Pedagogue
AI ENABLEMENT FOR SCHOOLS

GOVERNOR BRIEFING | BOARDS AND TRUSTEES

FOR GOVERNORS, TRUSTEES AND BOARD MEMBERS | SEPTEMBER 2026

What *governors* need to know about AI

A briefing for boards: what AI is in plain terms, what it means for education and for the world of work pupils are heading into, what your safeguarding duties now say about it, and the questions a board should put to its leaders. It ends with a checklist you can take to a meeting.

14
BRIEFING POINTS

01–06 AI, education and work
07–09 Risk and safeguarding
10–14 Policy, tools and staff

Your job is not to master the tools. *It is to be sure the school has thought seriously about AI.*

PART ONE

What AI is, and *what it changes*

01 This is an educational question, not a purchase

It is tempting to think a school answers AI by buying something. **It cannot.** AI changes what pupils need to learn and how the school works, so the starting point is educational. The tools follow from that, and most of them are the same chatbots everyone else uses.

NOT THE QUESTION	THE QUESTION
Which AI tool should we buy?	**What does a good education look like** now that AI can do so much of the work, and what must pupils still learn to do themselves?
Can we just ban it?	**Are our staff confident enough** to judge where AI helps and where it harms?

02 What AI actually *is*

The AI in question is **generative AI**: it creates new text, images, audio and video in response to an instruction, rather than finding something that already exists. Most of it reaches schools through a handful of chatbots: ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google), Copilot (Microsoft) and Claude (Anthropic). Four things are worth holding on to.

GENERATIVE
It makes things
Ask for a lesson, a letter, a picture or a voice and it produces one that has never existed before, in seconds.

PREDICTION
Not a database
It predicts likely words from patterns in enormous amounts of writing. It does not look anything up unless told to.

CONFIDENCE
Fluent, and sometimes wrong
It invents facts, quotations and references in perfect prose. Anything that matters needs a human check.

GENERAL PURPOSE
Not another piece of edtech
A shift in how knowledge work is done, closer to the arrival of the internet than to a new classroom gadget.

BE WARY OF

Treating AI as a product to buy, or a problem to ban. Both let the school avoid the harder question of what it wants education to look like.

INSTEAD

Expect leaders to have a clear view of where AI belongs in teaching, in learning and in the running of the school, and to be honest about what they are still working out.

PART TWO

Learning, assessment and *the world of work*

03 Jobs are changing, and nobody can pick the winners

The World Economic Forum expects 170 million jobs to be created and 92 million displaced by 2030, and 39% of today's skill sets to be transformed or outdated. 86% of employers expect AI to transform their business (Future of Jobs Report, 2025). **Guessing which jobs are safe is not a strategy.**

WHAT THIS SHOULD MEAN FOR THE SCHOOL	WHAT IT SHOULD NOT MEAN
Breadth: arts, humanities, languages and sciences, not early narrowing	**Chasing a list** of supposedly AI-proof careers
Human skills: communication, curiosity, working with others, judgement	**Assuming coding alone** is the answer
Fluency with AI alongside deep subject knowledge, and knowing when not to use it	**Treating AI as a subject** that lives only in computer science

04 Expertise matters more, not less

AI is most useful to someone who already knows what good looks like. A teacher can see what an AI answer has missed. A pupil still learning the subject cannot, which is why some things AI can do are not appropriate for learning.

- **It raises the floor** on routine work
- **Judgement sets the ceiling:** knowing what is wrong, what is missing and what matters
- **A quarter of 13 to 18 year olds** who use AI admit to simply copying what it gives them, up from a fifth a year earlier (National Literacy Trust, 2025)

The answer is teaching, not banning: pupils learn to use AI well, to check it, and to recognise the tasks where using it would cost them the learning.

05 Assessment is where this bites first

Coursework and non-examination assessment are the sharp end, and the exam boards have been clear.

