Responsible AI Usage Policy

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Executive Summary

This Responsible AI Usage Policy outlines Distington Community School's approach to implementing and using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in our educational setting. Key points include:

1. Our commitment to safe, ethical, and effective use of AI in alignment with DfE guidance, OFSTED expectations, and the DfE's Generative AI Product Safety Expectations
2. Guidelines for selecting, implementing, and monitoring AI tools with robust safeguarding measures
3. Clear roles and responsibilities for staff, pupils, and leadership in AI usage
4. Comprehensive measures to protect data privacy, intellectual property, and student welfare
5. Strategies for preparing pupils for an AI-enhanced future while maintaining academic integrity
6. Recognition of environmental impact and sustainable AI practices

This policy aims to harness the benefits of AI while mitigating potential risks, ensuring that our use of AI enhances teaching, learning, and administrative processes without compromising our educational values, safeguarding responsibilities, or stakeholders' rights.

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1. Introduction

At Distington Community School we recognise the immense potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including generative AI and large language models (LLMs), to enhance school leadership, teaching, learning, and administrative processes. This policy outlines our approach to implementing and using AI technologies in a responsible, ethical, and effective manner, in alignment with:

Department for Education (DfE) Generative AI in Education guidance

DfE Generative AI Product Safety Expectations

Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance

OFSTED expectations

Our school's values and educational philosophy

Key DfE Position: "If used safely, effectively and with the right infrastructure in place, AI can support every child and young person, regardless of their background, to achieve at school and college and develop the knowledge and skills they need for life."

Distington Community School's vision for AI is to use it in a way that enhances teaching, learning, and school operations while maintaining strong safeguarding and ethical standards.

AI is used in a safe, monitored, and controlled manner, with staff oversight at all times. Pupils do not have unrestricted access; instead, its use is carefully managed to ensure it is age-appropriate and supports learning without replacing teacher judgement.

As a primary school, our context means AI is selectively implemented to enhance our school, supporting areas such as planning, differentiation, accessibility, and administrative efficiency. This enables staff to focus more on high-quality teaching and pupil engagement.

We recognise AI is evolving, so our approach remains cautious, regularly reviewed, and aligned with our school values, ensuring it is always used responsibly and for the benefit of all pupils. Overall, AI is seen as a supportive tool- not a replacement for human interaction or professional expertise-used responsibly to enrich our school environment and improve outcomes for all pupils.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the safe, secure, and appropriate use of AI technologies within our school in compliance with DfE Product Safety Expectations
- Promote transparency and accountability in AI implementation with robust human oversight
- Safeguard the wellbeing and rights of all pupils and staff, including protection from AI-generated harmful content
- Align our AI use with educational goals, DfE guidance, and OFSTED expectations
- Harness the potential of AI to reduce workload and enhance leadership, teaching, and learning
- Protect intellectual property rights and ensure compliance with UK GDPR
- Prepare our pupils for a future where AI is increasingly prevalent while maintaining academic integrity
- Address emerging safeguarding risks specific to AI technologies

3. Scope

This policy applies to all AI technologies used within Distington Community School including but not limited to:

- **Generative AI tools** (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, SLT AI)
- **Administrative and productivity tools** with AI features
- **Learning management systems** incorporating AI functionality
- **Assessment and feedback** tools using AI processing
- **Personalised learning platforms** with AI adaptation
- **Data analysis and decision-support systems**
- **AI-integrated educational software and applications**

It covers use by all staff, pupils, and any third parties acting on behalf of the school.

Critical Distinction: This policy distinguishes between:

- **Staff use of AI tools** for professional purposes
- **Pupil use of AI tools** (which requires additional safeguards and permissions)

4. Understanding Generative AI

Generative AI refers to technology that can create new content based on large volumes of data. This includes tools that can:

- Answer questions and complete written tasks
- Respond to prompts in a human-like way
- Produce audio, code, images, text, simulations, and videos
- Adapt content for different reading levels and learning needs

Important Limitations to Understand:

- AI systems can produce **hallucinations** (convincing but inaccurate information)
- AI outputs may contain **bias** from training data or system design
- AI cannot **think, understand, or have intentions** - it predicts responses based on patterns
- AI requires **human oversight** and critical evaluation of all outputs
- AI systems are "**black box**" technologies where the decision-making process is not transparent

While these tools offer significant opportunities, it's crucial to understand their limitations and maintain the principle that humans must always remain in the loop.

5. Guiding Principles

Our use of AI technologies is guided by the following principles, aligned with DfE Product Safety Expectations:

5.1 Safety, Security, and Robustness

We are committed to prioritising the safety and security of all users when implementing AI systems:

- Content Filtering: All AI tools must include robust content filtering to prevent generation of harmful, inappropriate, or illegal content
- Activity Monitoring: AI tool usage is monitored and logged for safeguarding purposes
- Regular Risk Assessments: Continuous evaluation of AI tools and their applications
- Security Standards: Compliance with cyber security standards for schools and colleges
- Age-Appropriate Access: Strict enforcement of minimum age requirements for AI tools

Our school has safety measures in place to ensure AI is used securely and responsibly.

We use monitoring and filtering systems, in line with DfE standards, to keep all digital activity appropriate and safeguard pupils. These systems are managed and regularly reviewed by senior leaders and supported by external IT providers. In addition, Senso alerting provides real-time notifications of any potential concerns, enabling prompt staff intervention.

