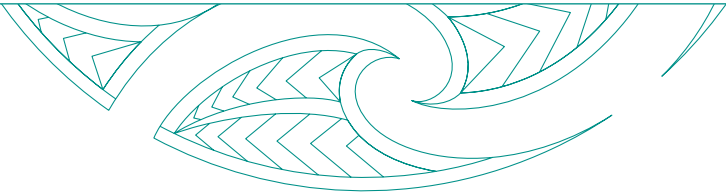




Ready or not:

How are schools responding to Artificial Intelligence?





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Executive summary

The use of Generative Artificial intelligence is becoming part of everyday school life for students, teachers, and leaders. While it can help reduce workload and has the potential to support teaching and learning, we also heard concerns about potential negative impacts on students and their development of key skills like critical thinking. Most schools remain in the early stages of responding to AI, unplanned, rather than strategic, and often relying on individual teachers to determine how and when it should be used. Schools are also grappling with challenges around reliability, accuracy, and appropriate use. There is an urgent need for a more coherent system-wide approach to help schools use AI safely, consistently, and effectively, to enhance teaching and learning.

Generative Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to tools that can create new content including text, images, video, music, or code. These tools are becoming more powerful and widely available, both in free and paid formats, and are increasingly influencing how education is delivered and experienced in New Zealand schools. While we acknowledge that there are genuine concerns around AI-related risks in areas like bullying, inappropriate media creation, and deepfakes, the scope for this report is the use of AI in schools for teaching and learning in a school context, and we do not specifically address personal use by students outside of school.

This report explores how schools are responding to AI and what this means for teaching, learning, and assessment. We found that AI use is already widespread but approaches to managing its use vary significantly between schools. Some schools have been able to develop clear policies and guidance, while others are still developing their responses to the challenges and opportunities AI presents.

Across the schools we visited, AI was most often described as a practical tool that can support efficiency, reduce workload, and assist learning. Leaders and teachers generally see AI as a tool that should support, rather than replace, professional judgement. Students similarly described both benefits and risks of AI use, recognising its potential as a time-saver, but also noted the dangers of overreliance or its impact on critical and creative thinking. We also heard concerns around inappropriate use of AI, especially for assessment.

Internationally, education systems have responded to the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence in different ways. Some jurisdictions have moved towards national frameworks with approved tools and centrally supported implementation. In New Zealand, as at the time of reporting, responsibility for developing the specific approaches for managing AI use for teaching and learning sits substantially with schools. As a result, schools are operating in a context where expectations are

clear in principle, but flexible in practice. This creates space for locally responsive approaches, but also contributes to uneven levels of readiness, capability, and policy development across the system.

We heard there was strong demand for clearer direction and support for schools as they adapt to the increasing use of AI tools. We acknowledge that planned, strategic use of AI can be of benefit for teachers, leaders, and students, but there are also risks that need managing. Our findings therefore point to the need for a more coherent, system-wide approach that combines clear expectations with practical support to enable schools to move towards a more strategic use of AI. For potential benefits to be realised, and potential risks to be avoided, AI use should be deliberate, planned, and supported by targeted capability building. We have therefore made a set of recommendations to support schools as they adapt to the emergence and adoption of these powerful and rapidly-changing technologies.

Key findings

We have developed 16 key findings across five areas.

Area 1: How is AI being used by leaders and teachers?

Finding 1: More than nine in ten school leaders are using AI to ease their workload, across administrative and strategic work. While leaders are mainly using AI for drafting communications and summarising information, many are also using it strategically to generate policies and guidance and to help plan the school curriculum.

Finding 2: More than four in five teachers are using AI, mainly to streamline planning and preparation. Teachers are mainly using AI to tailor teaching resources and to develop lesson plans. Close to three-quarters of teachers are confident using AI.

Findings 3: Where teachers and leaders are not using AI, or only using it a limited amount, reasons for this include reliability concerns and ethical objections.

Area 2: How are schools managing AI use?

Finding 4: School approaches to AI use and management are either 'planned/strategic' or 'unplanned'. A 'strategic' approach is most likely to support future-focused practice, maximising opportunities for teaching and learning, while managing potential risks associated with AI use.

Finding 5: Around three in four schools are in the 'unplanned' category – many schools don't yet have guidance for teachers or students, and where guidance exists, it is not always useful. Around seven in ten leaders say they don't have a policy for data privacy and security around teachers' use of AI.

Finding 6: With only a third of school leaders reporting that their school has a policy for student use of AI for learning, many are relying on individual teachers to set expectations.

Finding 7: More than three in four leaders in secondary schools say their school has a policy for use of AI for assessment, reflecting NZQA requirements. Fewer than one in four leaders in primary schools report having established rules for AI use in assessments.

Finding 8: Demand for guidance on how to use AI is high, with three-quarters of parents and whānau and around half of students wanting support to use it appropriately for schoolwork. However, only a third of leaders report that their school explicitly teaches how to use AI for learning. Schools want national guidance to improve consistency within and across schools.

Area 3: How is AI being used by students?

