

Governance and Oversight Policy

Academic Year 2026-27

Purpose To define lawful, transparent and effective governance arrangements through which the Proprietor secures compliance, delegates oversight and holds leaders to account for standards and pupil wellbeing.

Document control	Approved position
Policy owner	Proprietor
Executive lead	Headmaster
Governance body	School Advisory Committee
Applies to	Proprietor, SAC, Headmaster, senior leaders and any committee or person exercising delegated governance functions
Approval	Proprietor and Governing Body (SAC)
Effective	1 September 2026
Review	At least annually and after any material governance, ownership, legal or regulatory change
Publication	Staff SharePoint; governance particulars and required information published or supplied to parents as required

1. Policy statement

St Dominic's Grammar School is an independent day school for pupils from EYFS to Sixth Form. Mr Gary Hartland is the sole Proprietor. The Proprietor has established a Governing Body to provide structured oversight, advice, support and challenge.

Legal accountability Delegation to the Governing Body, Headmaster, a committee, governor or external adviser does not transfer or reduce the Proprietor's legal responsibility for the School and its compliance with the Independent School Standards and other applicable requirements.

The Governing Body must respect the distinction between governance and executive management. It sets and tests strategic expectations, examines evidence, challenges constructively and follows up action. The Headmaster leads and manages the School, implements policy and is accountable to the Proprietor through the agreed governance arrangements.

2. Aims

1. secure consistent compliance with all applicable standards and statutory duties;
2. actively promote pupils' wellbeing, safety, development and educational progress;
3. provide clear accountability between the Proprietor, Governing Body and Headmaster;
4. ensure decisions are informed, ethical, evidence-based and consistent with the School's Christian ethos, Veritas and its commitment to inspiring growth in mind, body and spirit;
5. maintain effective oversight of safeguarding, education, welfare, finance, risk, equality and operations;
6. provide recorded challenge, support, assurance and follow-through;
7. listen to pupils, parents and staff while preserving appropriate confidentiality;
8. identify governance skills, conflicts, risks and improvement priorities.

3. Legal and regulatory framework

9. Education Act 2002 and Education and Skills Act 2008, as amended;
10. Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended, particularly Part 8 and the standards across Parts 1 to 7;
11. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026);
12. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and applicable local safeguarding arrangements;
13. statutory EYFS framework applicable from 1 September 2026;
14. Equality Act 2010, including the public-facing duties relevant to service provision and the accessibility-planning duty;
15. Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004; Children and Families Act 2014;
16. School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
17. UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025;
18. Charities, company, employment, health and safety, fire, finance, tax and premises requirements insofar as they apply to the School or Proprietor;

19. DfE independent-school standards and registration guidance current for 2026-27;
20. current ISI inspection framework and associated inspection guidance.

This policy should be read with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Low-Level Concerns Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Complaints Policy, Risk Assessment Policy, Health and Safety Manual, Curriculum Policy, SEND Policy, Equality and Accessibility Policy, Data Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, Recruitment Policy and Finance procedures.

4. Governance structure and terminology

Role / body	Status and relationship
Proprietor	The legal proprietor and ultimate decision-maker. Holds responsibility for ensuring the Standards and all other applicable requirements are met.
Governing Body	An oversight body appointed by the Proprietor. It exercises only the authority expressly delegated to it and provides advice, support, challenge and assurance.
Chair	Leads the Governing Body, agrees agendas with the Proprietor and Headmaster, ensures effective meetings and provides an escalation route subject to the safeguarding arrangements below.
Headmaster	Chief executive and educational leader of the School. Responsible for day-to-day leadership, management, implementation and accurate reporting.
DSL	Leads safeguarding operationally, has status and authority to discharge the role, and has direct access to the Headmaster, safeguarding governor and Proprietor.
Committees / link governors	Carry out agreed scrutiny or monitoring. They do not make executive decisions or exceed written terms of reference.

The Governing Body are described as the School Advisory Committee. They do not hold the same legal status as a usual Governing body but have been set up to assist with governance by the sole proprietor. However, for ease of reference and understanding the term governor will be used throughout.

5. Membership

Member	Governance role / relevant experience
Mr Gary Hartland	Sole Proprietor of St Dominic's Grammar School, Brewood.
Sir Michael Griffiths	Chair of the Governing Body and designated safeguarding governor; education consultant, knighted for services to education.
Mr John Bowater	Governor; senior finance and business experience., DDSL Governor, SEND Governor
Dr Andrew Hartland	Governor; medical experience.
Mr Mark Capel	Governor; former Headteacher.
Sir Gavin Williamson	Governor; former Secretary of State for Defence and Secretary of State for Education.

