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# Leading in the Age of AI

## Practical strategies for school leaders

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How many of you have a written AI policy  
for your school?

That gap between what we have planned for and what is already happening is what this session is about.

# The speed of change



**91%**

## Cost Reduction

Software development costs fell 91% in eight months using AI coding assistants

ARK Invest 2026



**5x**

## Capability Growth

AI agents went from 6 to 31 minutes of reliable work in a single year

METR 2025



**1/2 day**

## ROI Breakeven

A ChatGPT subscription pays for itself in half a day of productivity gains

ARK Invest 2026

# 2025: The Inflection Point

## Key Trends

- 1 National AI curricula becoming standard 
- 2 Shift from "AI literacy" to "AI integration across subjects" 
- 3 Government-led, mandatory implementation 
- 4 Focus on preparing students AND teachers 
- 5 Emphasis on assessment validity and learning outcomes 

# AI Across Schooling System



## Curriculum

Policy development, resource allocation, guidelines



## School Leadership

Implementation strategies, staff development, infrastructure planning



## Teachers

AI-enhanced pedagogy, tool proficiency, ethical use in classrooms



## Learners

AI literacy, critical thinking skills, responsible use of AI tools



## Parents

Understanding AI's role in education, supporting children's AI literacy

# Questions for School Leaders



## Student Use

When and how can students use AI tools?



## Teacher PD

What training is needed?



## Data Privacy

Where is data stored? Who has access?



## Tool Vetting

How do we evaluate AI tools?



## Equity

How do we ensure equal access?



## Assessment Design

How do we assess in an AI-enabled world?

# Regional Challenges to Address

## LANGUAGE MARGINALIZATION

AI works best in English, with limited support for smaller languages, creating barriers for non-English speakers.

## CULTURAL/CONTEXTUAL BARRIERS

AI systems often reflect Western cultural biases and may misunderstand or misrepresent local cultural contexts.

## CURRICULUM CHALLENGES

AI educational tools may not align with local curriculum standards or educational priorities of different regions.

## DATA SOVEREIGNTY CONCERNS

Questions about who owns, controls, and has access to educational data processed by AI systems across borders.

## INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS

Unequal access to reliable internet, devices, and technical support needed to implement AI educational tools.



# Connectivity



## High Connectivity

- Cloud-based tools
- Real-time collaboration
- API integrations
- Full model capabilities
- Continuous updates



## Low Connectivity

- Downloadable models
- Offline-first design
- SMS/WhatsApp integration
- Sync when available
- Reduced model size



## No Connectivity

- Offline AI models
- On-device processing
- Pre-generated libraries
- Limited capabilities
- No external data access

# The reframe



## The Hype

- "AI will transform everything"
- "Every school needs it now"
- "Buy this tool, adopt this platform"



## The Fear

- "AI is cheating, it's dangerous"
- "Ban it, restrict it, wait"
- "Wait for someone to tell us what to do"

**Neither of these is useful for you as a school leader.**

The question is not which AI tools should we buy.

It is: are we ready to make good decisions about AI?

# Five dimensions of AI readiness



01

## Leadership & Governance

Who is accountable for AI decisions? Clear ownership and transparent processes.



02

## Policy & Ethics

Written guidelines for academic integrity, data protection and ethical boundaries.



03

## Infrastructure & Resources

Technical foundation, connectivity, devices and budget for smart decisions.



04

## Staff Capacity

Teacher confidence, training, support structures and critical evaluation skills.



AI READINESS



05

## Curriculum & Pedagogy

AI integration in teaching, assessment redesign and student AI literacy.

**DIMENSION 01****Leadership & Governance**

**Who in your school is actually responsible for AI decisions?**

**THE REALITY IN MANY SCHOOLS**

- AI decisions happen by default, not by design
- IT staff are making policy decisions they are not equipped for
- Multi-campus groups have no consistent AI approach

**WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE**

- A named AI lead, even if it is a part-time role
- AI as a standing item on the leadership agenda
- A clear process for evaluating new AI tools

**DIMENSION 02****Policy & Ethics**

**What are your rules, written down and shared with everyone?**

**QUESTIONS YOU WILL FACE**

- A student submits AI-generated coursework. What happens?
- A teacher uses AI to write report comments. Is that acceptable?
- A parent asks what student data AI tools are accessing. Can you answer?

**THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

- Data protection laws vary across West Africa, you cannot assume GDPR applies
- International school parents expect global standards
- Your policy is also your competitive differentiator

**DIMENSION 03****Infrastructure & Resources**

**What infrastructure decisions have you made deliberately, not by default?**

**THIS IS NOT ABOUT HAVING THE LATEST DEVICES**

- Some of the smartest AI strategies come from constrained environments
- Limited resources force intentional choices about what to adopt and why
- A school with 20 shared devices and a clear plan beats 200 devices with no strategy

**DECISIONS THAT MATTER HERE**

- Wi-Fi reliability vs. mobile data: what is your actual access model?
- Free tools vs. paid subscriptions: what is the real cost of "free"?
- Where does student data go when it leaves your network?

**DIMENSION 04****Staff Capacity**

**How are you building your team's confidence, not just compliance?**

**WHERE SCHOOLS UNDERINVEST**

- You can buy every AI tool on the market, but if teachers are not confident using or questioning them, it does not matter
- International schools have diverse staff: local hires, expat teachers, different comfort levels with technology
- One training session is not capacity building. It is a box-ticking exercise

**CONFIDENCE OVER COMPLIANCE**

- Teachers who feel safe to experiment become the most creative AI users
- Critical evaluation skills matter more than tool proficiency
- Confident teachers make better decisions about AI than compliant ones



**DIMENSION 05****Curriculum & Pedagogy****Where are students learning about, with, and to evaluate AI?****About****Learning about AI**

Understanding what AI is, how it works, its limitations and biases. Most Cambridge schools are not doing this systematically yet.

