

ST DOMINIC'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

PARENT CONDUCT, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

EYFS to Sixth Form

Academic year 2026–27

Document control	Details
Policy owner	Headmaster
Approved by	Governing Body
Approval date	September 2026
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review cycle	Annual and when requirements change
Next review	August 2027
Applies to	Parents, carers, family members, visitors and authorised representatives
School phases	EYFS to Sixth Form

This policy promotes safe, respectful partnership. It does not prevent legitimate criticism, safeguarding reports, whistleblowing, legal rights, regulatory contact or use of the School's complaints procedure.

1. Purpose and principles

St Dominic's Grammar School values a constructive partnership with parents and carers. Most concerns are resolved through timely, respectful communication. This policy sets reasonable expectations for behaviour and communication connected with the School, including on premises, at events, on transport, online and in parent-managed groups.

The School will listen, respond fairly and maintain accessible routes for concerns and complaints. In return, parents and other adults are expected to protect pupils' welfare, respect the dignity and privacy of others, follow lawful instructions and avoid conduct that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing or seriously disruptive.

The best interests and education of the pupil remain central. A pupil will not normally be blamed or sanctioned for an adult's behaviour. Any contractual decision affecting a pupil's place will be exceptional, separately considered, procedurally fair and taken only by an authorised decision-maker.

2. Scope

This policy applies to parents, carers, persons with parental responsibility, family members, authorised representatives, prospective parents, visitors and any adult acting in connection with a pupil. "Parent" in this policy includes those persons unless the context requires otherwise. It applies to:

- School premises, entrances, neighbouring areas, car parks and collection points;
- meetings, telephone calls, email, messaging platforms, video calls and correspondence;
- trips, fixtures, performances, worship, parent events, transport and School-linked activities;
- public and private social media, review sites, blogs, forums and parent-managed messaging groups where the School, pupils, families or staff are discussed; and
- contact with staff, pupils, other parents, governors, contractors, volunteers and visitors.

The policy does not make the School the administrator of independent parent groups. The School may nevertheless act when conduct within such a group creates a safeguarding concern, unlawful risk, serious harm, disruption to School life or a breakdown in the working relationship.

3. Related policies and documents

- Parental Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct and Low-Level Concerns Policy;
- Online Safety, Data Protection and Acceptable Use Policy;
- Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying Policy;
- Admissions Policy and parent contract/terms and conditions;
- Security, Educational Visits, Behaviour, Equality and Accessibility policies.

4. Legal and regulatory context

This is a non-statutory conduct policy. It supports, and must be applied consistently with, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025), Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Malicious Communications Act 1988, Communications Act 2003, Defamation Act 2013, Online Safety Act 2023, KCSIE 2026 and current DfE school-security and premises-access guidance. The School will also have regard to applicable contractual and employment duties.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Governing Body	Approve the policy; assure themselves that it is lawful, fair and implemented consistently; oversee serious or repeated cases and any complaint about the Headmaster; monitor patterns, equality and safeguarding impact.
Headmaster	Lead implementation; ensure concerns are triaged correctly; authorise formal warnings or access restrictions; ensure contractual decisions follow the parent contract and delegated authority; report significant matters to the Proprietor and Governing Body.
DSL	Assess safeguarding information; advise on safe communication and information sharing; ensure concerns involving a child are recorded and referred under KCSIE 2026; coordinate support and multi-agency action where required.
Senior and pastoral leaders	Maintain constructive parent contact; arrange meetings and support; record significant incidents; apply informal measures; escalate fairly and promptly.
Staff	Communicate professionally; maintain boundaries and confidentiality; avoid argument or retaliation; preserve relevant evidence; report threats, safeguarding issues and serious incidents.
Parents and other adults	Use the correct routes; communicate respectfully; protect children's privacy; follow site, safety and event instructions; cooperate with reasonable arrangements and avoid involving pupils in adult disputes.
Pupils	Pupils are not responsible for enforcing this policy. Their views, welfare and relationships must be considered in any response affecting them.

