

Using Generative AI Responsibly in Education

Short Guide for School and College Leadership Teams



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Introduction

This short guide offers schools and colleges a practical starting point when thinking about how to approach the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (in particular Generative AI (GenAI)), in their setting. It outlines key considerations and highlights some of the risks to be aware of before introducing AI tools into everyday practice.

Used alongside Firebird's *AI Essential Toolkit for Education*, this guide is designed to support informed decision-making, encourage local discussion, and help strengthen oversight, due diligence and safe implementation.

This guide supports the Department for Education's '*Generative AI in Education*' and the Information Commission's '*Guidance on AI and Data Protection*', which provide comprehensive guidance on responsible AI use, legal considerations and governance.



Meet 'Phoenix'
Firebird's 'Safe AI' Mascot

*Promoting safe, ethical and
responsible use of AI in
education.*

1

Artificial intelligence and GenAI



● What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems that can perform tasks we usually rely on people to do, like understanding speech, spotting patterns, solving problems or learning from experience. In schools and colleges, this might include tools that personalise learning, offer tutoring, or help staff identify students who need extra support.

● Generative AI

Generative AI (GenAI) is a type of AI that creates new content rather than just analysing existing data. Often powered by Large Language Models (LLMs), these tools can generate text, images, lesson plans, mock exam questions and more, in response to prompts.

For teachers, GenAI can save time with planning and resource creation, and for non-teaching or administrative staff, it can be useful for drafting parent communications, reports, newsletters and meeting notes, freeing up time for other tasks!

2 Leadership and oversight

● AI use and pedagogical aims

Before introducing the use of AI and GenAI, it is important for leadership teams to define clear purposes for their use. This might include tasks such as lesson planning, improving accessibility, personalising learning experiences, drafting or refining reports and letters, supporting timetabling, analysing pupil or student performance, generating newsletter content, or producing automated meeting minutes. The potential applications for AI use are vast!

Whatever the intended use, you should ensure it is aligned with your core educational values, pedagogical aims, strategic objectives and broader development plans.

● Governance and oversight

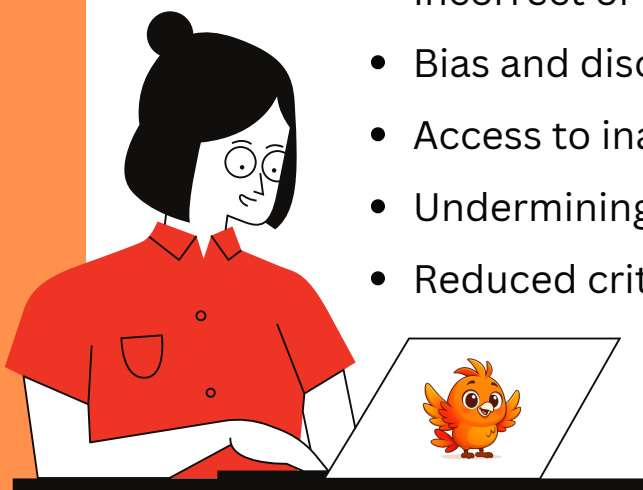
The Governing Body or Board of Trustees should oversee AI use in your school or college and nominate an AI lead to manage its adoption and monitor compliance. Safeguarding, behaviour, acceptable use and data protection policies, as well as privacy notices, should be updated and kept under regular review as the AI landscape continues to evolve.

3 Risks when using AI tools

AI and GenAI offer exciting opportunities to enhance teaching and learning and reduce administrative burdens, but it is essential to understand and manage the potential risks of using these tools, to ensure this technology is used safely, fairly and responsibly.

● Key risks

- Data privacy violations and security vulnerabilities
- Incorrect or misleading information
- Bias and discrimination resulting in unfair outcomes
- Access to inappropriate and unsafe content
- Undermining originality and academic honesty
- Reduced critical thinking and independence



● Minimising the risks

There are many ways you can minimise these risks, such as using approved, age-appropriate tools with strong data protection compliance; monitor and supervise pupil and student use; check the AI's outputs for fairness and teach pupils, students and staff to use AI responsibly. You can also communicate clear rules around using AI for homework and assignments to protect academic honesty and support independent learning.

4 Assessing AI tools

Part one

● Meeting the DfE standards

Before any AI tool is adopted, it must be assessed to confirm that it is safe and appropriate for school use. Each tool should meet the standards set by the DfE's *Generative AI Product Safety Expectations*.

● Compliance with the UK GDPR

Schools and colleges must ensure AI tools comply with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act when handling personal data. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is required when using innovative technologies like AI with children's data. You must assess the supplier's ability to protect data and have a Data Processing Agreement that clearly limits how data can be used. AI tools must not be allowed to use personal data for commercial purposes, such as training their models.

● Age appropriate and user safety

Many AI tools lack enforced age restrictions, so pupil and student use should be carefully supervised. Tools must be reviewed for age-appropriateness and safeguards to reduce risks of harmful, offensive, or biased content. Where age restrictions exist, they should be followed.

