

KS2-4

Understanding AI: Rights, safety and wellbeing



*Please read this guidance before teaching the lessons

Teacher guidance

This guidance accompanies the PSHE Association’s AI literacy programme for key stage 2 to 4 *Understanding AI: Rights, safety and wellbeing*. The lessons introduce different forms of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including generative AI, and examine their impact on rights, careers, relationships and our understanding of the world. We are grateful to Morgan Briggs, Senior AI Ethics and Policy Researcher, for her input into the lesson development. Please read this guidance carefully before teaching the lessons.

Introduction

Why teaching about AI is important

The last decade has seen dramatic technological developments in AI – with the associated opportunities, challenges and safeguarding risks recognised in the Department for Education (DfE)’s 2025 [statutory Relationships Sex and Health education \(RSHE\) guidance](#). At secondary, this includes taking a critical approach to new types of technology, including AI chatbots, and recognising potential risks. While AI is not explicitly mentioned in the statutory guidance for primary phase, there is an emphasis on pupils understanding their rights online and recognising the value of in-person (as opposed to online) relationships. The primary lessons in this pack address these requirements, whilst laying the foundations for understanding and navigating the increasing impact of AI in daily life.

The statutory requirements reflect the fact that children are increasingly interacting with AI on a daily basis¹. Ofcom found that four in five (79% of) online teenagers aged 13–17, and 40% of 7–12-year-olds now use generative AI tools and services, compared to only 31% of adults². Yet, many of these tools were not designed for children; and generative AI can pose a variety of risks to the safety and rights of younger users. A fast-growing application of generative AI are chatbots, which are easily accessible and commonly used to search for information and get advice³. Chatbots are increasingly marketed as companions (such as ‘friends’ or ‘partners’) and more young people are turning to them to help manage loneliness and mental health during trying times⁴. While communicating with chatbots can have benefits, it also poses significant risks including receiving inaccurate information, exposure to inappropriate or harmful content, and emotional reliance.

¹ [Exploring AI with Children and Young People. Barnardos, 2024](#)

² [Gen Z driving early adoption of Gen AI. Ofcom, 2023](#)

³ [Me, Myself & AI: Chatbot research. Internet Matters, 2025](#)

⁴ [Coded Companions. VoiceBox Report, 2023](#)

It is vital, therefore, that pupils understand how AI (including generative AI) works, so that they can recognise when they encounter it online, analyse the benefits and risks of using AI in their daily lives, and safely access these tools – if they wish to – now and in the future.

Complete our accompanying on-demand course, [Teaching about AI: Chatbots, deepfakes and manipulated images](#), to deepen your subject knowledge. It covers key terms related to AI and chatbots, the law related to deepfakes, and lots of practical classroom tips!

For further information about generative AI and its implications for children and young people, visit [Fully Human](#).

Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps pupils feel comfortable with sharing their ideas and opinions without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. It is good practice for teachers to:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules about how they will behave in discussion, such as:
 - Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
 - We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
 - We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone, their feelings, or experiences.
 - We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
 - We won't share our own personal experiences, or those of anyone we know.
 - We won't put anyone on the spot, and we have a right to pass.

- offer opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class
- make a box/envelope available for pupils to put questions or concerns in (anonymously if they wish), to avoid having to voice them in front of the class
- provide factually accurate, up to date information
- provide balanced arguments to help pupils clarify their own opinions
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals, being mindful not to normalise generative AI usage, as experiences will vary
- use distancing strategies to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom, allow pupils to explore topics objectively, and to keep the learning environment safe
- always work within the school's policies on safeguarding and confidentiality
- link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting pupil wellbeing
- make pupils aware of sources of support, both in and outside the school.

Further guidance on creating a safe learning environment is available from the [PSHE Association](#).

Safeguarding and supporting pupils

Although generative AI can offer valuable opportunities to support creativity and learning, it can also carry risks, and the long-term effects on children's development and wellbeing remain largely uncertain. Research⁵ indicates that children may come across inaccurate information or inappropriate content and warns that as chatbots become more human-like, the boundary between real and artificial relationships could become blurred. These concerns are particularly acute for children with greater vulnerability, as they are more likely to use chatbots (especially for companionship) than their peers.

Ahead of teaching these lessons, safeguards to put in place could include:

- Reminding pupils, where relevant, that although the lessons address AI use, in the UK, generative AI use is usually restricted to 13 years and above, with parental permission.
- Making relevant pastoral and safeguarding staff aware of the topic you will be covering and encouraging them to discuss the lesson content with any pupils who are accessing support for related issues. It can be helpful to inform parents too, in case pupils come home with questions or wish to discuss any issues further.
- Giving those pupil(s) a chance to withdraw from the lesson if appropriate (without being asked to justify their absence to their peers). Consider how to follow up the missed lesson with the pupil(s), as this learning may be especially relevant to them.
- Ensuring any characters, scenarios or case studies you use are unlike any members of your class. For example, you may need to change the characters' names, so they are different to those of your pupils, and/or adapt any scenarios that directly reflect the current or past personal experiences of any pupils in the class.
- Signposting sources of support before, during and after the lesson.

