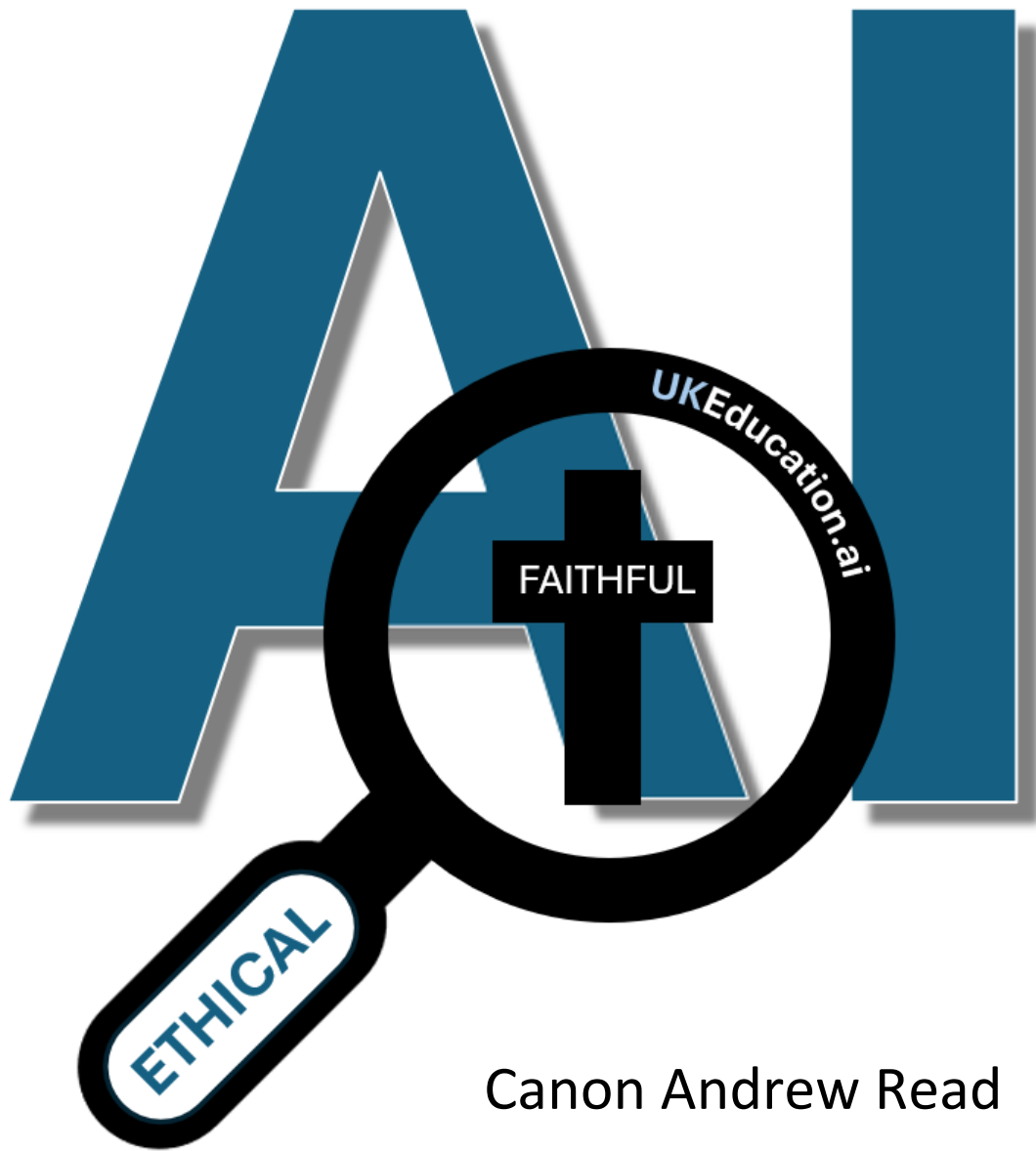


ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE

Using AI in Church Schools, Academies and Multi-Academy Trusts.



Canon Andrew Read

“Grounding the use of artificial intelligence in Christian vision, values, principles and commitments.”

Access linked resources



<https://ukeducation.ai>

Forward

This book seeks to help those who feel simultaneously excited by the powerful possibilities of AI and worried by the potential risks and ethical considerations. It explores how existing Christian values, principles, and beliefs might help us navigate and inform our personal, professional, and governance behaviours when implementing AI in a faithful manner.

Of course, AI is a broad, complex and fast-moving field, and no resource can provide all the answers. To help address this, additional resources linked to each section of this book are available at [UK Education.ai](https://www.ukeducation.ai).

In 1993, as a fresh-faced teacher, I wrote a children's book that - for a short time and to my surprise - became a sector bestseller covered by local and national media. It attempted to introduce young minds to the power and possibilities of computer programming within the aspirational story arc of human exploration—this at a time of an infant internet, very limited mobile devices, and 'state-of-the-art' fax machines—a time just like now of heightened worry about the upsides and downsides of powerful technology.

Some three decades later (and much to my humble delight), Dr Martin Eve - lauded Professor of Literature, Technology and Publishing at Birkbeck, UCL – gracefully [cited](#)* the book as one of his formative inspirations (as a young child), for his passage into a career in computational technology and literary studies.

Martin's kind attribution set me thinking: In many ways, despite coming so far in terms of the power and possibilities of personally enabling technology, the same ethical anxieties persist - not least in the sphere of protecting childhood whilst also inspiring future adults.