**With****Learning with AI**

Using AI as a tool in learning: research assistant, writing partner, study aid. This is happening whether you have planned for it or not.

**Judge****Evaluating AI**

Critical thinking about AI outputs: accuracy, bias, appropriateness. The skill your students need most and get taught least.

# How AI-ready is your school?

- Scan the QR code to take the AI Readiness Pulse Check



 2 min

# Readiness is contextual

81-100%



## Transformation

AI is embedded in strategy, teaching, and operations

61-80%



## Active Implementation

Structured programmes, clear policies in place

41-60%



## Early Adoption

Exploring, experimenting, building awareness

0-40%



## Foundation Building



A school at 30% is not failing. They know where to start: governance and policy first, before spending a single cedi on technology.

# Three things you can do this term

## 1 Start with governance

Before you spend anything on technology, do three things:

- Designate an AI lead, even part-time
- Add AI to your leadership meeting agenda
- Create a simple AI decision flowchart

**COST: NOTHING. TIME: ONE WEEK.**

## 2 Curiosity before curriculum

Resist the urge to jump straight to a formal training programme:

- Start a voluntary AI exploration group
- Share one tool per staff meeting
- Permission to play, not perform

**BUILD CONFIDENCE, NOT COMPLIANCE.**

## 3 Redesign one assessment

Don't try to solve the whole problem. Start small:

- Pick one assessment in one subject
- Ask: "If students have AI, what's meaningful here?"
- Pilot it. Learn. Share what you learn.

**START THE CONVERSATION. TRY SOMETHING.**

1

## STRATEGY

**Start with governance, not technology**

The most common mistake: schools buying AI tools before deciding who is responsible for AI decisions.

**Designate an AI lead**

Even a part-time role. Someone whose job it is to stay informed, coordinate, and advise leadership.

**Add AI to the agenda**

Make AI a standing item at leadership meetings. Not a one-off discussion, an ongoing conversation.

**Create a decision flowchart**

When a new AI tool is proposed: who evaluates it, what criteria, and who approves?

**Cost: Nothing. Time: One week. Impact: Every AI decision that follows.**

## 2

## STRATEGY

**Curiosity before curriculum**

**Resist the urge to jump straight to a formal training programme. Start with curiosity.**

**HOW TO START**

- a** Start a voluntary AI exploration group. Enthusiasts first, sceptics welcome.
- b** Share one AI tool per staff meeting. Not a mandate, just a "look what I found."
- c** Give permission to play, not perform. Low stakes before high expectations.

**WHY THIS WORKS IN YOUR CONTEXT**

- Your staff come from different countries and training backgrounds, one approach will not fit all
- The most resistant teachers often become the most creative users, once given space
- Peer learning across campuses builds capacity faster than external trainers

**Build confidence, not compliance. Confident teachers make better AI decisions.**

3

STRATEGY

## Redesign one assessment

Assessment is where AI anxiety lives. Do not try to solve the whole problem. Start small.

1

### Pick one

One assessment, one subject, one year group



2

### Ask the question

"If students have AI, what is meaningful here?"



3

### Pilot it

Try it. Learn from it. Share what you learn.

### FOR CAMBRIDGE SCHOOLS SPECIFICALLY

- Your IG and AS/A Level assessments are externally set, but your internal assessments are yours to redesign
- Start the conversation now so you are ready when Cambridge updates its assessment guidance



# AI Assessment Scale



## 1

### No AI

The assessment is completed entirely without AI assistance in a controlled environment, ensuring that students rely solely on their existing knowledge, understanding, and skills.

## 2

### AI Planning

AI may be used for pre-task activities such as brainstorming, outlining and initial research. This level focuses on the effective use of AI for planning, synthesis, and ideation, but assessments should emphasise the ability to develop and refine these ideas independently.

## 3

### AI Collaboration

AI may be used to help complete the task, including idea generation, drafting, feedback, and refinement. Students should critically evaluate and modify the AI suggested outputs, demonstrating their understanding.

## 4

### Full AI

AI may be used to complete any elements of the task, with students directing AI to achieve the assessment goals. Assessments at this level may also require engagement with AI to achieve goals and solve problems.

## 5

### AI Exploration

AI is used creatively to enhance problem-solving, generate novel insights, or develop innovative solutions to solve problems. Students and educators co-design assessments to explore unique AI applications within the field of study.



What would make the biggest difference to  
your school right now?

# If AI could help with one thing tomorrow...

RAISE YOUR HAND FOR EACH ONE THAT APPLIES

**1**

## **A clear AI policy**

Written rules for staff, students, and parents that your school can act on

**2**

## **Teachers creating with AI**

Staff who can confidently build their own resources and lesson materials

**3**

## **Parent communication**

Clear, confident messaging about how your school approaches AI

**4**

## **Student performance tracking**

AI tools that help monitor progress and support individual learners

**Most of you will pick more than one. That's the point.**

# My challenge, by the end of the next term, answer five questions

1

## LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

**Who** is responsible for AI in your school?

2

## POLICY & ETHICS

**What** are your rules, written down and shared with everyone?

3

## INFRASTRUCTURE & RESOURCES

**What** infrastructure decisions have you made deliberately, not by default?

4

## STAFF CAPACITY

**How** are you building your team's confidence, not just compliance?

5

## CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY

**Where** are students learning about, with, and to evaluate AI?

The schools that thrive with AI will not be the ones with the biggest budgets.

They will be the ones with the clearest thinking.

That starts with you.



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