

Subject: Guidance for education professionals on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the wider context of the use of digital technologies in education

Circular Number: 2026/02
Date of Issue: 11 May 2026

Copied for information to:

- Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools
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- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
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- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools
- Teachers' Unions

Summary of Contents: To encourage the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in a safe, secure and supportive manner in the context of the wider use of digital technologies in education.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of the Circular should be addressed to:

DE: Curriculum Team
EA: Education Information
Solutions (EdIS) Programme Team

Governor Awareness:

Essential

Status of Contents:

Information / advice for teachers and schools

Superseded Documents:

Circular 2007/01 Acceptable use of the internet in schools

Relevant Documents:

EdIS GenAI Platform is available with a C2k ID on the C2K Exchange: [Pages - eLearning](#)

[DE Circular 2016/27](#) provides advice for schools regarding on-line safety.

Expiry Date: The content of this guidance will be reviewed regularly.

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Checklist for Education Professionals on GenAI in the context of digital education

Policy and Strategy Alignment

- Schools may wish to identify someone to take the lead on GenAI to advise school leaders, staff and governors.
- Review, revise, and align existing policies and strategies with the guidance provided in the document specific for age/stage/phase of school.
- Ensure that revised policies cover areas such as teaching, learning, assessment, reporting, administration, management, self-evaluation, improvement, data protection, and teacher professional development.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of school policies on practice and review regularly as required.

Advance Professional Development

- Allow sufficient time for staff preparation, sharing of practices and teacher development planning.
- Utilise GenAI to save time on routine administrative tasks and optimize evaluation, governance, management, and leadership.
- Ensure that the use of GenAI enhances teachers' professional time without infringing on their professionalism and autonomy.

Support Pupil Learning

- Ensure digital safety while supporting pupil learning.
- Promote the development of technological skills, critical/analytical thinking, computational thinking/problem-solving, and creative capacity across the curriculum.

Transform Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

- Integrate GenAI tools to enhance teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Ensure authenticity, veracity, integrity, and fairness in teaching and learning, especially in assessments.
- Direct learners when it is and when it is not appropriate to use GenAI tools in learning and assessments and support their use.
- In relation to high stakes summative assessments schools should ensure that the JCQ *AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications* is embedded within assessment policy.

Promote Inclusive Design for Digital Learning

- Use GenAI to support inclusive learning, especially for learners with additional needs or special educational needs.
- Apply digital tools that support home/school partnerships and collaborative learning.

Ethical and Safe Use of GenAI

- Apply GenAI in ways that are lawful, ethical, safe, secure, fair, and transparent.
- Safeguard personal privacy and confidentiality when using digital tools and services including guardrails for the use of GenAI and by conforming to data protection requirements.

Training and Awareness

- Undertake mandatory training provided by C2k/EdIS before using GenAI tools.
- Promote awareness and understanding of how digital tools and services are being used within the school and with external stakeholders.

Addressing Concerns and Misuse

- Be transparent and open about where and how GenAI is being used.
- Follow enhanced disciplinary and safeguarding procedures in case of misuse.
- Identify the person(s) responsible for managing the risk of errors from undue reliance on GenAI.

Background

1. The purpose of this document is to encourage the use, in education, of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in a safe, secure and supportive manner. GenAI presents exciting opportunities to improve people's lives, including by making our public services better. It is important to acknowledge that whilst it has impact and value, there are also risks that need to be proactively managed in all phases of school.

2. The emergence of GenAI tools is part of the wider availability and use of digital technologies in education. This document sets out four high level principles to guide schools and EOTAS settings in applying digital technologies, including GenAI, to optimise learning outcomes and manage tasks in ways that are informed, safe, secure, ethical, inclusive and effective. These are:

- Support pupil learning whilst being digitally safe;
- Transform teaching, learning and assessment;
- Promote inclusive design for digital learning; and
- Advance professional development, promoting efficiency, effectiveness and ethically sound practice.

