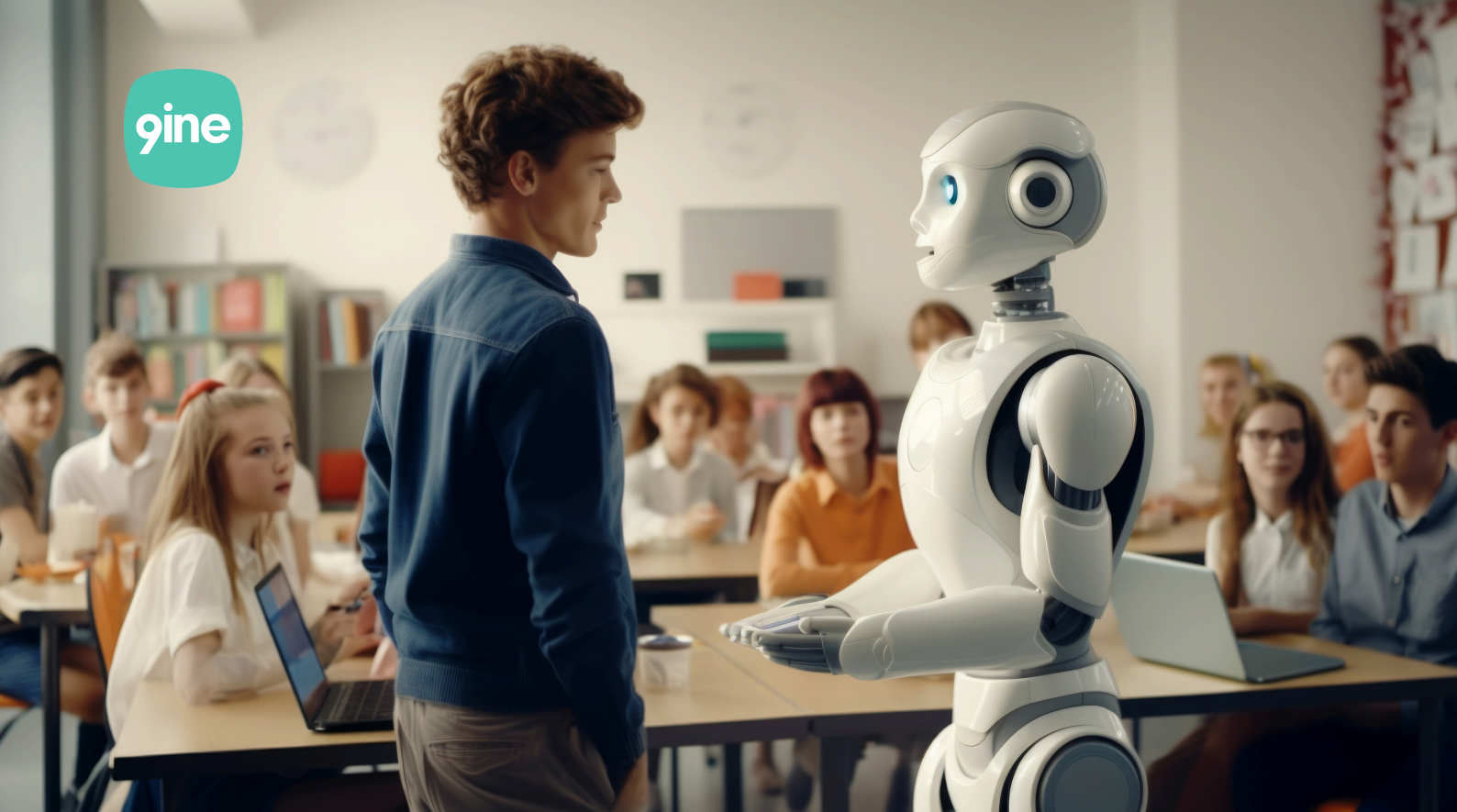




Governance and Ethics of Using AI in Schools

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform education, offering opportunities to enhance teaching, personalise learning, streamline administration, and improve student outcomes. Yet, its adoption also raises complex ethical, legal, and governance challenges. Schools must address these issues to safeguard student welfare, maintain data protection standards, and preserve trust within their communities.

This guide, created by [9ine](https://9ine.com), provides an overview of key ethical considerations, outlines the evolving legal and regulatory landscape, and offers strategies for robust AI governance. It concludes with a checklist designed to help schools implement AI responsibly and in full compliance with relevant standards.

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Key Ethical Considerations

1. Algorithmic Bias:

If the data used to train AI models is biased, the resulting systems may perpetuate inequalities. In education, this can lead to unfair grading, inappropriate placement decisions, or differential treatment of certain groups of students. Schools should ensure that their chosen AI tools undergo thorough bias testing and commit to addressing any identified issues.