Governance contact is through the School Office at Bargate Street, Brewood, South Staffordshire, ST19 9BA, using the School's published telephone, postal or email details. Personal contact details will not be published.

The governance register will record each member's appointment date, term where applicable, appointing authority, role, declarations, checks, training and attendance. The published membership list must be checked after every change and at least annually.

6. Appointment, suitability and induction

21. The Proprietor appoints and may remove governors and determines any term of office. Appointments will address the Governing Body's current skills, independence, diversity and succession needs.
22. Before appointment or before delegated management responsibility begins, the School will complete the checks required by KCSIE and the Regulations, including identity, right to work where relevant, enhanced DBS and barred-list information where legally required, overseas checks where applicable, and a section 128 direction check for persons within scope.
23. No person may act where disqualified or prohibited. Any uncertainty is referred to the Proprietor and the School's safer-recruitment lead before duties begin.
24. Governors receive an induction covering the School, the Standards, KCSIE 2026, safeguarding reporting, EYFS, SEND/equality, complaints, data protection, confidentiality, conflicts, risk, finance and inspection.
25. All governors read KCSIE 2026 Part Two and any other parts relevant to their duties. The Proprietor and Chair ensure that safeguarding knowledge is updated at least annually and training is recorded.
26. The School maintains evidence of appointment, checks, induction, training, declarations and access to current policies.

7. Reserved matters and delegation

The Proprietor retains all legal powers. The following are reserved to the Proprietor unless lawfully exercised jointly with, or after advice from, the Governing Body:

27. ownership, legal structure and the governance framework;
28. appointment or removal of the Headmaster, Chair and governors;
29. approval of strategy, annual budget, material borrowing, major capital commitments and material contracts;
30. applications for, or implementation of, a material change to the School's registration;
31. final approval of statutory or high-risk policies identified in the policy schedule;
32. serious regulatory notifications, action plans and responses to enforcement;
33. decisions concerning closure, merger, acquisition or material change of premises;
34. final decisions on matters expressly reserved by another policy, contract or law.

Operational authority is delegated to the Headmaster within approved policy, budget and risk limits. The Headmaster may sub-delegate tasks but remains accountable for their completion. Urgent action may

be taken to protect life, safety, welfare, legal compliance or School continuity; the decision and rationale must be reported promptly to the Proprietor and Chair.

8. Core duties of the Proprietor

35. ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote pupil wellbeing;
36. ensure compliance with every applicable Independent School Standard and other statutory or regulatory requirement;
37. provide sufficient leadership capacity, staffing, premises, systems and resources;
38. appoint a suitable Headmaster and maintain effective oversight of performance and conduct;
39. establish effective safeguarding arrangements, including an appropriately trained DSL, sufficient deputies and safe escalation routes;
40. ensure mandatory information, policies and reports are supplied or published as required;
41. notify the DfE and other bodies of material changes and reportable events within required timescales;
42. respond decisively to non-compliance, serious incidents, weak controls or failure to complete agreed actions;
43. retain evidence demonstrating oversight, challenge, decisions and improvement.

9. Core duties of the Governing Body

44. understand the School's context, ethos, strategy and principal risks;
45. scrutinise evidence of compliance and pupil wellbeing rather than relying on assurance alone;
46. hold the Headmaster and senior leaders to account through clear questions, recorded decisions and action tracking;
47. monitor the quality of education, curriculum breadth, teaching, assessment, outcomes, attendance, careers, enrichment and next steps;
48. oversee safeguarding culture, safer recruitment, allegations and low-level concerns, online safety, filtering and monitoring, attendance and children missing education;
49. review SEND, disability, equality, accessibility, behaviour, anti-bullying, mental health, medical and EYFS arrangements;
50. review finance, staffing, health and safety, premises, cyber security, data protection, business continuity and material contracts;
51. consider pupil, parent and staff voice, complaints, incidents and emerging patterns;
52. ensure policy review and implementation are systematic and evidenced;
53. report concerns, recommendations and unresolved actions to the Proprietor promptly.

