International Coalition of Girls' Schools
icgs
Advancing Girls' Education Globally

eBRIEF
RESEARCH SUMMARY FOR PRINCIPALS

Issue 17 | 5 September 2025

*ICGS **eBriefs** are sent regularly to principals of member schools around the world. They deliver timely and relevant research summaries to assist with speech writing, presentations, newsletters and blogs. You are welcome to share eBriefs with your staff or use them in any way that suits you.*

The Latest Developments in AI and Education: Bringing together policy, research and practical education

Key insights from recent reports and research:

- AI chatbots are a useful tool for young people, with **69% of adolescents aged 13-17** saying they have learned something new from these tools.
- These benefits come with risks, including inaccurate or biased information, with **1 in 5 young people** directly copying what AI has told them, and **another 1 in 5** not checking outputs against any other sources.
- Policy statements, research and reports suggest that a broad approach to developing guidelines around AI use in education is required, **involving government, infrastructure and industry.**
- **Policy development must be people centred.** This includes parents, educators and students.
- Teachers' belief in the need for students to develop the skills to critically engage with AI in education is **essential to managing these challenges.**
- There is a role for **purpose-built, education-specific AI tools,** but students still require support to critically engage with AI outputs to support both their educational and personal development.

As advancements in AI continue to grow at an ever-increasing pace, educators and schools are encouraged to make the most of new technologies to benefit student learning and wellbeing while simultaneously guiding students towards responsible and critical use of generative AI technologies. Yet with the rapid changes in this field, research, guidelines and policy development have occurred at different rates, and are not always easily accessible to schools. As AI tools become more readily available, and with many more applications, students are more likely to repeatedly draw on these tools as part of their learning process. Bringing together recent reports, policy guidelines and research is a critical step to supporting educators as they guide students on this journey.

A new report released by Internet Matters in July 2025 took a deep dive into children's use of AI chatbots to better understand and safeguard their use of these technologies. Through research, surveys, focus groups and actual user testing, this showed that children's use of AI is widespread, growing, and becoming embedded in their day-to-day lives. The use of this

technology by children for learning-related tasks is rapidly increasing across many subjects, from mathematics to creative writing.

AI is a valuable tool for students who may have barriers to accessing learning support in a classroom environment, or those who do not have access to additional supports at home. Students report that when AI works well, it helps them with their homework and learning tasks. Yet it also comes with risks. AI can give incorrect, misleading and false information. And many students continue to use these tools, without verifying the given answers or information, even after recognising that AI chatbots can get things wrong. In fact, 2 in 5 children who use this technology are willing to follow the advice AI gives them, even when the advice is contradictory. Among vulnerable children, this figure increases to 50 per cent (Internet Matters, 2025). This reinforces the benefit and place of purpose-built, education-specific AI tools, but also makes attention to this challenge even more urgent.

Researchers from Canada and China have reviewed the research. By surveying 2,223 research papers published in journals officially ranked in the highest quality research tier, they identified four major categories of AI in education that have been studied or researched. These are adaptive learning and personalised tutoring, intelligent assessment and management, profiling and prediction and emergent productions in education. Other major research topics were shown to be system application and design, adoption and acceptance of AI in education, impacts of AI in education and challenges of AI in education.

But what does this practically mean for educators and schools? And how can we bridge the gap between formal research, policy makers and the teachers working on the ground with students who are increasingly accessing these technologies? This Research and Development (R&D) is crucial and informs policy direction. Yet it must also respond to the practical needs of educators. As the U.S. Department of Education has pointed out, this needs to be addressed now – in terms of both the benefits and risks this technology brings. A key report from the Department has recognised that this requires a national response, including policies specifically addressing education, rather than only focussing on local responses across individual regions and schools.

This can be achieved by placing people (parents, educators and students) at the centre of these approaches and policies, focusing on safety, ethics and effectiveness, and using AI to advance equity while promoting transparency and ensuring these tools fit educational goals. This is challenging when schools are actively looking to governments for guidelines and policies to lead the direction and practical application of AI in schools. As the U.S. Department of Education has suggested, we need to ask two questions: What is our “collective vision” for education and AI, and how will we “be ready with necessary guidelines and guardrails” so this vision can be implemented ethically, equitably and widely (Cardona et al., 2023, p. 6)?

