



## Debate Mate Online Safeguarding Protocol

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:

1. 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.
2. All sessions are only able to begin once a DBS checked mentor has logged into a password protected Debate Mate Zoom account. The session is only accessible at the specified time and is shared by Debate Mate with teachers and parents/guardians who will pass this on to their pupil/child.
3. Debate Mate staff will never contact young people directly without the explicit consent of teachers / parents or guardians
4. Debate Mate mentors will never contact young people directly
5. 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 mentors.
6. All participants must have their own first name as their display name in order to be allowed into the session. Parent/Guardian names will also be admitted, but any other unrecognised names will not be permitted to the session.
7. Features such as participant screen sharing and the private chat feature are disabled to prevent private message hijacking and cyber-bullying.
8. Any safeguarding concerns can be reported by teachers or parents by emailing: [safeguarding@debatemate.com](mailto:safeguarding@debatemate.com). The sender will receive a secure online form to complete and Debate Mate's safeguarding team will follow up appropriately.
9. If a mentor or member of staff reports a safeguarding concern about a young person, Debate Mate's policy is to contact the child's school. It is our policy not to disclose information to parents/guardians as this is best practice.
10. We regularly remind students that if they have any concerns or worries, they should speak to a trusted adult at school or at home.
11. For sessions with DEBATE MATE ONLINE LIMITED ONLY: sessions will be recorded for Safeguarding and Child Protection purposes. Session recordings will be stored securely for up to 60 days and then securely destroyed. Parents will be required to provide their consent for this protocol when registering their child to a session.
12. If you have any questions about safeguarding, you can contact one of Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Leads or Deputies: Enayah Byramjee [enayah@debatemate.com](mailto:enayah@debatemate.com) or Jessica Rolfe-Dix [jess@debatemate.com](mailto:jess@debatemate.com) or Kim Rennie [kim@debatemate.com](mailto:kim@debatemate.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 mentors will go through our 'Learning Agreement' 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.

Reviewed November 2022