COMPLAINTS POLICY

RATIONALE

Salesian College has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The College always tries to resolve any complaints speedily, sympathetically and effectively. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this procedure.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has, for example,

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have done
- acted unfairly or improperly

This policy is available to parents in hard copy if requested and it can be found on the College website.

The College is obliged to keep a written record of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved in any of the stages or proceed to a panel hearing. Records will also be kept of the actions taken by the College in response to the complaint.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

This procedure is not available for use by prospective parents – it may only be used by parents of current pupils - and it does not cover exclusions from school (subject to a separate Exclusions Policy, 5.16.1). It only applies to past pupils if the complaint was raised in writing by the parent when the pupil was still registered as a pupil.

STAGE 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's or daughter's subject teacher or Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the subject teacher or Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Head of Year, Deputy Headteachers or Headmaster.

Complaints made directly to the Heads of Year will usually be referred to the relevant subject teacher or form tutor unless the Head of Year considers it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

Complaints made directly to the Headmaster or one of the Deputy Headteachers will usually be referred to the relevant Head of Year or department unless the Headmaster or one of the Deputy Headteachers deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.

If the complaint is about the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, in writing c/o the Clerk to the Governing Body.

The individual dealing with the complaint will keep a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. **Should the matter not be normally resolved within five working days, or in the event that the member of staff involved and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents may wish to proceed to Stage 2. In this case it is expected that the parents would notify the College of this as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within five working days.**

Should a complaint arrive during the school holidays, there may be some flexibility in the 5 days allowed. However, every reasonable effort will be made, and a delay would only be in exceptional circumstances and with the understanding and agreement of the person making the complaint.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint formally in writing to the Headmaster. Although all complaints should be made in writing, it does not follow that Stage 2 is automatically triggered whenever a complaint or concern is expressed in writing. Complaints will normally only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at the preliminary, informal, stage and only if the complainant wishes to escalate the matter to Stage 2. The Headmaster, or in his absence one of the Deputy Headteachers, will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In all cases, in term time, the Headmaster (or a delegated person) will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to:

- discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing within 10 working days. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing within ten working days. The Chair of Governors will give reasons for his/her decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, and it is expected that they would notify the College of this as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within five working days.

STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of Governors, who will call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors, who on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten working days.
It should be ensured that, where there is a Panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school.

The other members will be Governors of the School and may include the Chair of Governors if the Chair has had no prior involvement in the Stage 1 or 2 decision.

Guidance from DfE on the identity of an independent panel member: "Our general view is that people who have held positions of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered."

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.

The parents, who should attend, may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within seven working days of the hearing.

The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about. The findings and recommendations should be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body and the Headmaster.

TIMETABLE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

All complaints received in writing by the College will be taken seriously and handled sensitively. Complaints will be acknowledged as soon as is reasonably practicable, normally within five working days, if received during term time. Within that acknowledgement, it will be set out how the College intends to deal with the complaint and the period within which parents can expect a response. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible, and the College's staff will work hard to ensure that this happens. At all stages of the complaints process, the College will keep the complainant updated as to timeframes for responses and next steps. Please note that, for the

purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

A written record of all actions taken by the College as a result of a formal complaint (whether it is upheld or not) will be kept by the College in accordance with the Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014.

Salesian College will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils, details of the complaints procedure and, on request, provide to the ISI Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate and to parents the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

POLICY CONTROL	
Author	Headmaster
SLT Approved Date	*12 September 2025*
Governors Approved Date	23 October 2025
Review schedule	*Annual*
Date of next review	*September 2026*