

From AI Policy to Practice

A human-centred, trust-wide approach to AI governance and literacy

Organisation: Vine Schools Trust

Contributors: Emma Wigmore and Cassie Taylor

Focus: AI literacy, governance, safe adoption and strategic alignment

The challenge

Vine Schools Trust wanted AI decisions to be led by educational purpose, not by the latest high-profile tool. It needed to build staff understanding, align use with strategic priorities and values, and apply consistent safeguards across its schools while retaining local insight and flexibility.

The approach

Vine reset its starting point: purpose before technology. Leaders define the problem or strategic outcome first, then assess AI against the trust's Church of England identity and its commitment to protecting truth, dignity, relationships and what should remain distinctly human.

AI literacy underpins the strategy. Staff learn the benefits, risks, limitations and appropriate uses of changing tools. Age-appropriate modules from early years to Key Stage 2 will also build pupils' understanding before broader access.

Governance in practice

- **Representative oversight:** A cross-trust working party and school digital champions combine central challenge with classroom insight.
- **Practical controls:** The AI policy, evaluation guidance, technical settings and data-protection checks create shared boundaries.
- **Trustee assurance:** Trustees challenge purpose, safety and responsible use through the education committee.

Safe and purposeful tool adoption

Vine uses Microsoft Copilot in its existing environment and selected TeachMate following working-party review. Schools may propose alternatives, but all tools including free, bespoke or automated solutions, must pass the trust's short evaluation of purpose, safety, data protection and compliance.

Change management and engagement

Communication is treated as part of governance, not a one-off launch. Staff can question assumptions and share failed experiments, helping the trust refocus on intended outcomes rather than tool capabilities.

Pupil and parent engagement is staged. Current communication focuses on safety and awareness; wider parent discussion will follow once staff can explain the trust's purpose and safeguards confidently.

Impact so far

AI is now a trust-wide governance and improvement priority, supported by a shared framework for making purposeful, safe and values-led decisions.

- **Consistent decisions:** A common policy and evaluation guide provide a clear route for reviewing new tools.
- **Shared ownership:** Digital champions, school staff and central teams shape the strategy together.
- **Stronger assurance:** Trustees can challenge purpose, safety and risk, while staff experiment within agreed boundaries.

Five lessons for other trusts

1. **Lead with purpose.** Define the outcome before assessing technology.
2. **Build literacy before scale.** Equip staff to recognise benefits, limitations and risk.
3. **Share governance.** Combine central oversight, school insight and trustee challenge.
4. **Make controls usable.** Give every new tool the same simple, visible checks.
5. **Learn openly.** Use successes and failures to refine practice at a measured pace.