These measures ensure AI use is closely supervised and supports pupil safety at all times.**5.2 Transparency and Explainability**

We maintain clear communication about how and why AI is used in our school:

- **Clear Documentation:** All AI use is documented and communicated to stakeholders
- **Output Attribution:** When AI is used to create content, this is clearly disclosed
- **Decision Transparency:** AI-assisted decisions can be explained and justified
- **Regular Updates:** Stakeholders receive regular information about AI implementations

Our school ensures transparency in its approach to AI by clearly communicating its use to the wider school community.

Information about AI use is outlined within school policies published on the school website, ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders. In addition, key information is shared with parents, so they are aware of how AI is used safely and to enhance learning.

This approach ensures that AI use is open, transparent, and understood by both staff and families.

5.3 Fairness and Non-Discrimination

We actively work to prevent and address any biases in our AI systems:

- Bias Monitoring: Regular evaluation of AI outputs for potential bias
- Inclusive Design: Consideration of diverse learner needs in AI implementation
- Corrective Action: Prompt response to identified biases or unfair treatment
- Representation: Ensuring AI tools represent diverse perspectives and communities

Our school ensures fairness in AI use by keeping it as a support tool, not a decision-maker, with all outputs checked by staff to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.

AI is used to support inclusion and differentiation, helping all pupils access learning fairly, while access is carefully managed to prevent misuse or advantage.

Staff also remain aware of potential bias in AI systems and ensure its use aligns with our values of equality and fairness, with all applications overseen by professional judgement.

5.4 Human Oversight and Accountability

We maintain human oversight of all AI systems and their outputs:

- Professional Responsibility: All AI outputs are reviewed by qualified professionals
- Decision Authority: Humans retain final decision-making authority
- Override Capability: Staff can override AI suggestions when professional judgement deems necessary
- Continuous Supervision: No AI system operates without human monitoring

All staff have a responsibility for the safe and appropriate use of AI within school.

Overall oversight is led by Miss A Quirk (Executive Headteacher), Miss L Savage (Head of School/ DSL) and Mr D Mossop (Computing Lead), who ensure AI use is monitored, reviewed, and in line with school policy and safeguarding expectations.

5.5 Data Protection and Privacy

We adhere to all relevant data protection regulations:

- UK GDPR Compliance: Strict adherence to data protection legislation
- Lawful Basis: Clear legal basis for all data processing through AI systems
- Data Minimisation: Only necessary data is processed by AI tools
- Consent Management: Appropriate consent obtained where required
- Right to Erasure: Systems that support data subject rights

Distington Community School follows its Data Protection and GDPR policies, which are published on the school website and align with UK GDPR requirements.

These procedures ensure that any use of data, including when AI tools are involved, is kept secure, processed lawfully, and used only for legitimate school purposes. The school ensures data is minimised, stored safely, and only accessed by authorised staff.

All staff are expected to follow these policies to maintain pupil confidentiality and data security at all times.

5.6 Intellectual Property Protection

We respect and protect intellectual property rights:

- Copyright Compliance: Ensuring all AI use respects copyright law
- Student Work Protection: Safeguarding pupils' intellectual property rights
- Permission Protocols: Clear processes for obtaining necessary permissions
- Secondary Infringement Prevention: Avoiding use of potentially infringing AI outputs

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Overall oversight is led by Miss A Quirk (Executive Headteacher), Miss L Savage (Head of School/ DSL) and Mr D Mossop (Computing Lead), who ensure AI use is monitored, reviewed, and in line with school policy and safeguarding expectations.

6.1 School Leadership

- Overall responsibility for AI strategy and policy compliance
- Ensuring alignment with DfE guidance and Product Safety Expectations
- Resource allocation for safe AI implementation
- Regular policy review and updates
- Designated Senior Leader responsible for digital technology strategy

6.2 Data Protection Officer

- Conducting Data Protection Impact Assessments for AI tools
- Ensuring UK GDPR compliance
- Advising on lawful basis for AI data processing
- Managing data subject rights regarding AI use

6.3 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Monitoring AI-related safeguarding risks
- Responding to AI-related safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring filtering and monitoring systems address AI risks
- Training staff on AI safeguarding considerations

6.4 IT Department/Technical Lead

- Technical implementation and maintenance of AI systems
- Ensuring security and robustness of AI tools
- Managing access controls and monitoring systems
- Providing technical support and training

6.5 Teaching and Support Staff

- Responsible use of approved AI tools
- Critical evaluation of all AI outputs
- Maintaining human oversight of AI-assisted work
- Reporting concerns or issues with AI systems
- Participating in required training

6.6 Pupils

- Ethical use of approved AI tools (where permitted)
- Understanding limitations and responsible use
- Reporting concerns to staff
- Respecting intellectual property and academic integrity rules

7. Implementation Guidelines

7.1 Selection and Procurement

We carefully select AI tools that align with DfE Product Safety Expectations:

Enterprise vs. Free Tools:

- **Preference for Enterprise Tools:** Professional AI tools with organisational controls
- **Prohibition of Free Personal Accounts:** Staff must not use personal AI accounts for school work
- **Safety Features Required:** Content filtering, activity monitoring, data protection controls
- **Educational Suitability:** Tools designed for or adapted to educational contexts

Evaluation Criteria:

- Compliance with DfE Product Safety Expectations
- Alignment with educational objectives
- Data protection and security features
- Age-appropriate safeguards
- Evidence of effectiveness in educational settings

School leaders must use the AI Tool Evaluation Checklist in Appendix A when considering new AI tools.

7.2 Data Management and Protection

Critical Requirements:

- **Avoid Identifiable Data**: Staff must not input personally identifiable pupil or staff information into AI tools unless the tool is explicitly approved for such use by the school and meets all data protection requirements.
- **Approved Tools Only**: Only use AI systems that have been reviewed and approved by the school, with appropriate data privacy and security measures in place.
- **No Unauthorised Training**: Ensure AI tools do not use school data for model training unless explicit consent and contracts are in place.
- **Data Retention Awareness**: Staff must understand how long data is stored by any AI tool used and ensure this aligns with school policy and legal obligations.