6. School commitments

- provide clear contact and complaint routes and make reasonable adjustments where needed;
- acknowledge concerns, explain next steps and respond within the applicable policy timescale;
- distinguish robust disagreement or criticism from abuse, harassment, threats or safeguarding risk;
- avoid retaliatory, discriminatory or disproportionate action;
- handle personal information confidentially and only share it when necessary and lawful;
- seek to resolve problems through discussion, clarification and practical agreements;
- keep records proportionate to seriousness and review emerging patterns; and
- protect staff, pupils and families from unacceptable conduct and foreseeable harm.

7. Expected standards of conduct

Parents and other adults should:

- treat pupils, staff and other adults with courtesy and respect, including during disagreement;
- raise concerns with the person or leader best placed to resolve them, or use the formal complaints procedure;

- give accurate information and allow a reasonable opportunity for investigation and response;
- attend by appointment where required and follow visitor, parking, collection, safeguarding and emergency arrangements;
- respect staff working hours, personal contact details and professional boundaries;
- keep children out of adult disputes and avoid asking them to gather information, relay hostile messages or take sides;
- seek consent before sharing identifiable images, recordings or information about another person; and
- comply with court orders and promptly tell the School about changes relevant to parental responsibility, collection or information sharing.

8. Communication standards

Channel	Reasonable use	Avoid
Email and letters	Clear subject; relevant facts; one appropriate recipient; reasonable response time.	Repeated duplicate messages, mass copying, excessive capitals, personal attacks or demands for immediate responses outside emergencies.
Telephone/video	Arrange a suitable time; identify yourself; stay focused; allow notes to be taken.	Recording without prior agreement unless lawful and justified; shouting; repeated calls; contacting personal numbers without permission.
Meetings	Attend by appointment; bring a supporter or interpreter by agreement; follow an agenda; permit a written note.	Ambush meetings, intimidation, refusing reasonable safety arrangements, or bringing unexpected participants without notice.
Informal contact	Use brief doorstep contact for simple information and arrange a meeting for complex matters.	Discussing confidential or contentious issues in front of pupils or other families.

9. Social media and parent-managed groups

9.1 Positive use

Parent groups can provide friendship, reminders and mutual support. Parents may discuss their own experiences, share lawful opinions and make fair comment. Membership and administration of independent groups are matters for their organisers, subject to law and platform rules. No parent is required to join a group, and no group may present itself as an official School channel without written permission.

9.2 Privacy and safeguarding

- Do not post a child's full name, image, location, medical information, SEND information, allegation, disciplinary matter or safeguarding information without appropriate authority or consent.
- Do not share screenshots, emails, reports, contact details, pupil work or recordings that expose confidential information about another person.
- School events do not create an automatic right to publish images of other children. Follow event-specific photography instructions and image-consent arrangements.
- Never name or speculate about a child or adult involved in a safeguarding concern. Report it directly to the DSL, children's social care or police as appropriate.
- Do not contact pupils through private accounts or invite them into adult parent groups unless this is a lawful family/social relationship and does not breach safeguarding boundaries.

9.3 Disagreement, criticism and complaints

The School encourages direct use of its concern and complaints routes because they permit investigation, response and remedy. However, this policy does not impose a blanket ban on public criticism or lawful contact with regulators, police, legal advisers, the media or elected representatives. A negative review or criticism is not, by itself, misconduct. Action will focus on the manner, content and impact of communication—for example threats, targeted harassment, discriminatory abuse, knowingly false allegations presented as fact, disclosure of confidential child information, impersonation or conduct that creates a safeguarding or security risk.

9.4 Group administrators

Administrators of independent groups are encouraged to publish simple rules, obtain consent before adding members, remove unlawful or abusive content, protect telephone numbers and avoid presenting rumours as School information. The School may ask an administrator to preserve or remove content, but it cannot guarantee or control action by a platform or private group.

10. Unacceptable conduct

Depending on context, seriousness, frequency and impact, unacceptable conduct may include:

- violence, threats, intimidation, stalking, harassment or behaviour causing reasonable fear for safety;
- abusive, insulting, humiliating, sexually inappropriate or discriminatory language or imagery;
- aggressive confrontation, shouting, swearing, refusing to leave, obstructing access or disrupting lessons, events or operations;
- targeting a pupil or encouraging adults or pupils to ostracise, ridicule, monitor or confront someone;
- publishing confidential, private or safeguarding information, including material that identifies a child at risk;
- malicious impersonation, doxxing, non-consensual intimate or manipulated imagery, or attempts to compromise accounts and systems;
- persistent unreasonable communication that significantly interferes with School operations, after proportionate adjustments and warnings;
- making allegations known to be false, fabricating evidence, coaching a child to give a false account or pressuring others to support a version of events;
- covert recording used to intimidate, misrepresent or disclose confidential information, while recognising that recording may sometimes be lawful and relevant evidence;
- ignoring lawful security, collection, safeguarding, court-order or premises instructions; and
- retaliation against a person who raises a safeguarding concern, complaint or protected disclosure.

