



TEA PRACTICAL GUIDE #01 | 2026

RESPONSIBLE AI USE FOR TEACHERS

A Practical Guide to Safe, Ethical and Effective AI Use in Schools

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Practical answers to everyday teacher questions about student data, AI-generated materials, hallucinations, bias, copyright, privacy, assessment and responsible professional judgement.

Prepared by Teachers Education Academy (TEA), Estonia

Research • Resources • Training • Tools

About This Guide

Generative AI is already part of teachers' professional environment. The important question is no longer simply whether educators use AI, but whether they use it with sound pedagogical judgement, appropriate safeguards and a clear understanding of its limitations.

This TEA Practical Guide translates current European AI and education policy into everyday professional questions. It is designed primarily for teachers and school staff in primary and secondary education. It is not a substitute for national law, institutional policy, a data protection officer, legal advice or the terms of a specific AI service.

CORE PRINCIPLE

Educational purpose comes first. Use AI only when it adds genuine value, and never outsource professional responsibility, safeguarding or final judgement to an AI system.

The European context in 2026

The European Commission's updated 2026 ethical guidelines emphasise practical school scenarios, ethical decision-making, the AI Act, GDPR and responsible use of AI and data. The EC-OECD AI Literacy Framework defines AI literacy through knowledge, skills and attitudes and provides a common reference for primary and secondary education.

How to use this guide

- Start with the question that matches your situation.
- Use the checklists before sharing data or relying on an AI output.
- Apply your school's approved tools and policies.
- When in doubt about personal data, safeguarding, legal status or high-stakes decisions, escalate rather than improvise.

Responsible AI: The Teacher's Professional Lens

Responsible AI use is not a separate technical task. It sits inside ordinary professional responsibilities: protecting learners, designing valid learning, making fair decisions, checking evidence, respecting rights and explaining important choices.

Purpose

What educational problem am I trying to solve, and is AI actually useful here?

People

Who could be affected by the output, including students who may be vulnerable or under-represented?

Data

What information am I sharing, where might it go, and is sharing it necessary?

Reliability

How will I verify factual claims, sources, calculations and interpretations?

Fairness

Could the system reproduce stereotypes, unequal treatment or inaccessible assumptions?

Transparency

Do students, colleagues or families need to know that AI was used?

Human judgement

Which decisions must remain meaningfully under professional human control?

REMEMBER

Convenience is not the same as educational value. Speed is not the same as accuracy. Automation is not the same as professional judgement.

Can I Upload Student Work to an AI Tool?

SHORT ANSWER

Not automatically. First determine whether the work contains personal, sensitive or identifying information, whether the AI service is institutionally approved, and whether processing the real work is necessary.

Why it matters

Student work may contain names, handwriting, voices, images, learning difficulties, opinions, behavioural information or other data that can identify a learner. Uploading it to an external AI service can create privacy, contractual and data-processing issues.

Before you do it

- ☐ Remove names, IDs and other direct identifiers.
- ☐ Check whether indirect details could still identify the student.
- ☐ Use only school-approved AI services and accounts.
- ☐ Check your institution's privacy and data-processing rules.
- ☐ Ask whether a synthetic or anonymised sample would achieve the same purpose.
- ☐ Do not upload sensitive or safeguarding-related material without explicit institutional authority.

Safer professional practice

When the pedagogical objective can be achieved without real student data, use fictional, synthetic or carefully anonymised examples.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

If you would hesitate to send the information to an unknown external organisation, do not paste it into an AI system before checking how that system handles the data.

Can I Enter Student Names or Personal Information?

SHORT ANSWER

Treat identifiable student information as protected data. Do not enter it into a general-purpose AI system simply because the tool makes the task easier.

Why it matters

GDPR principles include purpose limitation, data minimisation, transparency and appropriate protection. A teacher should not assume that a public AI account is an approved environment for processing school data.

Before you do it

- ☐ Use the minimum information necessary.
- ☐ Prefer institutionally managed systems with appropriate agreements.
- ☐ Check retention, training-data and sharing settings where relevant.
- ☐ Avoid health, disability, disciplinary, safeguarding and family information unless an authorised process explicitly permits it.
- ☐ Follow your school's data protection procedures.

