

Safe Schools Alliance UK—written evidence (FEO0087)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into Freedom of Expression Online

The Safe Schools Alliance is a group of concerned parents, grandparents, teachers, governors, and health professionals from more than 30 local education authority areas in the UK. We are from a wide range of backgrounds and have no religious or political affiliation.

Many of our members and supporters are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Many are parents, carers or grandparents of LGB or trans-identifying young people. This motivates us to ensure that schools keep every child safe and are inclusive of all.

The question most relevant to us is question 2. How should good digital citizenship be promoted? How can education help?

Safe Schools Alliance believe that children should be educated on their rights as well as their responsibilities. We believe children should be taught debate in schools and the importance of freedom of speech. They should be educated on the difference between freedom of speech and harassment or inciting violence. They should be taught that nobody has the right never to be offended, but equally we all have the right to freedom from targeted harassment. These are complex and difficult issues that many adults struggle with, these conversations must begin in school with children taught how to think, not what to think and how to debate, not what to say.

Children must be taught an accurate interpretation of both international law such as the Human Rights Act and domestic law such as the Equality Act 2010, this teaching must not be allowed to be biased by lobby groups.

Safe Schools Alliance believe in freedom of speech and freedom of expression, however we also believe in safeguarding. Freedom of Speech must never be allowed to override safeguarding. We must acknowledge that under 18's are children with a right to be safeguarded and protected including online. All necessary steps must be taken to protect them from online harms.

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