A parent will not be criticised merely for celebrating their own child's achievement, declining to join a private group, excluding someone from a genuinely private social group, expressing an unpopular view, making a complaint or asking the School to reconsider a decision.

11. Raising concerns and complaints

1. For an immediate danger or crime, call 999. For a safeguarding concern about a child, contact the DSL or the appropriate statutory agency without delay.
2. For an ordinary classroom or pastoral concern, contact the relevant teacher, tutor or phase leader.
3. If unresolved, follow the School's Parental Complaints Policy and Procedure. Complaints about the Headmaster, Proprietor or member of the Governing Body must use the routes specified there.
4. Concerns about staff conduct must be sent to the Headmaster; concerns about the Headmaster must be sent to the Chair/Proprietor in accordance with the safeguarding and complaints procedures.
5. Data-protection concerns may also be raised with the School's data-protection contact and, where appropriate, the Information Commissioner's Office.

The conduct policy must not be used to divert, delay or suppress a safeguarding referral, formal complaint, subject access request, equality complaint or report to a regulator. Conduct and the underlying concern may need to be handled separately.

12. Responding to a concern about parental conduct

12.1 Immediate triage

The recipient or senior leader will consider immediate safety, safeguarding, medical need, criminal risk, evidence preservation, the welfare of pupils and whether contact arrangements need temporary modification. Police or emergency services will be contacted where necessary. Staff must not enter a public online argument.

12.2 Fair assessment

Unless urgent protective action is required, the parent will be told the substance of the concern and given a reasonable opportunity to respond. The decision-maker will consider context, intent where relevant, actual and potential impact, frequency, prior warnings, disability or communication needs, evidence, the parent's underlying concern and the effect on the pupil. Anonymous allegations will be treated cautiously and corroborated where practicable.

12.3 Records

The School will retain a proportionate record of significant incidents, evidence considered, safeguarding decisions, communications, adjustments, outcomes and review dates. Records will be stored securely and access limited according to role. Screenshots should include date, time and source and should not be circulated more widely than necessary.

13. Informal resolution and support

Where safe and suitable, the School will seek early resolution through clarification, apology, correction, removal of content, agreed contact arrangements, a named point of contact, scheduled updates, a meeting with ground rules, a supporter or interpreter, written rather than verbal communication, or mediation by agreement. Mediation is not appropriate where there is abuse, coercion, a safeguarding concern or a material power imbalance.

14. Formal and protective responses

Response	When it may be used	Safeguards
Advice or reminder	Low-level, isolated or inadvertent conduct.	Clear expectation; support and correction; brief record if needed.
Written conduct agreement	Repeated difficulties or need for structured contact.	Defined channels, frequency, participants, review date and reasonable adjustments.
Formal warning	Serious incident or repetition after advice.	Allegation and evidence summarised; response considered; duration and consequences stated; review route given.
Meeting controls	Where a meeting may be difficult or unsafe.	Appointment, neutral venue, two staff, remote option, agenda, time limit, supporter/interpreter and written note.
Temporary access restriction	Urgent or continuing safety/disruption risk.	Narrow, time-limited, collection/communication alternative, pupil access protected, prompt review.
Premises bar	Serious violence, threat, harassment, disruption or continued breach.	Authorised written decision; reasons, scope, duration and review; reasonable opportunity to make representations unless immediate action is required; arrangements for the pupil maintained.
Police/platform/legal referral	Possible crime, credible threat, harassment, malicious communication, privacy breach or urgent content risk.	Headmaster/DSL/legal advice as appropriate; preserve evidence; avoid promising a particular external outcome.
Contractual action	Irremediable breakdown or serious/repeated breach engaging the parent contract.	Last resort; authorised decision; contract followed; pupil's interests, equality, proportionality and alternatives considered; separate written reasons and review/appeal route where applicable.