3. It is important that education settings take time to review, revise and align all related policies in keeping with this guidance not just digital / ICT policies. Education settings' policies may include, for example, strategies and practices in the areas of teaching, learning, assessment and reporting, administration and management, self-evaluation and improvement, and teacher professional learning as well as those for managing risk and the protocols for acceptable / positive behaviour by staff, pupils and parents. School policy reviews should be specific for the age/stage of learners and the phase/type of school. This Circular provides a high-level checklist of recommended actions for education professionals.

4. Further explanatory background and guidance relating to these principles, which will be updated regularly, is available on the C2K Exchange. A link is available on the first and last page of this Circular.

What is Artificial Intelligence / Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)?

5. Artificial Intelligence (AI) describes a series of technologies (including agentic systems, AI media, AI mentors, social/chat AI, large language models (LLMs), text-to-speech tools, translation applications, predictive text and tools which are increasingly embedded and normalised in general digital technologies) that can perform tasks which usually supplement human intelligence. Different kinds of AI are emerging and are being deployed rapidly. *Up-to-date explanations, information and guidance is available in more detail on the C2K Exchange.* A common factor is that there has been a huge rise in the access to and use of AI tools which are not without their significant flaws and challenges, especially about ethics and equity. This has led to significant interest in and concerns about how GenAI could be used, or misused, in education and with our learners.

Why, where and when may GenAI be useful in education?

6. GenAI in the education system presents many opportunities like “*increased teacher efficiency, personalised learning experiences, and the breaking down of structural barriers to education. On the flip side, GenAI also raises challenges such as the potential for over-reliance, the spread of misinformation, the exacerbation of existing biases, privacy and security concerns, a widening of the digital divide, and academic integrity issues*¹.”

7. GenAI tools can answer questions; complete written tasks; generate images, text or code; generate, present and analyse data; support creative exploration and invention and respond to prompts in a human-like way. As a result, it can be used by teachers and learners as a tool to supplement tasks involving reasoning, research, data analysis, problem-solving, perception, creativity and decision-making. It can also be used to produce audio, video and images, such as speech and music, simulations, artwork, animations and podcasts. *Detailed examples of use cases across the life and work of schools, prepared by teachers for teachers, and on curriculum and assessment uses from CCEA can be found on the C2K Exchange.*

¹ [Research and Information Services Research Paper: Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Education System](#)

8. The GenAI offering within the EdIS/C2k service is built around two main products: Copilot for Microsoft Office 365 and Google Gemini for Education. Both are supported through a range of basic and advanced resources on a centralised reference and learning platform. Mandatory user training, through this platform, will be required ahead of any GenAI license provision and use of either product. In addition, the platform will support co-creation of teacher professional learning opportunities and foster collaboration within the communities of practice already established through two successful proof of concepts projects².

9. GenAI is more than a search engine. Knowledge and skills in using AI tools intelligently are becoming increasingly important in the preparation of young people for the world of work. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025³ reports, for example, that "AI and other processing technologies are expected to transform 86% of businesses with 6 in 10 workers requiring reskilling to take place⁴" and notes that "39% of worker's core skills are set to change by 2030." *More information about the AI-related knowledge and skills which children and young people, at different ages and stages, need to know is available on the C2K Exchange.*

10. The benefits of using GenAI and wider digital technologies should be understood, interpreted and implemented in ways which are relevant to the age and stage of the learners and the nature of education in each school / setting. *Use cases and advice are available on the C2K Exchange.*

Approved GenAI tools within EdIS versus non-approved GenAI tools

11. Copilot for Microsoft Office 365 and Google Gemini for Education use only the information contained in the school's folder structures and LLMs available to the user. Crucially, none of the data inside the school's own ecosystem is shared publicly to train LLMs. This is not the case for many other GenAI products. *Important information and advice on the use of other, non-supported, AI tools by both teachers and pupils is*

² https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1735992/AIforNI-AStrategicOverviewFullDocument.pdf

³ [The Future of Jobs Report 2025 | World Economic Forum](#)

⁴ [WEF: AI Will Create and Displace Millions of Jobs | Sustainability Magazine](#)

available on the C2K Exchange. We urge significant caution in using products other than those provided for use within the EdIS/C2k service.

