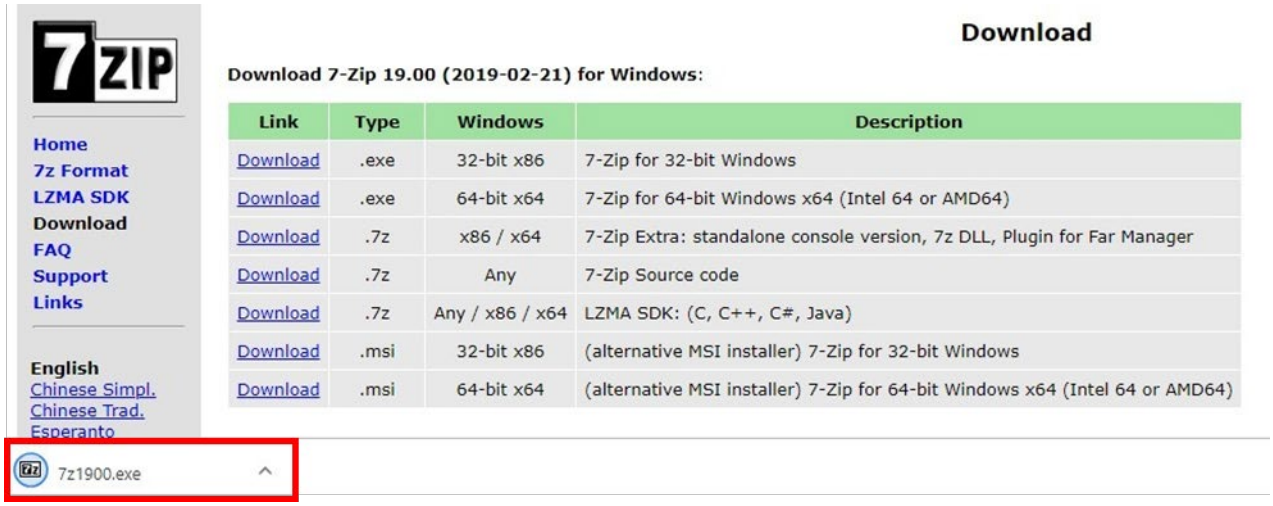
Downloading and installing 7-Zip

This is a step-by-step guide to downloading and installing 7-Zip file archiving software.

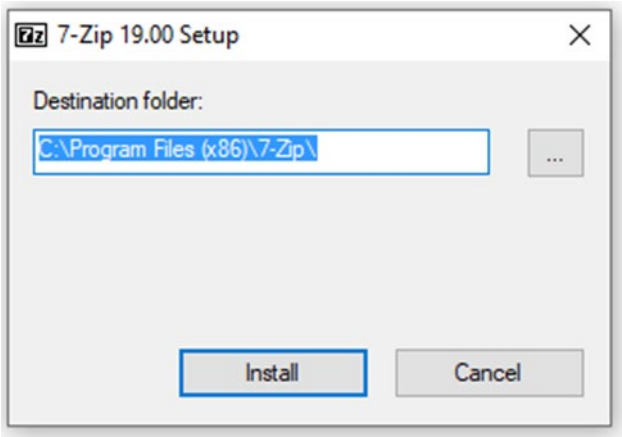
1. Go to 7-Zip's website here and navigate to the *Downloads* page. You'll need to download the correct version for your computer. The version will be the top link, shown in red in the picture below, which is the 32-bit Windows Version. This will support both 32-bit and 64-bit computers and we recommend using this version only.



2. Your computer may ask you to Open/Run the file, or save it. Please click **Open** or **Run**. Once complete, it will either open automatically, or you may need to click the item in the bottom of your screen, shown below in the bottom left of the following screenshot.



3. Once you click the downloaded file, or it opens automatically, the screen below will appear. You may select a custom installation location if you wish, or press **Install** to continue.



4. The setup window will confirm when the program is installed.

Using 7-Zip to encrypt

This is a step-by-step guide to encrypting a folder using 7-Zip file archiving software.

