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AI in Education 2026: Working it out

What UK teachers make of AI in
the classroom in 2026



Foreword

This is the third year Bett has asked teachers across the UK how they use artificial intelligence, and the first year I have been able to read three sets of results side by side. That vantage point changes what you notice.

The first survey, in 2024, caught a profession mostly watching from the sidelines. Seven in ten schools had not adopted AI in any form. The second, last year, caught the rush. This year's results show something I did not expect. Teachers are using AI more than ever, but their enthusiasm for it may already be cooling.

Eight in ten teachers now use AI for their work, and weekly use has doubled in a year. Yet fewer than half expect to use it more next year, down from two-thirds. Teachers are still reaching for AI, but they have stopped expecting quite so much of it.

The workload story is part of that. Teachers tell us AI saves them time on particular jobs, a first draft of a letter home, a worksheet, a test. But most say they are not working fewer hours. The time comes back and something else fills it. Anyone who has worked in a school will recognise that.

And then there is cheating. Most teachers think AI has made it easier for pupils to cheat without being caught, and in secondary schools suspicion is now part of the working week. Teachers are alert to it, and most act when they suspect it. That is a question about how AI is used rather than about the technology itself, and schools are only starting to answer it.

I would rather these pages were useful than comfortable. They set out what teachers told us, the encouraging and the awkward, and leave the conclusions to you. I hope you find them worth your time.



Duncan Verry
Portfolio Director, Bett

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As Bett's Global AI Partner, Lenovo is proud to sponsor this third annual report on UK educators' shift from early experimentation to more pragmatic use of AI. The findings reinforce a need we hear from educators globally: technology must be paired with strategy, responsible practices, and professional learning. Lenovo helps schools build that foundation by bringing together the right technology, implementation support, and partnerships that advance AI literacy for educators and learners. At Lenovo, we believe teachers should feel equipped to use AI with confidence and purpose - not as a substitute for professional judgment, but as a tool that creates more space for human connection, creativity, and meaningful learning. Our commitment is to help educators use AI in ways that are inclusive, trustworthy, and transparent, thereby expanding opportunity while keeping people, purpose, and meaningful learning at the centre.

Delia DeCourcy, Senior Strategist, Worldwide Education Team - Lenovo

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Introduction

Three years ago most schools in Britain had barely touched artificial intelligence. In our first survey, in 2024, seven in ten had not adopted it in any form, and the teachers who did use it often did so quietly, on their own initiative.

That picture has changed fast, and the government has done a good deal to change it. Ministers have made AI a priority for schools. The Department for Education has funded free tools for teachers and backed trials of AI marking and lesson planning. At Bett UK 2026, the DfE announced a £23 million, four-year expansion of its EdTech testbed, putting new tools into more than a thousand classrooms from September 2026. The Education Endowment Foundation, meanwhile, has opened a £2.5 million fund to work out whether generative AI actually helps children learn. Its own phrase for what it is trying to fill is an “urgent evidence gap”. After three years of rapid adoption, no one can yet say whether AI actually helps pupils learn.

And parents report the same thing from home. In polling by Public First, the share who think their child has used an AI tool for homework rose from 47% to 57% in ten months.

Into that gap, teachers have carried on regardless. This is the third year Bett has commissioned YouGov to ask them how they use AI, what it is doing to their workload, and what worries them about it. We surveyed 1,033 UK teachers in June 2026, weighted to represent the profession.

Because the same questions have now been asked three times, we can show where things have moved and, in a few places, where the movement is much smaller than it looks.

The headline numbers, in short.