Four key principles to guide the use of GenAI

- Support pupil learning whilst being digitally safe;
- Transform teaching, learning and assessment;
- Promote inclusive design for digital learning; and
- Advance professional development, promoting efficiency, effectiveness and ethically sound practice.

Support pupil learning whilst being digitally safe

12. GenAI can be used to enhance knowledge and skills development including in (i) technological skills, (ii) critical / analytical thinking, computational thinking / problem-solving, and (iii) creative capacity across the curriculum. Learners and practitioners should be informed by knowledge of how to apply technology, learn how digital / GenAI tools work and understand the implications for careers pathways. In particular, there is a need for the use of GenAI to be lawful, conform to data protection requirements, be ethical, safe, secure, fair and transparent. Staff, pupil and parent / carer wellbeing should be paramount.

13. Schools should:

- consider how best to teach pupils the knowledge and skills to use GenAI tools, especially those embedded in other software packages;
- apply technologies in ways which respect the care and wellbeing of all users – school staff and parents as well as learners - and promote their dignity and safety⁵;
- conform, both personally and corporately, to data protection requirements (see Data Protection section below) regarding the privacy of individuals and the security of digital systems and data services;
- guard the privacy of data and protect the property rights and copyrights;

⁵ [DE Circular 2016/27](#) provides advice for schools regarding on-line safety and may itself be subject to review.

- build the personal resilience of individuals as well as safeguarding the corporate reputation of the school;
- promote personal understanding and develop collective moral and legal responsibility for the consequences of use;
- be transparent in disclosing and explaining how digital tools and services are being used;
- be accountable ethically, morally, and legally – respecting the human rights and the autonomy of all staff and learners;
- safeguard personal privacy and confidentiality when using digital tools and services, including guardrails for the use of GenAI;
- respond to and put right any discrimination, misuse of information, errors, abuse and bias against individuals and groups; and
- reflect the evolving human, social, economic, and environmental implications of digital technologies - both by mitigating the emerging risks and promoting the opportunities.

Data protection considerations

14. GenAI tools come with certain risks related to data protection⁶. Schools must ensure that they are open, transparent and accountable in relation to any use of GenAI by the school. If any proposed use may involve the processing of personal data using GenAI, the school must ensure that the school's privacy notices are updated to disclose and explain how GenAI tools may be used by the school.

15. Schools must also ensure that any processing of personal data using GenAI is fair and accurate. As AI systems learn from data which may be inaccurate, unbalanced and/or reflect discrimination, they may produce outputs which are inaccurate or have discriminatory effects on people based on their gender, race, age, health, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other characteristics. Content produced using GenAI

⁶ Personal data must be protected in accordance with data protection legislation (e.g. the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and The Data Use and Access Act 2025 (DUAA).

must therefore be checked as a matter of routine school policy to ensure that it is fair, appropriate and accurate.

16. The EA has completed Data Protection Impact Assessments in relation to the two GenAI products within the EdIS/C2k service, Copilot for Microsoft Office 365 and Google Gemini for Education which cover the technical security of these products and highlight that both products operate within the school's existing folder structures and access permission framework, and that both products ensure that none of the data inside the school's own ecosystem is used to train any large language models. It is therefore strongly recommended that schools use these Gen AI tools, rather than any GenAI tools outside the C2k/EdIS service offering.

17. Any proposal for a school to use any other GenAI tools should be screened to consider if a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is required. If the proposed use will involve the processing of personal data using GenAI, a DPIA should be completed, and advice should be sought from the school's Data Protection Officer (DPO) in this respect. Completing a DPIA in relation to any proposed processing of personal data using generative AI will ensure that the school identifies and minimises the data protection risks. It does not have to eradicate all risk but should help minimise and determine whether or not the level of risk is acceptable in the circumstances, taking into account the benefits of what the school wants to achieve. *Advice on steps which must be taken in respect of the use of any other GenAI and AI tools is provided on the C2K Exchange.*

18. Where schools choose to use pupil-facing generative AI, with those age-groups of pupils for whom they are authorised, they must take great care to ensure they are abiding by their legal responsibilities. They should also consider potential impacts on learning, the importance of the teacher-learner relationship and the risks of bias and misinformation and take effective steps to educate users appropriately.