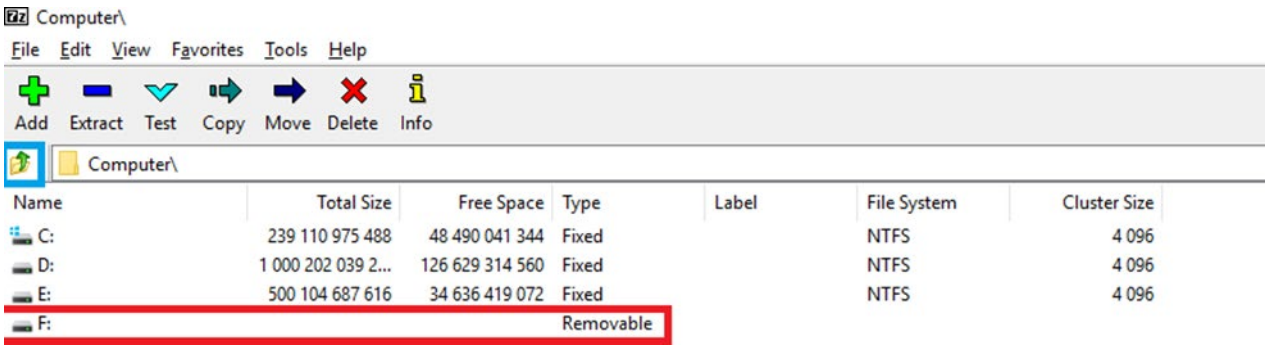
If you experience any difficulties with encryption, please email our Media Support team at mediasupport@aqa.org.uk. Please include your centre number, component code, and the number of students for which this issue applies, and details of any steps you have already taken to encrypt the media.

1. Please ensure that the USB or media device is plugged into your computer. You will need to open 7-Zip. Click on the Windows icon in the bottom left of the screen and type in the search box 7-Zip. The program **7-Zip File Manager** should appear. Click this to open the program.

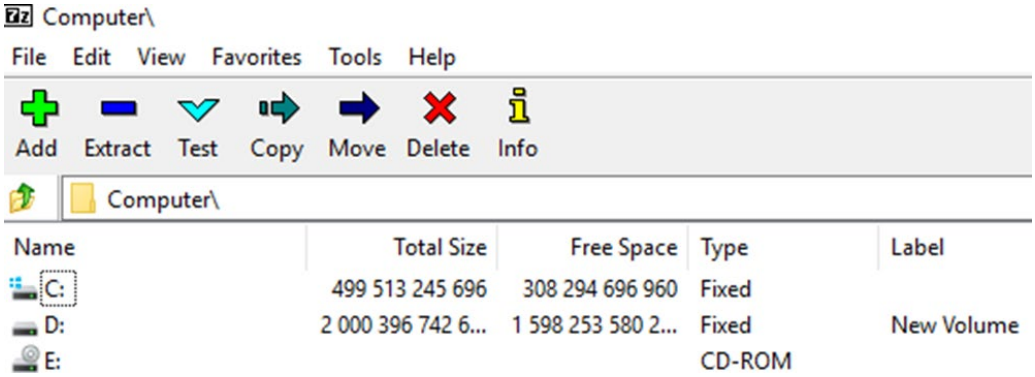
2. Alternatively, if using an older version of Windows, click the start menu, then click All Programs then 7-Zip and finally click on **7-Zip File Manager**. Once you've done this, the program will open and you should see a screen similar to the following screenshot.

3. Double Click on **Computer**. You will be given a list of several alphabetical storage devices. There should only be one device labelled *Removable* in the list. This should be your media device, outlined in red below.

4. To check if you have the correct folder, double click the device and the contents will be displayed. To go back to the previous view at any point, click the folder icon, shown in blue on the image below. Double click this folder.