Developing subject knowledge

Demystifying AI

When teaching about AI, it is important to avoid humanising (anthropomorphising) the technology. Generative AI tools, such as chatbots, are designed to produce human-like responses which can make children more likely to trust the information that the system provides and feel more open to sharing sensitive or personal information⁶. Instead, it can be helpful to demystify AI by making sure pupils recognise that it is a computer system that is trained on data – and that it does not have human qualities (such as thoughts, beliefs or empathy).

⁵ [Me, Myself & AI: Chatbot research | Internet Matters 2025](#)

⁶ [Viewing Generative AI and children's safety in the round. NSPCC, 2025](#)

Key terms explained

Artificial Intelligence (AI)	A technology that allows computer systems to carry out complex tasks, which previously required human-like intelligence (for example, prediction, generation, classification, recommendation). AI systems learn from data, detect patterns and improve performance over time.
Generative AI (GenAI)	This is one type of AI. It works by using patterns in existing data to create new content. For example, in response to the prompt input by a user, a generative AI model could create images, text, video clips, or audio clips – depending on what data it has been trained on. It is sometimes known as ‘GenAI’.
Prompt	The input given to a generative AI model. For example, a command (summarise... / change this image to...) or a question (what should I..?). Prompts can be given through text or voice.
Output	The response, result or information generated by an AI model, as a result of a prompt.
‘Hallucinations’	An answer given by a generative AI tool that is based on the patterns in the training data but which is incorrect.
AI chatbot	An AI-powered computer programme designed to simulate natural responsive and human-like conversation with a person. May also be referred to as an AI companion, AI friend or AI avatar. ChatGPT, Co-pilot and Gemini are examples of generative AI chatbots.
Disinformation	False information that is deliberately spread. Generative AI can be used as a tool to create disinformation.
Misinformation	False information that is mistakenly or accidentally spread, because people think it is true. Generative AI can contribute to misinformation through ‘hallucinations’.
Deepfakes*	Images, videos or audio clips that have been created by generative AI to look and sound real.
Large language models	An AI system trained on massive amounts of text data to understand, generate, and manipulate human language.

***Note:** To explore the topic of deepfakes, see our lesson pack [Digital deception: Understanding deepfakes](#), for key stages 2-4.

Preparing to teach

These lessons should form part of the overall programme for PSHE education in your school and would work well as part of a module on online safety or digital literacy. Please see the appendix for curriculum links to the PSHE Association [Programme of Study for PSHE education \(KS1-5\)](#) and the Department for Education's (2025) [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education](#) statutory guidance.

The lessons are designed to be delivered in one hour, with challenge and support suggestions provided, to adapt the learning to the needs of your class. The timings given are the minimum time required to deliver the activities. Whilst it is always important for PSHE education lessons to be pacy, it is equally important to meet your pupils' needs. More may be gained from spending longer on an activity that has fired up discussion and imagination. When this is the case, it may be more appropriate for your class to extend the lesson plan across two lessons.

Signposting support

Support for pupils

Ensure pupils know where they can seek help and further advice, now and in the future, if they have questions or concerns related to AI. Remind them that they can ask for help and advice from trusted adults at home, in school or from appropriate organisations.

Share the following website details with **key stage 2** pupils:

- Childline: www.childline.org.uk/kids; 0800 1111
- Think u know: www.thinkuknow.org.uk

Pupils in **key stages 3 and 4** should also be signposted to:

- CEOP: www.CEOP.police.uk
- YoungMinds: www.youngminds.co.uk

Appendix: Links to the Programme of Study and DfE’s 2025 statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health education

Lesson title and learning objective	PSHE Association Programme of Study	DfE 2025 RSHE statutory guidance
<p>Key stage 2</p> <p>Lesson 1 To learn about what artificial intelligence (AI) is and how it is used in our daily lives.</p>	<p>Online life and safety</p> <p>11. about rights and responsibilities online; to recognise their rights online, in relation to sharing personal data, privacy and consent</p> <p>12. how content on the internet is ranked and targeted at specific individuals and groups; the different ways information and data is shared and used online, including for commercial purposes; how to make safe, reliable choices about search results or the content they see</p> <p>13. how text and images in the media and online can be manipulated or fabricated; strategies to critically engage with what they see, read or hear online and identify misinformation and disinformation</p> <p>14. what AI is (including generative AI) and where it might be encountered in everyday life</p>	<p>Wellbeing online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) That for almost everyone the internet is an integral part of life. Pupils should be supported to think about positive and negative aspects of the internet. • (2) Pupils should be supported to discuss how online relationships can complement and support meaningful in-person relationships, but also how they might be in tension, and the reasons why online relationships are unlikely to be a good substitute for high quality in-person relationships, looking at the pros and cons of different ways of using online connection. • (7) How to take a critical approach to what they see and read online and make responsible decisions about which content, including content on social media and apps, is appropriate for them.
<p>Lesson 2 To learn about children’s rights and how they can be impacted by AI.</p>		
<p>Lesson 3 To learn about AI chatbots and how they are different from humans.</p>		