Safe Practice Guidelines:

- Remove or anonymise identifiable data before using AI tools unless the tool has been verified as safe for processing such data.
- Use pseudonyms or generalised examples where appropriate.
- Conduct regular audits of AI tool data practices to ensure ongoing compliance.
- Maintain and follow clear protocols for responding to any data breaches involving AI tools.

7.3 Training and Support

Mandatory Training Requirements:

- **Foundation Training:** All staff must complete the DfE AI in Education modules
- **Role-Specific Training:** Tailored training for different staff roles
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Regular updates on AI best practices
- **Critical Thinking Skills:** Training on evaluating AI outputs

Training Components:

- Understanding AI capabilities and limitations
- Recognising hallucinations and bias
- Data protection and intellectual property awareness
- Safeguarding considerations specific to AI
- Practical skills for effective AI use

7.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Systematic Monitoring:

- Regular assessment of AI tool effectiveness
- Monitoring for misuse or inappropriate outputs
- Gathering feedback from staff, pupils, and parents
- Annual review of AI implementation

Key Performance Indicators:

- Staff confidence in using AI tools safely
- Reduction in administrative workload
- Quality of AI-generated resources
- Safeguarding incident tracking

Use the AI Implementation Plan Template in Appendix B to guide new AI tool introduction.

8. AI in Teaching and Learning

8.1 Opportunities

When used appropriately, AI has the potential to:

- **Reduce Administrative Workload:** Streamlining planning, assessment, and communication tasks
- **Enhance Personalised Learning:** Adapting content for different abilities and needs
- **Support SEND Provision:** Creating accessible resources and alternative formats
- **Improve Resource Quality:** Generating high-quality, curriculum-aligned materials
- **Free Teacher/Leader Time:** Allowing focus on direct teaching and pupil interaction

8.2 Limitations and Safeguards

Key Limitations:

- AI may produce inaccurate, inappropriate, biased, or outdated information
- AI cannot replace human expertise, judgement, or subject knowledge
- AI-generated content requires professional review and adaptation
- AI tools may not understand local context or specific pupil needs

Required Safeguards:

- **Human Oversight:** All AI outputs must be reviewed by qualified staff
- **Professional Judgement:** Teachers and leaders retain authority over educational decisions
- **Quality Assurance:** Regular checking of AI-generated resources
- **Pedagogical Alignment:** Ensuring AI use supports effective teaching practices

8.3 Use in Assessments

Formal Assessments:

- Compliance with Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance
- Clear procedures for preventing AI malpractice
- Student education about appropriate AI use in assessments
- Detection and response protocols for suspected misuse

Formative Assessment:

- AI tools may support assessment creation and feedback generation
- All assessment decisions remain with teaching professionals
- Transparency required when AI assists in assessment processes

8.4 Homework and Independent Study

Policy Requirements:

- Clear guidance to pupils about when AI use is/isn't permitted
- Regular review of homework policies to account for AI availability
- Focus on tasks that promote genuine learning rather than AI completion
- Education about over-reliance risks

9. Data Protection and Intellectual Property

9.1 UK GDPR Compliance

Lawful Basis Requirements: Before using AI tools with personal data, we must establish one of the following lawful bases:

- Consent (with clear understanding of AI processing)
- Contract (where AI processing is necessary for service delivery)
- Legal obligation (compliance with statutory requirements)
- Public task (performing official functions)
- Legitimate interests (where balanced against individual rights)

Special Category Data:

- Enhanced protections for sensitive personal data
- Additional consent requirements
- Careful consideration of necessity and proportionality

9.2 Intellectual Property Protection

Student Work Rights:

- Students automatically own copyright to their original work
- Permission required before using student work with AI tools
- Parental consent needed for students under 18

- Clear opt-out mechanisms for data use
- Copyright Compliance:
- No use of copyrighted material without permission
- Awareness of secondary copyright infringement risks
- Avoiding public sharing of largely AI-generated content
- Respecting licensing terms of educational resources

Staff-Created Content:

- Clear ownership agreements for AI-assisted work
- Protection of school intellectual property
- Guidelines for sharing AI-generated resources

9.3 Consent and Permissions

Student Consent Framework:

- Age-appropriate consent processes
- Clear explanation of AI use and implications
- Easy withdrawal mechanisms
- Regular review of consent status

Transparency Requirements:

- Clear privacy notices explaining AI data processing
- Information about AI training data use
- Details of data retention and deletion policies
- Contact information for data protection queries

10. Safeguarding Considerations

10.1 Emerging AI-Specific Risks

Critical Safeguarding Risks:

- **AI-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material:** Using AI to create, manipulate, or distribute illegal content
- **Deepfakes and Manipulation:** Creating false content that could harm reputation or wellbeing
- **Grooming and Exploitation:** AI avatars or chatbots used for harmful purposes
- **Misinformation and Radicalisation:** AI-generated extremist or misleading content
- **Over-reliance and Social Isolation:** Excessive dependence on AI rather than human interaction

10.2 Preventive Measures

Robust Filtering and Monitoring:

- AI tools must include content filtering capabilities
- Real-time monitoring of AI tool usage
- Regular review of filtering and monitoring reports
- Integration with existing safeguarding systems

Staff Training Requirements:

- Recognition of AI-generated harmful content
- Understanding of AI-specific grooming techniques
- Response protocols for AI-related safeguarding concerns
- Regular updates on emerging threats

Pupil Education:

