

THE HAVEN

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

The Haven Complaints Procedure

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Policy Statement and Purpose

The Haven is committed to listening to learners, parents/carers, and commissioning partners. We welcome feedback and view complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve, and strengthen trust.

This procedure provides a clear, fair, and accessible route for raising concerns. It ensures that all complaints are handled promptly, impartially, and in line with the Independent School Standards (Part 7) and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended). The Haven is not a DfE-registered independent school and those Standards do not apply to it as a matter of law. They are adopted here as a voluntary benchmark, so that families and commissioners get the same protections a registered setting would provide.

This policy is available to all parents and carers on request and is published on The Haven's website (<https://thehavenonline.school/>).

Scope

- This procedure applies to complaints from parents/carers, learners, and external partners (including Local Authorities and schools).
- It does not apply to staff employment concerns, which are covered under Grievance and Disciplinary Policy v10.25.
- Safeguarding concerns must be referred directly to the DSL and will not be investigated solely under this procedure. See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy v01.26.

- Allegations against staff are managed under Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy v01.26.

Stages of the Procedure

1. Informal Resolution

- Concerns should be raised initially with the relevant educator, coordinator, or the DSL, where appropriate.
- We aim to resolve issues quickly and informally wherever possible.
- Where a parent or carer remains dissatisfied after informal discussion, they may proceed to the formal stage below.

2. Formal Complaint (Stage 1)

- If unresolved, a formal complaint should be submitted **in writing** to the Proprietor (or a nominated senior leader).
- The complaint will be acknowledged within **5 working days**.
- A thorough, fair investigation will be undertaken.
- A **written response** will be issued within **20 working days** of acknowledgement, setting out findings, conclusions, and any actions taken.

3. Panel Hearing (Stage 2)

- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, they may request a **panel hearing** in writing.
- **The panel will consist of at least three members, one of whom will be independent of the management and governance of The Haven.**
- The hearing will be scheduled within **20 working days** of the written request.
- **Parents and carers may attend the hearing and may be accompanied if they wish (e.g. by a relative, friend, advocate, or representative).**

The panel will:

- Consider all relevant evidence in a fair and impartial manner.
- Make **findings and recommendations**, which will be:
 - Provided in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - **Made available to the Proprietor and the Head, and to Ofsted on request.**
- Provide its written decision within **10 working days** of the hearing.

4. Further Escalation

If the complaint remains unresolved following the panel's decision, parents/carers may escalate the matter to the appropriate regulatory body — for example, **Ofsted**, the **Local Authority**, or the **Department for Education**, depending on commissioning arrangements.

Record Keeping

- A **written record** is kept of all complaints made under this procedure.

- The record details whether complaints:
 - Were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing; and
 - Any actions taken by The Haven as a result, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.
- All complaints are logged and retained for a minimum of **three years**.
- Governors review anonymised complaint data annually.

Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access in accordance with statutory powers.

Monitoring and Review

- Termly DSL-led checks identify patterns and ensure a proportionate response.
- Annual review by Governors ensures continued alignment with the **Independent School Standards (Part 7)** benchmark.
- This policy will next be reviewed in **April 2027** or sooner should regulations or practice require amendment.

Related Policies

- Whistleblowing Policy v01.26
- Grievance and Disciplinary Policy v10.25
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy v01.26
- Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy v01.26
- Terms and Conditions v10.25
- Governance & Legal Structure v10.25
- Equal Opportunities, Equality & Diversity Policy v10.25

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