- **JCQ:** AI misuse in assessed work is malpractice, and pupils must acknowledge any AI they use
- **JCQ:** teachers must not use AI as the sole means of marking pupils' work
- **Our advice: do not rely on AI detectors.** They are unreliable, and research has found they wrongly flag writing by pupils who speak English as an additional language, which makes unfair accusations a discrimination risk as well as a pastoral one

Accusations carry risk too: in the United States an AI cheating allegation reached a federal court, where the school's decision was upheld. Evidence and process matter. Ask what is changing in assessment, not only what is banned: rules set task by task, with drafts and disclosure, hold up better than a blanket ban.

06 What parents are asking

"Is my child using AI for homework?"
57% of parents think so, up from 47% a year earlier (Parent Voice Project, 2026).

"Will it stop them learning to think?"
A fair worry. The answer is how AI is taught and assessed, not whether it exists.

"What are you teaching them about it?"
Parents want the school to have a view, and to say it plainly.

"What is the school doing to keep them safe?"
Age limits, school accounts, filtering and a named person to go to.

PART THREE

Risk, safeguarding and *the rulebook*

07 AI is already in the school, with or without a plan

82% of primary and 78% of secondary teachers say they have used generative AI in their work (DfE, December 2025). 56% of 8 to 17 year olds use it, and 51% for schoolwork (Ofcom, 2026). In a union survey of 9,408 teachers this year, 49% said their school had no AI policy for staff or pupils (NEU, 2026). **Waiting is not a neutral choice.**

THE EDUCATIONAL RISK OF WAITING

- **Pupils teach themselves** bad habits, with no agreed line from the school
- **Staff improvise** in good faith, without guidance or shared practice
- **Assessment drifts,** and pupils hear a different rule in every classroom

THE SAFEGUARDING AND COMPLIANCE RISK

- **Personal data** goes into tools nobody has checked, with no record of who decided what
- **AI content reaches pupils** through apps, browsers and search, outside the filtering the school knows about
- **Incidents get harder to answer for:** deepfakes, chatbots acting as friends, and no paper trail

What KCSiE 2026 now says

Safeguarding guidance is where AI becomes a board duty

08 AI is named in the risks pupils face

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 defines nudes and semi-nudes to include images "digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence". Its online safety section now recognises harmful interaction with generative AI that simulates human contact, explicit images generated using AI, and misinformation. 13% of teenagers have had an experience with a nude deepfake, and only 11% have been taught about them at school (Internet Matters).

The harm is real, even when the image is not.

09 The duties land on the board

Governing bodies and proprietors are told to make online safety "a running and interrelated theme" across the school's approach to safeguarding; to see that filtering and monitoring are reviewed at least annually, led by a senior leader with the DSL and IT; and to protect personal information with appropriate cyber security. All staff must now read Part one in full, and their training must cover their own responsibilities for filtering and monitoring.

Ask when the review last happened, and whether it covered AI.

The documents behind all of this

Five reference points. None asks a board to understand the technology. All assume someone is taking responsibility for it.

DOCUMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BOARD
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026	Statutory safeguarding guidance, in force from September 2026	AI named in online safety risks; filtering and monitoring reviewed annually
Generative AI in education	DfE policy paper, updated August 2025	Schools set their own rules within data protection, safeguarding and copyright law
Generative AI: product safety standards	DfE, updated January 2026	What a safe AI product for education would look like. Use it as a risk assessment when choosing tools
Filtering and monitoring standards	DfE, updated September 2026	Roles assigned including a named governor, annual review, and AI-generated content considered in it
AI Use in Assessments	JCQ, April 2025	Rules for coursework and NEA: misuse is malpractice, and AI must not be the sole means of marking

PART FOUR

Policy, tools and *data*

10 Does your school have an AI policy?

Only 20% of primaries and 34% of secondaries had one in the DfE's most recent survey (Technology in Schools, November 2025). **A good policy is short, and settles five things.**

WHAT THE POLICY MUST SETTLE	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE
Data protection	Pupil, staff and family data can leak into tools the school does not control	Named rules on what never goes in, and a DPIA before any tool that processes personal data
Who may use AI, and at what age	Most consumer tools set a minimum age of 13, and some 18	Clear by age group, using school accounts rather than personal ones
Which tools are allowed	Staff will otherwise choose their own, with no due diligence	A short approved list, and a route to ask for something new (see 12)
Assessment and academic integrity	Pupils need to know the rule for each task, not a blanket ban	Task-by-task rules, disclosure, assessment that values the process. No reliance on AI detectors: they are unreliable and risk unfair accusations
Safeguarding, filtering and monitoring	AI content reaches pupils through apps, browsers and search	Covered in the safeguarding policy, and in the annual filtering and monitoring review

