

Child Safe Policy

All children at DebateBetter have a right to feel safe, protected and included.

This policy is part of our organisation's ongoing commitment to protecting the children in our care from harm and abuse. It:

- outlines the child safe practices our organisation has put in place to minimise the risks to child safety
- sets out what is required from staff, including volunteers and others who interact with our organisation, so they know what is expected from them to keep children safe.

Our commitment to child safety

At DebateBetter we commit to the safety and wellbeing of every child in our care. Please read our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, which is available on our website <https://www.debatebetter.au/child-safety/>.

Our organisation ensures services and activities are inclusive of all children, including children with diverse needs.

Scope and audience for this policy

The policy describes what is required from all staff and volunteers in the organisation when taking part in any activities, services and events that involve children.

Responsibilities for children's safety

Everyone in our organisation is expected to carry out the requirements specific to their role to keep children safe. This includes:

- upholding our organisation's commitment to child safety
- reading, signing and upholding the behaviours set out in our Child Safe Code of Conduct
- meeting requirements across all other child safe policies and procedures, including child safe recruitment practices and risk management
- taking part in our regular reviews of our child safe documents

- reporting all breaches of our policies or any allegations of child harm or abuse, and meeting all external reporting obligations
- completing all child safe training.

Please contact Oliver Bardsley at +61 400 079 534, Jade Di Girolamo at +61 426 655 376, childsafety@debatebetter.au or through our child safety form on our website with any of your child-safety related questions or concerns.

Active participation of children, families and communities

- All our child-related policies and procedures are easily accessible on our website and offline for everyone who accesses our services and events, including children, parents, carers and community members.
- Children, parents and carers from diverse backgrounds and circumstances are encouraged to provide feedback on our child-related policies and procedures, including our Child Safe Code of Conduct that describes acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours and our Child Safe Risk Management Plan.
- We provide opportunities for children to provide feedback to our management, board or committee on what makes them feel safe, supported and included.

Definitions of harm and abuse

Psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse)

This includes bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming and name calling, ignoring and isolating a child, and exposure to domestic and family violence.

Physical abuse

This includes physical punishment, such as pushing, shoving, punching, slapping and kicking, resulting in injury, burns, choking or bruising.

Sexual abuse

This includes the sexual touching of a child, grooming, and production, distribution or possession of child abuse material.

Grooming

This is a process where a person manipulates a child or group of children and sometimes those looking after them, including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of 'trust' so they can then later sexually abuse the child.

Misconduct

This is inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse, but could indicate that abuse is occurring and would often be in breach of an organisation's Child Safe Code of Conduct. This could include showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, having inappropriate conversations with a child or an adult sitting with a child on their lap.

Lack of appropriate care

This includes not providing adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.

What the policy covers**Social media use and online communication**

Staff and volunteers must never communicate privately with children online or on social media. Any necessary online communication should include the child's parent or carer in the correspondence.

Photography and the use of images

Photos and videos of children can only be taken with the permission of parents or carers. Parents and carers must also approve any images used on our social media channels. It is unacceptable for staff or volunteers to take photos or videos of children, other than their own, on personal devices, or to share images without permission.

Physical contact

Physical contact with children should be kept to a minimum. Everyone involved in the organisation is expected to have healthy physical boundaries with children.

Gifts and benefits

Staff and volunteers must never give gifts to children, or bestow benefits of any kind to a child, unless they have direct permission from the child's parents or carers.

Secondary employment

Staff members must declare any secondary employment and make sure there are no conflicts of interest associated with the employment, such as coaching them externally in a school environment. This includes any coaching that the staff member conducts with children outside of Debatebetter.

Out of hours contact with children

Staff and volunteers must let us know about any out-of-hours contact they have with children in our care. It is unacceptable for staff or volunteers to participate in the lives of children outside the organisation without a valid reason. Professional boundaries with the children in our care must be maintained at all times.

Recording of online sessions

Every online class and tournament room is recorded by default as a child-safety measure. Recordings are never shared with coaches, students or families, and are securely deleted after 12 months unless they are needed for a concern under investigation. Recording is disclosed in our Enrolment Terms, and every adult in a session gives an express acknowledgement before they are admitted. Students aged 14 or over also acknowledge the recording for themselves. A student who will not acknowledge the recording cannot take part in a recorded session, and we make this clear at the point of enrolment.

Online classes and supervision

Parents must be aware that each lesson is taking place. Waiting rooms are enabled and students are admitted by name. For primary school children we expect a parent to be nearby. No coach is ever alone with a single student in a breakout room unless a second adult is present, or the breakout is recorded and the Child Safety Officer has approved the format in advance.

Tournaments

Tournament rooms can only be entered by approved participants that are admitted by name, with an adult moderator in each room and published adjudication standards. Parents are given spectator links, and an online risk assessment is signed before registration opens for each event.

Online group channels and messaging

Any student group channel that is run by DebateBetter has at least two adult moderators, and keeps its message history. We do not run student group channels on age-restricted social media platforms. Coaches do not follow, friend or accept requests from students on personal accounts, must unfollow students if they presently follow them, and any contact outside of monitored channels is treated as a serious breach.

Behaviour between students

We do not tolerate bullying, humiliation, exclusion, harassment, or sexualised or discriminatory comments between students, wherever they happen, whether in chats, group channels, breakout rooms, or in the minutes before a coach joins. A coach is required to stop any such behaviour in the moment, and, where appropriate, reports it to the Child Safety Officer the same day.

In-person activities

Most of our activities take place online. Any occasional in-person activity happens only in visible spaces with another adult present, and never one-to-one.

Reporting requirements for different types of concerns or incidents

Child Safe Reporting Policy

Our Child Safe Reporting Policy sets out requirements and procedures for complaints, allegations, disclosures and reports, and external reporting obligations. It can be accessed at <https://www.debatebetter.au/child-safety/>.

Other related child safe documents

DebateBetter has a range of other key documents that relate to child safety. These can be accessed on our website at [debatebetter.au](https://www.debatebetter.au), and include:

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Our public commitment to prioritising the safety and wellbeing of every child in our care, published on our website and shared with parents at enrolment.

Coach Code of Conduct

Guides the day-to-day behaviours of everyone who works with our students. It sets clear professional boundaries, prohibits private one-to-one contact with a child, and requires any concerns to be reported immediately. Every coach and founder signs it before their first contact with a student.

Child Safe Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy

Sets out our screening and recruitment process, including verification of each adult's Working with Children Check through the OCG employer portal, child-safety focused interviews and reference checks, induction into this policy, and the ongoing training required before anyone has contact with a student.

Child Safe Risk Management Plan

Describes the specific child-safety risks in our online and occasional in-person activities and the protective strategies we use to reduce each one, including an online risk assessment signed before every event.

Publication, communication and engagement

Our Child Safe Policy and other child safe documents are published on our website at debatebetter.au. Parents receive our child-safety commitment at enrolment, and anyone involved in our community can request a copy by email at any time. We send regular reminders to our community about our child safe documents and invite feedback whenever one of these documents is up for review.

Related legislation, regulations and standards

DebateBetter must understand and comply with a number of NSW child protection laws, schemes and standards. These include:

- NSW Child Safe Scheme and the ten NSW Child Safe Standards
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 (NSW)
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Crimes Act 1900 (NSW), including sections 316A and 43B
- Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (NSW)

Next review date

This policy will be reviewed in August 2027 as part of our annual compliance cycle, or earlier if there are any critical incidents. The Child Safety Officer is responsible for the review.