10. Safeguarding governance

Safeguarding is a standing governance priority. The Proprietor and Governing Body will ensure that KCSIE 2026 is implemented and that arrangements are effective in practice.

54. The DSL has sufficient status, authority, time, funding, training and access to information and the Proprietor.
55. A designated safeguarding governor provides scrutiny and support but does not undertake the DSL's operational role or investigate concerns.
56. The safeguarding policy and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements are reviewed at least annually and after any serious incident or significant change.
57. The Proprietor and Governing Body receive appropriately anonymised information on referrals, early help, attendance, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, online safety, filtering and monitoring, allegations, low-level concerns, training and safer recruitment.
58. Filtering and monitoring standards, roles and effectiveness are reviewed at least annually, with action tracked.
59. Concerns about the Headmaster are reported to the Proprietor. Where the concern is about the Proprietor, staff follow KCSIE, local authority designated officer and whistleblowing routes without referring the matter to the person concerned.
60. Governors preserve confidentiality and do not seek case detail beyond what is necessary for lawful oversight.

No operational interference Governors must not investigate safeguarding disclosures, allegations, complaints or employment matters unless formally authorised under the relevant procedure. They must preserve evidence and use the designated reporting route.

11. EYFS governance

The governance arrangements apply across the School, including EYFS. The Proprietor and Governing Body will obtain assurance that EYFS learning, development and safeguarding-and-welfare requirements are met, including suitability, ratios, qualifications, paediatric first aid, key-person arrangements, premises, supervision, medicines, eating, safer sleep where relevant, information for parents, complaints and statutory notifications.

EYFS monitoring will be proportionate and informed by visits, leadership reports, records, staff and parent feedback and safeguarding evidence. Any concern that a statutory EYFS duty may not be met is escalated immediately.

12. Education, inclusion and pupil wellbeing

Governance scrutiny will consider both compliance and impact. Evidence will include progress and attainment, curriculum review, lesson and work evidence, destinations, attendance, exclusions, behaviour, safeguarding, participation, pupil voice and support for different groups.

- 61. Education remains broad, ambitious, coherent and suitable for pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs from EYFS to Sixth Form.
- 62. SEND and medical needs are identified and supported; reasonable adjustments are anticipatory and effective.
- 63. The accessibility plan addresses curriculum, physical environment and information.
- 64. Protected characteristics, Fundamental British Values and respect for others are promoted lawfully and appropriately.
- 65. Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing, protection from harm, education, recreation, social and economic wellbeing, and contribution to society are actively promoted.
- 66. Pupil voice is sought safely and meaningfully, including from younger pupils and those who may communicate differently.

13. Finance, risk and resources

- 67. The annual budget reflects educational, safeguarding, staffing, premises, technology and compliance priorities.
- 68. Management accounts, cash flow, material variances and financial risks are reviewed regularly.
- 69. Financial authority limits, procurement, segregation of duties, banking, payroll and fraud controls are documented.
- 70. Conflicts and related-party transactions are declared, assessed, approved by an unconflicted decision-maker and recorded.
- 71. The strategic risk register identifies owners, controls, assurance, target dates and residual risk.
- 72. Serious incidents, near misses, insurance claims, cyber events and business continuity activations are reported according to thresholds.
- 73. Premises, fire, health and safety and statutory inspection actions are tracked to completion.

14. Meetings and decision-making

- 74. The Governing Body will normally meet at least once each term and more often where risk or circumstances require.
- 75. The Chair, Proprietor and Headmaster agree a forward plan and agenda. Papers should normally be circulated at least five working days before the meeting.
- 76. A meeting is quorate when at least three governors are present, including the Proprietor or Chair, unless the Proprietor has approved a different written arrangement.
- 77. The Headmaster normally attends and reports but may be asked to withdraw for confidential discussion. Other leaders or advisers attend by invitation.
- 78. Decisions are ordinarily reached by consensus. Where a vote is needed, each unconflicted governor has one vote; the Chair has a casting vote. The Proprietor may reserve or determine any matter within the Proprietor's legal authority.

- 79. Minutes record attendance, declarations, challenge, evidence considered, decisions, dissent where requested, actions, owners and deadlines. Draft minutes are reviewed promptly and approved at the next meeting.
- 80. Confidential matters are minuted separately with access limited to those who need it.
- 81. Written or virtual decisions between meetings must be authenticated and entered into the next minutes.

