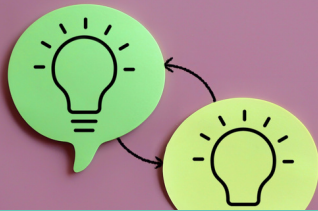


# PANEL REPORT

RESPONSIBLE AI USE



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## SESSION 3

The third meeting of the AI Edify Learning and Teaching Innovation Panel focused on the practical realities of AI integration across schools, examining how pupils and staff are engaging with AI tools, the challenges of safety and training, and the emerging question of what responsible AI education looks like in practice. Underpinning the discussion was a recognition that national policy change and broader sharing of practice across the sector are needed to support schools navigating this landscape.

Discussions revealed a landscape of cautious experimentation. Schools are trialling a range of AI platforms with pupils over thirteen, including Gemini, NotebookLM, Copilot, and vibecoding tools, while acknowledging ongoing tensions around data protection, safeguarding, and regulatory uncertainty following updates to KCSIE. Both Gemini and Copilot were recognised as offering stronger data security than other mainstream tools, owing to the enterprise IT back-office infrastructure provided by Google and Microsoft. For younger pupils, meaningful AI integration remains largely undeveloped, with early trials of tools such as Canva AI and MagicSchool yielding mixed results.

A recurring theme was the tension between enabling innovation and managing risk. Schools are deploying monitoring tools and risk assessments, yet there was consensus that a zero-risk approach is neither achievable nor desirable. The effectiveness of outright bans was questioned, with participants arguing that preparing pupils for a world in which AI is embedded requires guided, reflective engagement rather than prohibition. Traffic light systems and alternative classification models were discussed as ways of communicating expectations, though questions remained about how well these account for subject-level nuance.

Staff training emerged as a significant bottleneck. Competing priorities for INSET time, variable confidence levels, and the absence of established pedagogical frameworks for AI were all identified as barriers. Practical models were shared, including fortnightly micro-tasks, department-level AI leads, and problem-based CPD sessions. The panel also discussed appointing innovation or AI leads at Senior Leadership Team level as a way of driving change, noting that a number of schools have created such roles and that advertisements for these positions are beginning to appear in the maintained sector. The panel also explored a detailed case study of Eton College's CAITLLbot, a bespoke AI tool designed to make pupil engagement with AI visible, reflective, and educationally purposeful.

Throughout the session, a fundamental distinction shaped the conversation: using AI for academic stretch and rigour is categorically different from using it for workflow efficiency, and schools must be intentional about which they are pursuing and when.

# KEY THEMES



## Learning & Teaching Innovation Panel

### **1 Pupil Engagement with AI: Access, Safety, and Readiness**

The panel opened with a discussion of how pupils across different age groups are currently interacting with AI tools. For pupils under thirteen, meaningful engagement remains limited. Some schools have trialled platforms such as Canva AI and MagicSchool up to Key Stage 3, but experiences were described as uneven, with tools often proving clunky or poorly suited to younger learners. A clear gap was identified in how schools are approaching AI education and literacy at this stage, with many still considering how, or whether, to integrate it prior to giving pupils direct access.

For pupils over thirteen, the landscape is more active. Schools reported using a range of tools including Gemini, NotebookLM, vibecoding platforms, ChatGPT, and Copilot. Several participants noted the strength of Claude as a tool, though its inaccessibility for under-eighteens without API access was raised as a practical limitation. Questions were raised about the continued viability of ChatGPT in school settings following KCSIE updates, with some schools banning it outright over data protection, privacy, or trust concerns. A dual economy of Copilot and Gemini was described by several contributors as the emerging default in their institutions.

Safety was a dominant concern throughout this part of the discussion. Schools are conducting platform-level risk assessments and deploying monitoring tools including keystroke logging, Smoothwall filtering, and screen monitoring. Some schools also reported using wifi logs to monitor AI usage alongside pupil surveys, providing a broader picture of how and when pupils are engaging with these tools. However, there was a shared acknowledgement that the risk of harm can never be reduced to zero, and that best practice lies in maintaining robust, living risk assessments that are regularly reviewed and updated. The panel noted that an excessive focus on safety has, in some cases, become a barrier to progress, with the weight of DfE requirements contributing to institutional caution.