Finding 9: Three in four students are using AI for schoolwork and they mainly use it for finding information and generating ideas. Some students report they don't like using AI due to ethical concerns.

Finding 10: Reported AI use differs in scale between secondary and primary students, but there are similarities in what they use AI for. Both primary and secondary students use AI to support research and idea generation, but secondary students report more sophisticated use for independent learning tasks, such as refining written work. Primary students are more likely to use AI to generate music and images.

Finding 11: One in five primary students and two in five secondary students report using AI in ways they know they shouldn't for assessments.

Finding 12: Teachers are concerned that students are using AI inappropriately and end up bypassing learning. They are also concerned about inappropriate use in assessments.

Area 4: What is working well in schools and what could be improved?

Finding 13: When schools are taking a strategic approach to managing AI, they support safe and effective use by: putting in place clear school-level guidance for staff and students, building AI capability and confidence, and providing structured opportunities for teachers and students to use AI appropriately.

Finding 14: Some challenges that schools face include: concerns about the reliability of AI tools, not knowing enough about how to use these tools well, and not having clear and specific guidance.

Area 5: What are the early impacts of AI use?

Finding 15: More than half of teachers report that AI is making their job easier overall. Only seven percent report AI is making their job harder, despite the challenges authenticating student work experienced especially by secondary school leaders.

Finding 16: How students use AI shapes the impact on their learning. More than half of teachers report concerns that current, unplanned use is having a negative effect on students' critical thinking. However, students and teachers report more positive impacts on learning when students use AI to generate ideas, help them solve problems, and check work, rather than to produce work for them.

Recommendations

ERO used the key lessons from our findings to develop nine recommendations under three areas. These recommendations aim to establish a coherent and nationally consistent approach to AI in education, supporting schools to integrate AI safely, effectively, and equitably in ways that support teaching and learning.

Area 1: System leadership and coherence

Recommendation 1: Develop a **national AI in education framework**, drawing on international AI literacy frameworks (e.g. OECD, UNESCO, SAIL), but adapted for the New Zealand context. This framework will provide a coherent foundation for guidance, policies, curriculum integration, assessment, and capability-building across the education system.

Area 2: Nationally consistent guidance and expectations

Recommendation 2: Provide clear, nationally consistent policy on the appropriate and effective **use of AI by teachers** tailored to primary and secondary contexts. This will reduce variability across schools and support safe and confident use in teaching practice.

Recommendation 3: Provide nationally consistent **policy for student use** of AI in schoolwork, **tailored to primary and secondary contexts**. This will support consistent expectations and promote responsible use across schools for students in different year levels and with different learning needs

Recommendation 4: Provide national guidance to support the **integration of AI literacy and use across learning areas**, aligned with the curriculum refresh. Evidence indicates that benefits for student learning are strongest when AI is embedded in teaching and learning contexts, rather than as a standalone subject.

Recommendation 5: Embed consistent **rules and guidance on the use of AI in assessment**. Strengthen existing guidance around NCEA assessment, and provide guidance for primary schools and other contexts where assessment expectations are less well defined.

Recommendation 6: Provide nationally consistent **guidance for parents and whānau** on the use of AI in schoolwork and assessment. This will support shared understanding of appropriate use, strengthen trust, and enable families to support their children's learning.

Area 3: Tools and system supports

Recommendation 7: Set national expectations and provide supporting resources to guide schools in selecting and using **AI technologies safely and effectively**.

Recommendation 8: Support the development of **teacher and leader capability** through targeted PLD.

Recommendation 9: Explore the feasibility of establishing **centrally-provided AI tools** and environments for educational purposes.



About this report

This report is about how AI is being used in schools by students, teachers, and leaders in a range of ways. It examines how AI tools are influencing how schools manage classroom practice, assessments, and day-to-day administrative tasks, and the emerging impacts that AI is having on teaching and learning.

The Education Review Office (ERO) has a key role looking at how the education system supports schools to provide quality education for students. As part of our national review programme ERO looked at how schools are using AI, the emerging impacts of these tools on teaching and learning, and what lessons we can learn from how schools are managing these impacts.

What we looked at

For this report, ERO wanted to understand what was happening in the use of AI in schools, including the guidance available to schools, the extent to which AI was already being used in practice, and how New Zealand's approach compares with others internationally.

At the start of this project (Term 1, 2026), AI was already being used in schools, but formal system level expectations were still emerging. To understand current patterns of use, we initially looked at six key questions:

- 1) How are teachers and leaders using AI?
- 2) How are teachers teaching and controlling how students use AI?
- 3) How are students using and learning about AI?
- 4) What are the challenges teachers and leaders face in using and regulating the use of AI?
- 5) What are the challenges students face when using AI?
- 6) What are the emerging impacts on teaching and learning?

Through our analysis and synthesis process we have refined and presented our findings broadly under five areas: teacher and leader use, schools' management of use, student use, what's working well and what's challenging, and emerging impacts on learning.