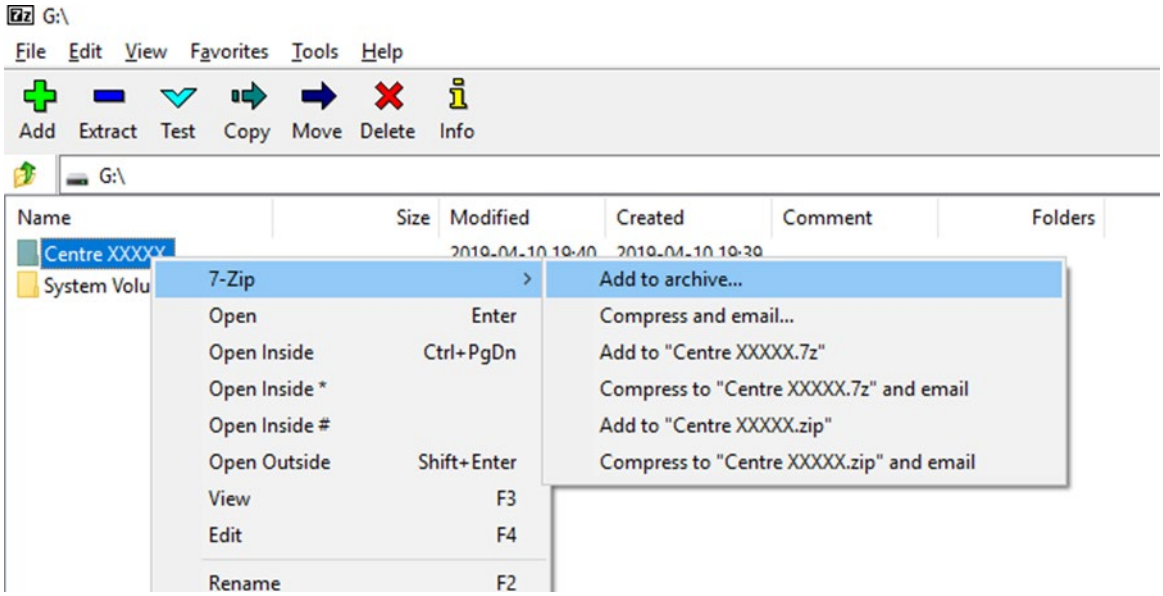


Please note that if you have a DVD or CD, it will show as the image below, with the type being **CD-ROM** or **DVD.** The remainder of the steps will still be relevant as you're encrypting the folder and not the media device.



5. Please note, in the screenshots for the remainder of the guide there may be a folder called System Volume. Please ignore this folder as it should appear on some media devices, but it is nothing to be concerned about.

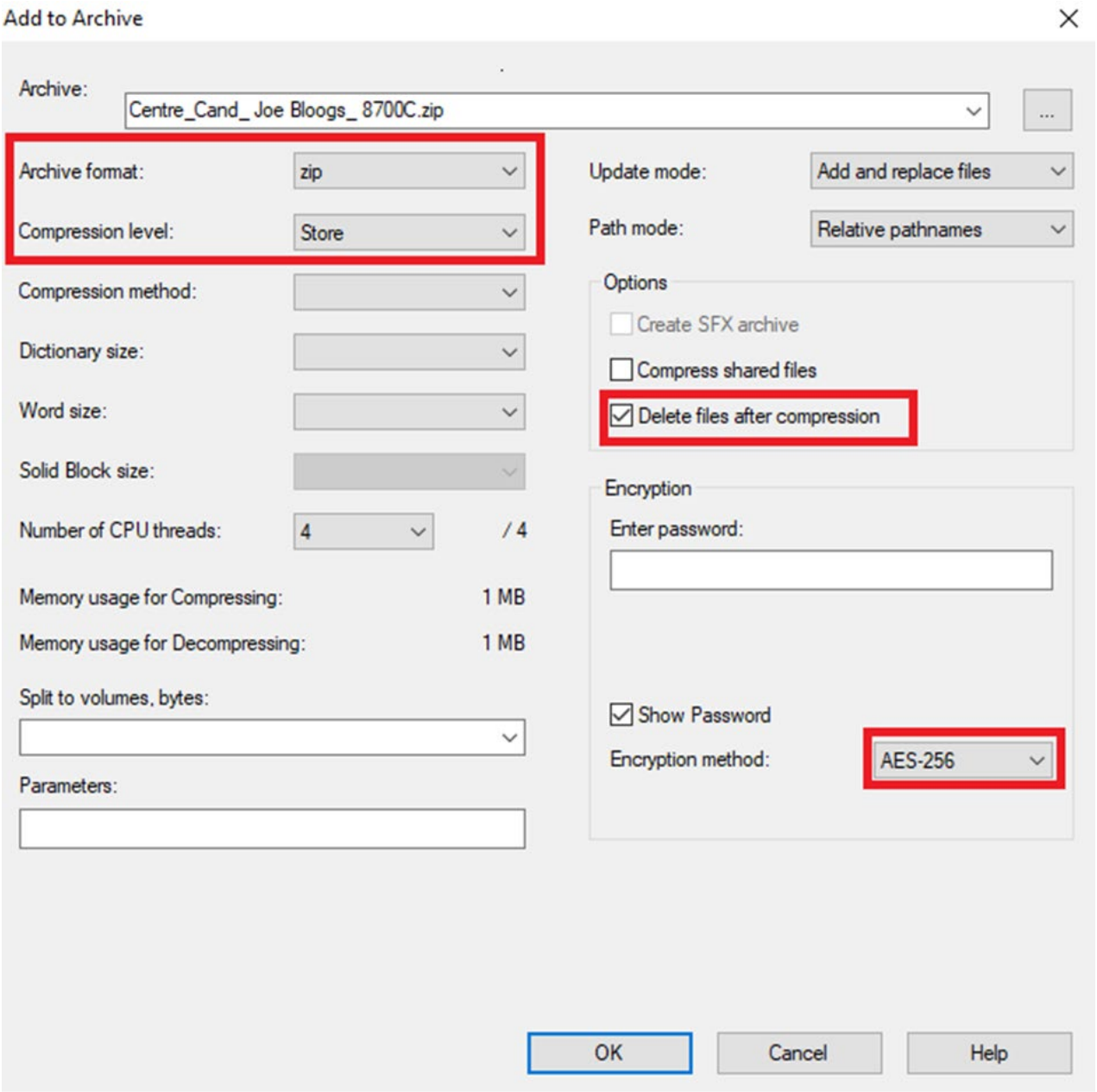
   You will be taken to the screen below. In this case, our folder is labelled *Centre XXXXX*. If you right click on the folder, a menu will appear. Click on **7-Zip**, then click on **Add to archive**.



