

The Role of AI in Education: A Balanced Approach

Artificial intelligence (AI) is undeniably reshaping education, offering exciting possibilities to enhance learning. However, with its integration into schools, it has also sparked concerns among parents, educators, and society at large. From worries about laziness and plagiarism, to the potential erosion of critical thinking and creativity, the debate over AI's role in education is robust and essential. If implemented thoughtfully, AI has the potential to become an invaluable tool to support pupils' learning and development. To achieve this, schools must strike a careful balance to ensure that AI enhances, rather than undermines, each pupil's education.

The diversity of opinions amongst our parent body in the recent survey demonstrates the importance in seeking this balance. When responding to the question about AI use at Blundell's, responses varied from:

Why on earth are we discussing this? just because AI is out there Blundell's is not obliged to use it.

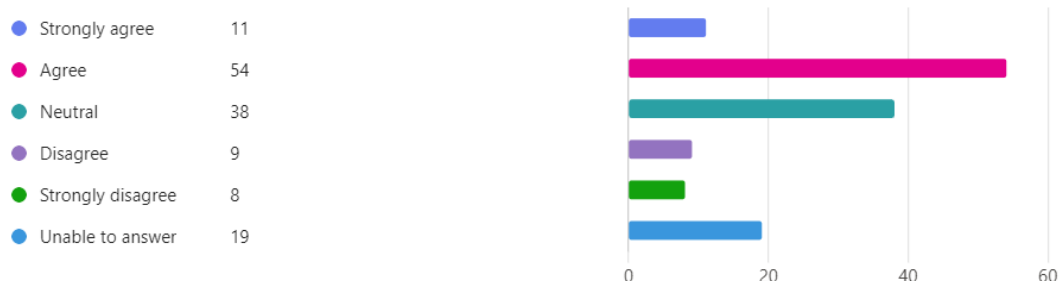
To:

I can't believe you haven't moved already on this and haven't adapted education to a rapidly changing world. We are already way behind and not thinking about this and how it's already changing the face of economics, politics, employment and finance. New subjects should have already been included in the curriculum and course content adapted to discuss and decipher how the pupils can live well with AI. It's not going away and it's clear the old ways won't be able to last. Time to accept and adapt immediately.

The vast majority of parents feel, as staff do, that AI might benefit learning, but perhaps aren't quite sure how, at this stage.

49. Do you believe AI can enhance your child's learning experience?

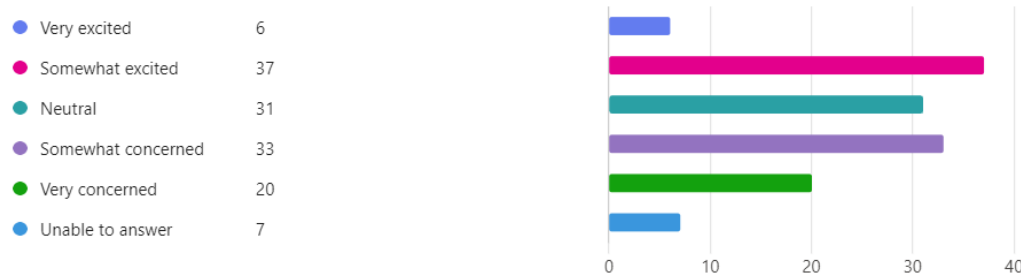
[More details](#)



There is some excitement about how AI will affect education in the future, but also some trepidation:

57. How do you feel about the increased use of AI in education in the future?

[More details](#)