15. Restricting access to School premises

School premises are private property. Parents normally have an implied licence to enter for authorised purposes such as collection, appointments and events, subject to School rules. The School may regulate or withdraw that permission to protect safety and prevent nuisance or disturbance.

- An urgent temporary restriction may be imposed immediately where there is a credible risk; written confirmation and a prompt opportunity to respond will follow.
- A proposed longer restriction will normally set out the reasons and evidence, allow written representations, identify the decision-maker and specify the area, activities, duration and review date.
- Restrictions will be no wider or longer than reasonably necessary and will be reviewed after a significant change or on the stated date.
- Safe alternatives will be arranged for collection, meetings, information and participation in the pupil's education. A bar does not automatically prevent written or remote communication.
- Breach of a clear restriction may amount to trespass and may be reported to police.

16. Persistent or unreasonable contact

The School will not label contact unreasonable merely because it is frequent, detailed, challenging or unsuccessful. It will first consider whether delay, unclear responses, disability, language, trauma or safeguarding anxiety is contributing. Where volume or repetition significantly obstructs School operations, proportionate contact arrangements may be used, such as one named contact, consolidated weekly correspondence, one channel, response only to new substantive points, or a defined review period. Emergency, safeguarding and materially new information will always be considered.

17. Equality, disability and accessibility

The School will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments for disabled parents and others where required. Adjustments may include accessible formats, interpretation, extra processing time, a supporter, rest breaks, remote meetings or altered communication channels. An adjustment does not require the School to accept abuse, threats or unsafe conduct. Equality impact will be considered before formal restrictions or contractual action.

18. Safeguarding and pupil welfare

- Any information suggesting that a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm must be reported to the DSL and managed under KCSIE 2026, regardless of the adult's conduct.
- Children with SEND, disabilities, health conditions or communication barriers may face additional safeguarding challenges; staff will consider how parental conflict or online exposure affects them.
- Pupils will not be questioned about adult conduct merely to gather evidence unless necessary and appropriate; their views will be sought sensitively when decisions affect them.

- Parents must not publish safeguarding allegations or information that could identify or endanger a child. Confidentiality is not absolute: information will be shared with statutory agencies when necessary to protect a child.
- Where conduct may constitute an allegation against staff, low-level concern, child-on-child abuse or crime, the relevant specialist procedure takes precedence.

19. Confidentiality, data protection and recordings

The School processes conduct information for safeguarding, education, security, legal and contractual purposes. It will observe data-protection principles, share only what is necessary and respond to information-rights requests subject to lawful exemptions and third-party rights. The School may lawfully record meetings or calls where necessary and transparent; parents will normally be told. Parents who wish to record should ask in advance so privacy, safeguarding and reasonable adjustments can be considered. A refusal does not remove any legal right that may exist, but misuse or publication may still breach confidentiality, data protection, harassment or other law.

20. Review, challenge and complaints about action

A parent may request review of a formal warning, conduct agreement imposed without consent, access restriction or premises bar by writing to the person named in the decision letter within 10 working days, explaining the grounds and any relevant adjustment needed. A reviewer not materially involved in the original decision will consider proportionality, process, evidence, new information and pupil impact. Urgent protective measures may remain in place during review.

A complaint about how this policy was applied may be made under the Parental Complaints Policy, subject to its scope. A contractual decision concerning a pupil's place follows the review or appeal route in the parent contract and relevant School policy; this conduct review does not replace it. Safeguarding and external regulatory routes remain available.

21. Governance, monitoring and training

The Headmaster will report significant cases, access bars, police referrals and contractual action to the Proprietor and Governing Body, respecting confidentiality. At least annually, leaders will review patterns by phase, type, outcome and protected characteristic; the effect on pupils and staff; complaints arising; reasonable adjustments; timeliness; and whether School communication contributed. The Governing Body will challenge disproportionality, inconsistency and any use of this policy to avoid legitimate scrutiny.

- Staff with parent-facing roles receive guidance on de-escalation, boundaries, record keeping, safeguarding triage, equality and safe online response.
- Reception, site, events and transport staff know how to summon assistance and implement access restrictions safely.
- The DSL is consulted on safeguarding content, vulnerable pupils and information sharing.
- Lessons from incidents inform communication, security and policy improvement.