Where we looked

For this report, we collected data in Term 1, 2026. We looked at English-medium state and state-integrated schools with students in Year 5 and above. We collected responses from students, parents and whānau, teachers, and school leaders. We also spoke with a range of experts and used other evidence and research to support our findings. The findings of our review are evidenced by a range of data and analysis from:

Where we looked	Who we talked to
Almost 4000 survey responses from:	→ 1,587 students → 859 teachers → 472 school leaders → 889 parents and whānau
Interviews and focus groups with 129 participants:	→ Including students, teachers, school leaders, and parents and whānau
Site visits at:	→ Eight case study schools
Data and evidence from:	→ A review of international and New Zealand literature → Administrative data on school use of AI

Report structure

This report has seven parts.

- **Part 1** looks at **the context for schools'** AI use, including what national and sector guidance exists, and how New Zealand's approach to managing AI in education compares to other countries.
- **Part 2** reports on **how leaders and teachers are using AI** for different parts of their work.
- **Part 3** examines the **different approaches schools are taking** to regulate AI use. This includes policies and rules for student and teacher use of AI, and how schools are teaching students about AI use.
- **Part 4** examines **how students are using AI**. This includes how AI use differs across primary and secondary, how students use AI for assessment and learning, and what inappropriate use for schoolwork looks like.
- **Part 5** looks at **what is working well and what the challenges are for schools**. This includes examples of key enablers, as well as the key challenges schools face. This section includes two case studies from schools that have been able to take a strategic approach to managing AI.
- **Part 6** explores the **emerging impacts of AI on teaching and learning**, and what this looks like for students, teachers, and leaders.
- **Part 7** sets out our **key findings** and **recommendations** from this review.



Part 1: Context

The New Zealand system offers high-level guidance that schools then translate into expectations and practices that suit their context. These are supported by a growing range of academic frameworks that encourage more intentional and scoped use of AI. Internationally, some countries are pursuing more deliberate, managed approaches to AI in education supported by strong central guidance. While some New Zealand schools are able to take a strategic approach to managing AI, overall they are operating with differing levels of clarity, capability, and confidence, with AI use being managed in varied ways across contexts and year levels. A key challenge for schools is responding to rapid developments in AI, while also balancing multiple other priorities.

Generative AI is rapidly entering education systems around the world, with the potential to support personalised learning, teaching practice, and streamline certain tasks.¹ However, there are also risks around overreliance, privacy, bias, and the need to maintain human oversight.² Currently, responsibility for interpreting and applying government guidance around AI sits largely with schools, supported by a growing range of frameworks that encourage more intentional and scoped use of AI. In 2023, the UN Education, Scientific, and Culture Organisation released guidance for AI in education, and called for greater support and regulation from governments to support the use of AI in schools.³

Across the OECD, many teachers are using AI in their work to help with administrative tasks, create lesson plans, and draft communications.⁴ Students are also using AI tools, especially at secondary level, to help find information, draft writing, and create plans. This presents risks as well as opportunities, as when students use AI they may not be learning from their work, especially when AI is used as a shortcut rather than a tool to extend their thinking and scaffold ideas. This has increased the need for schools and education systems to clarify what appropriate use looks like, and how AI can support learning without replacing student effort or teacher judgement.

1) What central guidance on AI use in schools currently exists?

The Ministry of Education provided updated high-level guidance to schools in early 2026.

The Ministry of Education currently provides high-level guidance on the use of generative AI for all schools and kura across Years 0-13, including both primary and

secondary settings. The guidance was first released in 2023 in response to the rapid uptake of publicly available generative AI tools, and has been reaffirmed through updates issued with the latest to date released in Term 1, 2026.⁵ It is the main system-level reference point for schools at the time of reporting.

The guidance is designed to help schools make informed decisions about AI, while also highlighting potential risks. It does not require schools to use or avoid AI, and it does not specify which AI tools should be used. Instead, it outlines key factors that school leaders and teachers should consider when deciding whether and how AI should be used in teaching and learning.

It recognises that AI has potential to support planning, feedback, and learning, but emphasises that these tools introduce risks that require deliberate management. The guidance emphasises the centrality of ‘professional judgement’, and teachers are expected to treat AI outputs as a draft, reviewing and verifying content before using it.

Privacy and data protection are highlighted as major risks for schools using AI. The guidance explains that many AI tools store and may train using the data that users input, meaning personal data may be shared beyond the school’s control. Schools are therefore advised not to upload personal or identifiable information to AI. There are also cultural and equity considerations, as AI outputs may not appropriately reflect mātauranga Māori, te reo Māori, or local contexts.

The Ministry signals a clear governance role for schools and boards. Schools are encouraged to engage openly with their communities and to develop shared understandings and local expectations for AI use. While formal AI policies are not required, the guidance promotes school-level rules and guidance as good practice, consistent with New Zealand’s self-managing school model.

NZQA provide expectations for secondary schools offering NCEA.

Alongside Ministry guidance, secondary schools offering NCEA are subject to specific expectations issued by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Joint advice on the use of AI in assessment was first issued in 2023 and has since been updated and consolidated for the 2026 assessment year, with further guidance issued in Term 1, 2026.⁶ Where the Ministry issues guidance for schools on how to approach AI for teaching and learning, NZQA sets clear expectations for its use in assessments in secondary schools.