Safer professional practice

Replace personal details with neutral placeholders and keep the link between the placeholder and the real student outside the AI system.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

Anonymisation is not just deleting a name. A combination of class, age, event, diagnosis or distinctive circumstances may still reveal who the student is.

Can I Use AI to Create Lesson Plans and Materials?

SHORT ANSWER

Yes, as a drafting and ideation aid - provided the teacher checks accuracy, suitability, accessibility, bias, copyright implications and alignment with learning objectives.

Why it matters

AI can save preparation time and generate alternatives, but it does not know your learners, curriculum context or classroom dynamics unless you provide information - and providing too much information can itself create privacy risks.

Before you do it

- ☐ Define the learning objective before prompting.
- ☐ Check every factual claim and cited source.
- ☐ Adapt reading level and cultural context.
- ☐ Check accessibility and inclusion.
- ☐ Remove invented references or fabricated quotations.
- ☐ Review whether the activity genuinely requires student thinking.

Safer professional practice

Use AI to expand your options, not to replace instructional design. Ask for multiple approaches, then select and revise professionally.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

A polished worksheet can still be pedagogically weak. Judge the material by the learning it enables, not by how professional the AI output looks.

Can I Trust AI-Generated Information?

SHORT ANSWER

No. Generative AI can produce confident, fluent and incorrect information. Treat outputs as drafts or hypotheses that require verification.

Why it matters

AI systems can invent facts, references, quotations, legal provisions, historical details and numerical claims. Fluency can make these errors harder to notice.

Before you do it

- ☐ Verify important claims against authoritative sources.
- ☐ Open and inspect cited sources rather than trusting citation text.
- ☐ Recalculate important numbers independently.
- ☐ Check dates, names and legal references.
- ☐ Use primary or official sources for high-impact information.

Safer professional practice

For factual teaching content, ask AI to help structure your search, then verify the content with reliable sources before presenting it to learners.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

Never use 'the AI sounded certain' as evidence. Confidence in wording is not confidence in truth.

How Should I Handle Bias and Stereotypes?

SHORT ANSWER

Assume bias is possible. Check whether an AI output represents groups fairly, relies on stereotypes, omits perspectives or produces systematically different treatment.

Why it matters

AI systems learn patterns from data and human-created material. Historical inequalities, dominant cultural perspectives and under-representation can appear in outputs.

Before you do it

- ☐ Test prompts with different names, genders, backgrounds or contexts.
- ☐ Look for stereotyped occupations, abilities or behaviours.
- ☐ Check whose perspective is missing.
- ☐ Avoid using AI-generated profiles to label student potential.
- ☐ Invite learners to critique biased outputs as part of AI literacy.

Safer professional practice

Use diverse, teacher-selected sources and examples to challenge narrow AI outputs rather than accepting the first response.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

Bias is not solved by asking the model to 'be unbiased'. It requires active checking, context and professional judgement.

What About Copyright and AI-Generated Materials?

SHORT ANSWER

Do not assume that 'AI-generated' means copyright-free, risk-free or automatically yours. Check the service terms, the source material you provide and the rules that apply in your jurisdiction.

Why it matters

Copyright questions can arise when teachers upload protected materials, ask AI to transform them, reproduce outputs that resemble protected works, or publish generated content. Legal treatment can differ by jurisdiction and use case.

Before you do it

- ☐ Do not upload copyrighted textbooks or paid resources unless authorised.
- ☐ Keep records of important source materials used.
- ☐ Check licences before publishing or redistributing content.
- ☐ Avoid prompts designed to imitate living creators or reproduce protected material.
- ☐ Attribute human sources where attribution is required.

Safer professional practice

Prefer openly licensed, public-domain or institutionally licensed source material when building resources for redistribution.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

AI is a tool in the workflow, not a copyright clearance mechanism. When publication or commercial reuse matters, verify rights separately.

Student Privacy: What Should Teachers Protect?

SHORT ANSWER

Protect more than names. Privacy includes any information that can identify, profile or expose a learner.

Why it matters

Education data can be especially sensitive because it may reveal performance, behaviour, disability, family circumstances, language background, images, voice, location or patterns of participation.

Before you do it

- ☐ Avoid uploading student photos, recordings or biometric-like data to unapproved tools.
- ☐ Do not paste safeguarding notes or counselling information.
- ☐ Minimise data even in approved systems.
- ☐ Explain relevant AI-supported processing when transparency is required.
- ☐ Know who to contact in your institution for data protection questions.