The Promise of AI in Education

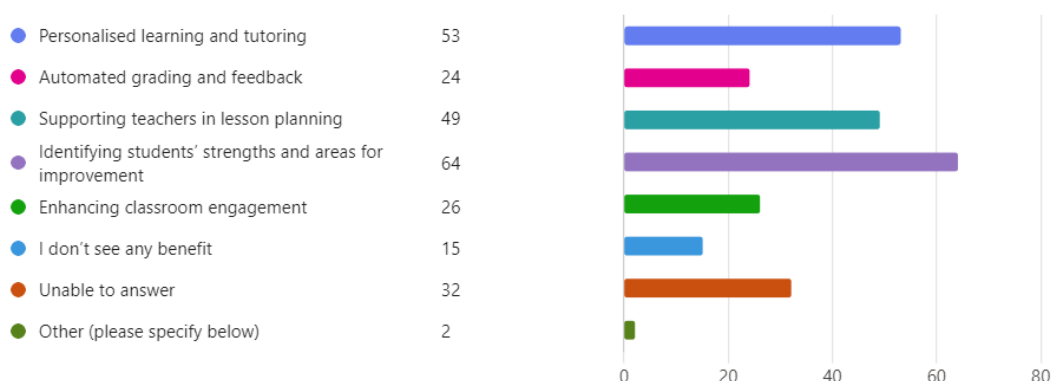
AI offers tools that can support pupils in unique and powerful ways. For example:

- **Personalised Learning:** AI can tailor revision materials to individual pupils, focusing on their specific gaps in knowledge. Tools like interactive quizzes, subject chat bots, and tailored challenges, can serve as a “revision buddy,” enabling pupils to engage with content at their own pace.
- **Efficiency in Learning:** Pupils can use AI to condense class notes, organise information, and break down complex topics into manageable chunks. This improves study efficiency and allows them to focus on mastering material. AI can also be a useful tool in providing prompts or enhancing brainstorming to help with essay writing.
- **Support for Specific Needs:** For pupils with difficulties in processing information or writing, AI tools can provide much-needed scaffolding, helping them articulate their ideas and complete tasks without unnecessary frustration. AI can significantly enhance education for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) by providing personalised, accessible, and engaging learning experiences. Adaptive learning platforms can tailor content to individual needs, while assistive technologies like speech-to-text tools and AI for dyslexia can improve access and confidence.
- **Skill Development:** Learning how to use AI itself is a valuable skill. Prompting to get a useful response, then filtering, evaluating, analysing, and adapting AI-generated content teaches pupils critical skills that will become increasingly important in the modern workplace.

Most parents also feel that there will be many specific benefits:

50. In your opinion, which of the following areas could AI benefit your child's education the most?

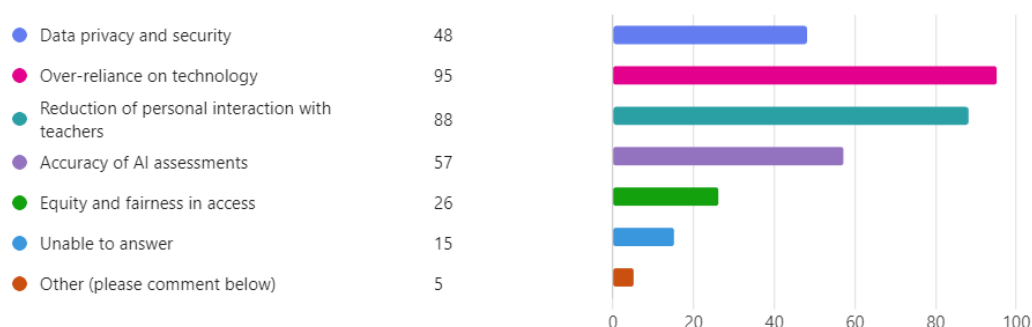
[More details](#)



These possibilities make AI a potentially transformative tool for education when used appropriately. However, to unlock these benefits, pupils need to be educated on the effective and ethical use of AI, this is reflected in the concerns parents feel:

53. Do you have any concerns about the use of AI in your child's education? (Select all that apply)

[More details](#)



The Risks of Misusing AI

Despite its potential, AI in education raises legitimate concerns, the below also being raised by parents in our recent survey:

1. Encouraging Shortcuts and Plagiarism

Some parents worry that AI will encourage pupils to take shortcuts, bypassing the hard work of critical thinking and learning. Tools like ChatGPT can generate essay responses, solve maths problems, and write creative stories - leading to fears that pupils will submit AI-generated work as their own. This would undermine the learning process and could lead to failure when pupils are expected to demonstrate skills without AI assistance, such as in exams or real-world tasks.

2. Erosion of Critical Thinking and Creativity

AI's ability to provide instant answers may diminish pupils' capacity for independent thought and creativity. Critical thinking and problem-solving - the very bedrocks of employability - cannot be replaced by algorithms. Parents have voiced concerns that over-reliance on AI in education would deprioritise these essential human skills leaving pupils ill-prepared for the challenges of the workplace, and of life.