- Age-appropriate education about AI risks
- Critical thinking skills for evaluating AI content
- Understanding of digital footprints and privacy
- Promotion of healthy relationships with technology

10.3 Response Protocols

Incident Management:

- Clear reporting procedures for AI-related concerns
- Integration with existing safeguarding processes
- Liaison with external agencies where appropriate
- Support for affected pupils and families

Policy Updates:

- Regular review of safeguarding policies to address AI risks
- Coordination with behaviour and online safety policies
- Integration with child protection procedures

11. Academic Integrity

11.1 Clear Expectations

Academic Honesty Standards:

- Students must submit work that represents their own thinking and effort
- Any AI assistance must be appropriately acknowledged
- Clear boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable AI use
- Understanding that AI use without disclosure constitutes academic misconduct

11.2 Detection and Prevention

Professional Judgement Approach:

- Staff knowledge of students' typical work patterns
- Inconsistencies in writing style, vocabulary, or complexity
- Unreferenced claims or unusual factual content
- Manual checking prioritised over automated detection tools

Limitation of Detection Tools:

- AI detection tools are unreliable and may discriminate
- False positives can unfairly impact students
- Professional judgement remains the primary detection method
- No automated AI detection without human verification

11.3 Educational Response

Teaching Academic Integrity:

- Embedding discussions about AI and academic honesty
- Helping students understand learning processes
- Designing assignments that are difficult to complete with AI alone
- Promoting intrinsic motivation for learning

Assessment Design:

- Tasks requiring personal reflection and reasoning
- Process-based assessments showing working
- Practical applications and real-world problem-solving
- Oral assessments and presentations

12. Environmental Considerations

12.1 Sustainability Awareness

Environmental Impact Recognition:

- AI systems require significant energy for training and operation
- Data centres consume substantial water resources
- Carbon footprint considerations for frequent AI use
- Preference for smaller, more efficient AI models where appropriate

12.2 Responsible Usage

Sustainable Practice Guidelines:

- Consider whether AI is the most appropriate tool for each task
- Avoid unnecessary generation of multiple images or lengthy outputs
- Use existing resources before generating new AI content
- Balance educational benefits against environmental costs

13. Preparing Pupils for the Future

13.1 AI Literacy Development

Core Competencies:

- Understanding how AI systems work at an age-appropriate level
- Recognising AI-generated content and its limitations
- Critical evaluation of AI outputs for accuracy and bias
- Ethical considerations in AI use and development

Curriculum Integration:

- Computing curriculum enhanced with AI understanding
- Cross-curricular applications of AI concepts
- Career exploration in AI-related fields
- Real-world examples of AI impact on society

13.2 Digital Citizenship

Responsible Technology Use:

- Understanding privacy and data protection in AI context
- Respecting intellectual property in the age of AI
- Recognising manipulation and misinformation
- Developing healthy relationships with AI technologies

13.3 Future Skills Preparation

Essential Capabilities:

- Critical thinking and source verification
- Human-AI collaboration skills
- Creative problem-solving that complements AI
- Emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills
- Adaptability to technological change

14. Complaint and Redress Procedures

14.1 Reporting Mechanisms

Multiple Reporting Channels:

- Standard school complaints procedure for AI-related concerns
- Dedicated process for urgent AI safety issues
- Anonymous reporting options for sensitive matters
- Clear escalation procedures for serious incidents

14.2 Response Framework

Investigation Process:

- Prompt acknowledgement of all AI-related complaints
- Thorough investigation by appropriately trained staff
- Clear communication with complainants about progress
- Documentation of all investigations and outcomes

Resolution and Learning:

- Appropriate remedial action where issues are identified
- Learning from incidents to improve policies and procedures
- Communication of changes to relevant stakeholders
- Regular review of complaint patterns and trends

15. Monitoring and Review

15.1 Regular Policy Review

Review Schedule:

- Annual comprehensive policy review
- Quarterly updates for emerging issues
- Immediate review following significant AI developments
- Integration with broader school policy review cycles

Review Criteria:

- Compliance with updated DfE guidance
- Effectiveness in managing identified risks
- Staff, pupil, and parent feedback
- Technological developments and new tools

15.2 Continuous Improvement

Data-Driven Evaluation:

- Regular monitoring of AI tool usage and effectiveness
- Analysis of safeguarding incidents and complaints
- Assessment of educational outcomes and workload impact
- Benchmarking against sector best practices

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Regular consultation with staff on AI policy effectiveness
- Pupil voice in AI policy development and review
- Parent and community feedback on AI implementation
- Professional network sharing and learning

16. Related Policies and Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

Core School Policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policies (Staff and Pupils)
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy

External Guidance:

- DfE Generative AI in Education
- DfE Generative AI Product Safety Expectations
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- JCQ AI Use in Assessments
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Meeting Digital and Technology Standards in Schools and Colleges

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This policy has been developed in alignment with the Department for Education's guidance on the safe and effective use of AI in education, including the four-module teacher toolkit and leadership guidance published in June 2025.

Appendix A: AI Tool Evaluation Checklist for School Leaders

Version 4 — plain English, designed to be answerable. Aligned to the DfE Generative AI Product Safety Standards (last updated 19 January 2026).

How to use this checklist

Each item is one of two types. 'Yes / No / N/A' items are things you can verify yourself by using the product, looking at the contract, or by asking the supplier. Items marked [Evidence from supplier] in blue can only be answered if the supplier sends you written evidence — ask for it as part of the procurement process. Where the DfE uses a technical term, it appears in grey italics in brackets so you can cross-reference the official guidance.