Safer professional practice

Design prompts around the teaching problem rather than around the student's identity. 'Suggest feedback strategies for a learner struggling with fractions' often needs less data than uploading the learner's full record.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

Data minimisation is a practical teaching habit: share only what the task genuinely requires.

Can AI Be Used in Assessment?

SHORT ANSWER

Yes, in carefully designed supporting roles. High-stakes or consequential assessment decisions should not be delegated blindly to AI.

Why it matters

Assessment requires validity, fairness, explainability and professional accountability. AI may misread context, reward surface features, penalise language differences or produce inconsistent judgements.

Before you do it

- ☐ Define what the assessment is measuring.
- ☐ Use a clear rubric independent of the AI tool.
- ☐ Test the system on varied examples before use.
- ☐ Review every consequential judgement.
- ☐ Provide a human route for challenge or correction.
- ☐ Do not infer motivation, personality or future potential from AI output.

Safer professional practice

Use AI for low-risk support such as generating practice questions, rubric examples or draft feedback, while retaining human review and responsibility.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

If an assessment decision matters to a student's progression, opportunity or record, the teacher must be able to explain and defend the decision without hiding behind the AI.

Should Students Disclose Their Use of AI?

SHORT ANSWER

Usually, clear disclosure expectations are better than vague prohibitions. Schools and teachers should define what kinds of AI assistance are permitted for each task.

Why it matters

Students cannot meet expectations that have not been explained. 'No AI' may be appropriate for some tasks; structured AI use may be appropriate for others.

Before you do it

- ☐ State permitted and prohibited uses before the task.
- ☐ Explain whether brainstorming, translation, editing or generation is allowed.
- ☐ Ask students to identify meaningful AI assistance where relevant.
- ☐ Design tasks that require process evidence, reflection or oral explanation.
- ☐ Apply rules consistently.

Safer professional practice

Use a simple declaration such as: 'I used AI for ____; I checked/changed ____; the final decisions and submitted work are my responsibility.'

TEA PRACTICE POINT

AI disclosure should support academic integrity and learning, not become a ritual checkbox with no connection to the task.

Can Teachers Use AI for Feedback and Grading?

SHORT ANSWER

AI can help draft feedback, but the teacher remains responsible for accuracy, tone, fairness and the final judgement.

Why it matters

Feedback is relational and contextual. A generic model may miss what the learner was taught, what support was available, or what progress is most important.

Before you do it

- ☐ Remove unnecessary personal data.
- ☐ Give the AI the rubric rather than the student's full profile.
- ☐ Check whether feedback matches the actual work.
- ☐ Edit tone and developmental priorities.
- ☐ Never send unreviewed AI feedback to a student.
- ☐ Keep final grades under accountable human control.

Safer professional practice

Ask AI for alternative feedback phrasings or next-step suggestions after you have identified the learning issue yourself.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

Good feedback is not the longest feedback. Use AI to improve clarity and options, not to flood learners with automated comments.

AI and Learners with Special Educational Needs

SHORT ANSWER

AI may improve access and differentiation, but it can also expose sensitive information or make inappropriate assumptions. Use it with additional care.

Why it matters

Support needs can involve sensitive personal data. AI-generated adaptations may also oversimplify content, lower expectations or rely on stereotyped assumptions about disability.

Before you do it

- ☐ Do not enter diagnoses or detailed support records into unapproved tools.
- ☐ Focus prompts on accessible design features rather than labels.
- ☐ Check whether adaptations preserve the learning objective.
- ☐ Test readability, navigation and format accessibility.
- ☐ Involve relevant support professionals where appropriate.

Safer professional practice

Prompt for options such as chunked instructions, alternative representations, vocabulary scaffolds or accessible formatting without naming a real learner.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

Inclusion means removing barriers while preserving ambition. AI should not quietly reduce a learner's opportunities.

What Should I Check Before Using a New AI Tool?

A useful AI tool is not automatically an appropriate school tool. Before adoption, check both educational value and institutional risk.

Educational fit

- ☐ What learning or professional need does it address?
- ☐ Does it improve learning, access, feedback or efficiency in a meaningful way?
- ☐ Could a simpler non-AI tool do the job better?