- **Eight in ten** teachers now use AI for teaching-related tasks, and weekly use has doubled in a year
- **Half** say AI has cut their workload, but only a third say they actually work fewer hours
- **Fewer than half** expect to use AI more next year, down from two-thirds in 2025
- **Nearly half** still feel that using AI for core teaching would be a kind of ‘cheating’
- **Over half** are open to giving up curriculum time to teach pupils to use AI responsibly



About the research

The Bett survey was carried out online by YouGov among a representative sample of **1,033** UK teachers. Fieldwork ran between 16 and 29 June 2026, and the figures have been weighted to represent UK teachers. The sample included **429** senior leaders and **604** classroom teachers, **506** teachers in primary, **486** in secondary and **41** in all-through schools, and **897** in state and **76** in independent schools. Some questions allowed more than one answer, so a few totals come to more than 100. Others fall short of 100 because of rounding. This is the third annual wave of research, following 'The Rise of AI in Education' (2024) and 'AI in Education 2025'.



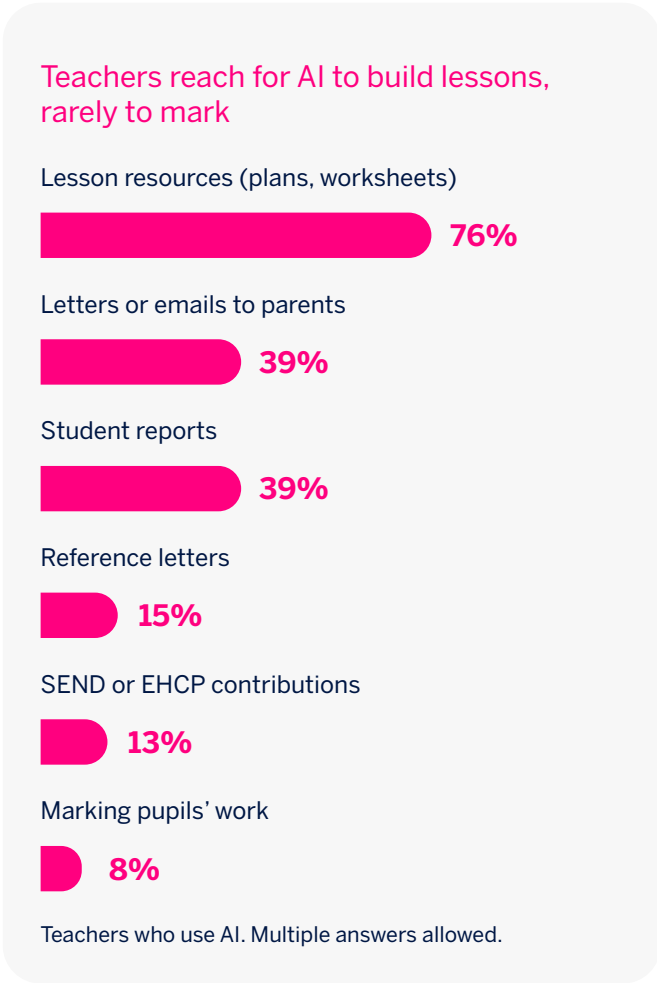
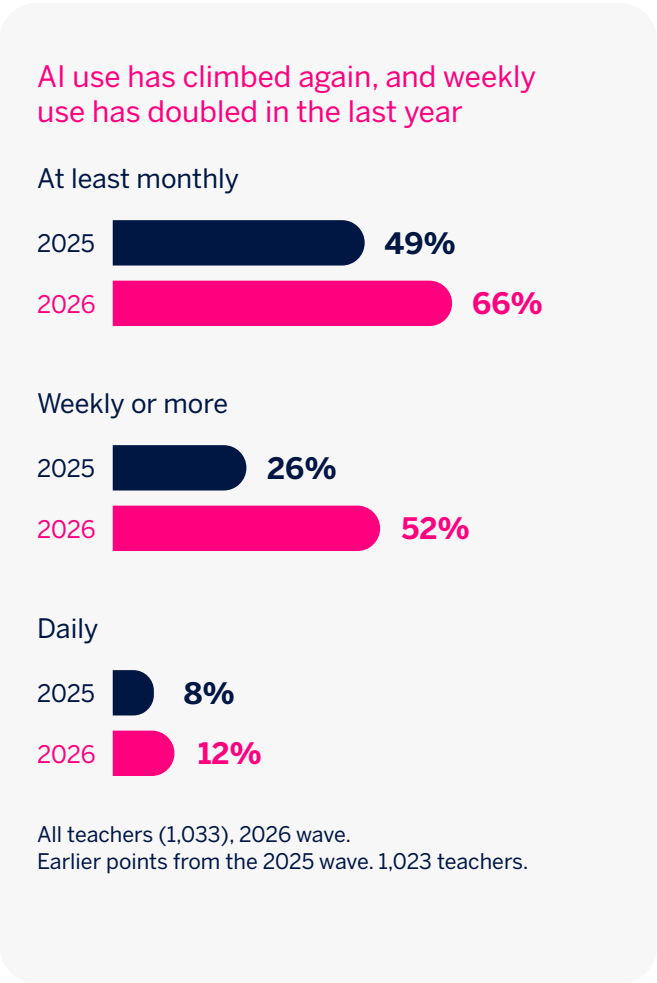
How many teachers are using AI?

