



Debate Mate Online Safeguarding Protocol 2020-21

As an educational organisation, the safety and wellbeing of our young people is Debate Mate's top priority. All Debate Mate staff and mentors undergo comprehensive safeguarding training and Enhanced DBS checks. You can view our Safeguarding Policy [here](#).

In order to protect the young people we work with remotely, Debate Mate has consulted with a team of online safety specialists to implement a range of enhanced safeguarding and security measures for all of our online delivery, which include the following protocols:

- In advance of any session, Debate Mate will liaise with the organising teacher or parent/guardian to confirm the names of invited and expected students.
- A password-protected link to the session, which is only accessible at the specified session time, is then shared by Debate Mate with teachers and parents who will pass this on to their pupil/child.
- Debate Mate staff and mentors will never contact young people directly.
- At the beginning of each session, participating students are placed into a virtual waiting room and will have their names checked against the session register before being granted access by the facilitator.
- The session facilitator will take a register of all participants before the session commences.
- Features such as participant screen sharing and the private chat feature are disabled to prevent private messaging hijacking and cyber-bullying.
- Any safeguarding concerns can be reported by teachers or parents by emailing: safeguarding@debatebate.com. The sender will receive a secure online form to complete and Debate Mate's safeguarding team will follow up appropriately.
- We regularly remind students that if they have any concerns or worries, they should speak to a trusted adult at school or at home.
- If you have any questions about safeguarding, you can contact Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Karishma Dharni, at karishma@debatebate.com

Ensuring a successful and safe virtual debating programme:

- We suggest children should be against a plain background during the virtual debate sessions, where possible. They should avoid displaying any personal items.
- In the first session, Debate Mate facilitators will go through our 'Rules for Online Safety' with students so everyone is clear on what is and is not permitted, and these expectations will be reaffirmed throughout the programme.
- For sessions arranged with schools, we welcome a teacher to sit in on the session to observe. For sessions arranged with parents, we welcome parents to be present at the beginning and end of each session.
- Where possible, parents are advised not to leave their child unattended. While they do not need to sit next to them, it is recommended that they are within earshot.
- The sessions are interactive, but there will be a few occasions where students need access to a pen and paper for notetaking.