Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education
How will AI impact children and young people in West Sussex?

By Stephen Bush, Senior Education Adviser

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is poised to revolutionise the landscape of teaching and assessment in UK schools over the coming years, bringing changes that may affect the experiences and outcomes of children, young people, and colleagues.

Personalised approach
One significant area where AI is expected to make a profound impact is in personalised learning. AI-powered adaptive learning platforms can analyse individual student performance data, identifying strengths and areas to work on further, tailoring educational content to suit each student's unique needs. This personalised approach may deliver a more effective and efficient online learning experience, catering to diverse learning needs and abilities. As a result, students may receive more targeted support online, or in the classroom, from teachers who have used the AI analysis to plan their teaching. This could develop a deeper understanding of subjects and potentially reduce achievement gaps.

Administrative support
AI is also anticipated to streamline administrative tasks for teachers, enabling them to focus on activities that directly impact children. The automation of routine tasks such as grading and data analysis can save valuable time, allowing teachers to dedicate more attention to engaging with students to build relationships, provide feedback, refine their teaching and engage in their own professional learning.

Many commentators regard AI technologies used in assessment as a 'double-edged sword'. Automated grading systems powered by machine learning algorithms have developed rapidly. Some can now efficiently and accurately evaluate written assignments, freeing up teachers from time-consuming assessment. Additionally, AI-driven assessment tools can provide real-time feedback to students, facilitating continuous improvement and a more proactive approach to learning. However, such technologies could leave teachers less informed on their classes' progress, and may degrade the relationships they would otherwise build with children and young people. Opportunities to synthesise the work of a class to, for example, inform future planning may be lost.

Countering plagiarism

AI plagiarism in UK schools poses a significant challenge, as children and young people increasingly rely on advanced technology to complete assignments. Educators face the dilemma of detecting and addressing instances where students employ AI tools to generate or modify content. To counter this, institutions and exam boards are adopting plagiarism detection software that employ sophisticated algorithms to identify potential instances of AI-generated work.

Additionally, educators are emphasising critical thinking and originality in assignments, fostering a culture that values individual contributions. In future, the curriculum may also incorporate ethics discussions around AI use, encouraging students to understand the consequences of relying on technology to complete academic tasks.

The outlook for AI in education

Undoubtedly, there is a need for additional training to equip educators with the skills necessary to leverage AI effectively in the classroom. Professional development initiatives could focus on empowering teachers to integrate AI tools seamlessly into their teaching practices, maximising the potential for improved outcomes, with an awareness that children and young people have access to similar tools.

Over the next decade, we are likely to witness a transformative impact of AI on teaching and assessment in UK schools. From personalised learning experiences to automated assessments, AI holds the potential to revolutionise education. However, careful consideration of ethical implications, continuing professional development for educators, and a commitment to responsible AI implementation will be essential to ensuring a successful integration of AI in the education sector.