Since I wrote that book, I myself have been on a journey of discovery through school, academy trust, and diocesan leadership, increasingly finding that the terms of reference sought for the ethical use of such powerful new tools can be found in the existing inter-generational Christ-centred belief structure upon which our church schools were founded.

As a critical friend for using and developing the use of technology in personal and professional life, I have replicated those terms of reference here in this book to try to make sense of AI now. Whether of Christian faith or not, I hope you find them useful too.

And finally, as befitting a book on AI, I set myself the challenge of creating a resource with the help of AI itself. Whilst the ideas and structural design of this book and its resources are entirely human, I intentionally used AI to refine, reformat and improve the quality of the content. Whether AI succeeded in helping, I will let others be the judge – but I can at least blame it for any sections that do not meet your expectations!

With best wishes for your wise and brave use of AI,



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* Martin Paul Eve, "[From Mars and Back to Close Reading with Computers](#)", <https://eve.gd>, June 11, 2019

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STARTING POINT

We all know that artificial Intelligence is already shaping our personal and professional lives. The speed of change is rapid, unstoppable and powerful. As a result, AI can feel overwhelming, unsettling, and morally ambiguous. That's because it is all these things and more - we are right to sense both opportunity and risk, promise and peril, good and bad. AI was created by us, and is reflective of us.

How to Use the Book and Resources

Being fully aware of how to use AI in a manner that protects and nurtures the positives of being fully human (foibles and strengths!) - requires good AI literacy and the capacity to put such understanding to practical use, not least in terms of ethical deployment and monitoring.

For this reason, this book and its connected digital resource is not a directory of different AI products, case studies and use. It covers the step *before* letting such technology loose: Just as you would never allow new staff to work with your children without safer recruitment processes and a framework for evaluating their suitability, the same is true of the use of powerful AI.

This book covers the creation of an ethical *AI Vision* (Step 1), how to issue some key *AI Assurances* and what the main *ethical principles* of responsible use might be (Step 2), and how to implement a professional model of ethical use (Step3). For those short of time simply read this summary book and use the 3-step process in conjunction with the downloadable templates at ukeducation.ai. For those looking for a selective deeper dive into one or more of the aspects covered, follow the web links shown in the blue boxes that follow every section.

Finding an Ethical Starting Point – what you already know

Just like other important moments in life, AI begins with a Christian conversation and a faith-minded implementation process. This starts not with the technology, but with revisiting who we are, what we are trying to be, and how our existing Foundational principles can serve as the terms of reference to get the best out of the opportunity. Church schools, academies and trusts are good at this – it's in their foundational DNA and forms a core part of how we are judged in a SIAMS inspection.

Church Schools are not only educational institutions but also anchors in their wider communities; they are families of formation for those of all faiths and none, underpinned by a belief system grounded in transferable values, standards, and our obligations to each other. They attempt to teach children not only how to think but also how to live life in all its fullness now and in the future: they shape character, identity, relationships, and moral imagination, and attribute meaning through Christian belief. For some, this may become personal Faith; for others, a more secular but still powerful values-led life reference.

Unsurprisingly then, deploying AI within this precious context requires careful thought. The toolkit to do so successfully already exists within the institution's belief and values structure. The challenge, as ever, is remembering this and learning how to apply it within this new context: AI is not a neutral tool, and use must be determined through the foundational lens of who we are and what we are trying to achieve. In practical terms, this means Christian love, vision, safeguarding, justice, human dignity and a yearning to make the world a better place.

Fortunately, the Christian tradition offers a stable, time-tested moral framework for navigating change – even technological. As a contextual example and starting point, it reminds us that every person is made in the image of God, not in the image of an algorithm or language model. It teaches us that wisdom is more than facts, that truth is more than prediction, and that to flourish is more than being more efficient. It calls us to protect the vulnerable, challenge unfairness, and steward creation with humility and

courage. Transferable intentions that apply to multiple contexts, with AI perhaps just the latest (albeit very powerful) one.

To this end, then, AI does not replace Christian formation, but it can challenge us to consider the questions our pupils and we ourselves ask about identity, truth, justice, and what it means to be human. AI should not replace teachers (but it could improve teaching), or pastoral care - but it could be used to spot risks, such as non-compliant social media. A serious opportunity then.

All of which, of course, means that we must try and arm ourselves with the confidence to lead with wisdom, courage, clarity and care: To embrace AI without losing our existing distinctly Christian purpose - to use AI as a useful servant to this, and never the saviour. Such a Faithful approach to AI is possible, and, as said, can most usefully begin in the non-technological context of what it means to be 'us' – as a Christian-based community full of discerning individuals.

The link between self-identity and AI use can be shaped with some strong *starting* principles:

1. Christian vision must and *can* shape our AI vision in a powerfully complementary manner.

Dignity, justice, wisdom, truth, and stewardship are powerful guides for all uses of AI.

2. AI must serve us, not replace us.

Teaching, pastoral care, and leadership are relational, moral, and spiritual. AI can support, but never substitute for, human discernment in these areas.

3. Safeguarding our neighbours is non-negotiable.

AI introduces new risks. Most AI incidents can be thought of as safeguarding incidents, with commonly shared thresholds for setting expectations, monitoring, proactive response, and intentional follow-up.

4. To serve others well, we first need to develop ourselves

AI literacy, safe use, bias awareness, and pastoral boundaries must be part of the professional toolkit, including annual safeguarding training.

5. We all need formation, not just skills.

Discernment, integrity, truth-testing, and ethical awareness are essential transferable attributes for adults and children.

6. Stewardship must be active.

Those involved in any form of governance must ask about opportunities, risk, safety, data protection, bias, and impact.