6. A screen will appear with several options. We only need to look at the ones highlighted in red in the screenshot on the following page.

   Ensure that your options match those highlighted in red in the screenshot before doing anything else. All the other options should be left as default.

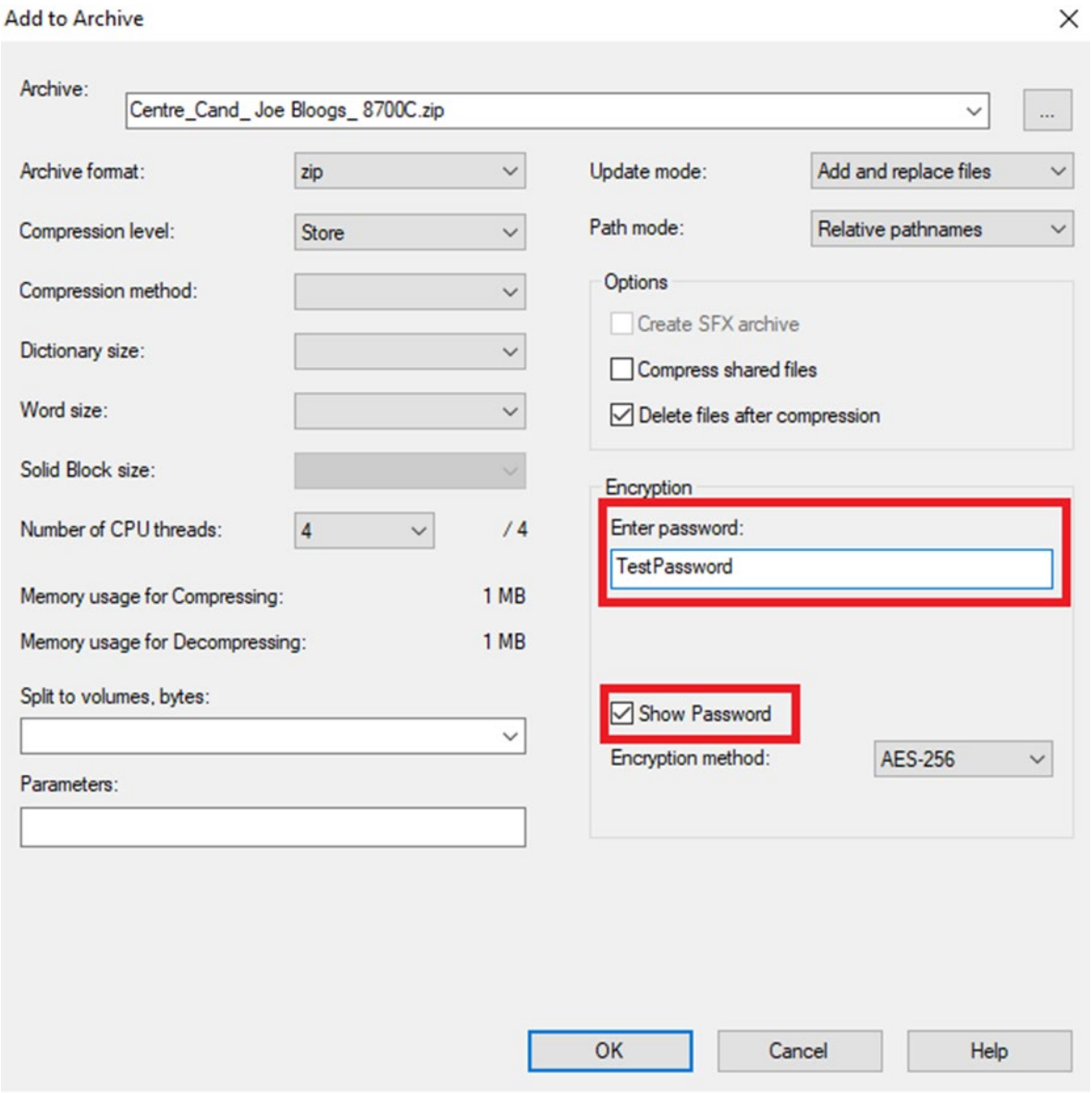
   Once done, you should not need to change these options again. It is worth checking the first two media devices you encrypt each day, to ensure the options have not reset.