Encouragingly, these approaches are beginning to become more visible. In the United Kingdom, research presented to Parliament has actively suggested that the government and broader industry must “shape the AI revolution rather than wait to see how it shapes us” (Department for Education, 2025b). A United Kingdom policy paper has suggested that if “used safely, effectively and with the right infrastructure in place, AI can support every child and young person, regardless of their background, to achieve at school and college and develop the knowledge and skills they need for life” (Department for Education, 2025a). These benefits are critical for students and bring

benefits that can enhance and accelerate the learning experience. Yet they must be balanced against appropriate education and management of inaccurate, inappropriate, unsafe, or biased content provided to students by generative AI.

One of the latest UK policy papers in this area suggests that safety must be a top priority in developing approaches to the use of generative AI in education. This is followed closely by the need to be aware of privacy matters, intellectual property restrictions, and developing a comprehensive understanding of the role of AI in formal assessments. It has been recognised that this requires investment at a higher level, including government and comprehensive infrastructure. This involves sustainable and secure infrastructure for AI use, training and attracting talent to build and research appropriate tools, increasing skilled graduates in the area, and encouraging diversity in the field. Initiatives such as the UK's £8.2m investment plan into teacher training and student support are key to this goal. This plan is targeted at increasing women in AI by supporting more girls to study A-level mathematics, with particular focus on supporting disadvantaged secondary school students to close barriers to opportunity – a critical opportunity for girls that also responds to this significant challenge.

Without disregarding the importance of encouraging girls to pursue their full potential in STEM and new technologies, this goes beyond numbers of students moving into the AI space or decisions on funding and policies alone. It also recognises the broader impact of technology on students, the recognition that young people generally have positive attitudes towards AI, and the extent of potential risks that can impact a range of areas from enjoyment to cognitive skill development. This is not the first time that technology has transformed how students learn. However, AI "takes the workarounds [and changes] to new heights" (Baron, 2025). This is one key reason that educators and schools have repeatedly recognised that students need to be taught how to critically engage with generative AI tools effectively.

The UK National Literary Trust (2025) suggests that with 1 in 5 young people merely copying what AI has told them and another 1 in 5 not checking outputs, "greater support may be needed to ensure this group of young people have the information and skills they need to critically evaluate AI responses". Policies and guidelines may not yet have fully established the exact path forward for educators and schools as they navigate this challenge. But there is significant recognition of the need to develop students' skills around the critical use of AI for educational tasks to support not only educational, but personal growth.

References

Baron, N. S. (2025, August 13). *AI is making reading books feel obsolete – and students have a lot to lose*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/ai-is-making-reading-books-feel-obsolete-and-students-have-a-lot-to-lose-262680.

Cardona, M. A., Rodríguez, R. J., & Ishmael, K. (2023). *Artificial intelligence and the future of teaching and learning*. Department of Education Office of Technology. https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/documents/ai-report/ai-report.pdf.

Department for Education. (2025a, August 12). *Policy paper: Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education/generative-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-education.

Department for Education. (2025b, January 13). *Independent report: AI opportunities action plan*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-opportunities-action-plan/ai-opportunities-action-plan.

Internet Matters. (2025). *Me, myself and AI: Understanding and safeguarding children's use of AI chatbots*. https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/AI-Chatbots-Report-V5-Final-Version.pdf.

McDonald, C. (2025, May 9). *Government launches £8.2m plan to encourage girls into AI*. Computer Weekly. https://www.computerweekly.com/news/366623812/Government-launches-82m-plan-to-encourage-girls-into-AI.

National Literacy Trust. (2025, February 26). *Children, young people and teachers' use of generative AI to support literacy in 2024*. https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-young-people-and-teachers-use-of-generative-ai-to-support-literacy-in-2024/.

Wang, S., Wang, F., Zhu, Z., Wang, J., Tran, T., & Du, Z. (2024). Artificial intelligence in education: A systematic literature review. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 252*(A)*, Article 124167. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2024.124167