7. Our use of AI must be transparent.

Staff must disclose AI use. Pupils must declare AI assistance in work – as we have done in this book.

8. Committing to Data Protection means valuing the individual.

No personal data in unapproved tools. Data Protection Impact Assessments for high-risk tools.

9. Our response to AI must be grounded in our existing professional standards.

We must be systematic, responsible and review regularly. Tools and risks evolve.

10. AI can support flourishing — when used wisely.

The Three Step Model: From Theory into Practice

It is doubtful that any human invention hasn't been used for good *and* bad. Sometimes the negative impact is consciously and deliberately intended; at other times, unintentional – a consequence of innocent or reckless behaviour. Our collective responsibility is to seek to minimise or eradicate the negative risks and maximise the potential benefits. This requires us to be – at all times – *intentional* in our use.

Using the above ten starting principles, the remaining chapters of this book and the linked web-based resource explore how we might exercise such wisdom and intentionality in our use of AI in a responsible Christian manner. It moves from the creation of an AI vision to the establishment of some more detailed AI-specific assurances and principles of use and their incorporation into a practical model for application. It does this by establishing a three-step process reflective of three sequential areas of work:

At a **whole institution** level (See ukeducation.ai/threestepmodel):

STEP 1: SET STRONG FOUNDATIONS

- Create an ethical **AI Vision**
- Agree and publish **AI Assurances**

(Key principles and practical actions are highlighted in every section of this book, and a downloadable template for *AI Vision* and *AI Assurance* is available on the support website.)

STEP 2: AGREE ON PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL AI USE

- Establish consequential and universally applicable **Principles of Use** that serve the *AI Vision* and *AI Assurances*.
- Write and publish a staff **Acceptable AI Use Policy** and pupil/student **AI Charters**.

(Key principles and practical actions are highlighted in every section of this book, and a downloadable template *AI Use Policy* and *AI Charters* are available on the support website.)

STEP 3: DEPLOY AN IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

- Use the vision and assurance-aligned *Principles of Use* and *Acceptable AI Use Policy* and *pupil/student Charters* to deploy a whole-school, academy or trust **Ethical AI Framework**.
- Use the *Ethical AI Framework* to deploy a staff **Professional Implementation and Monitoring Model** (PIMM).
- Establish AI oversight **Assurance Questions** for use by governors and trustees

(Key principles and practical actions are highlighted in this book, template *Ethical Framework*, *PIMM* and *Governance Assurances* are downloadable from the website.)

Don't become overwhelmed! This book and the accompanying website highlight a demanding range of ethical considerations – that's the nature of AI. The *Three Steps* and the downloadable examples turn this complexity into a manageable set of practical actions that can be co-adapted and applied *to your own beliefs, values, principles and risk thresholds*.

STEP 1: SET STRONG FOUNDATIONS

1. Set Your Own Ethical Standards: Write an AI Vision

AI is now woven into the daily life of schools through lesson-planning tools, automated marking suggestions, predictive analytics, filtering systems, and pupil-facing chatbots. Because these systems shape decisions, influence behaviour, and mediate information, they carry ethical weight. For church schools, this weight is even greater because technology directly interacts with the school's Christian vision, safeguarding responsibilities, and commitment to human dignity.

AI ethics matters because AI affects **formation, safeguarding, justice, accountability, and the school's Christian identity**. It influences who pupils become, how staff work, and how leaders make decisions. Without ethical reflection, AI can subtly shift a school's culture toward efficiency and automation rather than wisdom, compassion, and relational presence.

Church schools must therefore ensure that the use of AI is intentional, values-led, and rooted in a theological understanding of the dignity of the human person.

Key Principle: *Ethical use of AI is not a technical preference; it is a moral responsibility requiring the creation and communication of an intentional vision.*

Practical Action: *Create a whole institution & informed AI Vision statement.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/ethics, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

2. Make an Ethical Commitment: Deploy AI Assurances.

To be a church school or trust means drawing on our Christian beliefs and values to deploy AI ethically, in ways that reflect our *AI Vision*. To do this, we can create a set of underpinning, theologically driven principles and core reflections that act as touchstones for our implementation journey. This results in the creation of an *AI Assurance* statement and the consideration of institution-level AI principles of use for discussion and discernment by leaders and governors:

AI Assurances: Published commitments regarding AI use that serve to reassure, protect and nurture.

AI Principles: Formed from an assessment of potential opportunities and risks, guiding the specification of an AI implementation model.

Key Principle: *Such principles and core reflections can be developed into AI-specific terms of reference that can be adapted and used to frame an institutional-wide approach.*

Practical Action: *Create and publish a statement of AI Assurances that specify the core commitments for institution-wide AI use and provides terms of reference for its monitoring and evaluation.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/principles, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

3. Know what AI is (and Is Not): AI Literacy

AI can analyse complex data, generate text, images, explanations, translations, and feedback. It can support accessibility, reduce workload, and personalise learning. However, AI is not conscious, relational, moral, or autonomously wise. It can categorise context but not empathise with it, accept accountability, or exercise pastoral judgement.

This makes AI a powerful assistant but a formulaic and dehumanised decision-maker. It must never replace teachers, leaders, chaplains, or pastoral staff. It must never simulate spiritual authority or relational care. AI can support preparation and delivery, but it cannot replace presence.