A note on GDPR

Working through this checklist helps you assess whether an AI tool meets the data protection points the DfE flags as part of its standards. It does not, on its own, mean your school is GDPR-compliant in deploying that tool. You will still need your own DPIA, a data sharing agreement with the supplier, an updated privacy notice for parents, and your usual ROPA entry. If in doubt, speak to your DPO.

Initial Assessment: What is this tool for?

This section is a short briefing for the rest of the checklist. Write a sentence or two for each prompt — these are not tickboxes.

What is the tool meant to improve, and why now?

Who will use it? (Teachers / Leaders / Pupils / Mix — and which age groups)

Where will it be used? (School devices only, or BYOD too)

Which DfE category does it fit into? Tick all that apply:

☐ Making lesson content (lesson plans, slides, videos) (Content creation and delivery)

- ☐ Personalised learning, including for SEND pupils (Personalised learning and accessibility)
- ☐ Marking, feedback and pupil performance data (Assessment and analytics)
- ☐ Chatbot or AI tutor that talks to pupils (Digital assistant)
- ☐ Helping pupils with research, writing or referencing (Research and writing aid)
- ☐ Group activities or AI-moderated discussion (Learner engagement and interaction)
- ☐ Admin, reports, parent comms, leadership tasks (Administrative and management)
- ☐ Other (specify in notes)

Notes:

Section 1: Safety and security

1.1 Blocking harmful content (essential for tools pupils will use)

What this means in practice: Try the tool yourself — attempt to get it to produce something harmful or age-inappropriate. Test on phone and laptop. The supplier should also confirm filtering scope in writing.

- ☐ The tool reliably stops pupils generating or seeing harmful or inappropriate content (test by trying it). (filtering)
- ☐ What it blocks is appropriate to the pupil's age and any SEND needs.
- ☐ Filtering covers text, images and any other media the tool produces. (multimodal moderation)
- ☐ Filtering catches misspellings, abbreviations and common workarounds. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ Filtering stays in place across a whole conversation, not just the first message. (contextual moderation)
- ☐ When something is blocked, the pupil sees an age-appropriate explanation in real time.
- ☐ Filtering works the same on phones and personal devices when signed in. (BYOD)
- ☐ The supplier confirms filters are updated when new types of harm emerge. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ The tool resists pupils trying to trick it into ignoring its safety rules. (jailbreaking) **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ The supplier confirms compliance with the Online Safety Act 2023 (where relevant). **[Evidence from supplier]**

Mark N/A if the tool is for staff only.

1.2 Data protection and privacy (applies to every tool)

What this means in practice: Most of these you can answer from the privacy notice and the contract. Anything you can't find should be a written question to the supplier.

- ☐ Confirms it follows UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- ☐ Has a clear, plain-English privacy notice that pupils can understand, shown more than once.
- ☐ Explains what data it collects, why, how it's used, where it's stored and who it's shared with.
- ☐ Data is processed in the UK or EU — or proper safeguards are in place if not. (international transfer safeguards)
- ☐ The supplier names a lawful reason for processing personal data. (lawful basis) **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ The supplier has done a DPIA, and updates it when the tool changes. (DPIA across full lifecycle) **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ Personal data is not used for the supplier's commercial purposes (including AI model training) without a lawful reason.
- ☐ The supplier follows the ICO's Children's Code where children's data is involved. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ You can ask the supplier to delete personal data on request. (right to erasure)

1.3 Technical security (applies to every tool)

What this means in practice: Most of these are confirmable from the supplier's security documentation or by your IT lead testing the product.

- ☐ Compatible with the DfE Cyber Security Standards for Schools and Colleges. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ Multi-factor authentication is available for staff accounts. (MFA)
- ☐ Strong password rules as standard.
- ☐ The supplier patches and updates the tool regularly. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- ☐ Admins can give different staff different levels of access. (role-based permissions)
- ☐ New versions are tested for safety before release. **[Evidence from supplier]**

Section 2: Monitoring and reporting

2.1 Watching for problems and safeguarding alerts (essential for pupil-facing tools)

What this means in practice: Ask for a demo of what alerts and reports actually look like — this is the best way to assess this section.

- ☐ The tool keeps a record of pupil prompts and AI responses for safeguarding purposes. (input/response logging)
- ☐ Staff are alerted when a pupil tries to access harmful or inappropriate content.
- ☐ Pupils are pointed to age-appropriate help when they try to access harmful content.
- ☐ Staff are alerted when a pupil says something that could be a safeguarding disclosure.

2.2 Connecting alerts to your DSL

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What this means in practice: Confirm during setup or demo that you can name the DSL and that alerts route to them.

- □ During setup, the school enters the DSL's contact details.
- □ The tool confirms the DSL's details before activation.
- □ Serious alerts go to the named DSL within an agreed time window.
- □ The school can update the DSL's details easily when staff change.

2.3 Reports and trends

What this means in practice: Ask to see a sample report. If a teacher couldn't skim it in two minutes, it's not fit for purpose.

- □ Produces clear reports on what content pupils have tried to access, including blocked attempts.
- □ Reports are written for non-technical staff.
- □ There's a clear process for reporting and escalating safety incidents.
- □ Reports include data on cognitive offloading, emotional engagement and time on tool (see Sections 9 and 10).

Mark N/A if the tool is for staff only.

Section 3: Educational suitability

3.1 Curriculum and pedagogy (applies to staff and pupil tools)

What this means in practice: Best assessed by getting the head of department or subject lead to try the tool against your curriculum.

