AI for Students:
How are children using AI?

AI for Students

We've produced lots of content this year about how AI can benefit school teachers, staff, and leaders and ultimately go on to improve the learning experience for students. But how else is it affecting them? With so many AI learning tools at their disposal, as well as content generation tools like ChatGPT and AI features now in their favourite software and apps, most children, particularly teenagers, have as much access to AI as adults do. Children are particularly vulnerable to risks and uncertainties associated with AI in the short and medium term.

How do we protect children against its potential dangers? How are they using AI now? And how do we teach them how to use AI ethically and safely? You can find out everything you need to know about how your students are using the new technology in this handy guide.

Learn more about our AI in Education webinars

There's so much potential for AI in education, but there's simply not enough guidance about it. We wanted to start the conversation about AI in education, so we decided to put on our AI in Education webinars and educate teachers, staff, and school leaders on the basics of AI and how to use it in schools. We'll be hosting more AI in Education webinars in the autumn, so don't miss the chance to further expand your AI knowledge.

View upcoming webinars

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How are children currently using AI?

Learning tools

There are countless AI tools designed to help students understand and learn course material and test their knowledge, from tutor chatbots that offer a personalised learning experience to assistive technology that supports students with learning difficulties (e.g., tools that transcribe voice to text). Many popular learning tools developed before the advent of AI, like Quizlet, now also offer AI capabilities that have enhanced their offering, such as tailoring study tools to individual learning systems.

Homework help

There is still some debate over whether students should use AI to help with homework, but many establishments agree that it can be used to support the information gathering process and to help them come up with ideas (check your school's AI policy to ensure you know the rules students must follow and give out the right information to students).

Lots of students use generative AI tools like ChatGPT for this purpose, but schools understandably don't want students to use them to write the assignments. Some writing tools, like grammar and spelling checkers, also now use AI to help students rephrase wording and improve their writing.

Student cheating with AI has become a major problem, particularly in higher education, which has fuelled the rise in AI detectors teachers use when grading assignments to check for AI-generated content.

Creative tools

Children now have the ability to express their creative side like never before with content generation tools, whether that's a piece of writing, an image, or even a piece of music. From homework to personal enjoyment, the possibilities are endless thanks to the tools constantly improving their capabilities.

General information and advice

Just like adults in the workplace, children are using tools like ChatGPT and DeepSeek to pull information from a variety of sources into a quick answer to a question. But many children, mainly teenagers, are also using the tools for advice, particularly around sensitive or serious topics they feel uncomfortable sharing with an adult despite these queries likely being best shared and discussed with one.

Over 50%

of young people said generative AI helped them with ideas, or helped them understand things or learn new things (Annual Literacy Survey)

The dangers of children using AI

There are many risks associated with AI, from threats to data privacy and misinformation to the technology potentially spreading bias and discrimination. With regards to children using AI, these threats are considerably amplified. Here are some of the most significant dangers associated with children using AI with no support or training.

It can be used to create upsetting images to bully and harass other children

With plenty of AI image generation tools now able to create hyper realistic images, including deep fakes, it's possible for children to create upsetting or harmful images that they can share with others to bully them or cause offense.

It can limit children's ability to learn

While there are plenty of tools that can help students' learn, there are concerns that should students use tools to do their assignments, they will not experience the benefits of them. Work flagged as generated by AI could also harm their academic career.

It can spread bias and prejudice among children

Although AI itself is not biased, training data is taken from a wide range of sources created by people including the internet, books, and social media which can cause the models to create biased answers which may reinforce harmful stereotypes related to race, gender, sexuality, or other human characteristics. Children can be especially receptive to this content if they do not have the knowledge to recognise the cause of this prejudice or even that the content is promoting harmful stereotypes which can go on to influence their views and behaviour.