AI can help learners mimic understanding by formulating ideas and presenting them in clear language, bypassing the necessary cognitive processes that form an authentic level of personal knowledge, skills or understanding in that area,

Key Principle: *Understanding what AI is—and what it is not, though it sometimes pretends to be—is essential for safe, ethical, and theologically grounded use. It can never replace human presence.*

Practical Action: *Make sure staff have access to training that sensitises them to these limitations and characteristics, using discussion and case studies.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/definition, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

4. Know What We Are Nurturing: Childhood

Childhood is a unique, irreplaceable stage of life defined by growth, vulnerability, curiosity, spirituality, and emerging independence.

In an AI-shaped world, protecting childhood means safeguarding not only traditional features—safety, love, play, learning, identity, fairness, and wonder—but also ensuring that AI is used ethically, safely, and in ways that enhance rather than erode children’s development.

Key Principle: *The challenge is not to shield children from AI entirely, but to ensure it serves their best interests and preserves the essence of childhood.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that all instances of AI deployment are specialist-led, using a professional implementation model, supported by an evaluative framework accompanied by appropriate training.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/childhood, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

STEP 2: AGREE ON ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF USE

Wisdom, Safeguarding, Data & Privacy...

1. Protect Wisdom, Truth and Human Dignity: AI replicates the best and the worst

A Christian ethical approach to AI begins with the belief that every person is made in the image of God. AI must never reduce pupils to data points or replace relational work. Wisdom requires discernment; truthfulness requires transparency; and dignity requires boundaries.

Key Principle: *AI must serve people, protect the vulnerable, and uphold the school's Christian vision.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that the AI Vision, AI Assurances and later consequential implementation models place a strong emphasis on dignity and respect.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/wisdom, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

2. Understand New Safeguarding Risks: AI as an Online Risk

AI introduces new safeguarding risks: harmful content, deepfakes, grooming, misinformation, personalised emotional manipulation, and data misuse. These risks must be embedded in safeguarding systems, not treated as technical issues.

Key Principle: *AI incidents are safeguarding incidents.*

Practical Action: *Staff must be trained, DSLs must lead, and pupils must be protected: Integrate AI into all existing safeguarding policies, processes, practices and training. Read KCSIE and all gov. AI guidance.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/safeguarding, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

3. Filter and Monitor Well: What “Appropriate” Means

Filtering prevents access to harmful content; monitoring detects concerning behaviour. AI complicates both because harmful content can now be generated internally.

Key Principle: *Leaders must ensure systems are safe, proportionate, transparent, and reviewed annually. DSLs must understand how alerts work. Over-blocking harms learning; under-blocking harms pupils.*

Practical Action: *Review thresholds, test robustness, and publish human as well as technical expectations.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/filtering, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

4. Protect Children's Privacy: by design (use the Children's Code)

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) *Children's Code* requires high privacy by default, transparency, minimisation, and avoidance of manipulative design. AI tools must be configured with child safety at their core. Suppliers must meet Department for Education (DfE) product safety expectations.

Key Principle: *AI must protect children's rights, not exploit them.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that all AI used at minimum meets the ICO and DfE requirements.*

Explore this further at [ukeducation.ai/privacy](https://www.ukeducation.ai/privacy), which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

5. Protect Data Rigorously: Lawful, Fair, Transparent AI Use

AI raises complex GDPR challenges. Schools must ensure lawful processing, fairness, transparency, minimisation, and accountability. Personal data must not be entered into unapproved AI tools. A *Data Protection Impact Assessment* (DPIA) is a structured risk assessment process used by organizations to identify and minimize the data privacy risks of any project, system, or policy. It ensures that data protection is designed into a project from the very beginning, which is essential for high-risk tools.

Key Principle: *Privacy is a matter of dignity and trust.*

Practical Action: *Ensure AI is an integral part of GDPR policy and compliance procedures.*

Explore this further at [ukeducation.ai/data](https://www.ukeducation.ai/data), which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

6. Data Risk Assessment: Using A Risk Register

AI introduces safeguarding, privacy, bias, and operational risks. Risk registers help leaders assess these risks before adoption. Mitigations must be clear, realistic, and documented. High-risk tools require heightened scrutiny.

A *Data Protection Impact Assessment* (DPIA) is required whenever processing personal data is likely to result in a high risk to individuals. AI tools frequently fall into this category because they may analyse, store, or generate inferences about personal information. A DPIA Trigger Checklist helps leaders decide when a DPIA is necessary and ensures compliance with UK GDPR. In a church school, the checklist also supports ethical reflection on dignity, fairness, and stewardship.

Key Principle: *Effective risk assessment transforms caution into wisdom.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI is a named element within any oversight strategic risk register, and has its own discrete AI risk register.*

Explore this further at [ukeducation.ai/risk](https://www.ukeducation.ai/risk), which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

Teaching, Curriculum, Inclusion, Learning, Assessment, Truth Skills, Pastoral Care...

7. Plan Staff Use: Teaching, Planning, Admin and Professional Judgement

AI can act as a virtual tutor, assistant, or practice partner — but never as a teacher in the full relational, moral, and spiritual sense. Teaching is incarnational, embodied, and accountable. AI can support learning, but it must never replace presence. AI can reduce workload — but it must never replace human time invested in wise professional judgement.

Staff must verify outputs, protect data, and maintain self-driven standards. AI is a tool, not a replacement for humans, a shortcut to maintaining standards, or a line manager.

Key Principle: *Professional identity is integral to a sense of vocation and must not be artificially replaced.*

Practical Action: *Assess where AI needs to feature in habitual training (such as safeguarding) and ensure that all AI training and development goes beyond technical skills to address the ethical dimension, as well as the institution's assurances and implementation models.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/vocation, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

8. Integrate into the Curriculum: cross-subject AI literacy

AI literacy must encompass critical evaluation, ethical awareness, safe practice, and theological reflection. Pupils must learn to question AI, recognise bias, and seek the truth.

