

AI & Automation Practitioner — Level 4

From AI Experimentation to Responsible Implementation

Building AI Capability in Schools

Presenter: Gemma Holz | Supporting Education Group | 13 October 2026



Which best describes AI use in your school or trust right now?

Understanding where your school or trust is right now shapes the conversation for all of us.

 Select the option that best applies — poll open now

A

Individuals are experimenting independently with tools like ChatGPT or Copilot, but there is no organisational policy or oversight yet.

B

We have started to develop guidance or policy, but implementation is inconsistent across teams.

C

We have an AI policy in place and are actively working to embed responsible practice.

D

We have not started yet — AI is not yet a priority for us.



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AI is already entering your school — whether your organisation knows it or not

AI is not coming to schools — it is already here, arriving through the tools individuals already use every day.

- **Staff and pupils are already using generative AI tools** — for drafting communications, lesson planning, research, and marking support
- **AI-enabled products are embedded in widely-used platforms** — learning management systems, data dashboards, and communication tools
- This is **not a future problem to plan for** — it is a present reality to respond to
- The question is not "should we use AI?" — it is "**how do we use it responsibly?**"



Where AI and automation can genuinely help schools

AI and automation offer genuine, practical value — in administration, teaching and learning, and leadership — when deployed thoughtfully.



Administration & Operations

Automate routine data entry, report generation, attendance workflows, and staff communications — freeing up time for higher-value work.

● Efficiency gain



Teaching & Learning

Support lesson planning, resource drafting, adaptive practice tools, and accessibility features — enhancing what teachers already do.

● Pupil impact



Data & Insight

Surface patterns in attendance, attainment, or wellbeing data to support earlier intervention — turning information into timely action.

● Early intervention



Leadership & Governance

Streamline governor reporting, policy drafting, and evidence gathering for Ofsted or regulatory requirements — reducing burden at the top.

● Strategic value

Individual access to an AI tool is not the same as an organisation having responsible AI practice — and the gap between the two carries real risk.

Having a tool is **not** the same as having a strategy



Individual Tool Use

- **One person's decision** — based on their own understanding
- **No organisational oversight** — actions are unsanctioned and untracked
- **Data protection risks** go unassessed — sensitive pupil data may enter unapproved tools
- **Outputs go unchecked** — errors or bias are not caught before they matter
- **Accountability is unclear** — when something goes wrong, no-one owns it

vs



Responsible Organisational Adoption

- **Clear policy** — defines approved tools, acceptable use, and escalation routes
- **Governance and risk assessment** — DPIAs completed before tools are deployed
- **Staff capability** — people understand when, why, and how to use AI safely
- **Human oversight** — high-stakes decisions always involve professional judgement
- **Named accountability** — someone owns AI governance and can answer for decisions



Most schools are **strong on tool access** — and have a gap in the organisational infrastructure around it. That gap is where real risk lives.



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What ungoverned AI use looks like in practice

When AI use outpaces organisational governance, the risks are real — for pupils, for staff, and for the school's legal and regulatory position.



Data Protection

Personal and sensitive pupil data entered into unapproved tools without a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) in place.



Algorithmic Bias

AI tools producing outputs that disadvantage particular groups — including SEND pupils (first-person fairness bias) — without anyone checking.



Automation Bias

Staff over-relying on AI outputs without applying professional judgement — cognitive outsourcing of decisions that matter.



Safeguarding

AI-generated content or recommendations about vulnerable pupils reviewed without appropriate human oversight.



Model Drift

An AI system's outputs changing over time as its underlying model is updated, without the school knowing.



Policy Vacuum

Staff making ad-hoc decisions because there is no agreed AI policy to follow.

Responsible implementation is about building the conditions that make adoption safe, sustainable, and effective.

Responsible implementation: the four conditions every school needs



Policy

- A clear, proportionate AI policy staff can understand and follow
- Covers approved tools, acceptable use, and escalation routes
- Consistent across all teams — not ad hoc individual decisions



Governance & Risk

- DPIA processes for every new AI tool before deployment
- Alignment with DfE Generative AI Product Safety Standards
- Regular review of impact and model drift over time



Human Oversight

- Human-in-the-loop decision-making for all high-stakes outcomes
- Applies to pupil data, safeguarding, SEND, assessment, and employment
- AI assists — people remain accountable and in control



Workforce Capability

- Staff who understand not just how to use AI — but when, why, and with what checks
- Reduces automation bias and cognitive outsourcing
- Builds confident, responsible practice across all roles

These four conditions don't need to be perfect from day one — **every school needs to be working towards all four.**



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Who in your school owns AI governance?

Responsible AI adoption requires clear ownership — and right now, many schools don't have a named person with the knowledge to carry it.



Senior Leaders

Set strategy, approve policy, ensure accountability

Rarely have time for operational AI implementation



Digital & Tech Leads

Manage tools and infrastructure day-to-day

May lack governance or pedagogy expertise



DPOs & Data Leads

Assess data protection risk and compliance

May not have AI-specific knowledge to apply



Safeguarding Leads

Protect vulnerable pupils — a critical function

Need AI-aware colleagues to flag relevant risks



T&L Leads

Shape pedagogy and staff CPD across school

Need a framework to embed AI practice responsibly



The Gap

Who bridges technology, policy, people & governance?

