

AI in our schools: the governor's cheatsheet

The bits worth keeping from the briefing. You don't need to be an AI expert. Asking good questions is the job.

If you remember one thing: **AI drafts. People decide.**

Our role: we steer, the school drives.

8 QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT MEETING

- How are staff using AI today, and on which accounts?
- What do we want AI to achieve for our school?
- Which tools are approved, and who decides?
- What training have all staff had, including support staff?
- How do we keep pupil data and photos out of the wrong tools?
- Is AI covered in our safeguarding and filtering reviews?
- What do parents know about how we use AI?
- How will we know it's saving time and improving practice?

WHAT "IN PLACE" LOOKS LIKE

- ☐ **A dedicated AI policy**
Signed off by governors, naming approved tools.
- ☐ **A safe use guide for staff**
Do's and don'ts, including no personal accounts.
- ☐ **Staff sign-off**
Everyone confirms they've read and understood it.
- ☐ **Training**
Hands-on, on real tasks, for all staff.
- ☐ **A parent letter and website notice**
So families know what we do and don't do.
- ☐ **AI in safeguarding**
Filtering, monitoring and DSL guidance, reviewed yearly.

! THE RISKS, AND HOW WE HANDLE EACH ONE	
RISK	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE
Pupil data in the wrong place Names, photos or sensitive details in personal or unapproved tools.	Approved tools on school accounts , plus a clear rule: no personal data unless the tool is approved for it.
Safeguarding Deepfakes of pupils or staff. AI "companion" chatbots giving harmful advice.	AI named in filtering, monitoring and DSL training , and in behaviour and anti-bullying policies.
Confident but wrong "Hallucinations": made-up facts, figures or sources.	A person checks everything before it's used or sent.
Over-reliance and bias Skills slipping, or one-sided outputs accepted as fact.	Training that teaches staff to question , edit and keep their professional judgement.
Long-term effect on learning No research yet on what it means for children's independence and thinking.	Go steady with pupil-facing AI , and keep teaching children to think for themselves.
Energy and cost Paying for tools we don't need, or wasteful use.	Use what we already pay for first (Copilot or Gemini), and prompt well first time.

FURTHER ALONG? FIVE DEEPER QUESTIONS

Strategy
How does our approach to AI fit our priorities and values?

The shift: from "yes or no to AI?" to "why AI, and when?"

Judgement
How are we balancing time saved with professional judgement?

Impact
Is AI improving practice, not just making tasks quicker?

People
Which skills do we want staff to build, with and without AI?

Review
How will we know if our approach needs to change?

i THE QUESTIONS I GET ASKED THE MOST

Is using AI cheating?

No more than a calculator or spellcheck. A professional checks and owns the result.

What's wrong with staff using their own ChatGPT?

Personal accounts don't have the school's data protections, and the school can't see or support what's happening. Start with the school's Copilot or Gemini.

Which tools should our school use?

There's no official list. Start with what you already have on school accounts, then add specialist tools through a simple request and check.

Can I use AI to summarise governor papers?

As a first read, on a school-approved tool only (papers are often confidential), and never instead of reading them.

Should teachers use AI to write reports?

To draft and review, yes, with personal details kept out unless an approved tool allows it. The teacher owns every word.

Are children already using AI?

Yes, at home and in every web search. Teaching them to use and question it matters, alongside age-appropriate rules.

Do we need to be AI experts?

Not a chance. Our job is to ask good questions and check things are in hand.

Do we need a new committee?

Usually not. Many boards give AI to an existing link governor and ask for a short update in the head's report each term.

🗣️ WHERE IT'S GOOD, AND WHERE IT'S NOT

✓ Good

Drafting letters, reports and plans.
Lesson ideas and resources.
Adapting texts for different needs.
Summarising for a first read.

✓ Good, with care

Anonymised pupil work, on school-approved tools, with a teacher checking the output.

⚠️ Not without a proper review

Pupil names, photos or sensitive details in unapproved tools. AI marking or deciding about pupils. Pupil-facing AI without data protection and safeguarding checks.

The simple test: it's about the data, not the tool. No personal info? Crack on. Named pupils? Stop and check first.

AA WORDS YOU'LL HEAR

Generative AI · AI that creates something new: text, images, a worksheet.

Prompt · What you type in. Clearer prompts, better answers.

School account · The version of Copilot or Gemini that comes with the school's Microsoft or Google login, inside its data protections.

LLM (large language model) · The engine inside tools like ChatGPT. Predicts what a good answer looks like.

Hallucination · A confident answer that's wrong or made up.

Human in the loop · A person checks and decides before anything is used.

➔ WHERE TO START: ABOUT A TERM, START TO FINISH

1. Ask the question

A no-blame staff survey: who's using what, and on which accounts?

2. Agree the tools

Usually Copilot or Gemini on school accounts.

3. Write it down

A short policy and a one-page staff agreement. Governors approve.

4. Tell people and train them

A letter to parents, and hands-on training for staff.

📖 FURTHER READING (FREE AND OFFICIAL)

DfE: Using AI in education settings, support materials

DfE: Generative AI product safety standards

Ofsted's approach to AI

DfE: Using AI in education, support for leaders

DfE: Digital and technology standards