COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

COLLEGE VISION
At Rupertswood we proclaim our belief in the Kingdom of God, in Jesus Christ as its herald and in His gospel as the words of eternal life. We seek to be reconciled and to live as the pilgrim People of God empowered by His Spirit, celebrating the Resurrection around the table of the Eucharist.

We strive to be examples of Don Bosco's living charism - implementing the 'Preventive System' fostering the growth of the whole person in an atmosphere of reasonableness and kindness, committed to creating a climate where people know that they are loved and esteemed - a true Family Spirit.

It is our responsibility to provide a comprehensive education which integrates faith, history, knowledge and culture and we accept the task of developing in our young people a desire for achievement, a sense of happiness and a readiness to serve, so that they can take their place in and influence Australian society by living out the values of the Gospel as passed down in the tradition of the Church.

We value the unique beauty and history of our College where, during the days of the Dreaming, in Colonial times and since the first foundation of the Salesian, young people have learnt about their place in the world, the traditions of their people and the importance of the Spiritual.

PREAMBLE
Salesian College is an open community committed to nurturing an educational environment which values each member of the community, their relationships based on Gospel values, their commitment and expertise. The purpose of the Salesian College Complaint Resolution Policy is to promote the pastoral care of teachers and students, as well as meeting our obligations of addressing the legitimate concerns of parents, caregivers, students and colleagues. This policy recognises that if there is a practice which is detrimental to the students' welfare or learning, then this situation or incident needs to be addressed and changes made to this practice. In order to meet a standard of best practice Salesian College has developed this policy to help resolve and where possible avoid potential problems. As a college community we recognize the importance of good communication and that talking with the person concerned is the first step in resolving the issue.

POLICY AIDS
This Policy aims to provide an accessible and simple process for the resolution of concerns and complaints of all members of the Salesian College community (staff, students and parents). A complaint may include a concern about curriculum, student welfare, student behaviour or other matters. It does not cover concerns of a criminal nature. It aims to foster positive school relationships so that complaints are resolved and that relationships are restored.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
The key principles for the handling of expressions of serious concern at Salesian College are:

- The College is open to the concerns of parents, caregivers, staff and students
- Complaints are received in a positive manner
- Parents, caregivers and students can expect to be taken seriously and can approach any member of staff about their concerns
- The concern is addressed quickly and as close to the source of the concern as possible. This enables discussion to clarify concerns and viewpoints including teaching and learning concerns.
- That natural justice is observed in resolving the complaint. If a complaint is made about an individual, the individual has a right to be advised of the complaint and that there is procedural fairness.
- Information about the complaints procedure is clear and readily available
• Concerns are dealt with speedily and those who have raised them are kept informed about progress
• A person making a complaint or responding to a complaint will not be treated differently or detrimentally.
• It is not acceptable for individuals to receive adverse treatment because they have raised a complaint
• Precise confidential files and a log are kept
• Confidentiality is respected and maintained as far as is possible
• Resolution of the matter is sought where appropriate
• Staff training covers the handling of complaints

POLICY DETAILS

1. Where complaints may come from.
   Complaints may emanate from:
   (a) parents (and caregivers)
   (b) students
   (c) the public
   (d) staff

2. What is an Open Community?
   In order to develop an open organisation it is essential that all members of the College community feel that
   the College is open to their concerns. The interests of the College are better served, for example, when
   parents and caregivers are able to express their concerns directly to a member of staff as opposed to sharing
   their dissatisfaction with others. It is important that individuals feel valued and involved with the College and
   are encouraged to express their views.

   Our College community is one:
   • that listens to parents, caregivers, students and staff
   • where parents and caregivers feel comfortable in contacting staff.
   • where staff are comfortable in dealing with complaints.

   An effective complaints procedure can diffuse problems and can provide the College with helpful information.
   Concerns treated as constructive suggestions can be used to improve standards and may prevent cause for
   further complaint. Even unjustified complaints may indicate areas that can be improved.

3. What constitutes a complaint?
   A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if
   that person thinks that there are areas within the College community that warrant concern. All complaints
   need to be handled seriously. A gentle expression of concern, or a simple query, may grow into a major
   matter if the complainant feels that he / she has not been taken seriously or has been brushed aside. Often
   matters that have the potential to escalate can be resolved if they are handled well in the initial stage.
   Procedures need to be flexible to handle both formal complaints and the informal raising of issues.
   Complaints against members of staff need particularly sensitive handling. All complaints need to be recorded.
   Distinction should be made between a complaint and a simple query.

4. Complaint resolution process
   In the first instance, this policy encourages all complainants to communicate directly with the person with
   whom they have the concern. If this action does not resolve the concern, then:
   • Parents/Caregivers & Students should contact the Home Group teacher or the House Co-ordinator.
   • Staff should contact their House Co-ordinator or KLA Co-ordinator.

   In most cases, a resolution can be arrived at through open communication and the use of Restorative Justice
   principles. In instances of more serious concern, or when a matter is incapable of resolution, a member of the
   Leadership Team is to be informed of any parent or caregiver complaints; staff complaints should be directed
   to the Principal. The Leadership Team will then appoint an investigator who is determined to be the most
   appropriate person due to the nature of the complaint. If staff are approached about a matter that lies outside
   their area of responsibility it should also be referred to a member of the Leadership Team. There may be some
   who will wish to go directly to the Principal with their concerns, depending upon the concern or the individuals
   concerned. This should be requested through the Personal Assistant to the Principal. However, the Principal
   may refer the concern to the level that he believes is most appropriate. Responses to issues of serious concern
   will be communicated by the College Principal in verbal or letter form only- not electronic/email.
REducing anxiety
As the person expressing concern may feel vulnerable, the College can reduce anxiety by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled.