These expectations apply primarily to Years 11–13 and reflect NZQA’s statutory role in maintaining the credibility and integrity of national qualifications. NZQA’s guidance focuses on assessment authenticity rather than pedagogy. It does not seek to regulate the broader use of AI in teaching and learning, but clarifies how AI use interacts with existing rules requiring that assessed work reflects a student’s own understanding and performance.

NZQA policy mandates that schools must incorporate AI guidance into their assessment policies, positioning AI as an extension of existing issues such as plagiarism and inappropriate assistance. NZQA maintains a clear distinction between external and internal assessment. The use of generative AI tools is prohibited in NCEA external assessments, and this position is reinforced

in communications to schools ahead of the 2026 examinations. For internal assessment, whether AI use is permitted depends on the specific Achievement Standard and its Conditions of Assessment. NZQA places increased emphasis on teachers and schools understanding where AI use could undermine assessment validity, particularly in standards that assess planning, research, ideation, or original expression.

Transparency and disclosure are critical components of the policy. Where AI use is permitted in internal assessments, NZQA's policy requires that students must acknowledge it; failing to do so is treated as a breach of authenticity. NZQA also cautions against relying solely on AI detection tools, instead emphasising a holistic approach to managing authenticity that includes assessment design, supervision, and teacher judgement.

Together, Ministry and NZQA guidance create a layered environment for secondary schools, where AI must be managed differently across teaching, learning, and assessment contexts. This contrasts with primary settings, where the risks are still emerging and more developmental.

The Teaching Council has embedded expectations around AI use within their 2026 Teaching Standards.

The Teaching Council's 2026 Standards for the Teaching Profession have been updated to introduce an explicit expectation that teachers use digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, in ways that are safe, ethical, and supportive of learning.⁷ This is captured within Standard 5 (to "create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments"), particularly focus area 5.4, which requires teachers to "use equipment and technologies appropriately and effectively to support learning". This does not signal compulsory use of AI, but rather the need for teachers to think carefully about using the tools if they choose to use them.

Like Ministry guidance, the standards are principles-based, rather than prescriptive. They do not mandate specific tools or approaches, but instead set an expectation that teachers exercise professional judgement in how technologies, including AI, are used in practice. The inclusion of AI within this focus area signals that its use is now considered part of core teaching capability, rather than an optional or emerging area of practice.

The standards place responsibility on teachers to model appropriate use and to create learning environments where students are supported to use technologies well. This includes helping students develop the knowledge and judgement needed to engage critically with AI generated content, and to use these tools in ways that support, rather than replace, their own learning.

The Teaching Council's approach differs slightly from Ministry guidance in that it is tied to professional accountability. The standards form part of the expectations for teacher practice, including appraisal and practising certificate processes from 2027. This means that expectations around AI use are not only advisory, but are embedded within what it means to meet the professional standards of teaching in New Zealand.

At a system level, this creates a stronger signal than earlier guidance that AI capability is becoming an expected part of teaching practice. However, like other principles-based guidance, the standards still rely on schools and leaders to interpret and implement them in context.

2) What sector guidance on AI use in schools exists?

A Community of Practice has developed within the sector to provide grounded, practice-based guidance on AI use in school.

Alongside formal guidance, a sector-led Community of Practice – the AI in Education Community of Practice (AiEdCoP) – has emerged, reflecting growing demand within the sector for more grounded, experience-based guidance.

This community, which now has over 600 members, brings together educators and experts to make sense of AI in practical terms. Its focus is on cutting through hype and prioritising what works for teaching and learning. The guidance that has emerged consistently emphasises an education-first approach, where AI is used to support pedagogy, critical thinking, and student agency and not replace them.

There is also a strong focus on safe and ethical use, including managing risks, supporting student wellbeing, and encouraging informed decision making. Equity and cultural responsiveness are central, with attention to ensuring AI use reflects Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse learners and contexts.

Assessment integrity is another key concern. The community is contributing to shared thinking about how schools can adapt assessment design, strengthen transparency, and maintain validity in AI supported work.

While not formal or mandated, this work captures something different from system guidance: a practice-led effort within the sector to collectively define what 'good' AI use looks like.

3) What guidance are schools responsible for developing?

Schools are encouraged to develop their own local policies for the use of AI, reflecting national guidance.

Together, central guidance places the responsibility for defining AI use largely at the school level. Rather than prescribing consistent national policies, the system expects schools to translate high-level principles into clear expectations that suit their context.

The Ministry's guidance signals that schools should move beyond ad hoc responses and develop coherent approaches that guide teaching, learning, and assessment. This includes setting shared expectations for staff and students about when and how AI can be used, and where limits should apply.

This is framed as part of schools' broader governance role within New Zealand's self-managing system. Boards and leaders are expected to interpret system-level guidance in ways that reflect their local context, including student age, curriculum

design, assessment approaches, and community expectations. AI use is not treated as a standalone issue, but as something that should be integrated with existing policies on digital safety, privacy, wellbeing, and assessment integrity.