7. Under the *Enter password* box, type in the corresponding password for the relevant exam series.

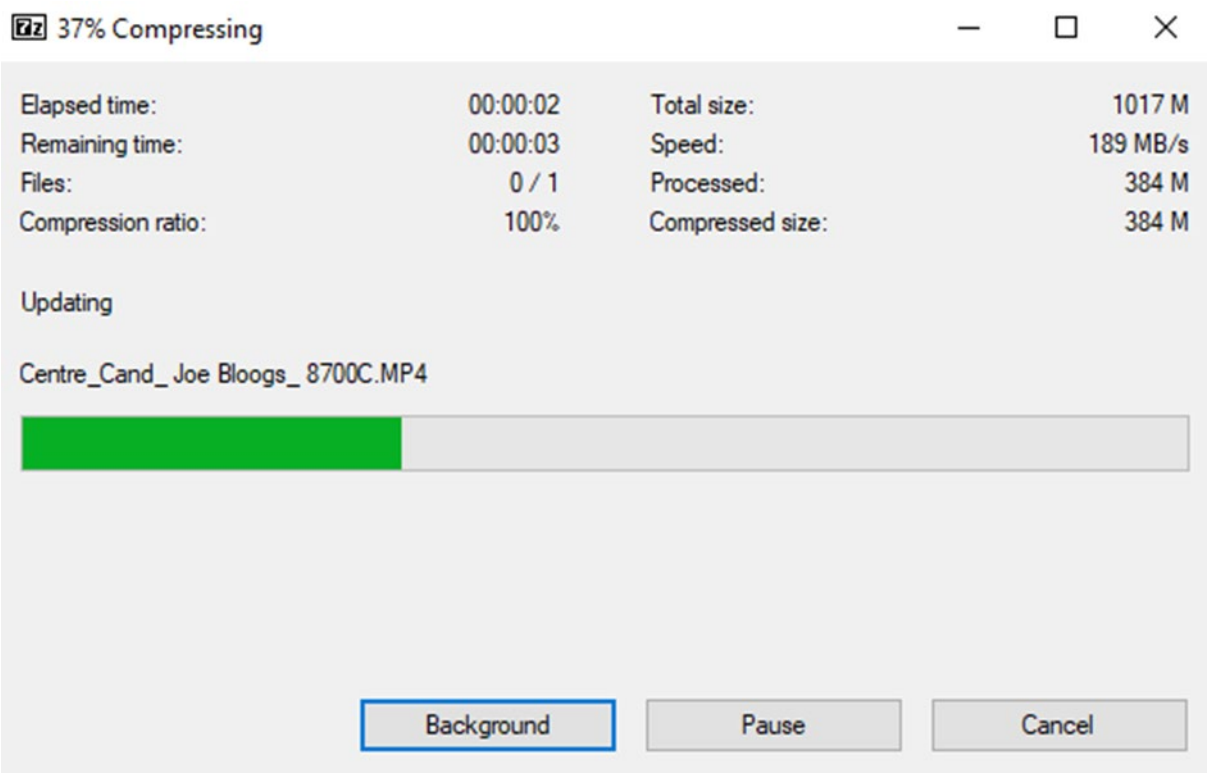
   A full list of passwords for the current academic year can be found on Centre Services.