Transform teaching, learning and assessment

19. GenAI has significant potential for use across the curriculum and in applying digital tools for teaching, assessment and learning outcomes. It can also be used to

create opportunities for shared education and collaborative learning. However, there is a need to ensure authenticity, veracity, integrity, and fairness in teaching and learning and especially assessments. *Use cases and advice are available on the C2K Exchange which will continue to be updated as practices are developed.*

20. As GenAI tools depend on the content and materials on which they have been trained; they can perpetuate the biases and prejudices in their original sources. Teachers, leaders and other staff should use their professional judgement when using these tools. Any content produced requires critical judgement and quality assurance as a matter of routine to check for appropriateness and accuracy. The quality, veracity and content of any final documents remains the responsibility of the professional who produces it on behalf of the organisation to which they belong.

21. Learners should be given explicit direction about when and how it is appropriate to use GenAI/digital tools in learning tasks and in assessment activities (conforming to guidance on [AI use in assessments from the Joint Council for Qualifications](#)) and when it is not. Further information and advice for students can also be found on CCEA's website [Using the Internet and AI Safely in Assessments](#).

Promote inclusive design for digital learning

22. GenAI may be used to promote inclusion for all learners in light of their specific needs or requirements, including improving access and enabling obstacles to learning to be overcome. GenAI may support the planning of teaching and learning that uses technologies to help overcome barriers such as additional needs and the use of digital tools in diverse ways to support inclusive learning. GenAI and digital services can support home/school partnership to support pupils' learning. Improved assessment data may help learners to demonstrate their progress and achievements.

23. The teachers involved in the proof-of-concepts pilots included those from Irish-medium schools. The use cases created included both bilingual resources and learning content in the Irish language-. Furthermore, C2k/EdIS has established a dedicated resource to support GenAI uses in the Irish-medium.

24. Learners, teachers, teaching assistants and school leaders are encouraged to incorporate digital tools in teaching and learning in ways that develop, over time, the independent agency of learners. They should apply digital services to create opportunities for shared education and collaborative learning and should utilise and then evaluate regularly, the uses and risks of digital services which raise standards and promote school improvement.

Advance professional development, promote efficiency, effectiveness and ethically sound practice

25. GenAI applications have the potential for raising standards and promoting school improvement. Specifically, GenAI uses may enable teachers and leaders to save time on routine administration tasks, optimise evaluation, governance, management and leadership (collaboratively through data analytics), designing and creating teaching programmes, creating and sharing resources, supporting professional learning and enhancing and transforming pedagogy.

26. This should always be done in an integrated, age-appropriate and ability-appropriate manner which releases more professional time for teachers to teach, without infringing their professionalism and autonomy, nor diminishing outcomes for the learners. Use of GenAI should enhance pupil's knowledge, understanding and skills including their creative, computational and critical thinking whilst ensuring that undue reliance on digital technologies including GenAI is avoided and does not limit the cognitive development of learners nor challenge educational integrity.

27. Schools should ensure accountability for all digital tools and services they employ, including GenAI. Attention needs to be given to providing and sharing professional learning opportunities for all teachers. A means of managing any risks which may arise from GenAI errors should be identified. Transparency should be maintained through clear communication with parents, carers, staff, and pupils about how these tools are used in teaching, communication, and administration. While routine or minor uses may not need to be individually disclosed, schools should record any significant uses that influence learning outcomes, reporting, or stakeholder communication. Transparency should also be approached as an educational

opportunity, supporting pupils and families to understand the role, benefits, and limitations of GenAI.

28. Further information, support and advice is available with a C2k ID on the C2K Exchange - [Pages - eLearning](#) (or go to My School; click on C2k Exchange; the notice will be on the right hand side; Document centre). The team can be contacted at: edisinfo@eani.org.uk.