In practice, developing school-level policies serves several purposes. It provides clarity and consistency in expectations, supports teachers to exercise professional judgement, and creates a basis for conversations with students and parents and whānau about appropriate use. It also enables schools to proactively manage emerging risks, while still allowing space for innovation.

However, this devolved approach means that responsibility sits heavily with schools. Approaches vary widely, and as a result, schools are operating in a context where expectations are clear in principle, but flexible in practice. This creates space for locally responsive approaches, but also contributes to uneven levels of readiness, capability, and policy development across the system.

4) How are other education systems managing AI use in schools?

Internationally, education systems have responded to the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence in different ways. Some jurisdictions have moved towards national frameworks with approved tools and centrally supported implementation and teacher training, with a focus on boosting AI literacy across the education sector.

Australia is combining detailed national guidance with well planned state-level tools and safeguards.

Australia teacher use of AI is already widespread. Around two-thirds of Australian teachers report having used AI in their work.⁸ The Australian approach shows how national principles can be combined with state-level tools that support privacy and curriculum integration.

Australia has developed national guidance for the responsible use of AI tools in schools, supported by curriculum work that incorporates AI concepts into learning.⁹ The Australian Framework for Generative AI in schools provides national guidance for 'ethical' and responsible use of generative AI in schools.¹⁰ This compliments the curriculum work of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)^a on teaching AI concepts from Foundation to Year 10.¹¹ AI learning is incorporated through dedicated content in maths and technology, and science, with links to cross-curriculum priorities.¹²

The Framework is underpinned by six guiding pillars: enhancing teaching and learning, promoting wellbeing and inclusivity, maintaining transparency about AI use, guaranteeing fairness and equal access, upholding accountability for outcomes, and protecting privacy and security under Australian law. This gives schools a clear national reference point for responsible use, while still allowing interpretation to vary across states and territories.¹³

^a ACARA is an independent statutory authority responsible for the development and ongoing refinement of the Australian Curriculum, national assessment, and reporting on schooling in Australia. Their aim is to improve learning outcomes for all young Australians through supporting world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting practices.

At the state level, the **New South Wales** government has developed a generative AI application to enhance teaching and learning in ways that align with curriculum outcomes.¹⁴ NSWEd Chat is a free and secure AI tool that keeps data in Australia, and uses strict privacy and filtering safeguards.¹⁵ Teachers must stay closely involved when these tools are used, and are responsible for ensuring accuracy of outputs. Student-modes are designed to promote critical thinking instead of giving direct answers.

Queensland recently developed its own generative AI programme for schools. Their tool, called Corella, is custom-built for education and designed to operate within a secure system that keeps data within Australia.¹⁶ This tool is being introduced in 2026 for teachers and leaders. Students in Years 7-12 will also be able to use it with parental consent. Corella is intended to support school staff to manage their workloads and plan lessons, and to support students with studying, checking work, researching, and summarising information.

The United Kingdom is investing in teacher development, infrastructure, and AI-enabled tools

The United Kingdom has introduced a national approach focused on the safe and effective use of AI in education, including teacher development and investment in AI education tools.¹⁷ As part of a broader efforts to strengthen AI use across different sectors, the UK government introduced its Generative AI in Education plan in 2025.¹⁸ Its core goal is to support safe AI use that strengthens teaching and learning, and builds AI literacy. Teacher training and support is offered through a four-module training package that covers understanding AI in education, interacting with AI, safe use, and specific use cases in education.¹⁹

The UK is also investing in AI tools, schools' digital infrastructure, and AI-powered lesson planning.²⁰ The Department for Education-funded education organisation *Oak National Academy* is conducting a randomised trial in 86 primary schools across the UK, to assess the impact of their AI-powered lesson planning tool, Aila.²¹ This tool was developed to help teachers create personalised, curriculum-aligned lesson plans and resources quickly and safely, and the trial will examine whether it reduces lesson planning time while maintaining high quality. A review of this tool is being supported by the Education Endowment Foundation and is expected by the end of 2026.

Generative AI use has increased rapidly among young people and teachers in the UK. Use among 13 to 18 year olds increased from 37 percent in 2023 to 77 percent in 2024.²² The proportion of teachers using AI also increased from 31 percent to 48 percent over that same period, with secondary teachers more than twice as likely to report using AI tools.²³ At the same time, there are concerns around equity of access, including the risk of a widening digital divide if access to AI tools, devices, and internet connectivity is not actively supported.²⁴ The UK approach shows a growing system-level effort to trial tools and upskill teachers.