Data and privacy

- ☐ What data does the service collect?
- ☐ Is data retained, shared or used to improve/train systems?
- ☐ Are there age restrictions or special terms for education?
- ☐ Is there an approved institutional account or agreement?

Reliability and control

- ☐ Can outputs be checked?
- ☐ Can teachers override or correct results?
- ☐ Does the tool explain important limitations?

Equity and accessibility

- ☐ Can all intended learners access it?
- ☐ Could paid features create unequal participation?
- ☐ Does it support accessibility needs?

DECISION RULE

Do not adopt first and investigate later. For school-wide use, involve the appropriate leadership, IT, procurement and data-protection processes.

What Should Never Be Pasted into a General-Purpose AI Tool?

Unless an authorised institutional process specifically permits it, keep the following out of general-purpose public AI systems:

- Student passwords, authentication credentials or access tokens.
- Safeguarding, counselling or child-protection notes.
- Medical, disability or other sensitive personal records.
- Disciplinary case details linked to identifiable students.
- Full student databases, contact lists or parent information.
- Unpublished exam papers or secure assessment materials where confidentiality matters.
- Confidential staff records, performance reviews or HR information.
- Commercially confidential institutional documents.
- Personal data copied simply because it is convenient rather than necessary.

SIMPLE TEST

If disclosure of the information could harm, embarrass, disadvantage or expose a student, colleague or institution, stop and check the authorised process before using AI.

The Teacher's 60-Second AI Risk Check

Before using AI for a real teaching task, run this quick check.

QUESTION	GREEN LIGHT	CAUTION / STOP
Purpose	Clear educational value	Using AI only because it is available
Data	No personal/sensitive data, or approved processing	Identifiable or sensitive data in an unapproved tool
Accuracy	Output can be independently checked	High-stakes claim cannot be verified
Fairness	Bias and accessibility considered	Output profiles, labels or stereotypes learners
Assessment	Teacher retains judgement	AI effectively decides a consequential result
Transparency	Use can be explained appropriately	You would be uncomfortable disclosing how AI was used
Control	Human can reject/correct output	Process is automated with no meaningful review

IF TWO OR MORE AREAS RAISE CONCERN

Do not continue by default. Reduce the data, lower the stakes, choose a safer tool, redesign the task or ask the appropriate school lead for guidance.

Responsible AI Classroom Checklist

- ☐ I can explain the educational purpose of using AI.
- ☐ I have told students what AI use is permitted for this activity.
- ☐ I have considered age, access, inclusion and accessibility.
- ☐ I am not requiring students to disclose unnecessary personal information.
- ☐ I have checked important AI-generated facts and sources.
- ☐ I have considered bias, stereotypes and missing perspectives.
- ☐ I have designed the task so students still need to think, create or justify.
- ☐ I have a plan for students who cannot or should not use the tool.
- ☐ I know what evidence of learning I will assess.
- ☐ I will not treat an AI detector as unquestionable proof of misconduct.
- ☐ I will review any AI-supported feedback or judgement before it affects a learner.
- ☐ I can explain my use of AI to a student, parent, colleague or school leader.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARD

Responsible AI use should be explainable. If you cannot explain why the tool was used, what data it received, how its output was checked and who made the final decision, the workflow needs redesign.

School AI Conversation Checklist

Responsible practice becomes stronger when schools move from individual experimentation to shared expectations.

Governance

- ☐ Which AI tools are approved, restricted or prohibited?
- ☐ Who reviews new tools?
- ☐ Who handles privacy, safeguarding and procurement questions?

Teaching and learning

- ☐ What uses genuinely support learning?
- ☐ How will we protect student thinking and authorship?
- ☐ How will expectations differ by age and subject?

Assessment

- ☐ What AI assistance is acceptable?
- ☐ How should students disclose use?
- ☐ How will teachers respond to suspected misuse fairly?

Professional learning

- ☐ Do staff understand hallucinations, bias, privacy and human oversight?
- ☐ Can staff practise with real classroom scenarios?

Communication

- ☐ What do students and families need to know?
- ☐ Can teachers explain school expectations consistently?

10 Responsible AI Principles for Teachers

1. Start with pedagogy

Define the learning purpose before selecting the AI tool.

2. Minimise data

Share the least information necessary.

3. Protect learners

Safeguarding, privacy and dignity outrank convenience.

4. Verify outputs

Check facts, sources and important claims.

