**Complaints Policy**

The Haven School

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**Awaiting Management Board Approval**

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| **Approved by:** |  | **Date:** March 25 |
| **Last reviewed on:** | May 2024 |
| **Next review due by:** | February 27 |

**The Haven**

**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**Purpose**

All schools are required by law to have a complaints policy. This policy should help resolve problems and provide a means for issues of concern to be raised and subsequently addressed. All complainants will be treated respectfully during and after the course of any complaints investigation and will receive a written response to their complaint, unless appropriate and reasonable measures have been put in place as a result of the ‘Persistent and/or Vexatious Complainants’ policy set out below.

**Expressing Concerns (Stage 1)**

There are inevitably issues that arise that, if dealt with promptly and in a considerate manner, will avoid the need for a formal complaint. Any problem or concern should be raised promptly with the member of staff responsible for the area you are concerned about. If your concern is more serious you may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with the head teacher. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage. Should either side indicate that the matter is not resolved to their satisfaction they have 14 working days from the initial complaint to indicate that they wish to proceed to the formal stage.

**Formal Complaints**

Formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern indicates that they remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further. All details of a complaint will be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution. The complaint will be dealt with in line with the school’s complaints procedure.

In most cases it will be the complainant’s choice as to whether to mount a formal complaint, but the school reserves the right to utilise the formal complaint procedures where the school feels that ‘informal’ methods of resolving concerns have been exhausted but a complainant clearly remains dissatisfied.

It should be noted that some outcomes of a complaint may lead to action being initiated under other formal procedures, such as safeguarding or disciplinary matters. Where this is the case you will be advised and informed of the procedures that are to be followed. It should be noted, however, that the school will not necessarily be able to provide you with the details of the outcome of those procedures for data protection reasons or otherwise, depending on the circumstances.

If a formal complaint is made to the school, you will be provided with a copy of this complaints policy. It is not a requirement that a formal complaint is made in writing, but the school will need to be clear what the complaint is about and may therefore request clarification from you before investigating the complaint.

Please be aware that the school reserves the right not to review a complaint made by a complainant that has not been brought to the attention of the school within 8 weeks of the alleged incident occurring. However, the school will consider any complaint outside of that timescale in certain circumstances.

**Stage 2 (Head teacher)**

It may be that the head teacher has not been aware of the concern raised prior to this point. At this stage he/she will seek to investigate your concerns, as well as attempting to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned. This may involve having a discussion/meeting with you.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, it will be considered by the Head of the Management Board (HoMB). The HoMB will seek to resolve the matter through discussion with the head teacher and you. In doing so and, if considered appropriate, the HoMB may wish to meet with you in person.

The school will endeavour to respond, in writing to a Stage 2 complaint after receiving the complaint within 14 working days.

Where concerns cannot be resolved by the head teacher (or the HoMB if applicable) then you will be advised that details of your continuing concerns will be accepted either in writing or verbally and then referred to the Management Board’s Complaints Committee (**Stage 3**). Details of these concerns must be received by the Management Board within 14 days of you being notified of the school’s stage 2 response.

**Stage 3 (Management Board)**

If a complaint has been referred to a Management Board then they will arrange to meet to consider the complaint, within 28 working days of receipt.

You will be given the opportunity to attend the complaints meeting to make representations in person, and you will have the right to bring a friend/family member or other supporter. If you decide not to attend the complaints meeting, it may be held in your absence. You will be given 7 days’ notice prior to the hearing.

**Management Board Complaints Committee (the Panel) – Procedure**

The panel will consist of 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the running of the school.

The Panel will want to ensure that the nature of the complaint is understood and, where possible, will seek to establish from you what actions you feel might resolve the problem. In helping to reach a conclusion, the Panel will seek to identify possible sources of information and advice to help collate the necessary evidence.

As indicated above, you will be given the opportunity to attend the complaints meeting and will have the right to bring a friend/family member or other supporter. In normal circumstances the head teacher and head of management board may also attend the meeting but will not take any part in the decision-making process. A typical complaints meeting may adopt the following structure:

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| * The meeting will be as informal as possible.
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| * Witnesses may be required to attend but only for the part of the meeting in which they give their evidence.
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| * After introductions, you will be invited to explain your complaint, and you will be followed by your witnesses (if any).
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| * The head teacher /HoMB may ask questions of both you and your witnesses after each has spoken.
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| * The head teacher /HoMB will then be invited to explain the school’s actions and will be followed by the school’s witnesses.
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| * You may ask questions of both the head teacher /HoMB and the witnesses after each has spoken.
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| * The Panel may ask questions at any point.
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| * You will then be invited to sum up your complaint.
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| * The head teacher /HoMB will be invited to sum up the school’s actions and response to the complaint.
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| * The panel chair will explain that both parties will hear from the Panel in writing within a set time scale.
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| * Both parties leave together while the panel remains to decide on the issues and reach a conclusion.
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The above procedures for the complaints meeting may vary with the approval of all parties, for example you may wish to meet the Panel without the head teacher being present. Where this is the case you should be aware that it will still be necessary for the Panel to meet with the head teacher as part of the process.

**Outcomes of Investigations**

Whether the complaint has been investigated by the head teacher, head of management board or a complaints committee, a written response will be sent to you within 14 working days outlining the outcome of the investigation, detailing how the conclusion has been reached, and enclose a copy of the minutes. The letter will also tell you where to next take the complaint, if you are not satisfied with the response provided. The person mentioned in the complaint will also be notified of the outcome.

The aim of the investigation or review will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between you and the school. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that sometimes you may not be satisfied with the outcome if matters are not found in your favour.

Parents/carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential and stored securely.

**The Role of the Secretary of State for Education (the Department for Education)**

If you still remain dissatisfied and feel that the school has not followed the appropriate procedure, any relevant policies, or has failed to discharge a statutory duty, you may wish to refer your complaint to the **School’s Complaints Unit (SCU)** within the Department for Education at the address below: -.

The Schools Complaints Unit

Department for Education

2nd Floor Piccadilly Gate

Manchester

M1 2WD

Please note that the SCU will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint as this remains the responsibility of the school, but if legislative or policy breaches are found, SCU will report them to the school and, if necessary, require the school to take remedial action.

We had one complaint registered under our formal complaint’s procedure during 2024-25 academic year.