   For the following example, we used the password *TestPassword.*

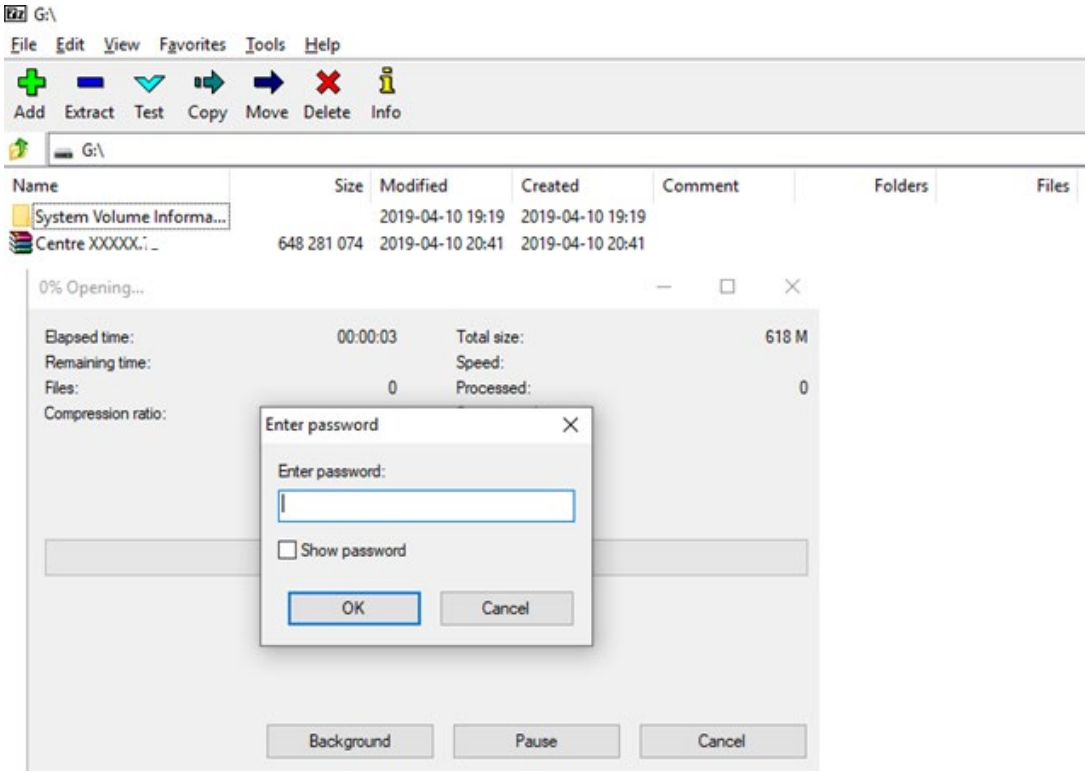


8. Once you've checked the password is correct, click **OK**. You'll then see a progress bar similar to the one in the following screenshot.

   Please note that if you have a very large media device, this may take some time. Occasionally, even though it states it is 100% complete, the program may need to do some background progress, so you may have to wait. When it has been completed, the progress box will disappear.



9. Once complete, return to the 7-Zip screen, the folder will now appear with a different image. To check if this has been encrypted, simply double click on the new folder. It will ask for a password as in the image below.



10. Type the password you used before into the box and it should give you access to the folder. If this is the case you have successfully encrypted the folder in the media device.