2. Preserving Critical Thinking and Creativity:

An excessive reliance on AI risks diminishing students' opportunities to develop independent research skills, analytical reasoning, and creativity. Educators must integrate AI thoughtfully, using it as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for genuine intellectual enquiry.

3. Data Privacy and Security:

AI often relies on large volumes of personal data to function effectively. Protecting students' sensitive information in accordance with privacy law and ensuring transparent, robust security practices is paramount. Schools must scrutinise AI providers to ensure adherence to strict data protection standards.

4. Maintaining Human Agency:

While AI can offer insights and recommendations, it should never supplant human judgement. Educators have an irreplaceable role in mentoring, inspiring, and understanding the nuanced needs of their students. AI must remain a support, not a substitute, for professional expertise and pastoral care.

5. Equitable Access:

AI tools should be accessible to all students, regardless of background or resources. Ensuring that no child is left behind is essential for preventing further entrenchment of the digital divide.

6. Environmental Sustainability:

The computational demands of AI can have significant environmental impacts. As reliance on AI grows, schools should consider the energy consumption and carbon footprint of data centres powering AI systems, selecting providers that prioritise sustainable practices where possible.

The Legal and Regulatory Landscape

Safeguarding and Welfare:

Schools are obliged to consider how all aspects of their operations—AI included— affect student welfare. This duty includes potential risks of harm of AI embedded in EdTech and extends to the use of AI-driven filtering or monitoring systems, which must be reliable, transparent, and regularly reviewed to protect students from harm while avoiding false or discriminatory judgments.

Data Protection Compliance:

Schools must comply fully with data protection laws and regulations. This includes:

- Ensuring transparency about data collection and usage. This means your school's privacy notice and policies need to be updated to reflect AI use.
- Obtaining proper consent where required.
- Implementing robust security measures in the access of AI to personal data; for example, when Microsoft Co-Pilot is being used there is a risk that it will have access to and be trained on personal and commercial data that it may not be intended to have access to.
- Conducting comprehensive assessments of EdTech providers, including those integrating AI, to guarantee adherence to legal and ethical standards.

Accreditation & Inspection Perspective:

On the whole, accreditation and inspection organisations require schools to have evidence they are taking a responsible, fair, and transparent approach when deciding where and how to use AI. This means schools being aware of all AI that is in use, have evidence that they have evaluated the risks of use, and have all relevant AI and Privacy policies in place. This requirement also extends to ensuring all staff are trained on ethical and responsible use of AI.

Implementing Robust Governance

To integrate AI ethically and effectively, schools should:

1. **Establish Clear Policies:** Create written policies outlining ethical, legal, and operational standards for AI. Update these regularly in response to technological and regulatory changes.
2. **Vet Providers Thoroughly:** Scrutinise AI providers to ensure they meet standards for data protection, fairness, security, and transparency.
3. **Train and Support Staff:** Provide professional development for teachers and administrators to understand AI's potential biases, ethical considerations, and data protection obligations.
4. **Foster AI Literacy:** Incorporate AI education into the curriculum. Students should learn what AI is, how it works, and how to engage with it critically and responsibly.
5. **Continuous Auditing and Monitoring:** Regularly review AI tools to assess performance, identify biases, and ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards.
6. **Engage the Community:** Communicate openly with students, parents, and staff about AI's purpose, benefits, and potential risks. Involve stakeholders in decision-making to maintain trust and transparency.
7. **Consider an AI Officer or Team:** A dedicated AI lead or steering group can oversee strategy, compliance, and continuous improvement of AI governance frameworks.



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A Risk-Based Approach

Not all AI applications carry equal risk. Categorising AI tools by their potential impact on student welfare, privacy, or educational outcomes can guide resource allocation and regulatory oversight. High-risk tools—those influencing critical decisions about progression, assessment, or support—warrant stricter controls and ongoing scrutiny, while less critical applications may require fewer safeguards.

Conclusion

The integration of AI into education offers the promise of innovation, efficiency, and personalised learning. By putting robust governance frameworks in place, schools can realise the benefits of AI whilst maintaining high ethical standards, transparency, and a relentless focus on students' well-being. The result is an educational environment in which technology serves as a powerful ally in nurturing learners, supporting educators, and building a future-focused, equitable system.



Practical Checklist for Schools

Policy and Governance:

- ☐ Develop a written AI policy outlining ethical, legal, and operational standards.
- ☐ Assign clear responsibilities for AI oversight (e.g. appoint an AI Officer or steering committee).
- ☐ Review and update policies regularly.

Data Protection and Privacy:

- ☐ Map all personal data used by AI tools and ensure compliance with the UK GDPR.
- ☐ Maintain transparency with students, parents, and staff about data usage.
- ☐ Scrutinise vendor contracts, privacy notices, and technical documentation.

