THE HAVEN

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

Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy

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Policy Owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Nominated Governor: Safeguarding Governor
Version: 10.26

1. Policy Statement and Purpose

The Haven is committed to ensuring that all allegations of abuse or inappropriate conduct involving adults working with children are managed promptly, proportionately, and fairly.

This policy:

- prioritises the safety and welfare of children and young people;
- ensures fair and respectful treatment of staff and volunteers;
- complies with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026* (KCSIE) Part four, *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*, and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedures;
- applies to online, hybrid, and in-person contexts.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all employees, contractors, volunteers, agency and supply staff, trainee teachers, governors, and trustees of The Haven. Following Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 Part Four, allegations against trainee teachers, supply staff and contracted staff are handled in the same way as allegations against employed staff, whatever disciplinary action the employing agency or provider may separately take;
- allegations that meet the harm threshold and low-level concerns;

- conduct occurring in person, online, or outside working hours where it may impact suitability to work with children.

3. Core Principles

- **Child first:** The welfare of children is the paramount consideration.
- **Fairness and dignity:** All parties are treated respectfully and without presumption.
- **No automatic outcomes:** Suspension is not automatic and decisions are risk-based.
- **Transparency and oversight:** All allegations are recorded and managed with appropriate LADO involvement.
- **Trauma-informed practice:** Processes seek to avoid re-traumatisation.
- **Confidentiality:** Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

4. Definitions

4.1 Harm-Threshold Allegation

An allegation that an adult has:

- harmed or may have harmed a child;
- committed or may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children;
- behaved in a way that may call into question their suitability to work with children.

4.2 Low-Level Concern

A concern about behaviour that:

- is inconsistent with the Staff Conduct Policy v10.26;
- does **not** meet the harm threshold;
- may indicate boundary issues or emerging risk if repeated.

Examples include boundary blurring, unprofessional digital communication, or inappropriate language.

5. Key Roles and Contact Details

5.1 Named Roles

Role	Responsibility
Head	Case manager for allegations unless they are the subject of the allegation

Role	Responsibility
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Receives and records concerns; ensures immediate safeguarding action
Co-Chair of Governors (chair of the proprietor board of trustees)	Case manager where the allegation concerns the Head (who is also the DSL), on behalf of the Proprietor
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Advises on threshold, oversight, and outcomes
HR Lead	Manages employment processes and records

5.2 Contact Details *(to be kept updated)*

- **Head**
  > **Email: head@autisticgirlsnetwork.org
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead** (role held by the Head)
  > **Email: dsl@autisticgirlsnetwork.org
- **Co-Chair of Governors** (for allegations concerning the Head)
  > **Email: cathy@autisticgirlsnetwork.org
- **LADO Contacts:
  > **The Haven works with multiple Local Authorities.
  > Current LADO contact details for each commissioning LA are held in the Safeguarding Contacts Register and on our Safeguarding Policy and are accessible to the DSL, the Head, and the Proprietor at all times.

6. Reporting Allegations

- All allegations or concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL or Head.
- No investigation or questioning should take place before LADO consultation.
- Records must be factual, dated, and objective.

7. Allegations Concerning the Head or DSL

At The Haven the Head is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where an allegation concerns:

- the **Head (DSL)** → the concern is reported directly to the **Co-Chair of Governors**, who acts as case manager on behalf of the Proprietor (the Autistic Girls Network board of trustees). This follows KCSIE 2026 Part four,

which directs an allegation concerning a headteacher to the chair of governors or, in a provision with a proprietor, to the proprietor.

- the **Deputy DSL** → the concern is reported directly to the **Head**.

Where the person who would normally receive the allegation is also the person the allegation concerns — or where there is any other conflict of interest — the concern is reported **directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer**, without going through the internal route first. Anyone reporting may take that route at any time, and does not need permission to do so. Keeping Children Safe in Education Part Four is explicit that this direct route exists, and it is stated here so that nobody has to work out for themselves whether it applies.

In these cases:

- the Head must not manage or influence the process;
- the Co-Chair of Governors becomes the case manager and keeps the Safeguarding Governor informed;
- the LADO is contacted within one working day.