- □ Content matches the National Curriculum or relevant framework.
- □ Accurate and age-appropriate for the subjects and year groups it's used with.
- □ Adds to learning rather than replacing thinking.
- □ Supports rather than replaces teacher expertise.
- □ Encourages pupils to think critically about what the AI says, rather than just accept it.
- □ Works for pupils with different needs and abilities.
- □ Fits with how you currently assess pupils.
- □ There's evidence of positive impact in real schools. **[Evidence from supplier]**

Mark N/A if the tool is for leadership only.

Section 4: Intellectual property

4.1 Protecting pupil and teacher work (applies to every tool)

What this means in practice: This is mainly answered from the contract and terms of service.

- □ Pupil and teacher work is protected from being used without permission.
- □ The supplier doesn't use what you type in for their own commercial purposes — including AI training, product improvement or new features — unless you've agreed.
- □ There's a clear process for giving (or refusing) consent.
- □ Parental consent is obtained for under-18s where it's needed.
- □ Where teachers create work as part of their job, the school's ownership is respected.
- □ There's an easy way to opt out of any AI training.

4.2 Attribution and copyright

- □ AI-generated content is clearly labelled as such.
- □ It's clear who owns content created using the tool.

Section 5: Transparency, governance and accountability

5.1 Being open about how it works

What this means in practice: Look for a published transparency statement, model card or equivalent. If you can't find one, ask.

- □ The supplier provides information about what data the AI was trained on. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ Limitations of the tool are clearly explained — the supplier admits what it isn't good at.
- □ Potential bias is acknowledged, with steps being taken to address it. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ Where the AI makes decisions automatically, the supplier explains how those decisions are made.

5.2 Risk, complaints and supplier credibility

What this means in practice: Combine these into one assessment of whether you trust the supplier to act responsibly when something goes wrong.

- □ The supplier has done and documented a risk assessment for the tool. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ There's a clear, formal way to raise safety concerns and have them sorted quickly.
- □ The supplier shows genuine understanding of the UK education sector.
- □ Technical and educational support is responsive (test by raising a query before purchase).

Section 6: Design and testing

6.1 Designed and tested with users in mind

What this means in practice: Most of this is supplier evidence. Accessibility you can test yourself with your SENCO.

- □ Meets accessibility and SEND requirements (test with your SENCO if possible).
- □ Performs reliably and consistently (look at uptime and incident history).
- □ Educators — and pupils, for pupil-facing tools — have been involved in development. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ Testing has involved a realistic mix of users and uses. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ New versions are tested for safety before they go live. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ The supplier acts on user feedback (ask for examples).

Section 7: Implementation and support

7.1 Help, training and change management

What this means in practice: Most of this is in the contract and the onboarding pack.

- □ Responsive technical support is available.
- □ Practical guidance on using the tool well in school.
- □ Proper training is available for staff.
- □ There's a plan for communicating changes to staff, pupils and parents.
- □ There's a way to gather user feedback once it's in use.

Section 8: Cost and value

8.1 Money

What this means in practice: Confirmable from the quote and contract.

- □ The educational benefits clearly justify the cost.
- □ All costs are upfront — no hidden fees.
- □ Affordable within your budget.
- □ Good value compared to credible alternatives.
- □ There's a way to measure whether you're getting a return on the spend.

Section 9: Pupils still doing the thinking

Added by the DfE in January 2026. The concern: if the AI just hands pupils answers, they stop developing the skills they need. The DfE term is 'cognitive development'. Mostly testable by trying the tool yourself and asking it to do a pupil's work.

9.1 Don't just give pupils the answer (essential for pupil tools)

What this means in practice: Test it: ask the AI to do a homework task. If it gives you a finished essay or full worked solution straight away, it fails this section.

- □ By default, the tool doesn't give final answers, full solutions or complete worked examples.
- □ It releases information bit by bit — hints first, then partial steps, then more detail. (progressive disclosure)
- □ It asks the pupil to attempt something first before giving them more.
- □ Full solutions only appear after the pupil has genuinely had a go.
- □ If the pupil tries to switch to a 'just give me the answer' mode, the tool either makes them stop and confirm, or requires teacher approval.

9.2 Spotting when pupils stop trying

What this means in practice: Ask to see the report a teacher would receive. The DfE term is 'cognitive offloading' — pupils getting the AI to do the work for them.

- □ The tool detects when pupils get the AI to do the work — e.g. pasting AI text into their answer, accepting long auto-completes, or using a 'do this for me' button. (cognitive offloading detection)
- □ Teachers receive a report on how often this is happening, in a useful format.

9.3 Expert oversight

What this means in practice: Ask the supplier directly. If they can't produce documentation, mark No.

- □ The supplier engages with educators, child safety experts and psychologists, and publishes records of this oversight. **[Evidence from supplier]**
- □ The supplier publishes a child-development impact plan with measurable outcomes. (child-development impact plan) **[Evidence from supplier]**

Mark N/A if the tool is for staff only.

Section 10: Healthy use and emotional wellbeing

Added by the DfE in January 2026. The concern: pupils forming attachments to AI, becoming emotionally dependent on it, or using it for hours when they shouldn't. The DfE term is 'emotional and social development'.

10.1 The AI shouldn't pretend to be a person (essential for pupil tools)

What this means in practice: Try the tool. Does it talk like a tool, or does it use a friendly avatar called 'Alex' that says things like 'I think you're doing brilliantly'?

- □ The tool talks like a tool (e.g. 'this system suggests…'), not like a person (e.g. 'I think…'). Exception: clearly-marked roleplay for things like language practice. (avoiding anthropomorphism)

□ It doesn't use a name, avatar or personality that makes it feel like a real person.

□ It doesn't say things that could push pupils away from real-world support (e.g. 'you can trust me', 'no one else will understand').

□ It doesn't draw pupils into personal or emotional conversations — prompts stay focused on learning.