11 Getting one in place

The policy is a short document. Getting to it is a process:

1. **Audit** what staff and pupils already use.
2. **Give it an owner,** and a link governor on the board.
3. **Start from a template:** our free guide Writing your school's AI policy.
4. **Consult** staff, pupils and parents, then approve and publish.

Date it and diarise the review. A policy written this year will need changing next year.

12 Approve a short list of tools

The approach we recommend. Rather than allowing anything or banning everything, the school keeps a list of tools it has checked.

- **Staff know where they stand,** and stop guessing
- **Each tool is risk assessed once,** properly, instead of never
- **A simple request route** stops the list becoming a block on good ideas

It is also your paper trail. Record what was checked, what was decided, by whom and when. If something goes wrong, that record is what shows the school acted reasonably.

13 The data risk sits in the supply chain

The school stays accountable for pupil data even when a supplier processes it.

When the ICO audited **28 edtech providers** used widely in UK schools, **over 40% had carried out no data protection impact assessment at all**, and around 70% had contracts missing requirements of UK GDPR (*Edtech examined*, June 2026).

On the DfE's product safety standards: they are demanding, and no mainstream chatbot meets them in full. Use them to inform the school's own risk assessment of a tool, rather than as a pass or fail test.

WHAT TO ASK BEFORE A TOOL IS ADOPTED

- ✓ **Have we done a DPIA?** Required for new technology processing children's data
- ✓ **Is our data used to train the model,** and can that be switched off?
- ✓ **Who is the controller,** and what does the contract actually say?
- ✓ **Which risks in the DfE standards** does this tool leave open, and how do we manage them?

PART FIVE

Staff, and *your checklist*

14 Staff capability is the whole game

Only 14% of teachers in England are confident across all three areas of AI literacy, 18% have had structured training and 15% say they have clear whole-school guidance (Royal Society survey of more than 9,000 teachers, 2026). **Tools without training change nothing.**

WHERE BOARDS SHOULD PRESS

- **Training for all staff,** teaching and support alike
- **Subject by subject:** each department deciding what AI means for its discipline
- **Leaders and governors first,** so the board can judge what it is being sold

WHAT GOOD TRAINING LOOKS LIKE

- **Time to practise,** not a single briefing
- **Led from the top,** with leaders visibly using it themselves
- **Evidenced,** so the school can show who was trained and when

TAKE THIS TO A MEETING

Governor checklist: AI in our school

Work through it with your leaders. An honest 'in progress' beats an optimistic tick, and the gaps make the agenda for the year.

	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
The board has seen the school's AI policy and knows when it is next reviewed	☐	☐	☐
A named governor links to AI, alongside safeguarding and data protection	☐	☐	☐
The policy says who may use AI, for what, and at what ages	☐	☐	☐
There is an approved list of tools, with a route to request a new one	☐	☐	☐
A DPIA has been completed for every AI tool that processes personal data	☐	☐	☐
Assessment rules for AI are set task by task, and pupils know them	☐	☐	☐
All staff, teaching and support, have had AI training this year	☐	☐	☐
Pupils are taught how to question AI, and when not to use it	☐	☐	☐
The annual filtering and monitoring review covered AI-generated content	☐	☐	☐
The board itself has had a briefing or training on AI	☐	☐	☐

A FINAL WORD

Govern the direction, *not the tools.*

Ofsted does not evaluate the use of AI in itself: it asks whether leaders made sensible decisions, as with any other tool. ISI has published nothing specific on AI, and independent school inspection looks at safeguarding and leadership as it always has. The test is the same either way: can the school show it thought this through?

FURTHER READING **Pedagogue:** free articles and guides, including our AI policy guide and KCSiE 2026 briefing

DfE: Using AI in education: support for school and college leaders **Ofsted:** How Ofsted looks at AI during inspection and regulation

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