11. Finally, remove the media device as you normally would, by ejecting the USB drive in the My Computer screen.

AQA Education (AQA) is a registered charity (number 1073334) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (number 3644723). Our registered address is AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Using 7-Zip to decrypt

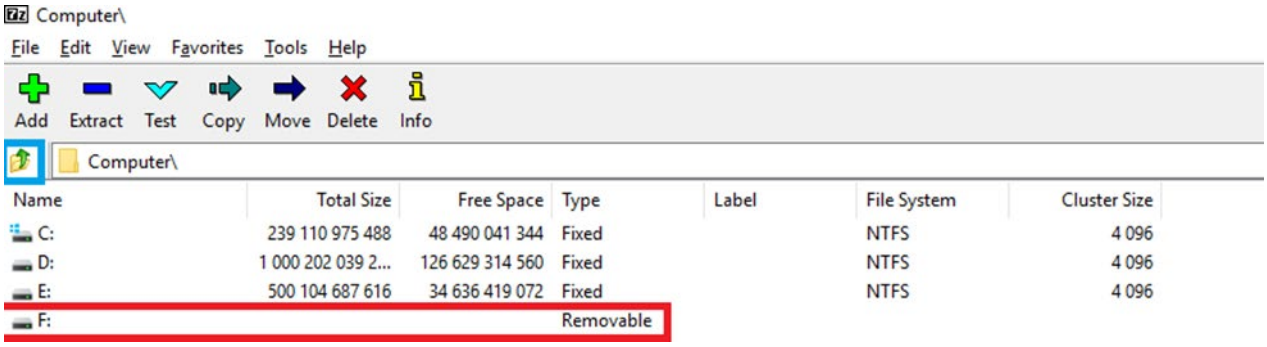
This is a step-by-step guide to encrypting a folder using 7-Zip file archiving software.

If you experience any difficulties with encryption, please email our Media Support team at mediasupport@aqa.org.uk. Please include your centre number, component code, and the number of students for which this issue applies, and details of any steps you have already taken to decrypt the media.

1. Please ensure that the USB or Media device is plugged into your computer. Then, open 7-Zip File Manager. You can usually find this on your desktop, but alternatively you can click the Windows icon in the bottom left of the screen and type **7-Zip** in the search bar and then click on **7-Zip File Manager**.

   In the 7-Zip screen double click on Computer. If you cannot see Computer, then click on folder with a green arrow on it. You may need to click this button multiple times until you see the list of items shown in the image below. The button is highlighted in red circle in the image below.

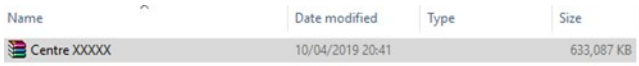
2. Once you've done this, double click on the drive you have plugged in. Usually this will have the type set as *Removable*

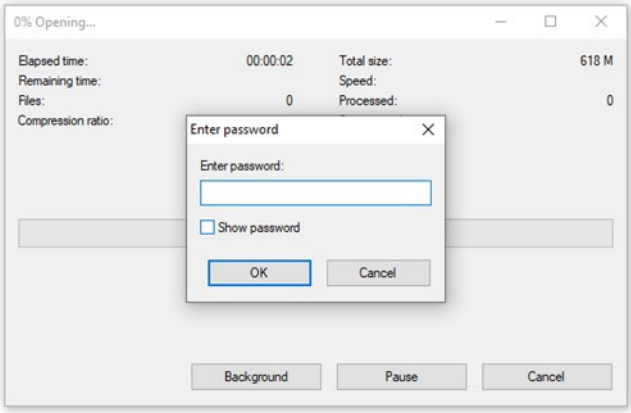


3. Double click the device. If a member of the school/college staff has encrypted the whole USB, it will immediately ask you for the password. To access to this, please go to the Associate Extranet under *Library* where you will find the centre password list. Type the relevant password for the series to access the files.