It may put their personal data at risk

Just as many adults have concerns about AI tools taking their personal data and inputs to train their models, there is a heightened risk when it comes to children. This is because there's evidence to suggest younger children tend to freely talk to chatbots, like Alexa, as if they are another person and may share personal or private information about themselves or others. Even older children aware of what AI is and how it works may not understand that they shouldn't share any personal information with AI.

It can lead to children experiencing social withdrawal

As mentioned above, some children may not understand that when they talk to an AI chatbot they aren't speaking to an actual person. This could lead to them forming close connections with AI tools, like ChatGPT, and developing confused boundaries between both the chatbot and others. This can lead them to develop a dependence on chatbots and withdraw socially.

It can generate incorrect information and advice

With some children using AI tools as an opportunity to get answers to their questions and queries – particularly sensitive or serious ones they don't want to ask an adult – they could be at risk of taking in misinformation or even potentially harmful advice.

1 IN 5

young people (13-18 year olds) do not check AI outputs (Annual Literacy Survey)

How to teach children how to use AI

The trick to ensuring children use AI safely and effectively is making sure they are well educated on how it works, the risks that come with it, and how to use it – just like would you do for adults! Here's a handy checklist for teaching students about AI.

☑ Start with the basics
Help children understand the AI essentials including how the technology works and its capabilities. Make sure young children know a chatbot isn't a person with feelings or thoughts they're speaking to, and explain how it makes decisions or produces content based on data it already has.

☑ Encourage critical thinking about AI outputs
Hallucinations (AI making up an answer), inaccurate information, and misinformation are relatively common outputs from AI tools. Students must be aware that it can give incorrect answers, and know how to fact-check the information against reputable sources. Many newer models and tools provide source links so it's good practice for students to follow and check the quality of the information used to build the responses they receive.

☑ Discuss ethics and fairness in relation to AI with them
Ensure they have a good understanding of how training data can lead to AI producing biased outputs. It is also worth noting that there have been high-profile examples of companies cutting corners when sourcing information in a way that does not always respect the intellectual property of the authors and artists who created the original content. Share some real-world examples of AI making unfair decisions or generating art that was built on the work of an artist without their permission. This is also an excellent opportunity to explain how content that's not generated by AI can reinforce bias, discrimination, or a disregard for intellectual property.

☑ Educate them on the importance of online safety
Online safety and privacy are very important topics to discuss with children from the age they start using the internet and devices. It's crucial they know not to share personal information with AI and understand that AI could take in that data and use it to train the model.

☑ Use AI tools with them
Introduce them to different AI learning tools and content generation tools to help them understand how they work, what they can use them for, and inspire them to use AI safely. This is also a great opportunity to point out any potential risks of AI while they use it, such as misinformation, opportunities to accidentally reveal personal data, copyright infringement, and what counts as plagiarism or cheating.

82%

of all parents are fairly or very concerned about children accessing inappropriate information when using generative AI (The Alan Turing Institute)

When should children start using AI?

Most experts agree children should start using AI aged 11 or around the start of secondary school to ensure they have a strong proficiency with the technology which will arguably become more important in the workplace when they enter it.

But some AI experts argue children as young as age 6 should be introduced to AI. They recommend they use AI to create stories, games, and pictures, whereas older children can use AI tools to help their learning. In the same vein, they claim this will prepare the younger generation for an even more AI-powered future.

About Bromcom AI

Bromcom AI is built into our MIS to enable schools across the country to streamline their administrative tasks and save time.