A related concern was raised about schools adopting AI platforms without fully understanding the theory of learning or pedagogy that underpins them. Several participants noted the discomfort of integrating tools into teaching practice when the educational rationale behind them is unclear or untested.

The question of bans was raised. While some schools have prohibited specific platforms, panellists questioned the effectiveness of this approach given pupils' capacity to circumvent restrictions through tools such as VPNs. A wider parallel was drawn with phone bans, and the consensus was that a culture of prohibition alone is insufficient. Schools must balance protection with preparation, ensuring that pupils are future-ready and able to engage with technologies they will inevitably encounter beyond school.

A helpful framing was shared for communicating the risks of free AI tools to pupils: "if you aren't paying for the product, you are the product." This was seen as a concise and memorable way to open discussions about data, privacy, and the commercial incentives behind consumer-facing AI platforms.

An interesting cultural observation was also noted: among some young people, AI-generated content is increasingly viewed negatively, with phrases such as "that is so AI" and "AI slop" entering student vernacular. This emerging scepticism, while informal, may present opportunities for fostering critical engagement with AI outputs.

## **2. Policies, Traffic Light Systems, and Communicating Expectations**

The panel discussed the various frameworks schools are using to communicate expectations around AI use. Traffic light systems, where "green" denotes permitted use, "amber" partial or guided use, and "red" prohibition, remain a common approach. However, an alternative model was shared that uses categories such as "analogue" or "basic" instead, moving away from the binary stop-and-go framing and allowing for more nuanced distinctions between different types of work.

There was recognition that no single classification system will capture the full complexity of AI use across different subjects and age groups. The effectiveness of these frameworks depends on how well they are understood and applied by both staff and pupils, and on whether they leave sufficient room for professional judgement at the departmental and classroom level.

## **3. Where and How AI Is Being Taught**

The panel explored the various contexts in which AI education is currently being delivered. Examples included dedicated sessions during form time, short focused AI activities delivered in regular bursts, computer science lessons, PSHE sessions with an emphasis on the social and ethical dimensions of AI, and academic enrichment programmes. One school described a "future ready" programme that situates AI within a broader framework of skills development.

There was agreement that AI education should not be relegated solely to computer science departments. The panel argued that it would be more effective to integrate AI teaching across all departments, potentially supported by intensive CPD to equip individual subject teachers with the confidence and knowledge to incorporate AI into their practice. The idea of appointing a departmental AI lead was suggested as a practical mechanism for ensuring that conversations about AI are happening in every part of a school. Beyond individual departments, the panel also discussed the value of appointing innovation or AI leads at Senior Leadership Team level, noting that a number of schools have already created such roles and that advertisements for SLT-level AI and innovation positions are now appearing in the maintained sector.

A provocative question was raised: should every teacher now be considered a teacher of AI? While this was not resolved, the framing prompted reflection on the extent to which AI literacy is becoming a cross-curricular responsibility, comparable to literacy or numeracy. One alternative perspective suggested that staff members who choose not to engage with AI could instead contribute by developing AI-resilient assessment tasks and learning activities, ensuring that schools maintain rigour regardless of individual staff preferences.

An example was shared of embedding AI awareness from Year 1, beginning simply with the concept that AI is a machine. This early-years approach was seen as laying important conceptual foundations, even where direct tool access is not yet appropriate.

#### **4. Staff Training: Barriers, Models, and Momentum**

Staff development was identified as one of the most significant bottlenecks to meaningful AI integration. The panel acknowledged that while the appetite for training is growing, schools face competing demands on INSET time, with AI often vying for space alongside safeguarding updates, curriculum reform, wellbeing initiatives, and other institutional priorities. The point was made clearly: for successful AI use, teachers need effective training.

Several practical training models were shared. These included fortnightly micro-tasks where staff are given something to read, try, or do; bespoke training programmes tailored to the outcomes of staff audits; the development of internal AI handbooks; and problem-based CPD sessions where staff bring a real challenge and work collaboratively to build a solution. The inclusion of support staff in training was also recommended as a way to build broader institutional momentum and enthusiasm.

The value of informal, ground-level engagement was emphasised. Small, everyday moments, such as conversations in staffrooms, demonstrations in department meetings, and quick wins shared over email, were seen as at least as effective as formal INSET sessions. The panel suggested that a network of departmental AI leads could sustain this kind of distributed, ongoing professional learning.