Bias, Fairness, and Accessibility:

- ☐ Conduct bias assessments on AI systems before implementation.
- ☐ Regularly review outcomes for signs of discrimination.
- ☐ Ensure equitable access to AI tools for all students.

Staff Training and Community Engagement:

- ☐ Train staff on responsible AI use, recognising biases, and protecting data.
- ☐ Integrate AI literacy into the curriculum so students can engage critically.
- ☐ Communicate clearly with parents, students, and staff about AI's goals and challenges.

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement:

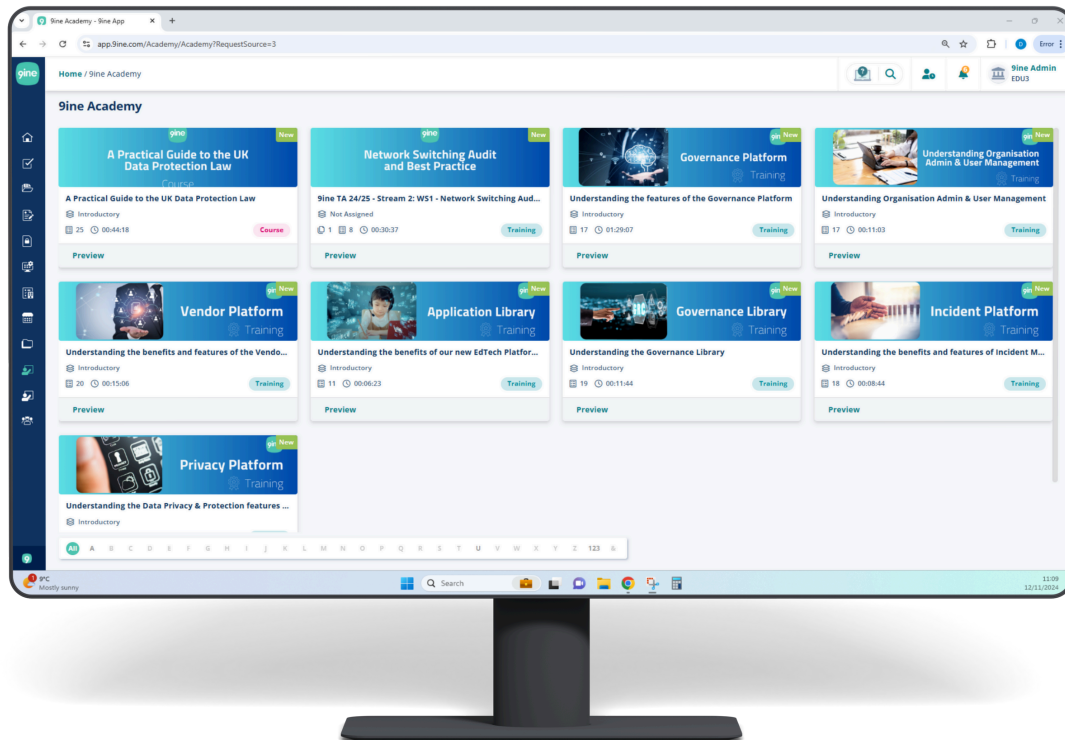
- ☐ Schedule regular audits of AI systems to verify compliance, accuracy, and fairness.
- ☐ Establish feedback mechanisms for stakeholders to report concerns.
- ☐ Have a clear process for addressing and rectifying identified issues.

Sustainability and Environmental Considerations:

- ☐ Consider the environmental impact of AI tools and select sustainable options where possible.
- ☐ Request suppliers' environmental impact reports and carbon reduction commitments.

How 9ine Can Help

9ine's AI Readiness Toolkit provides schools with a structured set of tasks, checklists and resources to integrate AI into school ethically and responsibly. 9ine's AI Pathway is a 21 course curriculum with differentiated course levels for all staff; from teachers through to Safeguarding and Technology. 9ine's Vendor Management and Application Library platforms take away the pain of GDPR and AI law compliance through pre-assessed contract, privacy notice, AI and information security policy documentation from EdTech Vendors.



About 9ine

9ine equips schools to stay safe, secure and compliant. We give schools access to all the expertise they need to meet their AI, technology, cyber, data privacy, governance, risk & compliance needs - in one simple to use platform. Our team of over 80 experts partner with schools to achieve a safer, smarter, and more secure educational future, where technology solutions, risk management, and compliance converge for excellence. Since 2009, 9ine has supported schools around the globe to meet a constantly developing legislation environment, including the introduction of GDPR, and remains future focused on supporting schools with navigating the use of emerging technologies.

For additional information, please visit www.9ine.com or follow us on [@9ine](https://www.linkedin.com/company/9ine).