Key Principle: *Wise discernment is the heart of a Christian digital curriculum.*

Practical Action: *Evaluate AI's place in all curriculum plans, linking it to your AI assurance statement (or equivalent), ethical use implementation approaches, and any learner/pupil/student charter.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/curriculum, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

9. Focus on Inclusion and SEND: Opportunities and risks

AI can support accessibility — but it can also introduce new vulnerabilities. Pupils with SEND may be more trusting of AI or more vulnerable to harm. AI must enhance inclusion, not replace human support.

Key Principle: *Inclusion is a theological commitment, not a technical feature.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI is a named part of your policies and statements related to all provision for SEND.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/inclusion, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

10. Control Bias, Discrimination and Justice: Equity vs equality

AI reflects human fallibility through its training data. It can disadvantage groups, reinforce stereotypes, or misinterpret language. Church schools must test tools, mitigate bias, and teach all staff and pupils to recognise injustice. AI seeks to please and can be complicit in feeding user-led confirmation bias.

Key Principle: *Addressing bias is an act of courageous advocacy.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI is a named part of your policies and statements related to the delivery of the Equalities Act, and include AI in any equality and inclusion training.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/fairness, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

11. Synthetic Learning: The risks of simulated progression

AI can support learning, but it can also undermine the learning process. In particular, the capacity of generative AI to propose ideas and articulate them clearly and proficiently provides a powerful but potentially corrupting substitute for thinking. By enabling learners to temporarily bypass important personal and cognitive stepping-stones, it fosters false knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Such vicarious or disconnected personal progression can be damaging if left unaddressed, leaving gaps in an individual's cognitive and physical learning journey. Shortcuts can be attractive to learners, but in a carefully sequenced curriculum, they disrupt or even render the learning experience neutral.

Key Principle: *A learner's personal and intellectual development journey cannot be outsourced; AI must not be allowed to falsely simulate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that any teaching and learning activity is covered by your institutional policy on acceptable AI use at a pedagogic - not just technical - level, particularly ensuring that clear expectations and boundaries govern the use of tools that undertake artificial thinking for a learner.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/learning, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

12. Assessment Reliability: Helping vs cheating

AI can undermine honesty and the validity of assessments. Schools must set clear boundaries, design AI-resilient assessments, and teach pupils why integrity matters. Defining what constitutes effective and appropriate use of AI across both summative and formative assessments is critical.

Key Principle: *Truthfulness is a Christian virtue.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that any assessment activity is covered by your institutional policy on AI, and that clear expectations and boundaries are set on its use, including employing tools to screen for AI use where relevant. Use your AI assurance statement and ethical framework to benchmark suitability.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/assessment, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

13. Address Specialist Risks: Deepfakes, misinformation and online harms

Deepfakes threaten truth, dignity, and trust. Pupils must learn to recognise manipulation. Schools must respond swiftly, pastorally, and transparently.

Key Principle: *Truthfulness is a non-negotiable spiritual and moral commitment.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI is a core element of the curriculum, providing adults and learners with the knowledge, skills and understanding to critically evaluate and recognise AI-generated and/or fake content.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/accuracy, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

14. Nurture Pastoral Care: Boundaries and Relational Integrity

AI must never be used for pastoral guidance, safeguarding notes, or emotional support. Pastoral care is relational, embodied, and accountable. AI cannot replace presence, empathy, or spiritual discernment.

Key Principle: *Pastoral care must remain human.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI assurances and your ethical framework impose strict controls and boundaries on the use of artificial sources of pastoral support.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/pastoral, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

Governance, Communication, Stakeholder Engagement and Record Keeping...

15. Have Strong Stewardship: Exercise an Assurance Governance approach

Governors must ensure that AI use is aligned with the institution's vision and is safe, fair, and well-governed. They must ask about safeguarding, data protection, bias, procurement, and impact. They do not need technical expertise — only wisdom, curiosity, and courage.

Key Principle: *Strong stewardship is a core Christian principle exercised through governance that protects dignity and ensures accountability.*

Practical Action: *Insist that governors and/or trustees co-create the AI Vision, and approve the AI assurance statement and ethical framework. Make AI awareness a core part of governor/trustee development and training, particularly those with nominated roles such as safeguarding and SEND, etc.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/stewardship, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

16. Deploy a Values-Driven AI Acceptable Use Policy: Distinctive, clear & supportive

An AI policy must be theological, ethical, safeguarding-led, and operationally clear. It must set boundaries, define responsibilities, and ensure transparency.

Key Principle: *Policy turns values into practice. Authentic beliefs have a lived impact.*

Practical Action: *Create an AI policy that aligns with your AI Assurance statements and ethical framework, and review it annually.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/policy, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

17. Engage Learners in the Ethical Commitments: Change culture

A pupil/student charter can promote safety, honesty, respect, privacy, discernment, and Christian values. It helps learners take equal ownership of their role as wise, responsible digital citizens.

Key Principle: *Charters shape culture and a sense of belonging.*

Practical Action: *Co-create an AI Learner/pupil/student Charter aligned with your AI Assurance statements and ethical framework. Use it to inform a learner-voice approach to monitoring risks, concerns and user experiences.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/charters, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

18. Work with Stakeholders: Parents, carers and the wider community

Parents and carers need clarity, support, and partnership. Schools must educate families about AI risks, boundaries, and opportunities. Community resilience grows through shared understanding.