	<p>15. reasons for following rules and age restrictions; how rules and age restrictions for some apps, streaming services, films, computer games, online gaming and gambling sites help protect personal safety and promote wellbeing</p> <p>16. the minimum age requirement for social media; how this protects children from inappropriate content or unsafe contact with other social media users</p> <p>17. about the benefits of limiting time spent online and choosing online activities carefully; how to assess the impact of online content, behaviours and habits on their feelings and wellbeing</p> <p>18. how AI chatbots work; similarities and differences between interacting with an AI chatbot and a human, and the implications for wellbeing</p> <p>22. similarities and differences between communicating with someone online and offline; the importance of meaningful in-person relationships; that while online communication might enhance some relationships, purely online relationships may be less fulfilling</p> <p>29. the importance of telling a trusted adult and getting support with anything that worries, scares or concerns them online; when, why, and how to report concerns online</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (9) How to understand the information they find online, including from search engines, and know how information is selected and targeted. • (10) That they have rights in relation to sharing personal data, privacy and consent. • (11) Where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online. <p>Caring friendships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (3) That not every child will have the friends they would like at all times, that most people feel lonely sometimes, and that there is no shame in feeling lonely or talking about it. <p>Online safety and awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) That people should be respectful in online interactions, and that the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including where people are anonymous. For example, the importance of avoiding putting pressure on others to share information and images online, and strategies for resisting peer pressure. • (4) The importance of exercising caution about sharing any information about themselves online.
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		Understanding the importance of privacy and location settings to protect information online.
<p>Key stage 3 and 4 Lesson 1</p> <p>To learn how different forms of AI affect our daily lives and work.</p>	<p>Key stage 3</p> <p>Online life</p> <p>1. about rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including on social media; how to establish personal values and clear boundaries around aspects of life that they want to share and keep private</p> <p>6. how to approach online and social media content critically, including identifying bias, mis- and disinformation, and assessing the likelihood that content is untrue, manipulated or created by AI; the importance of seeking a variety of perspectives on issues and strategies for fact-checking online information</p> <p>9. how persuasive design features affect the time people spend online; strategies for managing the effects of persuasive design features, and how to recognise when and why they need to come offline</p>	<p>Online safety and awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) Rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online • (12) How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online • (13) That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (e.g. to enable targeted advertising) • (15) That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk <p>Wellbeing online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) About the benefits of limiting time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic
<p>Lesson 2</p> <p>To learn about the challenges AI presents to people’s rights and experiences online.</p>		
<p>Lesson 3</p> <p>To learn how generative AI can spread mis- and disinformation online.</p>		

<p>Lesson 4</p> <p>To learn how AI chatbots can affect our wellbeing and relationships.</p>	<p>Online harms</p> <p>4. how generative AI works and is used; the ethical considerations related to generative AI, including regarding people’s rights and the environment; about the impact and possible harms of generative AI tools, such as chatbots, on wellbeing, relationships and advice seeking</p> <p>Key stage 4</p> <p>Online life</p> <p>11. how to critically assess and manage their online habits and when online activity can have both positive and negative impacts on their own and others’ wellbeing</p> <p>13. strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in online content, including how to analyse and fact check content produced by generative AI</p> <p>15. how mis- and disinformation are spread online, including conspiracy theories; how to manage emotional responses to these and evaluate content, narratives and interactions online</p> <p>16. ways in which AI chatbots are designed to mimic human interaction and companionship; the potential risks and consequences of frequently engaging with AI chatbots;</p>	<p>devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others’ mental and physical wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (5) How advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online, understanding the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation online, including conspiracy theories <p>Mental wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) That happiness is linked to being connected to others. Pupils should be supported to understand what makes them feel happy and what makes them feel unhappy, while recognising that loneliness can be for most people an inevitable part of life at times and is not something of which to be ashamed
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	<p>strategies for critically assessing the risks of new types of technology</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>13. how mental health and wellbeing can be affected positively and negatively by relationships; skills to discuss feelings with others; ways to safely manage feelings of loneliness</p> <p>Careers education: aspirations, learning and work</p> <p>14. the nature of the labour market, including the impact of AI and other influences; local, national and international employment opportunities</p>	
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