5. Expect bias

Actively test for unfair or stereotyped results.

6. Preserve human judgement

Do not delegate consequential educational decisions blindly.

7. Be transparent

Explain meaningful AI use when students or stakeholders need to know.

8. Protect learning

Do not let automation remove the thinking the task is meant to develop.

9. Design for inclusion

Consider access, accessibility, language and unequal effects.

10. Keep learning

AI systems, policies and risks change; professional learning must continue.

Quick Decision Guide

USE AI	USE WITH CAUTION	DON'T USE / ESCALATE
Brainstorming lesson hooks	Drafting feedback on anonymised work	Uploading identifiable student work to an unapproved public AI
Generating practice questions	Adapting materials after teacher review	Entering safeguarding or medical records
Creating alternative explanations	Summarising non-sensitive school documents	Letting AI make a final high-stakes grade or disciplinary decision
Producing fictional examples	Using AI-supported translation with checking	Publishing unverified AI claims as factual teaching content
Exploring multiple viewpoints	Using new tools pending institutional review	Sharing passwords, confidential databases or secure assessment content

CONTEXT MATTERS

The same AI feature may be low-risk in one task and high-risk in another. Consider the people affected, the data involved and the consequence of an error.

AI Literacy for School Staff in 2026

AI literacy is broader than prompt writing. Staff need enough understanding to use AI systems in context, recognise risks, question outputs and make responsible decisions.

Under Article 4 of the EU AI Act, providers and deployers of AI systems must take measures to support the development of AI literacy among staff and others dealing with AI systems on their behalf. The European Commission's 2026 Q&A explains that no single individual level or certificate is mandated; organisations should consider technical knowledge, experience, education, training, context and risk.

A practical staff learning programme should cover

- What AI is - and what it is not.
- Which AI systems the organisation actually uses.
- Opportunities and limitations in the relevant professional context.
- Hallucinations, bias and reliability.
- Data protection, privacy and approved tools.
- Human oversight and accountability.
- Assessment and academic integrity where relevant.
- Scenario-based practice for the roles staff actually perform.

TEA PRACTICE POINT

A one-off demonstration of popular AI tools is not an AI literacy strategy. Professional learning should connect technology to role, risk, policy and educational purpose.

A Model Classroom AI Agreement

Schools should adapt this example to age, subject, national rules and institutional policy.

OUR CLASSROOM AGREEMENT

1. We use AI only when the teacher or task permits it.
2. We do not enter personal or sensitive information about ourselves or others.
3. We check important facts instead of assuming AI is correct.
4. We do not present AI-generated work as entirely our own when disclosure is required.
5. We can explain how AI contributed to our work.
6. We remain responsible for the final work we submit.
7. We use AI respectfully and do not generate harmful, discriminatory or deceptive content.
8. We ask when we are unsure whether an AI use is appropriate.

Simple student AI declaration

I used AI for: _____

The tool helped me to: _____

I checked or changed: _____

The final decisions and submitted work are my responsibility.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Scenario Lab: What Would You Do?

Scenario A - Feedback

A teacher wants to upload 28 named essays to a free public AI account and ask for personalised feedback.

RESPONSIBLE RESPONSE

Redesign: remove unnecessary identifiers, check approved systems and institutional policy, and retain teacher review. Consider whether rubric-based support can be generated without processing real student data.

Scenario B - Hallucinated source

An AI-generated lesson plan includes three impressive academic references. One cannot be found.

RESPONSIBLE RESPONSE

Do not use the references until verified. Treat generated citations as leads, not evidence.

Scenario C - AI detector

A detector reports that a student's essay is '94% AI-generated'.

RESPONSIBLE RESPONSE

Do not treat the score as conclusive proof. Review process evidence, discuss the work with the student and apply the school's fair academic-integrity procedure.

Scenario D - Differentiation

A teacher enters a student's diagnosis and behaviour history to ask AI for a personalised worksheet.

RESPONSIBLE RESPONSE

Minimise data. Ask for accessible design options without identifying the student or disclosing sensitive records, unless an authorised process specifically permits such processing.

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REFERENCE NOTE

This guide is an independent professional resource prepared by Teachers Education Academy. Reference to European Commission, OECD, the AI Act or GDPR does not imply endorsement, certification or institutional affiliation.

About Teachers Education Academy



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