Key Principle: *Partnership strengthens flourishing.*

Practical Action: *Provide training and awareness-raising sessions for parents and carers, using a parent and student agreement on the appropriate use of AI, aligned with your AI Assurance statements and ethical framework.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/stakeholders, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

19. Communicate Well: Trust, Tone and Transparency

AI can enhance clarity and accessibility — but it can also misjudge tone or undermine authenticity. Staff must disclose AI use, verify accuracy, and avoid using AI for pastoral or disciplinary messages.

Key Principle: *Communication must remain relational and truthful.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI policy and staff handbooks include clear guidance on the appropriate use of AI to formulate, edit or control internal and external communications.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/communication, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

20. Record AI Incidents: Responding, recording, learning

AI incidents must be logged, investigated, and used for learning. They require safeguarding responses, root-cause analysis, and transparent communication. This requires a safe-space culture of professional improvement, not an anxious subservience to compliance driven by fear. Mistakes happen when change is rapid; the hope is to minimise their impact and recurrence.

Key Principle: *Incidents may have implications, but they are also learning opportunities. Christian integrity requires us to be honest with ourselves when things go wrong.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI is fully integrated into your safeguarding, prevention, and reporting processes.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/incidents, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

Training, KCSIE, Inspection, Procurement, Cybersecurity...

21. Prioritise Staff Training: a KCSIE-linked approach

Training must cover safeguarding, safe use, curriculum integration, professional judgement, pastoral boundaries, and theological reflection. AI literacy is essential for all staff, which includes how to use evaluative models to assess impact and undertake responsible experimentation.

Key Principle: *Training builds confidence and consistency. We owe that to ourselves and others.*

Practical Action: *Introduce initial AI induction training, followed by a cycle of annual update training as a stand-alone and/or integrated component of all staff training - as would be the case for safeguarding.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/training, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

22. Collate Safeguarding Evidence (KCSIE): A litmus test of care

AI risks must be embedded within safeguarding systems. Evidence includes training, incident logs, filtering reviews, DSL oversight, and pupil education.

Key Principle: **Safeguarding is the foundation of ethical AI.**

Practical Action: *Ensure that AI is an integral component of all safeguarding policies, processes and culture.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/kcsie, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

23. Consider Ofsted: Impact-focused scrutiny

Ofsted focuses on impact, not innovation. Inspectors ask how AI impacts learning, safety, assessment, and inclusion – they are not prescriptive on use or platform. Leaders must demonstrate informed, responsible decisions. Integrate AI into provision by adopting the same ‘thinking approach’ used across all areas of school, academy, or trust life.

Key Principle: *AI must support high-quality learning, not define it. Ofsted evaluates outputs, not inputs.*

Practical Action: *Use the standard Ofsted toolkit and judgement statements to assess how and where AI might be considered a constituent part of Ofsted’s focus, with particular attention to safeguarding, assessment and its positive contribution, or otherwise, to learner outcomes.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/ofsted, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

24. Use for SIAMS Evidence: Vision-led AI

AI use can strongly evidence a living Christian vision — when it is intentional, ethical, and relational. SIAMS looks for theological language, dignity, justice, and formation.

Key Principle: *How AI is implemented and used is an important exemplar of this vision in action.*

Practical Action: *Use the SIAMS IQs as the basis to assess how and where AI might be considered a constituent part of distinctly Christian provision, with particular attention to setting the overall vision, safeguarding, and its positive contribution, or otherwise, to achievement in all areas.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/siams, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

25. Procure Carefully: Enacting Due Diligence

AI procurement must be purpose-led, risk-based, and ethically grounded. DSLs and DPOs must be engaged. Tools must be tested, documented, and reviewed. Suppliers must demonstrate transparency and ensure safety.

Key Principle: *Procurement is a moral task, not a technical one.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that all AI procurement follows statutory requirements (see gov. , incorporating AI into any current procurement and commissioning policies and procedures.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/procurement, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

26. Deploy Tight Cybersecurity: Protect systems and identities

Cybersecurity is about safeguarding. Schools must protect data, train staff, assess suppliers, and maintain system integrity. Stewardship requires vigilance.

Key Principle: *Digital safety protects the vulnerable, all of whom are our neighbours.*

Practical Action: *Ensure that habitual training and development is undertaken in the safe use of AI, and the potential for AI to be used to mislead, corrupt and appropriate.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/cybersecurity, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

27. Consider Environmental Sustainability: Minimise impact where able

Environmental sustainability calls for asking and obtaining the environmental profile of every product and service used. All credible and responsible AI providers describe their approach to minimising their footprint – hopefully involving Carbon offset processes, renewable sources of energy, responsible sourcing, use and recycling of rare minerals etc.

Key Principle: *Prioritising AI products and services which seek to minimise if not negate their environmental impact, supporting long-term wellbeing for people and the planet.*

Practical Action: *Factor in the use of AI to any existing sustainability policy, considering biospheric consequences when scoping potential AI and data projects. (Biospheric consequences are the effects a project can have on our planet's ecosystems, its climate and the entire biosphere).*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/environment, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

STEP 3: INITIATE IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

1. Use Platform-Independent AI Language: Use three 'I's, not one.

The generic term 'Artificial Intelligence' encompasses a very wide range of technologies, manifest as products, services and tools competing for market space regardless of their funding model. Although AI can be understood through many lenses, including technical, operational, and platform-linked — for those trying to make practical decisions, a simpler and more strategic categorisation based on potential use is to group AI functionality into three broad types:

Those that:

- Artificially **Inform**
- Artificially **Invent**
- Artificially **Initiate** (and control).

