

THE HAVEN

Operated by the Autistic Girls Network charity — 1196655 (England and Wales), SC054837 (Scotland)

Stretch and Challenge Policy

(formerly known as the Gifted and Talented Policy)

Document	Stretch and Challenge Policy
Version	05.26
Status	live
Last reviewed	21 May 2026
Next review	21 May 2027
Owner	Head of Curriculum
Approved by	Proprietor + Governing Body

1. Purpose and naming

This policy sets out how The Haven identifies and supports learners with high prior attainment, exceptional ability in one or more areas, or particular strengths and interests that warrant additional challenge and depth. It corresponds to what is sometimes still referred to as a 'Gifted and Talented' policy.

We have chosen the name 'Stretch and Challenge' deliberately. The Haven is cautious about labelling young people as 'gifted', particularly given the well-evidenced disservice this term has done to neurodivergent young people whose abilities and difficulties co-exist in ways that resist simple categorisation. 'Stretch and challenge' describes the work of the educator, not a fixed label on the learner.

2. Our context

Many learners at The Haven are highly able in particular areas. Some are working significantly above age-expected levels in subjects of strong interest, while simultaneously needing support in other areas. This is a recognised pattern within the neurodivergent population. Our approach therefore treats high attainment and additional needs as compatible, not contradictory.

3. Identification

Learners may be identified for additional stretch and challenge through:

- Prior attainment data and assessment at admission.
- Ongoing assessment and educator observation.
- Self-identified interests and demonstrated depth.
- Parent / carer input.

- Learner voice. Identification is fluid. A learner may need stretch in one area and significant adjustment elsewhere. The identification is by area, not by global label.

4. What stretch and challenge looks like

Practical strategies used at The Haven include:

- Subject acceleration where appropriate, including early entry to GCSE where pace and well-being allow.
- Depth and complexity in tasks rather than simply more work.
- Open-ended tasks and independent projects in areas of strong interest.
- Mentoring conversations that introduce wider reading and ideas.
- Connection with peers with shared interests, where the learner welcomes this.
- Examination access arrangements, where applicable, to ensure that high ability can be demonstrated.

5. What we do not do

- We do not exempt highly able learners from well-being and identity work.
- We do not use 'gifted' as a category to add pressure or expectation.
- We do not treat areas of difficulty as inconsistent with areas of strength.
- We do not stream or set learners in ways that fix labels.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- Head: Strategic oversight of the policy.
- Educators: Identify and provide stretch and challenge in their subject.
- Mentor: Holds the whole-learner view and supports balance between stretch, well-being and identity.
- Learner and family: Partner in identifying interests and reviewing what is working.

7. Related documents

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- SEND Policy
- Examinations Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Mental Health and Well-being Policy

8. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head and approved by the Board of Governors.

Document version	1.0
Date issued	May 2026
Next review	May 2027

Document version	1.0
Document owner	Head
Approved by	Board of Governors

This PDF was generated from the published policy at policies.thehavenonline.school on 26 August 2026. The website is the authoritative, most current version of this policy.