3. Loss of Teacher Engagement

Another concern is that AI could replace or reduce the human interaction that makes education meaningful. One parent suggested that, in some schools, AI was used to mark homework (although I know of tools and research in this area, this is not something that we are currently pursuing at Blundell's). The parent suggested that, in these schools, this had led to disengagement, with teachers relying on AI rather than understanding why a pupil struggled with a question or topic, as well as a reduction in the relationship between pupil and teacher, as the pupil perceives that the teacher does not care about their work if they use AI to mark. Other parents feared the depersonalisation caused by reliance on AI could undermine the small-classroom, personalised approach for which independent schools are known, and that makes their considerable investment worthwhile,

4. Spread of Misinformation

AI is not perfect. It can generate false information or present inaccurate content with an air of authority. This has led to parental concerns about pupils accepting AI outputs without verifying their accuracy. Additionally, the rise of AI-generated fake news and images highlights the need for pupils to develop a critical eye when evaluating AI produced information.

A Thoughtful, Controlled Introduction

To address these concerns, Blundell's feels that AI should be introduced into education carefully and with clear boundaries. Blundell's has a group that has been working on this over the last term, and has drafted the following so far:

Vision:

We will harness the power of AI to enhance education, support pupils and teachers, and create inclusive learning environments, in line with the School's innovative ethos

Principles:

- Literacy: We will commit to provide first rate and forward-looking education for our school community; pupils, parents and staff
- Transparency: We will be transparent and accountable in our use and restriction of AI tools.
- Understanding: We will commit to understanding both the workings of and proper use of AI tools.
- Limitations: While recognising the power of AI, we will be mindful of its limitations, including identifying biases reflected or created by AI.
- Mental Health: We will be alert to the potential of AI to impact mental health, both positively and negatively.
- Safeguarding; We commit to ensuring we keep our pupils safe when using AI by monitoring the tools used and adhering to the school's safeguarding policy.

These will be delivered at Blundell's by:

1. Clear education on responsible use

Pupils will be taught that AI is a tool to enhance their learning - not a shortcut to avoid it. Lessons on AI will emphasise its limitations, such as its inability to think critically, its potential for error, and its lack of creativity. This will help pupils understand that while AI can assist with tasks like research or planning, they still need to use their own judgment and engage with the content themselves.

2. Clear and well explained ethical guidelines

The school will set clear rules for AI use, particularly concerning prep, assignments and exams. We will do this by explaining clearly how pupils can and cannot use AI in their work.

Our baseline assumption is that, with proper guidance, training, and clear AI assessment criteria, pupils will endeavour to use the technology responsibly and within the parameters set by the school.

We recognise that genuine errors or lapses in judgment may occur as pupils navigate this technology. Teachers will work proactively to educate pupils, helping them make

better decisions in the future. However, in cases of deliberate misuse, appropriate sanctions will be implemented.

Definitions:

Blundell's therefore envisages 3 tiers of work with regards to AI;

- *AI free*: This is work that must be done with no AI help at all
- *AI assisted*: This is work for which AI tools can be used, within certain set and established parameters
- *AI embedded*: This is work for which any permitted AI tool is allowed

If pupils are not explicitly told by their teacher, they can assume that the work is *AI assisted*. Pupils should ask their teacher if they need clarification or have questions before using AI for any work.

The school will reserve the right to use AI plagiarism detectors or teacher's academic judgment to identify inappropriate uses of AI.

AI Free

There will be times when no AI is permitted to be used. This will include examinations, in class assessments and tests, as well as some preps and other work.

AI assisted

There are situations and contexts within the school where pupils will be permitted to use AI tools to enhance their learning, and to explore and understand how these tools can be used. However, pupils should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Pupils should check and verify ideas and answers against reputable source materials. Large language models (LLMs) tend to make up incorrect facts and fake citations. Code generation models tend to produce inaccurate outputs. Image generation models can produce biased or offensive products.

Pupils will be responsible for any content they submit, regardless of whether it originally comes from the pupil or an AI tool. Pupils may not submit any work generated by an AI program as their own.