AI is now part of the working week for most teachers. Eight in ten use it for teaching-related tasks, and most of those use it at least weekly. But it's the pace of change that is the real story. Use has climbed significantly on last year, and weekly use has doubled in twelve months.

The holdouts are a shrinking group. Just over one in ten teachers (11%) have never used AI for any teaching purpose, and a further one in ten (10%) have tried it only once or twice. The fall is not quite like-for-like, though. Last year's survey did not offer a separate 'once or twice' option, so some of last year's 'never' may sit in that new box.

Age divides the profession more than role, phase or sector. Among the under-35s, net use is 87%. Among the over-55s, it is 62%. More than a quarter of the oldest teachers (28%) have never used AI, against 4% of the youngest. Senior leaders are a little ahead of classroom teachers, 86% against 76%, and readier to use it daily.

What are they using it for? Lesson resources, mostly. Building plans and worksheets is the most common use by far. After that come the written jobs, drafting letters and emails to parents, writing reports, references and contributions to SEND or EHCP paperwork. Marking is the exception. Few teachers let AI near pupils' work. For all the talk of automated assessment, they are not yet handing over the red pen.



Is AI saving teachers time?

Among regular users, the typical saving is one to two hours a week. One hour is the single most common answer (20%), with two hours close behind (19%). Some save less, 15% under an hour, and a smaller group save a lot, 7% more than five hours. Rolled together, regular users save a little under two hours a week. For comparison, the Education Endowment Foundation's 2024 trial put the saving on lesson planning at about 31%, or 25 minutes a week.

Half of users say AI has cut their workload overall. Four in ten (40%) say it has made no difference, and 9% say it has added to it. On the face of it that is a jump from the 34% who reported a lighter workload last year. But the question and the answer options have changed across the three waves, so the real shift is smaller than the numbers suggest. The direction, at least, is encouraging. More users are reporting benefits than they were a year ago.

But does AI actually shorten the working week? For most, no. Only a third of users say AI means they work fewer hours, while more than half (55%) work the same hours as before and 4% work more.

Teachers feel AI takes the weight off particular jobs but, for most, the hours saved are swallowed by other demands rather than handed back as a shorter week.

Older teachers feel the benefit least. Just 26% of the over-55s say they work fewer hours, against 41% of the under-35s.

AI lightens the load, but rarely the hours

51%

AI has cut my workload

35%

AI means I work fewer hours

Teachers who use AI.



What do teachers expect next year?

Fewer than half of teachers now expect to use AI more over the coming year. Almost as many expect no change, and a few expect to use it less or stop altogether. This is the biggest year-on-year change in the survey. Appetite has fallen sharply from a year ago, when far more expected to do more with it, and the expectation of a big increase has all but vanished. A small but real group now plan to stop using AI tools altogether.

The young are still keenest. Half of the under-35s (51%) expect to use more, against 39% of the over-55s. But in every group the mood is one of settling, not accelerating.