Singapore is carefully embedding AI within a wider, future-looking national education strategy

Singapore's EdTech Masterplan 2030 places AI within a broader strategy to strengthen digital and AI literacy, teacher capability, and personalised learning.²⁵ The Masterplan aims to transform learning through technology by developing student AI and digital literacy, equipping teachers with a strong pedagogy and data driven practices, and creating connected and flexible school environments within a broader collaborative national EdTech system.²⁶

Key enablers include upgraded online Student Learning Spaces, an AI integration platform for personalised learning, and infrastructure to support education to remain relevant and inclusive.²⁷ Singapore has also developed 'competency frameworks' and outlined intended student outcomes.²⁸

Singapore's Student Learning Space includes AI language feedback assistant that gives students instant feedback on spelling and punctuation. This is designed to give teachers more time to focus on complex learning tasks.²⁹ Singapore also has an AI ethics framework designed to guide safe and responsible development and governance of AI systems.³⁰

Teachers in Singapore most commonly report using AI to summarise topics, help draft student feedback and communications with parents, and develop lesson plans and activities.³¹

Singapore's approach shows how AI can be incorporated into a wider national digital education strategy supported by clear guiding frameworks.

5) In New Zealand, educational frameworks are increasingly used to support managed approaches to AI use.

A range of educational frameworks have been developed to support more intentional approaches to AI use. Developed by universities, education agencies, international organisations, and practitioner communities, these frameworks do not prescribe specific tools or regulate use. Instead, they articulate different views on purpose, readiness, and scope.

Academic literacy frameworks, such as the Scaffolded AI Literacy (SAIL) Framework for Education,³² are grounded in the view that AI literacy is a fundamental skill required by everyone. Different levels of literacy are needed in different contexts, and that these levels support intentional and critical engagement. The framework supports individuals (and schools) to make more conscious decisions about what AI is used for, what it is not used for, and the ongoing role of judgement. Rather than encouraging widespread uptake, the framework frames the importance of literacy in supporting bounded and differentiated use, with careful attention to how AI literacy can be taught to students of different ages, learning contexts, and educational purposes.

Other frameworks are developed by education agencies and professional bodies with a strong focus on workforce capability. Resources such as Ako Aotearoa's *Beginner's Guide to AI Literacy for Educators*³³ reflect the position that meaningful AI use depends first on teacher understanding and confidence. The stance underpinning these frameworks is that schools should prioritise building shared knowledge and practical competence among staff, before extending AI use more widely. AI is positioned primarily as a support for teachers' professional practice – such as planning, feedback, and efficiency – rather than as a routine tool for student use.

International frameworks, including UNESCO's AI competency frameworks for teachers and students,³⁴ take a longer-term, system-wide view. Their stance is that AI should be integrated gradually through capability development over time, rather than introduced quickly or uniformly. These frameworks emphasise progression, with expectations for understanding and use increasing as learners move through different stages of education. In school contexts, this supports approaches where students are first supported to understand AI and its functions, before being expected to use it independently as part of learning.

Practice-led initiatives in New Zealand such as *The Day of AI*³⁵ have been developed by practitioners and the education sector and are based on the view that effective use of AI in schools starts with a clear purpose, not rapid adoption. They respond to early AI discussions that focused on hype or tool-driven experimentation by prioritising understanding before use. In schools, this means structured, time-limited learning that explores how AI works, its limits, and its relevance to learning, rather than using AI as a default tool. This approach supports careful exposure to AI, while avoiding routine use before issues such as student readiness and assessment integrity are resolved.

These frameworks illustrate the diversity of perspectives on how AI should be used by schools. While their emphases differ, the common thread is an expectation that AI use should be deliberate, rather than incidental. Each framework encourages schools to make clearer choices about if, when, and how AI use supports teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence use in schools is developing within a principles-based policy environment, shaped by high-level national guidance, assessment-specific requirements, and wide variation in international approaches. Responsibility for interpreting and applying this guidance more specifically sits largely with schools, supported by a growing range of frameworks that encourage more intentional and scoped use of AI. As a result of the current approach in New Zealand, schools are operating with differing levels of clarity, capability, and confidence, and AI use is being managed in varied ways across contexts and year levels.

The next chapter reports on what we found about how leaders and teachers are using AI in New Zealand schools.



Part 2: How are leaders and teachers using AI?

AI is now widely used by leaders and teachers, as a practical tool to make every-day work more efficient. Leaders and teachers see the greatest value in using AI for tasks like planning and creating resources. However, AI use is more cautious where assessment, privacy, or student outcomes are involved.

What we found: an overview

- More than nine in ten school leaders are using AI to ease their workload, across administrative and strategic work. While leaders are mainly using AI for drafting communications and summarising information, many are also using it strategically to generate policies and guidance and to help plan the school curriculum.
- More than four in five teachers are using AI, mainly to streamline planning and preparation. Teachers are mainly using AI to tailor teaching resources and to develop lesson plans. Close to three-quarters of teachers are confident using AI.
- Where teachers and leaders are not using AI, or only using it a limited amount, reasons for this include reliability concerns and ethical objections.

These findings are set out in detail below.

How much are leaders using AI?

More than nine in ten leaders are using AI for their work, and usage is high across the board.

Most school leaders are using AI in their work. More than nine in ten leaders (93 percent) report that they are using AI, while only seven percent report not using it at all. The rate of AI usage is high across all leaders in primary, intermediate, and secondary schools, and does not differ significantly based on socioeconomic level of the school, whether the school is urban or rural, or the size of the school.