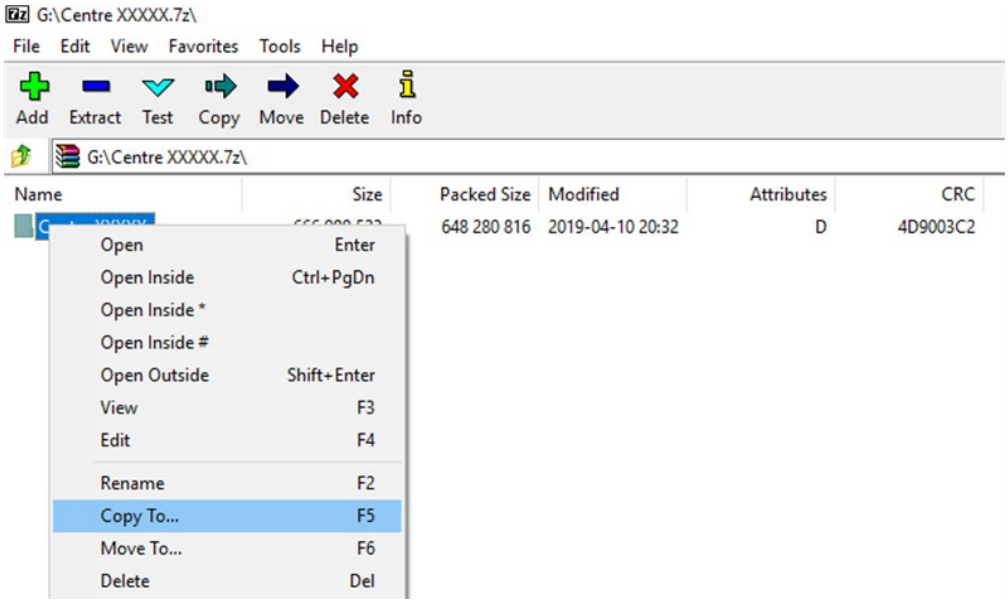
4. Type the password and it will open the device. At this stage it will give you access to the media. You can either double click the file(s) to view them or you can save a copy to your PC.

   If the folder opens without a password, 7-Zip will instead allow you to view the files, and will ask for the password when you open one of them. You don't need to type this in again as long as you keep 7-Zip open for each centre. It will appear like the screen below.

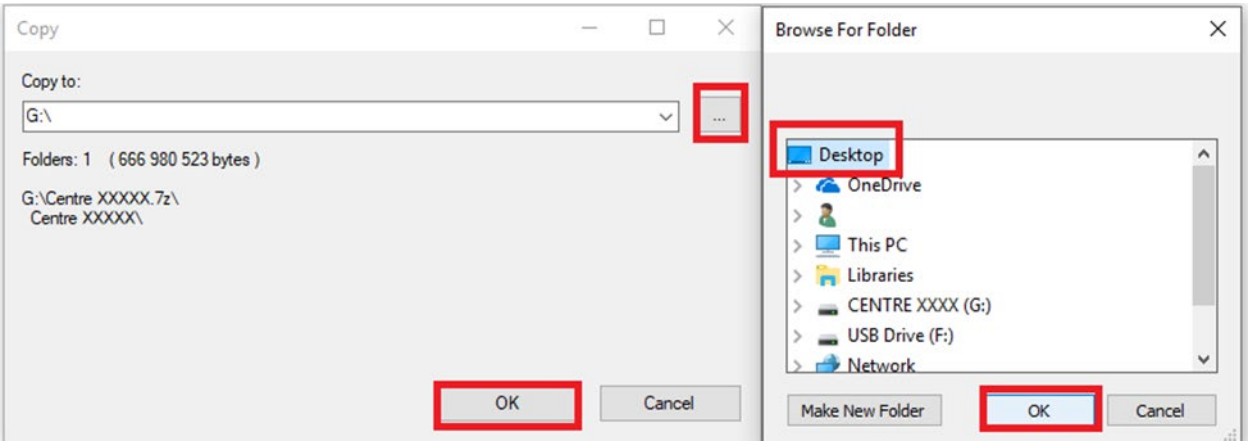




5. To save a copy to your PC right click the folder, and click on **Copy To.**



6. The screen below will appear. Then click on the ellipsis icon highlighted in red, followed by **Desktop**, then on **OK**. Then click **OK** again. This will create a copy of the whole folder to your desktop.



7. When complete, the dialogue box will close.

8. To view these files, minimise all your other programs then locate the new folder on your desktop with the same name as the folder you have just accessed. In the example case it would show *Centre XXXXX*.

9. You can then disconnect the device as you normally would with full access.