Remember that some do one of these things, and some do an interacting combination of all three.

Key Principle: *This 'three I' approach is helpful because it is platform-independent, describing not only what AI tools do but also how they shape and interact with human decision-making, behaviours, and professional judgement. It categorises by potential value rather than by IT labels.*

Practical Action: *Adopt a mixed-economy approach to innovation, selecting and valuing technology on the basis of what it contributes to the contextual needs of the institution and learners, not for how it is marketed, sold or provided as a default consequence of the use of a specific platform.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/managingai, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

2. Adopt a Professional Implementation & Monitoring Model: Use the three 'R's

Before investing in any AI, schools and trusts must first understand *why* they need it and *where* it will add value. Artificial intelligence can transform aspects of how schools and trusts operate, but successful adoption depends on needs-led, thoughtful planning.

The most effective approach is cyclical — moving through professionally familiar *Research, Resource, and Review* phases (i.e. subject the three 'Is' to the three 'Rs!'). This will ensure innovation is evidence-based, sustainable, and aligned with educational values. This must be led by senior leaders, subject leaders and individual staff, all strategically overseen by trustees or governors.

Key Principle: *By using a systematic approach, cross-mapped self-review questions can be used that align with a whole-school or trust-wide vision and approach.*

Practical Action: *Use the downloadable PIM template from ukeducation.ai, adapt it or use it as a starting point to devise your own.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/3Rmodel, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

3. Use SIAMS and KCSIE as an Evaluative Framework: The ‘Why’ Behind the ‘How’

SIAMS asks how a school’s Christian vision shapes decisions, relationships, and culture. KCSIE sets statutory expectations for safeguarding, training, reporting, and leadership oversight. Together, they form a useful moral and legal starting point for responsible AI use. Don’t reinvent the wheel – use these transferable frameworks to adopt an AI-contextualised approach.

SIAMS provides the theological why: dignity, justice, wisdom, and flourishing. KCSIE provides the safeguarding must: safety, training, filtering, monitoring, and reporting.

Key Principle: *AI use must be both vision-led and statutory-safe, and existing context-free frameworks can provide for this.*

Practical Action: *Integrate AI considerations into your SIAMS Self Evaluation (particularly IQ1) and any safeguarding policies or self-assessment monitoring checklists.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/siamsandkcsie, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

4. Adopt a Maturity Model for AI Use: Wisdom not scale

Schools progress from cautious awareness to reflective leadership. Maturity is not about scale but about wisdom, safety, and alignment with the Christian vision.

Key Principle: *Maturity is a measure of quality, not the speed of adoption.*

Practical Action: *Create a maturity statement for different future milestones based on an implementation timeline.*

Explore this further at ukeducation.ai/maturitymodel, which includes *Monitoring Questions* we might ask ourselves and others when reviewing implementation effectiveness.

STRONG STEWARDSHIP: ASSURANCE GOVERNANCE

Strong ‘Stewardship’ is delivered through good governance practice; in this case, an ‘Assurance Governance’ approach is recommended.

Assurance Governance (first developed in 2011 by Andrew Read and fully revised & updated every year since – see governor.org.uk or academytrustee.org.uk), is a simple but powerful approach to equipping governors and trustees with the confidence and ability to offer supportive challenge to executive leaders through effective questioning.

Every governor or trustee needs to be able to give confident consideration to all aspects of school life in a way that reflects the school’s embedded Christian character, serving those of all faiths and none, and, in this case, that includes the implementation of a powerful technology such as AI.

For all governors or trustees to collectively apply, questions can be identified that provide a concise way to test whether AI use remains vision-led, safe, ethical and effective. Two complementary sets can be used: A ‘short’ set of ten questions for regular board use and a more detailed set for a dedicated named governor/ trustees or working group with AI oversight.

Both the short questions and the longer, more detailed questions draw on the vision, assurances and principles set out in this book (and website): Both provide supportive challenge, test alignment with the school’s Christian vision, and monitor whether AI is being used safely, ethically and effectively.

Top 10 questions for governing board meetings

For routine governing board discussion, the following ten questions provide a concise way to test whether AI use remains vision-led, safe, ethical and effective.

1. How is our use of AI advancing our Christian vision and strengthening human dignity, rather than simply improving efficiency?
2. What are our current priorities for AI use, and where have we decided not to use it?
3. How are AI-related safeguarding risks being identified, monitored and acted upon?
4. What assurance do we have that personal data is protected and that high-risk AI tools are subject to proper review?
5. How do we know AI is supporting, rather than replacing, professional judgement, pastoral care and authentic pupil learning?
6. What are pupils being taught about AI literacy, truth-testing, honesty and safe use?
7. What staff training has taken place, and how are leaders checking that guidance is understood and applied consistently?
8. What evidence do we have that AI is improving outcomes, inclusion or workload without creating new harms or dependencies?
9. How are AI incidents, concerns or near misses recorded, reviewed and learned from?
10. What reports or assurance information should governors receive next so that we can govern this area well?

Detailed Questions Suitable for a 'named' governor or responsible sub-committee.

It is also good practice to appoint a named governor with oversight for AI or to establish a small working group when initially implementing it. These questions can be helpful to that individual or group:

1. Vision, values and strategic leadership

- How does our approach to AI reflect and strengthen our Christian vision, values and distinctive character?
- What have we said clearly about why we are using AI, and what outcomes we do and do not want from it?
- How have governors or trustees contributed to shaping and approving the school's AI vision and assurances?
- How do leaders know that AI is serving people rather than replacing human judgement, care or responsibility?
- Where are we choosing not to use AI, and why?

