THE HAVEN

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

Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Policy Statement and Purpose

The Haven is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. All staff and others connected with the school are encouraged to raise concerns about wrongdoing, malpractice, or safeguarding failures without fear of victimisation, disadvantage, or reprisal.

This policy provides a clear, fair, and transparent framework for raising and responding to whistleblowing concerns in accordance with:

- the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)**, and
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026** (DfE, in force 1 September 2026), in particular Part one on whistleblowing and Part four on allegations and concerns about adults.

It should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy v10.26
- Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy v10.26
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Staff Conduct Policy v10.26
- Grievance and Disciplinary Policy v10.25

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all employees, contractors, volunteers, governors, and trustees of The Haven;
- concerns raised by parents/carers or Local Authority partners where the issue relates to public interest or safeguarding.

It covers disclosures made in the public interest, including (but not limited to):

- safeguarding failures or risks to children;
- breaches of law, regulation, or statutory guidance;
- misuse of public funds or resources;
- health and safety risks;
- discrimination, harassment, or abuse of power;
- deliberate attempts to conceal wrongdoing.

This policy **does not** apply to:

- personal employment grievances (managed under the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure);
- low-level concerns about staff conduct, which are recorded and managed under the Low-Level Concerns Policy unless escalation is required.

3. Principles

- **Safeguarding first:** Any concern relating to the welfare of children is prioritised and acted upon immediately.
- **Fairness and impartiality:** All concerns are considered objectively, without presumption of guilt.
- **Protection:** Whistleblowers raising concerns in good faith are protected from detriment.
- **Confidentiality:** Information is handled sensitively and shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- **Transparency and learning:** Outcomes and lessons learned inform improvement in practice and systems.

4. Raising a Concern

4.1 How to Raise a Concern

Concerns may be raised:

- **verbally** (in person or via secure call), or
- **in writing** (email or secure form).

Concerns can be raised with:

- the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**;
- the **Head**;
- the **Co-Chair of Governors or the Safeguarding Governor**.

If the concern relates to the Head, it must be raised directly with the Co-Chair of Governors.

Where a concern involves safeguarding and cannot be addressed internally, or where the whistleblower feels unable to raise it within The Haven, concerns may be raised externally with:

- the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**, or
- the **Ofsted whistleblowing hotline** (0300 123 3155), or
- the **NSPCC whistleblowing advice line** for professionals (0800 028 0285), named in KCSIE 2026 for staff who feel unable to raise a safeguarding concern internally.

5. Recording Concerns (Including Verbal Disclosures)

All whistleblowing concerns are formally recorded.

Where a concern is raised verbally:

- the receiving senior leader will make a written, factual record as soon as practicable;
- the record will include:
  - date and time of disclosure;
  - name and role of the person raising the concern (unless anonymous);
  - a clear account of the concern using the whistleblower's words as far as possible;
  - any immediate actions taken.

Where appropriate, the whistleblower will be invited to review the written record to confirm accuracy.

Records are stored securely and accessed only by those with a legitimate role in managing the concern.

6. Procedure for Managing Concerns

Stage 1 – Acknowledgement and Initial Review

- Concerns are acknowledged within five working days (unless raised anonymously).
- An initial review is undertaken to determine:
  - whether the concern falls under whistleblowing;
  - whether safeguarding thresholds are met;
  - whether immediate protective action is required.

Safeguarding concerns are escalated immediately in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Stage 2 – Investigation

- An investigation is led by an appropriate, impartial senior leader or governor not implicated in the concern.
- Investigations are conducted fairly, objectively, and without pre-judgement.
- Information collected may include:
  - written statements;
  - safeguarding or QA records;
  - relevant policies, logs, or digital evidence;

- witness accounts (where appropriate).

Stage 3 – Managing Staff Involved

Where a concern relates to a member of staff:

- suspension is not automatic and is considered only where necessary to:
  - protect children or other staff;
  - preserve evidence; or
  - manage risk during the investigation.
- Where possible, alternative duties or increased supervision are explored first.
- Any decision is risk-assessed and reviewed regularly.

The staff member is:

- informed of the allegation in line with safeguarding guidance;
- supported appropriately;
- treated fairly until the concern is substantiated.

Stage 4 – Outcomes

Investigations may conclude that the concern is:

- **substantiated**;
- **unsubstantiated** (insufficient evidence);
- **unfounded** (no evidence the issue occurred);
- **malicious** or **false**.

Possible outcomes include:

- no further action;
- changes to systems, practice, or training;
- safeguarding escalation or referral;
- disciplinary action in line with relevant policies;
- referral to external agencies (e.g. LADO, DBS, TRA) where required.

Stage 5 – Feedback and Reporting

- Where possible and appropriate, the whistleblower is informed that the concern has been addressed and whether it has been substantiated, while respecting confidentiality and data protection.
- A summary of findings is shared with:
  - the Head;
  - the DSL;
  - the Safeguarding Governor / governing body (anonymised where appropriate).

7. Fairness, Protection and Support

- Whistleblowers acting in good faith will not suffer detriment.
- Retaliation, victimisation, or harassment of a whistleblower is treated as a disciplinary matter.
- Individuals who are the subject of a concern are treated fairly, respectfully, and without assumption of guilt until outcomes are determined.
- Deliberately malicious or knowingly false allegations may result in disciplinary action.

8. Learning and Improvement

The Haven is committed to learning from whistleblowing concerns.

Following investigation:

- themes and lessons learned are identified;
- actions may include:
    - policy updates;
    - training or supervision enhancements;
    - system or process changes;
    - safeguarding or QA improvements.
- Learning is embedded through staff briefings, training, and governance oversight.

9. Confidentiality

All whistleblowing matters are handled sensitively.
Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis and in line with data protection and safeguarding requirements.

10. Monitoring and Review

- A whistleblowing log is maintained securely by the DSL or nominated senior leader.
- Logs are reviewed termly by senior leadership and the Safeguarding Governor.
- Anonymised data and themes are reported annually to governors.
- Policy reviewed annually or sooner if statutory guidance changes.

This PDF was generated from the published policy at policies.thehavenonline.school on 20 November 2026. The website is the authoritative, most current version of this policy.