## 5. Case Study: Eton College's CAITLbot

The panel heard a detailed account of Eton College's development of CAITLbot, a Conversational Artificial Intelligence for Teaching and Learning; Innovative bot. The tool was designed with three core goals: to make pupil use of AI visible and reflective; to offer guided, study-aligned AI conversations; and to provide a safe and educationally purposeful alternative to ChatGPT, with usage visible to allocated staff members.

CAITLbot is capable of generating usage reports and producing PDFs of interactions for citing work where required, addressing one of the practical challenges schools face in tracking how AI has been used in assessed tasks. The system is built around a set of developed principles for AI use in education, with supporting guides available publicly. Its design emphasises stretch and challenge, positioning AI not as a shortcut but as a tool for deepening understanding.

The case study generated considerable interest as an example of how a school can move beyond policy into practice, creating infrastructure that aligns AI use with institutional values while maintaining transparency and accountability.

## 6. Academic Use versus Workflow Efficiency

A key distinction that shaped much of the session was between using AI for academic purposes and using it for workflow efficiency. The panel argued that these represent fundamentally different opportunities with different objectives. Academic use should prioritise challenge, rigour, and the development of understanding. Workflow use, by contrast, values efficiency and time-saving. Schools must be intentional about which mode they are operating in and ensure that the distinction is clearly communicated to both staff and pupils.

The metaphor of AI as a "multiplier of skills" was offered: AI amplifies what a learner already possesses, but it cannot multiply from zero. Without foundational knowledge and capability, AI tools add little value. This framing reinforced the panel's view that AI should supplement, not replace, the development of core competencies.

It was noted that AI has not yet delivered consistently positive outcomes across schools, in part due to a lack of developed, trialled use cases and robust evidence of impact. Naïve or unreflective use of AI was described as not merely unhelpful but actively detrimental. Where pupils engage with AI without understanding its limitations or the principles underlying their work, outcomes can be worse than if AI had not been used at all. The panel emphasised the importance of structured, guided engagement to prevent this.

One participant offered a compelling framing for conversations with pupils about their relationship with AI: imagining a future social gathering and asking who they want to be. Someone who can engage, converse, and think independently, or someone who is reliant on tools they do not understand? This was suggested as a way of grounding abstract discussions about AI in personal aspiration and identity.

## **7. AI in Coursework and the Exam Board Landscape**

The panel discussed the challenge of AI in coursework, with a particular concern being the inconsistency between exam boards and subjects in their treatment of AI use. What is permissible in one subject may be explicitly prohibited in another, creating confusion for schools, teachers, and pupils alike. This contradictory landscape was identified as a significant source of anxiety, particularly where schools are trying to develop coherent institutional policies.

A practical suggestion was to identify the "evergreen" use cases for AI that are common across subjects, for example, using AI to check understanding or consolidate learning, and to build shared expectations around these, even where subject-specific rules diverge.

The panel also discussed the value of engaging recent alumni to share their experiences of AI regulation at university level. Understanding how higher education institutions are approaching AI could help schools calibrate their own policies and ensure that pupils are well-prepared for the expectations they will encounter after leaving school.

## **8. AI Agents: Emerging Questions**

Towards the end of the session, the conversation turned to AI agents and their potential implications for schools. Concerns were raised about the complexity of managing multiple agents, including questions around their lifecycles, update cycles, and behavioural predictability.

A useful distinction was drawn between two types of agent. The first, exemplified by Microsoft's agent architecture, operates as a specialist performing synchronous, task-specific functions. The second, often described as agentic engineering, involves agents that run autonomously on scheduled tasks without requiring continuous human engagement. Each model carries different implications for governance, oversight, and institutional readiness.