15. Conflicts of interest and conduct

Governors act in the interests of the School and its pupils, exercise reasonable care, maintain confidentiality and avoid using their position for personal benefit.

- 82. Complete an annual declaration of interests and update it whenever circumstances change.
- 83. Declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict at the start of the relevant discussion.
- 84. The unconflicted Chair or Proprietor determines whether the member may receive papers, participate, remain present or vote.
- 85. Record the interest, decision and management action in the minutes and register.
- 86. Where the Chair is conflicted, another unconflicted member leads. Where the Proprietor is conflicted, independent advice and an unconflicted process are used so far as the legal structure permits.

Governors comply with the Staff Code of Conduct where relevant, maintain professional boundaries, do not direct individual staff outside agreed routes, and do not make public statements on behalf of the School without authority.

16. Monitoring, visits and evidence

Governance monitoring is planned, proportionate and evidence-based. A visit or meeting is not an inspection and must not disrupt learning, bypass leaders or drift into operational management.

- 87. Link governors agree scope and timing with the Headmaster or relevant leader.
- 88. Safeguarding visits are coordinated with the DSL and preserve confidentiality.
- 89. The governor triangulates information through appropriate records, discussion and observation.
- 90. A concise record identifies evidence, strengths, questions, risks and actions; factual accuracy is checked by the relevant leader.
- 91. Actions are added to the governance tracker and followed through to closure.
- 92. Governors distinguish evidence seen from assurance received and record where further evidence is required.

17. Reporting to governance

Area	Minimum evidence / frequency
Safeguarding	Standing item each meeting; annual comprehensive review; immediate reporting of material matters.
Education and outcomes	Termly dashboard; annual curriculum and outcomes review.
Attendance / behaviour / welfare	Termly trends, groups, actions and impact; urgent escalation of serious concerns.
SEND / equality / accessibility / EYFS	Termly or scheduled reports; annual compliance and impact review.
Finance and resources	Management information at least termly; annual budget and year-end review.
Risk / health and safety / premises / cyber	Risk register and action status at least termly; material incidents promptly.
Complaints / exclusions / allegations / low-level concerns	Anonymised pattern and compliance reporting at least termly, subject to confidentiality.
Staffing / recruitment / training	Termly workforce risks; annual safer-recruitment and mandatory-training assurance.
Policy and compliance schedule	At every meeting, with overdue or high-risk items escalated.

Reports must be accurate, timely, proportionate and clear about exceptions, trend, vulnerable groups, action, owner, deadline and impact. The absence of reported incidents is not by itself assurance that systems are effective.

18. Complaints, whistleblowing and governance concerns

Complaints are managed under the School's Parental Complaints Policy. Governors do not become involved before the stage assigned to them, because premature involvement may compromise independence. Complaints about governance conduct are referred to the Chair or Proprietor; a concern about either is routed to an unconflicted person or external authority as appropriate.

Anyone may use the Whistleblowing Policy or contact an appropriate prescribed or safeguarding body where internal reporting is unsafe, ineffective or inappropriate. No person will suffer retaliation for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

19. Data protection, confidentiality and records

93. Governance records are School records and are stored only in approved systems with role-based access.
94. Papers contain the minimum personal data necessary; safeguarding, employment, medical and legal material receives enhanced protection.
95. Members use School-approved communication routes and report loss, misdirection, phishing or unauthorised access immediately.

96. Minutes, registers, declarations, training and decision records are retained according to the School's retention schedule and legal requirements.
97. Information is shared with inspectors, regulators, auditors, safeguarding partners, parents or others where required or lawfully appropriate.
98. Subject access, legal disclosure and information requests are handled through the School's data-protection arrangements; governors do not respond independently.

20. Evaluation, succession and review

The Proprietor and Governing Body will review governance effectiveness at least annually. The review will consider compliance, meeting quality, attendance, skills, independence, diversity, succession, training, challenge, action completion, risk oversight, stakeholder voice and impact on pupil wellbeing.

An external review or independent advice will be commissioned where governance failure, persistent non-compliance, a serious incident, conflict, ownership change or the scale of change makes this proportionate. Improvement actions will have owners and deadlines and will be monitored to closure.

This policy is reviewed annually and whenever KCSIE, the EYFS framework, the Standards, DfE/ISI requirements, ownership or governance arrangements change.