2. Safeguarding, privacy and risk

- How have we identified AI-related safeguarding risks such as harmful content, deepfakes, grooming, misinformation and emotional manipulation?
- How are AI risks embedded within existing safeguarding systems, reporting routes and staff training?
- What assurances do we have that pupils' personal data is not being entered into unapproved AI tools?
- Which AI tools require a Data Protection Impact Assessment, and how is governor oversight of this recorded?
- How are AI-related risks reflected in the school or trust risk register, and what mitigating actions are in place?
- How do we know our filtering and monitoring arrangements remain effective in an AI-shaped online environment?

3. Teaching, curriculum and pupil development

- How is AI being used to support teaching and learning without weakening professional judgement or authentic pupil thinking?
- What are we doing to teach pupils AI literacy, truth-testing, discernment and safe use across the curriculum?
- How do we know pupils understand when AI use is appropriate, inappropriate, or dishonest?
- How are we adapting assessment practice so that it remains valid, fair and trustworthy?
- How are we ensuring AI supports inclusion and SEND provision without increasing vulnerability or dependence?
- What evidence do we have that AI is contributing positively to pupil flourishing, rather than just efficiency or output?

4. Staff practice, training and policy

- What training have staff and leaders received on safe, ethical and effective AI use?
- How do we ensure staff understand the limits of AI, including bias, inaccuracy and the need to verify outputs?
- Do our policies give clear guidance on acceptable AI use for staff, pupils and families?
- How do we expect staff to disclose or acknowledge their use of AI where appropriate?
- How are pastoral boundaries protected so that AI does not take the place of human care, spiritual discernment or safeguarding responsibility?
- How do leaders monitor whether policy is being applied consistently in day-to-day practice?

5. Governance, accountability and community engagement

- What reports, evidence or assurance information should governors receive regularly on AI use?
- How are AI incidents recorded, reviewed and used to improve future practice?
- How are parents, carers and the wider community being informed and involved in the school's approach to AI?
- How do we ensure procurement decisions about AI tools are ethical, transparent and appropriately scrutinised?
- How does our AI work support readiness for safeguarding scrutiny, Ofsted and SIAMS?
- What would responsible, mature AI use look like for our school in one year's time, and how will we know we are getting there?

CONCLUSION: USED FAITHFULLY, AI ENABLES GROWTH

The swift expansion of AI offers significant opportunities and serious challenges for schools. For church schools, the goal is not just to accept or dismiss AI but to pursue faithful innovation—leveraging existing wisdom that is adaptable. This approach balances courage, caution, wisdom, and hope. Faithful innovation understands that technology is part of God’s creation, shaped by human ingenuity but needing discernment to ensure it promotes human well-being rather than hindering it.

The initial theme of the conclusion emphasizes **human dignity**. AI should never replace or undermine the relational, embodied, moral, and spiritual aspects of education. The Christian belief that each person is created in the image of God offers a solid foundation amid a fast-evolving digital landscape. Ultimately, AI must assist people, not control or diminish them.

The second crucial theme is to **prioritise wisdom over novelty**. Schools must resist the temptation to adopt AI simply because it is new or appears efficient. Instead, leaders must ask essential, profound questions: Will this tool genuinely deepen understanding? Will it foster stronger relationships? Will it protect and uplift the vulnerable? Does it truly align with our Christian vision? Embracing wisdom requires patience, reflection, and humility—values that ensure we make thoughtful decisions.

The third theme is about **ethical boundaries**. Faithful innovation requires the courage to refuse uses of AI that undermine dignity, distort facts, or replace human judgment. Setting boundaries isn't a sign of fear but a demonstration of integrity and responsibility.

The fourth theme is **formation and flourishing**. AI should support the development of wise, compassionate, and reflective individuals. It needs to foster spaces for presence, prayer, creativity, and vocation. Flourishing is assessed not by efficiency but by the depth of relationships, attentiveness, and personal growth.

The fifth theme centers on **community and trust**. AI impacts pupils, staff, parents, and governors alike. Genuine innovation depends on transparency, collaboration, and mutual learning. Schools need to navigate this path collectively, helping each other with honesty and grace.

The sixth theme is **hope and courage**. While AI can seem overwhelming, Christian hope reminds us that our identity is rooted in Christ, not technology. Our true essence lies in our relationship with Him, our love for our neighbors, and our calling to care for creation responsibly. By approaching AI with courage and discernment, it can serve as a helpful tool that promotes the well-being and flourishing of both children and adults, rather than posing a threat.

In summary, faithful innovation isn't just about mastering technology; it's about staying rooted in Christ amid change. It involves using AI in ways that uphold dignity, safeguard the vulnerable, and foster community growth.

About the Author



About the Author:

Andrew has extensive experience of leading trusts, academies and trusts as a senior leader, MAT CEO, maintained trust trustee and academy trustee having taught, led, and managed in all phases from Early Years to Higher Education. He has extensive previous experience as an Ofsted inspector, an associate lecturer at Cambridge University, a specialist advisor for local and central government, a diocesan director of education, and a director in the commercial sector. He is also an active trustee for a range of national and local education children's charities, particularly those focused on improving the life chances of the most vulnerable children.

Andrew is a regular speaker at events and conferences, and has a passion for and a successful track record of taking on and turning around schools and trusts in challenging circumstances. He attributes this success to the power of strong local governance, the empowerment and valuing of committed volunteers, school and academy leaders, and wider teaching professionals, and has always been an advocate for the responsible use of powerful technology. He is also the founder and CEO of UK Education Research and Innovation Ltd.

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