The expectation of doing more with AI has fallen by nearly a third in a year

Expect to use AI more next year



Of which, expect a big increase



All teachers, each wave.



How well do schools support their staff?

Around three in five teachers (57%) say their school has adopted AI for at least one purpose. Just over a third (37%) say it has not adopted it at all. The purpose named far more than any other is cutting teacher workload (52%). Improving pupil outcomes trails a long way behind (15%). Over three years the share of schools said to be doing nothing on AI has fallen steadily, from 69% to 48% to 37%.

Support for the individual teacher is another matter. Two in five (41%) have had no training or help from their school at all. Where training does happen, there is not much of it. 16% get it once a year and only 2% more than once a term. That is an improvement on last year, when 46% reported none, but a small one.

The divide the Sutton Trust named in 2025 has not closed. Teachers in independent schools are more likely to get some support (61%) than those in state schools (41%).

Written policy is patchy. A third of teachers (33%) say their school has a policy on staff use of AI. Almost half (48%) say it has none, and 19% don't know. Even where a policy exists, only 18% say they understand it well.



What about academic integrity?

Nearly half of all teachers (45%) agree that using AI for core teaching tasks would make them feel as though they were 'cheating'. Slightly more (49%) disagree, and one in eight (13%) agree strongly. A year on, that has barely moved, from 44% to 45%. Rising use has not eased the discomfort. Female teachers are a little likelier to feel it than their male counterparts (46% against 40%).

The unease is private, though, and teachers are willing to talk about their AI use in the staffroom. Eight in ten teachers (83%) are comfortable being open with colleagues about using AI, and only 12% feel awkward. Men are readier than women to say they are very comfortable (51% against 36%). Teachers may feel like they are cutting a corner, but they are not hiding it from each other.

Their worry is really about pupils, not about the technology itself. Teachers are using more AI than ever. What troubles them is work passed off as a pupil's own. Most secondary teachers think AI has made it easier for pupils to cheat and get away with it, and a good share say much easier. In primary the picture is very different. Many teachers there don't yet know whether it is a problem, and in a lot of classrooms it simply hasn't shown up.

In secondary schools, suspicion is now commonplace, while in primary it remains rare. Across all teachers, three in ten (30%) suspected at least one pupil of handing in AI-assisted work without permission in a single month.

Over a longer span it is more common still. Across all teachers who assess work, almost half (47%) have marked a piece in the past year they suspected was AI-generated, and 11% have done so more than ten times.

When teachers suspect AI, most act. Nine in ten (92%) raise it at least sometimes, and over half (53%) every time. A third of teachers (35%) say they or a colleague formally raised concerns about a pupil in the past year, rising to 66% in secondary. And when concerns reached a conclusion, the pupil was found to have used AI two-thirds of the time (66%). Only 6% were cleared.

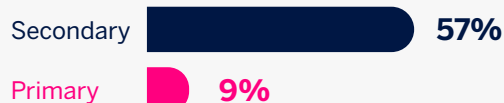


Secondary and primary teachers report different experiences

Say AI makes cheating easier



Suspected a pupil in the past four weeks



Marked suspected AI work in the past year, of those who assess



Secondary and primary teachers (486 secondary, 506 primary). The past-year figure is based on teachers who assess work.

What do teachers want to change?

Almost no teacher would leave written coursework as it is. Asked what should happen to it, given the cheating worry, they divide between two answers. The largest group would keep coursework but bolt on better AI-detection software. Almost as many would replace it with writing done under supervision in class, and a smaller group would scrap it altogether. Add the two together and more teachers want the format itself to change than want better detection.

Teachers are not alone in wanting that. Ofqual's chief, Sir Ian Bauckham, has said proposals for written coursework will face "far, far more scrutiny" under reformed qualifications, to stop AI-generated work being passed off as a pupil's own.