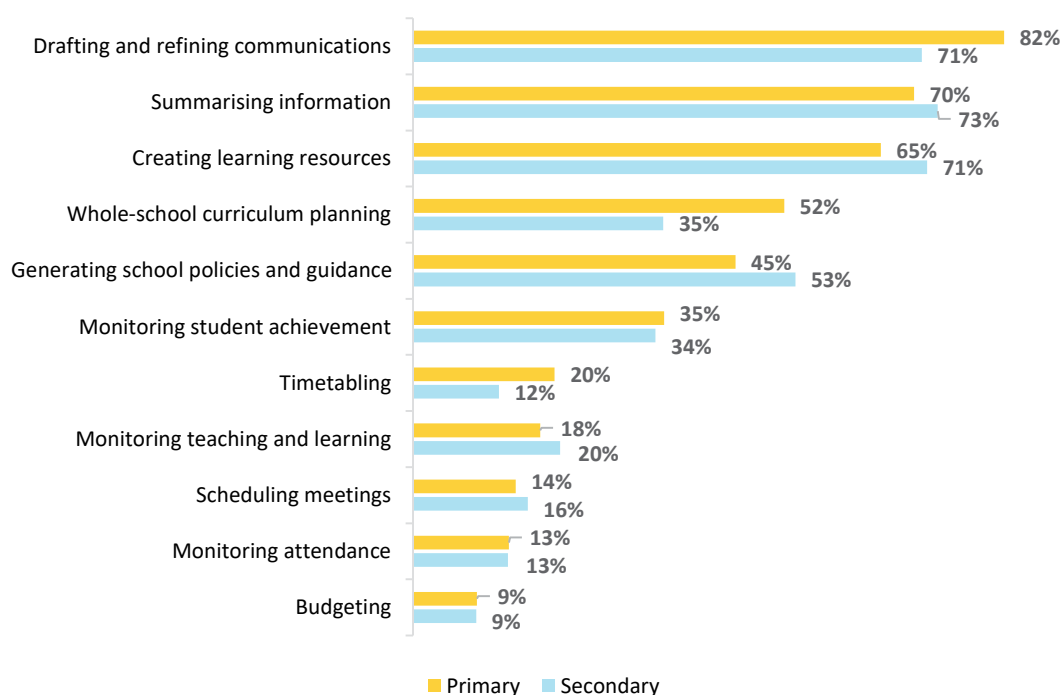
This very high level of uptake is notable. It suggests that AI has been taken up quickly at the leadership level and is already widely embedded in leaders' day to day work. This may reflect the nature of leadership roles, which often involve managing complex and time sensitive responsibilities. It may also indicate that leaders see clear value in AI, or feel a need to engage with it as part of leading organisational responses to emerging technologies.

While uptake is high, some variation remains. Differences in use appear to be linked more to individual confidence and attitudes than to school type, with some leaders adopting AI more readily than others. Leaders who do not use AI (only 35 school leaders in our survey sample) most commonly report that they do not feel they need it, have ethical concerns, or do not know how to use it properly.

How are leaders using AI for different elements of their work?

Leaders are using AI for a range of different tasks. The most common use is for drafting and communications (80 percent), summarising information (70 percent), and creating learning resources (66 percent).

Figure 1: *Leader use of AI for different tasks, by school type.*



Leaders most commonly use AI to support drafting and communication, particularly to manage frequent and high-volume messaging.

Writing and communication are the most common areas of AI use among leaders, with 80 percent using AI for drafting and refining communications, and 70 percent for summarising information.

Use in this area is largely driven by the volume and frequency of communication required in leadership roles. AI is most often used to support drafting messages, helping leaders structure content and shape tone before reviewing and adapting it.

Leaders noted that communication tasks are well suited to AI because outputs can be produced quickly and easily edited.

Leaders described using AI to improve the clarity, accessibility, and consistency of communications with parents and whānau, staff, and students. Examples included drafting newsletters, preparing presentations, shaping tone.

Secondary school leaders described using AI for high-volume tasks such as drafting testimonials for scholarships. In these contexts, AI helps manage workload while maintaining consistency in messaging.

At the same time, maintaining a 'human' voice remains important. Leaders emphasised that outputs need to be carefully reviewed, as generic or recognisably AI-generated content can undermine trust. Some leaders noted that AI can adapt over time to reflect their communication style, making it a more effective support tool.

“I use it quite a lot – I put the same info into different tools to see which one gets the best outcomes. I use it a lot for data analysis or to create an infographic to show the data. When I was doing feedback from student voice for the strategic plan, I used it to condense a lot of information. I photographed some student comments and then got it to write that up, rather than me write it up.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADER



Some leaders use AI to support classroom-related work – around two in three use it to create learning resources.

Around two thirds of leaders use AI for classroom-related functions, particularly for creating learning resources (66 percent). Use for monitoring teaching and learning is less common, at 19 percent.