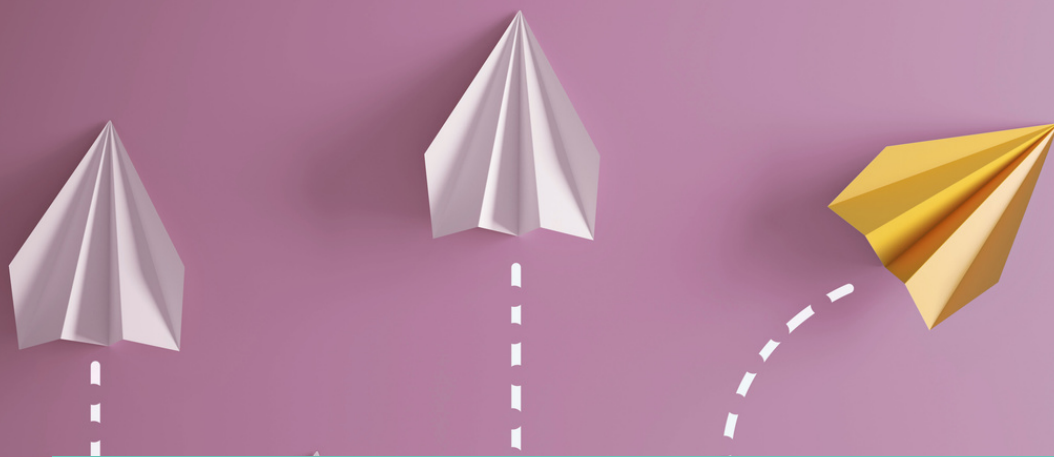
One participant observed that "the future of software is software on demand," capturing a broader shift in how institutions may need to think about technology provision. The panel also reflected on the importance of teaching the ethics of AI, including sustainability, environmental cost, and the cost of innovation itself, alongside its practical applications.



## TAKEAWAYS & GUIDANCE

The session produced a range of practical insights for schools navigating the integration of AI into teaching, learning, and institutional strategy. While the conversations acknowledged complexity and uncertainty, several clear messages emerged.

- Invest in structured, sustainable staff training through practical models such as fortnightly micro-tasks, department AI leads, and problem-based collaborative sessions.
- Distinguish clearly between academic and workflow uses of AI and communicate this distinction to pupils and parents.
- Avoid bans as a sole strategy. Guided, reflective engagement is more likely to build the critical skills pupils will need.
- Develop age-appropriate AI literacy from an early stage, even where direct tool access is not yet appropriate.
- Engage with inconsistencies in exam board guidance by identifying common, cross-subject use cases and building shared expectations.
- Consider bespoke AI tools where feasible, as demonstrated by the CAITLbot case study.
- Maintain robust, living risk assessments that are regularly reviewed and treat safety as a framework for responsible use, not a barrier to progress.
- Teach the ethics of AI alongside its applications, including sustainability, data privacy, and the social consequences of AI.
- Understand the tools before adopting them and be confident in the pedagogical rationale behind any AI platform deployed.
- Evaluate the back-end IT infrastructure of AI platforms as part of any adoption decision. Tools with established enterprise administration, compliance certifications, and data residency controls, as currently offered by platforms such as Gemini and Copilot, provide a significantly stronger foundation for data security in school environments.
- Appoint innovation or AI leads at Senior Leadership Team level to drive institutional change. A number of schools are already doing this, and similar roles are now appearing in the sector.



# FINAL THOUGHTS

The third session of the AI Edify Panel confirmed that schools are no longer asking whether AI will affect education, but how to respond wisely. The landscape is characterised by growing momentum, genuine enthusiasm, and a shared commitment to getting this right, particularly around staff training, regulatory coherence, and safeguarding.

Several priorities emerged clearly. Staff development must be practical, sustained, and sensitive to the competing demands on teachers' time. AI literacy should begin early and extend across the curriculum, not remain confined to computing departments. Schools need clearer, more consistent guidance from exam boards, and the distinction between AI for academic purposes and AI for efficiency must be made explicit in policy and practice. However, the panel's discussions also made clear that the efforts of individual schools, however thoughtful, will not be enough on their own. There is a pressing need for national policy change to provide schools with coherent, up-to-date guidance on AI in education, and for the sector to develop mechanisms for sharing practice, evidence, and resources on a much larger scale. Without this coordinated effort, schools risk working in isolation, duplicating work, and missing opportunities to learn from one another. Perhaps most importantly, as one participant put it, "the people who understand the technology are going to be the ones who drive change going forward." The task ahead is not simply to adopt AI, but to integrate it in ways that are intentional, equitable, and aligned with the educational values that schools exist to uphold, and that ambition demands leadership not only within schools but across the system as a whole.

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