

AI in Schools and Colleges

The BSA attended an event in April looking for insights for teachers. Here's what the speakers said...

Most teachers are using AI in their work, saving up to 10 hours a week of their time, an event on artificial intelligence in schools heard.

Jonathan Park, Head of AI at Twinkl, a teaching-resource company, said that a survey carried out of 10,000 teachers found they “really value the opportunity AI is giving them to make bespoke resources on any theme or topic, to get help with their planning, to speed up their admin. In this survey, 60% of teachers said they had used AI to help work.”

Speaking at the event, ‘Next steps for AI in education in England’, run by the Westminster Education Forum, Mr Park said: “We know that primary school teachers in England work incredible hours. And this causes challenges to workload, challenges teacher recruitment, retention and wellbeing, and AI is being seen by teachers as a solution to this problem.”

Primary school teachers worked 52-hour weeks on average, he said, but “in our recent survey, 64% of frequent users [of AI] say they saved between one to five hours a week, and 9% [saved] five to 10 hours a week. Teachers view it incredibly positively – 58% said it will be a force for good in education.”

However, “the flip side to that is teachers are telling to us that they do not have enough support from school leaders and from government departments. 76% said they’ve yet to receive any training from their school, and only 19% believe it’s sufficiently regulated. So more needs to be done to help both teachers get the most out of this technology.

“The Department for Education has begun to release some guidance around safe AI-use in education, but the results of our survey show that this has not effectively filtered down to teachers and school leaders.”

Saarrah Moosa, AI Lead at Frederick Bremer School, London, said that teachers “entered the profession to educate, inspire and transform lives, but in reality much of our time is consumed by planning, marking and admin, and it’s no surprise that 39,000 teachers leave the profession each year, with workload cited as one of the most common reasons.

“So in my own practice, I’ve been exploring how we can shift that balance, and crucially, how we can work smarter and not longer.

“One of the most powerful enablers of that shift is AI. It’s not here to replace teachers, it’s here to support us, to reduce the heavy lifting and to give back what we need most, which is time.

“Tools like chatGPT have enabled my colleagues to streamline lesson planning, adapt resources for diverse learners, provide rapid feedback and purposeful feedback and

respond more flexibly to student needs, all in a fraction of the time it would normally take.

“In a recent study, we found that AI tools actually reduced planning time by 30% and it’s not about cutting corners, but sharpening the focus of our work.”

As an example, teachers could take a single task and easily adapt it so that students with different needs and learning levels could understand it.

“Teachers now use simple, powerful prompts such as to: create a paragraph about a particular topic; then simplify it to a reading age of nine; extract key vocab; create a table of definitions; turn those key concepts into an activity; and adapt language complexity for different learner profiles.”

Jonathan Wharmby, a computer science teacher at Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, Liverpool, said that “AI is already proving to be a valuable asset. It can help reduce workload planning, resource creation and even marking.

“I know there were recent tests with [students’] handwriting recognition where it was scoring on average a 98% accuracy rate. Now, if we can get students writing answers and getting immediate feedback and scores, that’s going to help them 10-fold, rather than waiting for a teacher to mark something, – getting that immediate feedback that they can work on live is going to be crucial to them.”

However, he noted that not all teachers felt they could use AI. “We need to ensure that educators feel equipped and supported rather than overwhelmed by the emerging technology. I know through speaking to staff, a lot are eager to explore AI, it’s just they don’t have the knowledge or the confidence to do so. In a recent study 19% say they are not interested in using it in any time in the near future, which I find quite worrying.

“We have the ability here to have every teacher in the UK with a teaching assistant in their pocket. We also have the ability that every student to have a personalised tutor in their pocket, and that is something we can’t shy away from, that’s something that we really need to focus on, and we need to take this opportunity.”

Dr Aftab Hussain, Digital Transformation Manager, Bolton College, warned that AI could increase workloads if teachers needed to check students’ work was original and not simply generated by AI. “My biggest concern is that it is increasing the assessment workload for teachers, because as well as getting written submissions from students, you’re also having to do mini vivas for all your students when they present work.

“A lot of teachers are saying that these additional assessment practices are adding to their assessment workload, which is already high. I think we have to accept that AI is going to be used on a day-by-day basis, and we have to accept its use, but that’s got to have an effect on the way we assess [students].”

Bridie Tooher, Deputy Director, Digital Strategy Division, Department for Education, said that the government would spend extra on infrastructure to help schools get

gigabit-speed broadband, and give teachers training material to help them use AI effectively.

- ‘Next steps for AI in education in England’, run by the Westminster Education Forum, April 2025, online.