> **Governance**
>
> Under the ratified Governance & Legal Structure v08.26, the Autistic Girls Network board of trustees acts as proprietor and reserved matters, including appointment of the Head, sit with the board. The Proprietor confirmed in October 2026 that the Co-Chair of Governors, as chair of that board, is the case manager for an allegation concerning the Head. Where the Co-Chair is unavailable or conflicted, the other Co-Chair acts. The direct route to the Local Authority Designated Officer above is unaffected and remains available to any reporter at any time.

8. Managing the Allegation Process

Stage 1 – Initial Response

- Immediate safeguarding action taken if required.
- LADO contacted within one working day if the harm threshold may be met.
- Advice from LADO determines next steps.

Stage 2 – Interim Safeguarding Arrangements

During investigation:

- The staff member does not automatically continue working with children.
- A risk assessment determines whether:
  - duties can continue with safeguards;
  - alternative duties are required; or
  - suspension is necessary.
- Suspension is a neutral act and used only where there is no reasonable alternative.

Stage 3 – Investigation

- Managed in line with LADO advice.

- May involve police, children's social care, or internal investigation.
- The staff member is:
    - informed as soon as appropriate;
    - kept updated;
    - advised to seek union or legal support.

9. Outcomes and Next Steps

Each allegation concludes with one of the following determinations:

9.1 Substantiated

- The allegation is proven.
- Disciplinary action taken in line with employment procedures.
- Referral made to:
    - **DBS**, and
    - **Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA)** where applicable.
- Commissioning schools and LAs informed.

9.2 Unsubstantiated

- Insufficient evidence to prove or disprove.
- No disciplinary action.
- Support offered to all parties.

9.3 Unfounded

- Evidence shows the incident did not occur.
- Records retained appropriately but not treated as disciplinary.

9.4 Malicious or False

- Deliberate intent to deceive or cause harm (malicious), or
- Allegation made in good faith but proven false.
- Allegation removed from personnel records.
- Restorative and protective support offered.
- Behaviour and Regulation Policy v10.26 may apply if a pupil acted maliciously.

10. Fair Treatment and Support

The Haven is committed to treating both:

- the child or young person raising a concern, and
- the adult who is the subject of an allegation

with fairness, dignity, and care, regardless of outcome.

Support includes:

- named support person (not involved in investigation);
- access to wellbeing support;
- clear communication and reassurance.

11. Low-Level Concerns (Farrer & Co Guidance)

Low-level concerns are managed in line with **Farrer & Co (2023) guidance**, which emphasises:

- early reporting;
- transparency;
- pattern-spotting;
- a culture of professional curiosity rather than punishment.

All low-level concerns are:

- recorded in a central log;
- reviewed termly by the DSL and Head;
- escalated if patterns indicate risk.

(See Appendix A for summary of Farrer & Co guidance.)

12. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- All records stored securely within The Haven's protected systems.
- Access restricted to DSL, Head, and Proprietor.
- Records retained for 10 years or until normal retirement age, whichever is longer.
- Information shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

13. Learning, Review and Audit

- Each case concludes with a lessons-learned review.
- Findings inform:
  - staff training;
  - policy updates;
  - safeguarding culture review.
- Termly anonymised audits are conducted by the DSL and Safeguarding Governor.

Appendix A – Farrer & Co Guidance on Low-Level Concerns (Summary)

Low-level concerns:

- sit below the harm threshold;
- are recorded, not ignored;

- may indicate future risk if unaddressed;
- are addressed through reflection, supervision, and proportionate action.

This approach supports:

- safer cultures;
- earlier intervention;
- reduced escalation into serious harm.

14. Related Policies and Guidance

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy v10.26
- Staff Conduct Policy v10.26
- Safer Recruitment and Use of Volunteers Policy v10.26
- Whistleblowing Policy v10.26
- Behaviour and Regulation Policy v10.26
- Grievance and Disciplinary Policy v10.25
- KCSIE 2026 (Part four)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Governance & Legal Structure v08.26
- Farrer & Co: *Developing and Implementing a Low-Level Concerns Policy* (2023)

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.