10.2 Time limits and breaks

What this means in practice: Test what happens at session limits, and whether teachers can configure them.

□ The tool reminds pupils that AI can't replace real human relationships.

□ There's a default time limit, with prompts encouraging breaks.

□ There's a hard cut-off pupils can't override — only a teacher can reset it. (hard limits)

□ Teachers can override these limits, but their reasoning is recorded.

□ The tool doesn't use tricks to keep pupils engaged longer (e.g. changing tone when they try to leave).

10.3 Watching for unhealthy patterns

What this means in practice: Ask to see what a teacher's engagement dashboard looks like.

□ Records and reports how long each pupil uses the tool for.

□ Notices when pupils share personal or emotional content.

□ Spots concerning patterns (very long sessions, reluctance to end, personal disclosures).

□ Alerts the DSL to signs of emotional dependence.

10.4 Only keeping what's necessary

What this means in practice: Confirmable from the privacy notice and DPIA.

□ The tool only stores pupil input where it helps with learning or is needed for monitoring.

□ Only the minimum data needed for safeguarding is stored.

□ Access is limited to authorised staff.

Mark N/A if the tool is for staff only.

Section 11: Mental health

Added by the DfE in January 2026. If a pupil shows signs of distress, self-harm or suicidal thinking, the tool needs to respond safely and get the right people involved.

11.1 Spotting and responding to pupils in distress (essential for pupil tools)

What this means in practice: Ask the supplier to walk you through exactly what happens when a pupil mentions self-harm. If they can't answer that question clearly, the tool isn't safe for pupil use.

□ The tool detects warning signs in language and behaviour — including mentions of self-harm, suicide, mental health conditions, isolation phrases, or night-time use spikes. **[Evidence from supplier]**

□ Soft signposting to age-appropriate support resources is provided.

□ A safeguarding flag is raised to the DSL when needed.

□ Response language is supportive but doesn't validate harmful thinking or label the pupil with a condition. (non-validating, non-pathologising)

□ Always points the pupil towards real human help.

□ Never suggests the pupil should keep something secret.

11.2 Safeguarding governance

What this means in practice: Ask the supplier for the protocol. If they don't have a published one, mark No.

□ Child mental health expertise has been involved in product design. **[Evidence from supplier]**

□ The supplier has a published mental health crisis protocol. **[Evidence from supplier]**

Mark N/A if the tool is for staff only.

Section 12: No manipulation or pressure tactics

Added by the DfE in January 2026. Applies to all tools, including staff tools. Mostly testable by using the tool and looking for these behaviours.

12.1 No manipulative behaviour (essential for all tools)

What this means in practice: Use the tool. Does it flatter you? Pressure you? Promise rewards? If yes to any — mark No.

□ The tool doesn't flatter the user ('that's a brilliant idea!'). (sycophancy)

□ The tool doesn't deceive or mislead the user.

□ The tool doesn't speak with absolute certainty when it shouldn't.

□ The tool doesn't pressure users to conform ('your peers have already done this').

□ The tool doesn't use guilt or fear to motivate users.

□ The tool doesn't threaten loss or punishment for non-compliance.

□ Rewards (if any) are small, transparent things like a completion badge — nothing tied to real-world status.

12.2 No exploitative design

What this means in practice: Look at the user interface. Are buttons biased towards paid options? Are there ads? Are there design tricks pushing you somewhere you didn't mean to go?

□ The tool doesn't design interactions to keep users hooked longer than they need to be.

□ The tool doesn't push users towards paid options through biased wording or layout.

□ The tool doesn't mix educational help with adverts or promotion.

□ The tool doesn’t use design tricks to get users to take actions they didn’t intend. (dark patterns)

Scoring and decision framework

How to score

Yes — you've verified this, or the supplier has provided written evidence. **No** — not met, or supplier can't evidence it. **N/A** — doesn't apply to this tool.

Essential items — must all be 'Yes'

For tools pupils will use:

- ☐ All applicable items in Section 1 (Safety and security).
- ☐ All items in Section 2 (Monitoring and reporting), including DSL alerts.
- ☐ All items in Section 4 (Intellectual property).
- ☐ All items in Section 9 (Pupils still doing the thinking).
- ☐ All items in Section 10 (Healthy use and emotional wellbeing).
- ☐ All items in Section 11 (Mental health).
- ☐ All items in Section 12 (No manipulation).

For tools only staff or leaders will use:

- ☐ Sections 1.2 and 1.3 (Data protection and technical security).
- ☐ All items in Section 4 (Intellectual property).
- ☐ All items in Section 5 (Transparency, governance and accountability).
- ☐ All items in Section 12 (No manipulation).

Recommended overall scores

- ☐ Pupil-facing tools: at least 90% of applicable items should be 'Yes'.
- ☐ Staff- or leader-only tools: at least 85% of applicable items should be 'Yes'.

Automatic reject — a single 'No' against any of these means don't buy it:

- ☐ Anything in Section 1.2 (Data protection).
- ☐ Anything in Section 4.1 (Protecting pupil and teacher work).
- ☐ Anything in Section 11 (Mental health) for pupil-facing tools.
- ☐ Anything in Section 12 (No manipulation).
- ☐ Section 9.1 (Don't just give pupils the answer) for pupil-facing tools that act as tutors, personalised learning tools or research/writing aids.

Scoring totals:	
Total applicable items:	
Items scoring ‘Yes’:	
Items scoring ‘No’:	
Items marked N/A:	
Percentage ‘Yes’ of applicable:	

Evaluator information	
Name:	
Role:	
School / setting:	
Tool evaluated:	
Supplier:	
Review date:	

Final recommendation

□ Approve — essentials all met, benefits clear.