AI assisted might mean, for example;

- Using AI tools to help understand a topic, perhaps by summarising the teacher's notes or explaining the topic in a different way
- Providing a 'first sentence' starter to overcome 'writer's block'
- Helping generate ideas in background research
- Refining writing, for example to spell check work and help keep to the correct word count. (If allowed in that subject)

- Providing a range of essay questions or writing prompts to allow a pupil to practise a particular skill or area of knowledge.
- Combining ideas in ways that go beyond current own technical skills, such as mixing images, music, and video, animating still images, or applying sophisticated digital editing.
- Creating questions, problems, and tasks to test understanding.
- Visualising mathematical and scientific concepts.
- Providing example solutions and work-throughs to build problem-solving skills
- Processing large amounts of data in complex ways
- Summarising larger amounts of data and research than a pupil could practically process themselves
- Ensuring that search results gathered use credible sources, and help with referencing so that credit is given where it is due
- Conducting research using primary source material such as images, sound recordings or video as prompts
- Summarising a passage of a pupils own writing to check that they have expressed themselves clearly
- Evaluating the success of a piece of work as set against examined criteria
- Demonstrating alternative ways of completing a task already undertaken, to indicate new methods of addressing a question or topic
- Suggesting actions that could be taken to improve work when completing similar tasks in the future.

AI embedded:

AI embedded tasks are those which have been set to collaborate with AI, just as a pupil would work with a partner in class. Pupils can therefore use AI in this way to help with creativity, to prompt ideas and with critical thinking. Therefore, pupils may be set work which requires use of certain AI tools to complete. Only specified AI tools will be allowed.

AI embedded means that pupils may use AI throughout their work to support their learning. Pupils should highlight any content which is AI generated, as they should not pass AI generated work off as their own. Pupils may be asked to evaluate the output of an AI tool in AI embedded work.

Special case: Coursework (Non-examined assessment)

Our school abides by the JCQ AI Use in Assessments Policy for examinations. This can be found here ([link](#)). AI tools must only be used when the conditions of the assessment permit the use of the internet and where the pupil is able to demonstrate that the final submission is the product of their own independent work and independent thinking.

From the JCQ policy, examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the pupil's own;
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content;
- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the pupil's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations;
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information;
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools;
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliography

3. Giving enhanced teacher involvement

AI will support, not replace, the role of teachers. For example, while AI could help identify patterns in pupil performance, it would then be up to teachers to interpret those patterns and provide personalised feedback. Teachers will still be the ones engaging with pupils' struggles, answering questions, and nurturing critical thinking.

4. Developing New Skills

AI is here to stay, and education must adapt to prepare pupils for the changing world. We will ensure we continue to teach well the "soft skills" like teamwork, empathy, and communication - skills AI cannot replicate. Additionally, pupils should learn how to evaluate AI-generated content critically, compare multiple sources of information, and identify misinformation. These skills will be vital in a future shaped by AI.

5. The school will collaborate with Parents

Parents will be kept informed about how AI is used in the classroom. Regular communication will address concerns, showcase success stories, and build trust in AI's role as a tool to enhance - not replace - traditional teaching methods. A working group involving parents will be put together in the first half of the Spring term, and this group will feed in to the schools AI approach. An AI policy is being developed, which will be shared with parents by the end of the Spring term. The intention is to communicate each term with the latest developments in our AI vision and guidelines.

Striking the Right Balance

It is crucial to recognise that AI is neither a perfect solution nor an inherent threat. Instead, it is a powerful tool with both potential benefits and pitfalls. When integrated thoughtfully, AI will enrich education by enabling personalised learning, supporting pupils with specific needs, and fostering new skill development. However, we must guard against over-reliance on AI, ensuring it complements, rather than replaces, the human interaction, creativity, and critical thinking that define quality education.

Parents' concerns are valid, and they highlight the importance of careful implementation. With the right guidance, AI can help pupils thrive, not only by enhancing their learning but also by preparing them for a future where AI will play an increasingly central role.

In the words of one parent: *"If pupils are educated on its use well, it could become another wonderful tool to enhance their learning."* By addressing concerns openly, establishing clear guidelines, and focusing on education's human core, we can ensure that AI at Blundell's becomes a positive force for pupil development.