On teaching pupils to use AI, teachers are more divided. We asked, in effect, whether schools should give up curriculum time to teach children to use AI responsibly, and if so from where. Just over half (52%) are open to it, naming at least one subject whose time could be trimmed or folded into the existing curriculum. A third (33%) rejected the premise outright, saying no time should be found for it at all. Where teachers were willing, the subject most often offered up was PSHE (22%), well ahead of modern foreign languages (8%) and English (7%). Secondary teachers (59%) were readier to make room than their primary colleagues (47%).

More teachers want to change how coursework works than to police it better

Keep coursework, add better AI detection



Replace with supervised in-class writing



Remove extended-writing coursework entirely



Leave it as it is



All teachers (1,033).



Where this leaves us

Three years in, the argument about whether teachers will use AI is over. They do, almost all of them, most weeks. The questions worth asking now are the ones that come after adoption rather than before it.

The first is about value. Teachers are clear that AI helps with discrete jobs, the letter, the worksheet, the report. They are much less sure it has given them anything as solid as a shorter week. But a tool that saves time on tasks without saving hours overall is still worth having. It is just not the workload cure it was once billed as, and teachers have worked that out for themselves. The cooling of their expectations for next year looks like realism setting in.

The second is about trust. The same technology that drafts a teacher's lesson plan also drafts a pupil's homework, and teachers know it. In secondary schools the suspicion is now constant and the confirmed cases common. More teachers would change the form of assessment than put their faith in better detection, and that points at something larger than cheating. Assessment is meant to show what a pupil understands and can do alone. When teachers cannot tell whose thinking they are marking, the work tells them nothing.

What the profession has not been given is much help. Two in five teachers are working out how to benefit from AI with no training and, as often as not, no policy to follow either. The enthusiasm of the early adopters carried the first two years. What drives the next three is less clear.

Teachers have taken AI about as far as they can on their own. Whether it comes to do more than lighten the odd afternoon will depend on decisions that are not theirs to make on their own.



Case Study:

Francis Holland Schools Trust

Teachers spend their days planning, preparing and marking, adapting to a classroom full of different needs, and keeping up with technology that changes faster than any training course. Francis Holland Schools Trust wanted to know whether AI-enabled devices could take some of that weight off, and free teachers to spend more time where it counts, with their students.

To find out, the Trust ran a pilot with Lenovo and Intel. Selected teachers were given the Lenovo ThinkPad X9 Aura Edition, an AI PC powered by Intel's Core Ultra processor, and took part in hands-on training built around Intel's Skills for Innovation (SFI) programme. The aims were practical: reduce workload, build teacher confidence and find classroom-ready ways to use AI. Leadership also wanted to modernise teaching, prepare students for the workplace ahead, and shape the Trust's digital strategy from real experience rather than theory. They also wanted to set an example other schools could learn from.

The pilot

Lenovo worked with the school's IT team to deploy the ThinkPad X9 Aura Edition PCs. Teachers then worked through Intel SFI Levels 1 and 2, building practical skills in using AI purposefully, ethically and effectively. Rather than teach the ready-made SFI starter-pack lessons off the shelf, they adapted the resources to fit their own pupils.

As Carrie MacTavish, Head of Physics and Director of Digital Learning, explained: "One of the most crucial things about bringing tech into the classroom is that it's reliable. Every moment you lose in the classroom because of tech is a moment you and the students won't get back."

What changed

The Trust reports early gains in several areas. Teachers built real confidence with AI, using the device and the training to plan lessons, make resources and personalise learning more quickly. That gave time back. Time teachers put into the parts of the job that need a person rather than a programme. Classrooms became more inventive, with the SFI lessons offering new ways to bring problem-solving and real-world skills into everyday teaching.

And staff came away readier to try new technology, treating AI as something to learn with rather than simply a tool to reach for. Matt Britland, Director of Technology at Francis Holland Schools, saw the difference in day-to-day work. He said: "With the X9, we have AI built within the device, which our educators can use to develop lesson plans and resources, making our lives much easier."