◻ Ask general knowledge queries and instantly receive answers via its ChatGPT integration with the Chat Bot

◻ Run queries on your MIS data to quickly surface insights and information with the Data Bot

◻ Get support while using the MIS with the Support Bot

◻ Generate content including letters, lesson plans, and quizzes with the Chat Bot

As the first MIS provider to launch AI in an MIS, we're always looking for new ways to incorporate AI into our users' processes and ultimately make their lives easier.
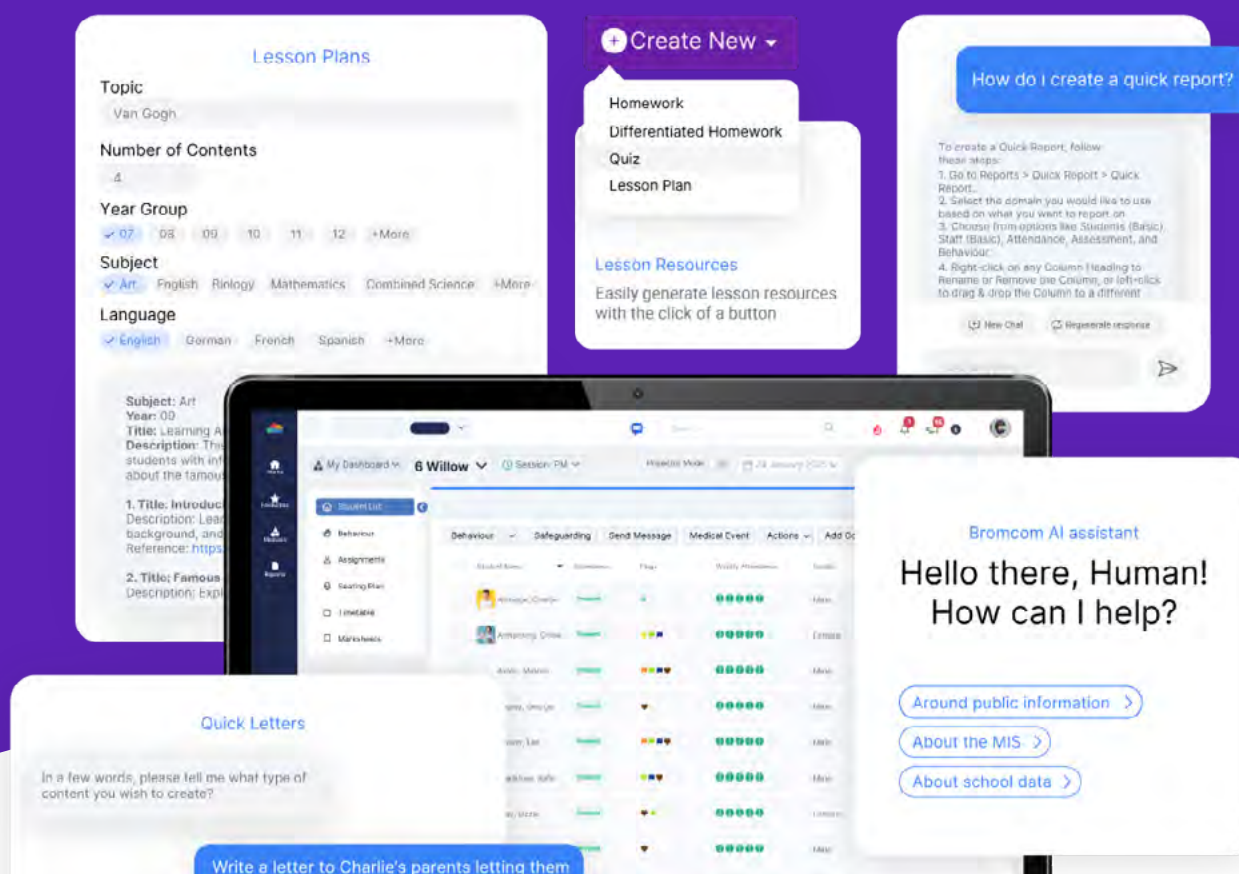
To find out more about Bromcom MIS and Bromcom AI and how they could benefit your establishment, click the button below.

Book a discovery call

Ready to learn more about using AI in your school?

In the autumn our AI in Education webinars will return where we'll deep dive more AI topics. Join us and our AI experts as well as school leaders from across the UK to get more insights into using AI, and be a part of the conversation in our live Q and A session.

View upcoming webinars

Let's Improve Education Together.

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