22. Policy availability and review

This policy is available to parents and prospective parents. It is reviewed annually and sooner following legal change, a serious incident, safeguarding learning, a complaint or evidence that it is not working effectively. It should be read with the parent contract and the policies listed in section 3.

Appendix 1 — Parent communication guide

If you need to...	Recommended route	Information to include
Share routine information	Teacher, tutor, office or published form	Pupil, concise facts, date, any action requested.
Raise a learning/pastoral concern	Teacher/tutor, then subject or phase leader	What happened, impact, steps already taken and desired outcome.
Make a formal complaint	Parental Complaints Policy route	Complaint, evidence, outcome sought and adjustment required.
Report safeguarding	DSL or statutory agency; 999 if immediate danger	Immediate facts, child, location, risk; do not investigate or post online.
Report staff conduct	Headmaster; Chair/Proprietor if concern is about Headmaster	Factual account, dates, witnesses, evidence; maintain confidentiality.
Challenge a conduct restriction	Review route in decision letter	Grounds, new information, pupil impact and proposed alternative.
Contact media/regulator/legal adviser	Lawful independent choice	Protect children's identities, confidential data and active safeguarding processes.

Appendix 2 — Decision checklist for formal action

- Has the underlying concern or complaint been routed and addressed separately?
- Is there an immediate safeguarding, security, medical or criminal risk?
- What reliable evidence is available, and has relevant material been preserved?
- Has the parent received the substance of the concern and an opportunity to respond, unless urgent action prevents this?
- Are disability, language, trauma, cultural context or other communication needs relevant?
- What is the actual and potential effect on pupils, staff, families and School operations?
- Is the proposed response the least restrictive effective option?
- Can safe communication and the pupil's access to education continue?
- Does the parent contract or delegated authority permit the decision-maker to act?
- Have equality, data protection, confidentiality and proportionality been considered?
- Are reasons, scope, duration, review date and route of challenge recorded?
- Does the DSL, Proprietor, Governing Body, insurer or legal adviser need to be informed?

Appendix 3 — Conduct agreement template

Field	Agreed arrangement
Parent / pupil	

Field	Agreed arrangement
School contact	
Communication channel(s)	
Expected frequency and response time	
Meeting arrangements / supporter / interpreter	
Confidentiality or safeguarding controls	
Reasonable adjustments	
What each party will do	
Start and review dates	
What happens if difficulties continue	
Parent comments	
School decision-maker / date	

Appendix 4 — Formal incident and decision record

Field	Record
Date, time, location/platform	
People involved and witnesses	
Pupils affected / immediate welfare action	
Factual description	
Evidence preserved	
Safeguarding / DSL decision	
Police, platform or external referral	
Parent's response	
Equality / adjustments considered	
Underlying concern routed to	
Options considered and proportionality rationale	
Outcome, scope and duration	
Review date and challenge route	
Decision-maker / signature / date	

Appendix 5 — Annual assurance record

Assurance question	Owner	Evidence / action
Policy and parent contract are aligned and current	Headmaster / Bursar	
Complaint routes remain accessible and are not displaced by conduct action	Headmaster / complaints lead	
Significant incidents and restrictions are recorded and reviewed	Headmaster	
Safeguarding concerns are triaged to the DSL without delay	DSL	
Premises restrictions are proportionate, time-limited and support pupil access	Headmaster / site lead	
Reasonable adjustments and equality impacts are evidenced	SENCO / senior leader	

Assurance question	Owner	Evidence / action
Patterns by phase, outcome and protected characteristic are reviewed	Headmaster / Governing Body	
Staff training and emergency/site arrangements are current	Headmaster / DSL / site lead	
Lessons from parent feedback and complaints inform improvement	Governing Body	

Appendix 6 — Key references

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended.
- Department for Education, The independent school standards: guidance for independent schools (April 2026).
- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Department for Education, Controlling access to school premises.
- Department for Education, School and college security guidance.
- Equality Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998; Protection from Harassment Act 1997; Defamation Act 2013.
- UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.
- Independent Schools Inspectorate, current inspection framework and handbook.

References should be checked at each annual review for amendment or replacement.