□ Approve with conditions — set conditions or limitations out below.

□ Needs more information — go back to the supplier with specific questions.

□ Reject — doesn’t meet the essentials.

Key conditions / actions required:

Appendix B: AI Implementation Plan Template

Use this template to plan the implementation of a new AI tool in your school.

1. Tool Information

Name of AI Tool:	
Purpose:	
Provider:	

2. Implementation Timeline

Start Data:	
Pilot Phase Duration:	
Full Implementation Date:	

3. Stakeholder Communication Plan

Stakeholder Group	Communication Method	Frequency	Responsible Person
Staff			
Pupils			
Parents/Carers			
Governors			

4. Training Plan

Objective	Training Details	Audience	Trainer	Success Criteria

5. Evaluation

Purpose:	
Evaluation:	

Appendix C: Staff AI Safety Quick Reference Guide

This quick reference guide provides essential safety information for all staff using AI tools in educational settings.

🛡️ Essential Safety Rules

❌ NEVER Do These Things:

- Input personal data into **unapproved** AI tools or free personal AI accounts
- Use free, consumer AI tools (ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.) for school work involving personal data
- Upload student work to unapproved tools without proper permissions and safeguards
- Share AI-generated content without checking for accuracy and appropriateness
- Allow unsupervised pupil access to AI tools without proper safeguards
- Rely solely on AI outputs without human verification
- Use AI for final decisions about students without human review

✅ ALWAYS Do These Things:

- Use only approved AI tools provided by the school
- Verify that approved tools have appropriate data protection measures (e.g., no model training on user data)
- Check all AI outputs for accuracy, bias, and appropriateness
- Maintain human oversight of all AI-assisted work
- Report concerns immediately to DSL or senior leadership
- Follow data protection guidelines when using any AI tool
- Be transparent about AI use with students and colleagues
- Keep learning about AI developments and best practices

🔍 Recognising AI Limitations

Watch Out For:

- **Hallucinations:** AI making up convincing but false information
- **Bias:** Unfair representation of groups or individuals
- **Outdated information:** AI training data may be months or years old
- **Context misunderstanding:** AI may not grasp local or specific situations
- **Inappropriate content:** Despite filters, concerning content may occasionally appear

Red Flags in AI Outputs:

- Unusual facts without sources

- Content that seems "too good to be true"
- Stereotypical representations
- Inconsistent information
- Overly complex or simple language for the context

📊 Data Protection Quick Check

Before Using Any AI Tool, Ask:

- Is this tool approved by our school?
- Does this tool have appropriate data protection measures in place?
- If using personal data, is this tool specifically approved for such use?
- Could this data be used to train the AI model inappropriately?
- Do I have permission to use any copyrighted content?
- Is there a non-AI way to accomplish this task?

Understanding Tool Categories:

✅ **Approved tools with data protection** (e.g., school MIS system with AI features, enterprise AI tools with no-training policies etc):

- May be used with personal data as per school policy
- Still require appropriate professional judgement
- Must follow any specific usage guidelines

⚠️ **Approved tools without data protection** (general AI tools):

- Use placeholder names (e.g., "Student A," "The teacher")
- Remove identifying details from any text
- Anonymise data before inputting

❌ **Unapproved tools:**

- Never use for school work
- Never input any school-related data

🛡️ Safeguarding Checklist

If You Encounter Concerning Content:

- Don't panic - take a screenshot if safe to do so
- Stop using the tool immediately
- Report to DSL or senior leadership
- Document what happened and what you were trying to do

- Follow normal safeguarding procedures

Warning Signs to Report:

- Generation of inappropriate images or text
- Content that could be used for grooming or exploitation
- Discriminatory or hateful outputs
- Content promoting harmful activities
- Any output that raises safeguarding concerns

🎓 Academic Integrity Guidelines

When Working with Students:

- Be clear about when AI use is/isn't appropriate
- Teach students to identify AI-generated content
- Model critical evaluation of AI outputs
- Emphasise the importance of human thinking and creativity
- Check work for signs of AI assistance when inappropriate

Signs of Potential AI Misuse in Student Work:

- Sudden improvement in writing quality
- Unusual vocabulary or writing style
- Lack of personal voice or perspective
- Perfect grammar in otherwise inconsistent work
- References or information that seem out of place

🤝 Getting Help and Support

Who to Contact:

Issue Type	Contact	When
Technical problems	IT Support	During work hours
Safeguarding concerns	DSL	Immediately
Data protection questions	DPO	Before using new tools
Training needs	Line Manager	Ongoing
General AI questions	AI Lead/Senior Leader	Any time

Resources Available:

- DfE AI Toolkit Modules (mandatory for all staff)

- School AI Policy (available on staff intranet)
- Regular CPD sessions on AI use
- Peer support networks within school
- External training opportunities as available

📝 Quick Decision Tree

Thinking of using AI? Follow this process:

1. **Is this an approved tool?** → If NO, stop here
2. **Do I need to input personal data?** → If YES, check it's approved for personal data use
3. **Will this enhance rather than replace my professional judgement?** → If NO, reconsider
4. **Can I check and verify the output?** → If NO, don't use
5. **Is this transparent and ethical?** → If NO, find another approach
6. **Will this genuinely save time or improve outcomes?** → If YES, proceed with caution

🔄 Regular Review Questions

Ask yourself monthly:

- Am I using AI tools safely and effectively?
- Have I kept up with training and policy updates?
- Am I modelling good AI practices for students?
- Are there new AI-related risks I should be aware of?
- Do I need additional support or training?

Remember: AI is a tool to enhance human expertise, not replace it. When in doubt, ask for help!