The following factors will assist in reducing anxiety:
- Information about the complaints procedure should be clear.
- Complaints are to be acknowledged as soon as is practical, but within a maximum of five days. Staff are to inform parents or caregivers as to what is happening to their concern or complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it should be received.
- The issue is to be dealt with as quickly as possible.
- The nature of the complaint and what is concerning the complainant should be clear. If it is not immediately obvious, individuals may need more time to explain.
- If the concern is deemed to be of a serious nature, the complainant will be asked to put that concern in writing.
- It may be helpful to discuss possible outcomes.

recording
The College is to keep an effective log of serious concerns. This may be required because:
- it may become the cause of future legal action
- patterns in the record may indicate a need for action
- the Principal should be able to check the log regularly.

The log, to be maintained by the Personal Assistant to the Principal, is to contain the following:
- date when the issue was raised;
- name of all parties involved;
- brief statement of the issue;
- member of staff handling the issue; and
- statement of the outcome.

Records of the complaint, the process for handling the complaint and any outcomes will be kept. Where the complaint is found to be vexatious or based on misinformation, etc. any record pertaining to the complaint or handling of the complaint will be kept in a file separate from the teacher or staff member concerned and the student. Where a complaint is addressed or acted on, a copy of any reports related to the handling of the complaint will be provided to the teacher or staff member concerned. Teachers and members of staff will have access to the files kept on them by the College. Policy and procedures at Salesian College will be consistent with the procedures outlined in the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) Policy 2.3

Confidentiality
Confidentiality is an important issue for students, parents, caregivers and staff. It is essential that any complaint be treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

Complainants often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. It should be made clear to all concerned that it is the College’s policy that complaints made by individuals are not to rebound adversely on them nor on those connected/related to the complainant.

The question of confidentiality will be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the complainant. The College’s policy is to be carefully explained. Members of staff are rightly concerned that they should know about complaints that might be damaging to their reputation. Such complaints will be made known to them and those who may need to be consulted.

Confidentiality is a major issue in the handling of complaints. Confidentiality shall be maintained at all stages of the complaint procedure with communication limited to those people who need to be informed in order to resolve the complaint. Members of our College community are encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. Anonymous complaints will not be acted upon officially.
RESOLUTION
Sometimes the very acknowledgment of an issue by the College brings peace of mind to parents and caregivers.

Satisfactory resolution may come from any of the following:
- knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in the future
- knowing that the College is now alert to a possible problem
- feeling that their concerns have been considered seriously
- an outcome which may be different from the one sought, but which is perceived to be well-considered
- a considered letter
- an apology

If time is required to consider matters of serious concern, parents should receive a report letter. This should cover:
- the issues raised
- how the issues were considered
- the people consulted
- action that is to be taken
- an apology, if appropriate

INTRACTABLE COMPLAINTS
Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively. If a complaint becomes intractable it is the responsibility of the Principal to come to a decision that is appropriate for the welfare of all parties concerned.

TRAINING
The College will provide access to training to help staff deal not only with complaints made to them, but also to complaints that are made about them. The College is also aware there is a need to provide support for staff against whom a complaint is made.

Training should encompass:
- the complaints procedure
- communication skills, such as listening, questioning and calming
- handling complaints, negotiation and mediation skills
- skills in observing, recording and reporting
- the benefits of handling complaints well
- the necessity to seek advice from experienced colleagues.

A LEAFLET FOR PARENTS
A leaflet explaining the recommended avenues for expressing concerns at Salesian College is attached. This leaflet is to be provided to parents at the point of enrolment at the College. Additional copies of the leaflet are available for collection at Reception.

STUDENT COMPLAINTS
The principles that apply to parental complaints also apply to complaints and concerns from students. There are, however, differences in approaches. One important difference is that students should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. In more complex situations, once the matter is resolved, a member of staff, designated by the Principal, should discuss the outcome with the student.
PERSON WITH CONCERN/COMPLAINT

COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH PARTY INVOLVED Within 1 week

RESOLVED NO FURTHER ACTION

UNRESOLVED

NB: Communication with the person is encouraged in the first instance.

2. ADVICE AND SUPPORT (CONTACT LEADERSHIP TEAM)

COMPLAINT GIVEN TO MOST APPROPRIATE PERSON TO MANAGE

3. COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION AND DOCUMENTATION COMMENCES.

4. RECOMMENDATION/DECISION AND FURTHER ACTION. REPORT BACK TO MEMBER OF LEADERSHIP TEAM.

SUBSTANTIATED

ACTION: DISCIPLINE/WARNING/COUNSELLING

RESOLUTION: APOLOGY, MEDIATION

UNSUBSTANTIATED

REASON PROVIDED TO PARTIES

COMPLAINANT CONSIDERS OPTIONS

DECISION UPHELD

DECISION MODIFIED

COMPLAINANT LODGES COMPLAINT WITH CEO/CM