Most schools don't yet have a named individual who can translate between all these roles



The missing role: someone who combines technology, policy, people, and governance — trained to bridge every function above. That is what an **AI and Automation Practitioner** is designed to be.



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Scenario: A new AI intervention tool — what do you do?

The situation

Your school's SENCO has found an AI-powered pupil intervention tool that analyses literacy data and recommends targeted support activities. It is marketed as "Ofsted-ready" and several schools in the area have already adopted it. The EdTech sales team wants a decision within the week.

What should happen before your school adopts this tool?

Select the best response

- A** Pilot it with a small group of pupils and see how it performs
- B** Ask the DPO to run a DPIA and review the tool's data processing practices
- C** Check whether the tool meets DfE Generative AI Product Safety Standards and review the model's training data for potential bias affecting SEND pupils
- D** **Both B and C — and brief the headteacher on findings before any decision is made**

The right answer is D.



Right now, many schools don't have someone equipped to lead that process — that is the role an AI and Automation Practitioner is trained to fill.

What an AI and Automation Practitioner can do for your school

The Level 4 apprenticeship builds the specific knowledge, skills, and confidence that school and trust leaders need someone in their team to have.



Draft and implement a fit-for-purpose AI policy aligned to your school's context and regulatory obligations



Apply a human-in-the-loop approach to high-stakes decisions involving pupil data, safeguarding, or SEND



Conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments for new AI tools — working alongside your DPO



Lead stakeholder engagement and workforce enablement — helping all staff use AI tools safely and confidently



Identify and design AI or automation solutions for genuine school needs — not generic deployments

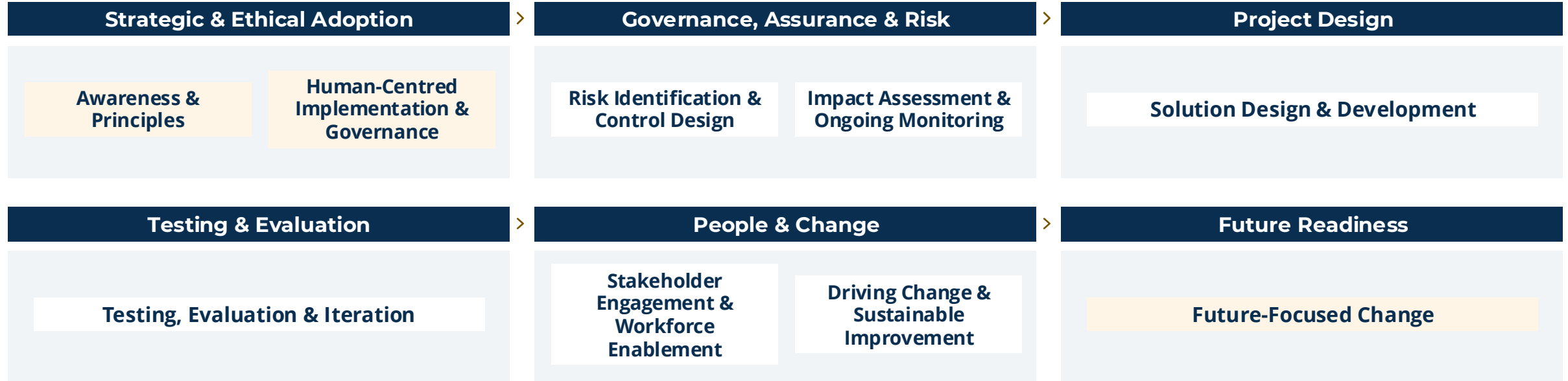


Deliver and evaluate a substantial workplace improvement project, assessed through professional discussion

How the programme works

Nine modules over 14 months, applied to real challenges in your school.

Nine modules across six themes



Learning Approach

Virtual classrooms · Online SCORM modules · Workplace application tasks · Bud evidence platform · Regular tutor coaching

Assessment

A mandatory **workplace project** addressing a genuine school or trust need, plus a **professional discussion** — no traditional written exams

Off-the-Job Training

Dedicated protected time within the working week

14
months

Funding and eligibility

What needs to be in place before enrolment

£ Funding

£18,000 programme cost

£0 with Growth and Skills Levy funding

Subject to eligibility and funding approval.

Eligibility

BPN assesses applicant eligibility and confirms employer support.

BPN confirms the funding route with your employer.

Protected learning time

Off-the-job training is a protected entitlement within the apprenticeship, with dedicated time in the working week.

Next steps

Explore what the programme could look like for your school or trust.

1

Register interest & apply

Use “Register Interest & apply” on the programme webpage.

Applications take approximately 15 minutes.

Initial conversation: no commitment required.

Questions and reflections welcome

2

Confirm funding & enrol

BPN checks your eligibility.

We contact your employer to confirm support and the funding route.

Enrolment call

An apprenticeship advisor discusses programme requirements with you.

3

Start in November

2 November
First Day of Learning webinar

Your Apprenticeship Tutor will induct you onto the programme.

Application deadline
25 October

PROGRAMME INFORMATION & APPLICATIONS

bestpracticenet.co.uk/AI-Practitioner