Appendix 1 - Reserved and delegated authority schedule

Decision / activity	Authority / assurance
Legal ownership, governance constitution, closure, merger or acquisition	Proprietor reserved.
Headmaster appointment, appraisal, remuneration and dismissal	Proprietor reserved, informed by appropriate independent advice and Governing Body input.
Strategy, annual budget, major capital project or material borrowing	Proprietor approval after Governing Body scrutiny.
Material change to registration	Proprietor approval and DfE consent before implementation where required.
Statutory and high-risk policies	Proprietor approval, normally after Governing Body review; operational policies may be delegated under the policy schedule.
Day-to-day leadership, staffing deployment, curriculum and operations	Headmaster within policy, budget and law.
Safeguarding case management	DSL and Headmaster under KCSIE and local procedures; governance receives anonymised assurance.
Serious regulatory or safeguarding notification	Headmaster/DSL initiates promptly; Proprietor informed; legal responsibility remains with the Proprietor.
Routine expenditure and contracts	Delegated under written financial limits.
Emergency action	Headmaster or available senior leader may act to protect safety/compliance; prompt retrospective reporting required.

Appendix 2 - Annual governance cycle

Term / timing	Core business
Autumn	Confirm membership, checks and declarations; KCSIE/EYFS updates; safeguarding and filtering/monitoring review; outcomes, destinations, attendance and improvement priorities; budget monitoring; policy schedule; inspection readiness.
Spring	Curriculum, teaching and assessment; SEND/equality/accessibility; EYFS; staffing and safer recruitment; risk, health and safety, premises, finance and cyber; stakeholder voice; action tracking.
Summer	Annual safeguarding and governance effectiveness reviews; next-year strategy, budget and staffing; compliance declarations; complaints/incidents patterns; training and succession plan; policy approvals.
Every meeting	Safeguarding; pupil wellbeing; compliance exceptions; risk; finance; complaints/incidents; policy/action tracker; declarations of interest; Headmaster's report.

Term / timing	Core business
As required	Serious incident, safeguarding or regulatory notification; material change; emergency or progress-monitoring response; Headmaster or Proprietor succession.

Appendix 3 - Annual governance assurance checklist

Assurance question	Evidence / action / owner
Are all Independent School Standards and EYFS requirements mapped to named owners and current evidence?	
Can the Proprietor evidence skilled leadership, effective fulfilment of responsibilities and active promotion of pupil wellbeing?	
Are governance membership, checks, declarations, attendance and training complete?	
Are KCSIE 2026, safeguarding culture, safer recruitment and DSL capacity effective?	
Has filtering and monitoring been reviewed and are actions complete?	
Are curriculum, assessment, careers and pupil outcomes evaluated for all groups?	
Are EYFS, SEND, equality, accessibility and medical arrangements effective?	
Are attendance, CME, behaviour, bullying, exclusions and complaints patterns understood?	
Are finance, staffing, premises, fire, health and safety, cyber and continuity risks controlled?	
Are policies implemented in practice, reviewed on time, and are inspection, incident and previous governance actions closed with impact verified?	
Are pupil, parent and staff views heard and acted upon appropriately?	

Appendix 4 - Governor visit record

Field	Record
Governor / role	
Date / area / agreed scope	
Leader(s) consulted	

Field	Record
Standards, policy or strategic priority considered	
Evidence reviewed	
What appears effective	
Questions or risks	
Action / owner / deadline	
Factual accuracy confirmed by	
Report considered by Governing Body on	

Appendix 5 - Declaration of interests and conduct

Declaration	Response / details
Employment, office, trusteeship, governorship or consultancy relevant to the School	
Business, supplier, property or financial interest involving the School, Proprietor or connected persons	
Close personal or family relationship that may create a conflict	
Gifts or hospitality above the School declaration threshold	
Other actual, potential or perceived conflict	
I will update this declaration promptly and comply with confidentiality, safeguarding and data-protection duties	Name: Signature: Date:

Appendix 6 - Key references

- 99. Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended.
- 100. DfE, The independent school standards: guidance for independent schools (April 2026).
- 101. DfE, Registration of independent schools: guidance for proprietors.
- 102. DfE, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- 103. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- 104. Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage applicable from 1 September 2026.
- 105. Equality Act 2010 and Schedule 10 accessibility planning.
- 106. School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- 107. UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.
- 108. Current ISI inspection framework and associated inspection guidance for 2026-27.

Legal references, membership, School registration particulars, governance contacts and delegated authority must be verified at least annually.