Assessing AI tools

Part two

● Monitoring and reporting

Effective supervision of student AI use requires both teacher oversight and technical monitoring. AI tools should provide detailed logs, flag safeguarding concerns, and notify staff of risky prompts. Age-appropriate alerts are vital, and schools need clear reports on usage trends and incidents. As many AI tools are web-based, they should integrate with existing filtering systems. However, some existing web filters can fail to capture AI prompts and outputs, so these should be reviewed. Additional controls are needed to either restrict student queries or monitor interactions more closely.

● Security

Tools must be secure against malicious use or tampering, including protections against ‘jailbreaking’ and unauthorised reprogramming. Features should include user-level permissions, multi-factor authentication, and regular updates and testing. Tools should align with the DfE’s *Cyber Security Standards for Schools and Colleges*.

● Intellectual property

AI products must not store or use pupil or staff-generated content for model training or other commercial uses without permission from the copyright holder (or their guardian for under 18s). Ownership rights must be respected under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

● Consult with stakeholders early

Where AI tools involve student use or the processing of personal data, it is important to engage relevant stakeholders early. Schools should consult with staff, parents/carers, pupils and students to explain how and why AI is being used, answer questions and address any concerns.

● Parental consent

Leadership teams should make a policy decision as to when parental consent will be sought for the use of AI tools in school. This applies to when AI is used to support educational functions involving pupil or student data, and when learners are using the tools directly. Consent is likely to be necessary where there is a reasonable risk to privacy or safeguarding, or where the tool will be used to inform or influence significant decisions about a child.

6 Training and support

● Knowledge and confidence

Staff must be confident and informed when using AI tools safely and responsibly. Training should cover:

- **How AI Works** – Key strengths, limitations, and risks such as hallucinations, bias, misinformation, and safeguarding issues.
- **Safe and Legal Use** – Responsibilities around data protection, privacy, and copyright.
- **Reporting Concerns** – Staff and students must know how to raise issues, with follow-up or oversight by the AI lead.
- **Withdrawing Access** – Clear steps to restrict AI tool access when concerns arise.

● Acceptable use agreements

Introduce or update Home School Agreements or Acceptable Use Agreements for staff, pupils and students, setting out what is expected of them when using AI tools in their work.



7 Monitoring and supervision

● Safeguard pupils and students

Establish clear systems and processes for the safe use of AI tools. This includes blocking access to harmful or unsafe AI platforms, particularly those that could expose children to violent, explicit, or otherwise inappropriate content.

● Monitoring and supervision

Monitor how AI is being used. This means reviewing both the prompts entered and the outputs generated, in order to identify any potential safeguarding concerns, such as references to self-harm, distress, or abusive material. Pupil interactions with AI tools should always be supervised to minimise the risk of misuse, factual inaccuracies, or an over-reliance on AI-generated content.

● Check outputs

Check outputs regularly for accuracy, bias, misinformation, plagiarism, or inappropriate content, ensuring that the material is suitable for the age and learning needs of students. Where any concerns arise, there must be clear procedures for escalating these promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the Senior Leadership Team, or the Data Protection Officer.

Conclusion



The adoption of AI in education brings both opportunity and responsibility. As the technology continues to advance, schools and colleges must approach its use with care, ensuring it supports their core purpose and safeguards the rights and wellbeing of pupils, students and staff. Clear governance, defined roles, updated policies, and a focus on pedagogical intent are all key to embedding AI in a safe, meaningful and legally compliant way.

By taking a measured and well-informed approach, leadership teams can develop the confidence and practical skill to make the most of AI while managing its risks. Ongoing review, staff training, and open dialogue with stakeholders will be essential as the landscape evolves. With the right oversight, AI can be a powerful tool to support inclusive, efficient and forward-looking education.

Additional reading

Department for Education:

- Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education
- Using AI in Education Settings: Support Materials
- AI Product Safety Expectations
- Cyber Security Standards for Schools and Colleges
- Understanding Artificial Intelligence ethics and safety

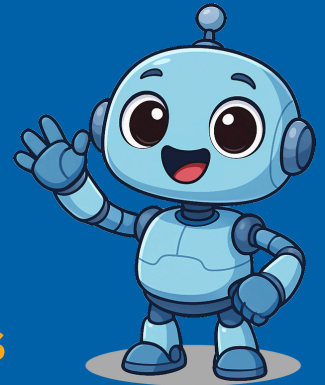
Information Commission:

- Guidance on AI and data protection

AI Essential Toolkit for Education



Only £399 ex vat



What's included in Firebird's Comprehensive AI Toolkit?

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Model Policy
- Acceptable Use Agreement for staff, pupils and students
- Guide to Managing Generative AI (GenAI) Risks
- Easy to follow GenAI guidance and checklists
- AI awareness posters for pupils and students (PDFs)
- Pre-completed Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) and due diligence assessments for ChatGPT; CoPilot and Gemini
- Checklist for assessing GenAI Tools' compliance
- Short AI training videos for staff

Order your AI Essential Toolkit

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Additional Support

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