Task-level savings

In this year's Bett / YouGov teacher research, AI most often helped with discrete jobs – a first draft, a set of resources – rather than handing back a shorter week. Francis Holland's pilot is one Trust working to turn those task-level savings into time spent with students, and to build the teacher confidence that decides whether the tools are used at all.

What comes next

The pilot has been recognised beyond the school. Francis Holland Schools Trust is now an Intel Skills for Innovation Certified School – a status that lets it share what it has learned with the wider sector and build closer links with industry. The SFI content behind the pilot, a growing library of professional development and ready-made lessons, is freely available to Lenovo customers, so other schools can follow a similar route.

[Click here](#) - to read the case study and watch the video.



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Opinion: Teacher development in the age of AI

I joined the profession in 2010. In the sixteen years since, teaching in England has changed enormously. We have become more evidence-informed, more curriculum-conscious and, in many places, much better at articulating what great teaching looks like. I believe passionately in that progress. But good ideas are fragile in implementation.

I saw this first-hand with curriculum centralisation. In my network, the purpose was genuinely empowering - stop thirty brilliant teachers separately spending Sunday afternoon creating versions of the same resource and give that intellectual capacity back to them. Over time, I began to hear a different rationale: "it's a workload saver." That subtle shift matters enormously for teacher development in the age of AI.

Efficiency is one of AI's great promises, but if our ambition is simply to help teachers complete existing tasks faster, we have set the bar remarkably low. The more exciting question is what expertise, attention and capacity AI might unlock.

A teacher cannot simultaneously hold thirty pupils' responses, compare each with previous work, identify patterns across the class and retain all of that over time. AI potentially can. Combined with expert task design, it could radically increase what we notice about learning, and for pupils with SEND it could help teachers see barriers and starting points with a granularity that makes genuinely responsive teaching more achievable.

And there is, for me, a big but. Teacher expertise is not developed by simply receiving the right answer. When teachers grapple with pupil responses, they are building knowledge: noticing an unanticipated misconception, distinguishing an error from a gap in understanding, deciding what deserves a response. That cognitive friction is gold dust. My concern is not that AI might become very good at analysing assessment. I hope it does. It is that we mistake removing cognitive effort for improving practice, when some of that effort is the very mechanism through which expertise develops.

This puts professional judgement at the heart of teacher development. The harder question is how we train teachers to decide when AI adds value, when it doesn't, and what professional work should remain deliberately effortful.

Transformative technology hasn't transformed what we know about how people learn. A prompt can be taught and a workflow modelled; neither tells a teacher whether using it is the right decision for these pupils, for this purpose, at this moment.

That judgement needs explicit development. Teachers could practise with authentic classroom problems, predict what they expect before using AI, compare its interpretation with their own and articulate why they chose one course of action. The aim is not greater fidelity to an AI technique, but greater discernment about its use.

This matters for professional agency too. Teachers who successfully interpret, challenge and adapt AI strengthen the self-efficacy that underpins it. If technology repeatedly occupies the role of analyst and decision-maker, we risk diminishing it. Today's tools and prompts will date quickly. The capacity to evaluate, adapt and exercise professional judgement will not.

Teachers also need safe parameters: an appropriate understanding of data, privacy, bias and risk, without individually carrying responsibility for policy, governance or infrastructure. Teacher headspace is finite, and it is precious.

That is why I am excited about AI. Used badly, it could accelerate output while narrowing the space in which teachers develop and exercise expertise. Used well, with teacher development designed around expertise rather than adoption, it offers something much more ambitious than a workload saving: greater access to knowledge about learning, fewer low value demands on attention and more capacity for the difficult, intellectually rewarding work that humans do best.

Perhaps its greatest efficiency will be creating more space for teachers to do the work that made them want to teach in the first place.

Today's tools and prompts will date quickly. The capacity to evaluate, adapt and exercise professional judgement will not.



Alice Whitby
Teacher Development Lead



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