This pattern reflects the practical value of AI in supporting the development of materials that can be adapted and shared.

Across all schools, leaders described using AI to support resource development, curriculum implementation, and teaching practice. AI was often used to process large volumes of curriculum content, break it down into practical steps for teachers, and support iterative planning. As one leader noted, “you can only eat an elephant one bite at a time.”

Primary leaders more often described using AI to support coherence across year levels and curriculum areas, particularly in response to recent curriculum changes. In smaller schools, where leaders often also teach, AI was used in similar ways to teachers, including planning and adapting resources. Secondary leaders more often described using AI to support resource development across subjects and departments, as well as developing marking rubrics and checking assessment judgements.

Overall, AI is generally used to support consistency and resource development rather than replace professional judgement.

Just under half of leaders use AI for strategic and governance tasks, with primary leaders leaning more toward curriculum planning and secondary leaders toward policy development.

Just under half of leaders use AI for strategic and governance functions. Overall, 48 percent use AI for whole-school curriculum planning and 47 percent for generating school policies and guidance.

This suggests AI is being used in more complex areas of leadership work, although uptake remains lower than for communication and resource development.

Patterns of use differ between primary and secondary schools. Primary leaders are more likely to use AI for whole-school curriculum planning (52 percent, compared with 35 percent of secondary leaders). Lower use of AI for whole-school curriculum planning in secondary schools may reflect the more distributed nature of curriculum responsibility across subject departments. Around half of leaders in both primary (45 percent) and secondary (53 percent) schools use AI to generate school policies and guidance.

In primary schools, leaders often described using AI to support curriculum planning, including implementing recent curriculum changes and coordinating learning across year levels and curriculum areas. Some noted that this was particularly useful in multi-year classrooms, where teachers need to adapt learning for students at different levels within the same class.

Secondary leaders more often described using AI for policy development and governance tasks, such as drafting policies, structuring guidance documents, and synthesising evidence. One leader described using AI to synthesise evidence to align with ERO's School Improvement Framework.

Fewer leaders use AI for monitoring student outcomes, and those who do tend to use it cautiously, mainly to summarise and present data.

Leaders report relatively low use of AI for monitoring student achievement and attendance. Around a third use AI to monitor achievement (35 percent), while only 14 percent use it to monitor attendance.

This pattern suggests that leaders are applying AI in different ways across monitoring activities. While AI has clear capability in analysing and summarising large amounts of information, its use is more common in some forms of monitoring than others.

We heard that AI is most often used at a higher level in this domain. Leaders described using it to organise, summarise, and present information (e.g. preparing information for boards) rather than for direct monitoring or decision-making. One leader described AI as “the perfect use,” while also emphasising the importance of staying closely involved in refining outputs and interpreting findings.

Across the schools we visited, leaders emphasised that AI supports rather than replaces professional judgement and existing monitoring processes. Even where

data volumes are large, AI is generally used for high-level analysis and reporting rather than direct monitoring of student outcomes.

Leaders make limited use of AI for administrative and operational tasks.

Leaders report the lowest levels of AI use in administrative and operational tasks. Around 18 percent use AI for timetabling, 15 percent for scheduling meetings, and 9 percent for budgeting. We were told that, where AI is used for these purposes, it tends to support small, well-defined tasks rather than larger processes. Leaders described using AI to help reduce manual workload or support comparisons.

How much are teachers using AI?

More than four in five teachers are using AI for their work. Usage is high across different types of schools.

“AI is a personal assistant tool. You drive your personal assistant; you use it to help you do different tasks. It isn’t driving you.”

TEACHER

Most teachers use AI in their work. More than four in five primary teachers (88 percent) and secondary teachers (82 percent) report using it. Overall, there are no clear differences in uptake based on socioeconomic level, whether a school is urban or rural, or school size, suggesting that AI use is broadly embedded across the system.

Teachers described using AI mainly as a practical tool for planning, administration, and communication. While many value it for improving efficiency, type and amount of use varies, and some teachers choose not to use it.

Teachers who do not use AI often cite the time required to use it effectively, concerns about reliability, particularly for New Zealand-specific and cultural content, and issues relating to bias, errors, privacy, and data security. Some view AI outputs as too generic or not fit for purpose, while others question its impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

We also heard from a small group of teachers who identify as ‘conscientious objectors’, choosing not to use AI on principled grounds. These teachers were particularly concerned about the example its use sets for students and its potential impact on creativity, independence, and development. More broadly, teachers pointed to change fatigue, limited guidance and PLD, and uncertainty about legal and ethical expectations.

While use is slightly higher among primary teachers (88 percent compared with 82 percent of secondary teachers), teachers across both sectors described using AI primarily for planning and resource development. Primary teachers more often

highlighted its value across multiple curriculum areas and diverse learning needs, while secondary teachers described more targeted use linked to specific subjects and curriculum requirements. Across both sectors, AI was valued for improving efficiency while remaining subject to teachers' professional judgement.

How does AI use differ across teachers?

Variation in teachers' AI use is not significantly shaped by differences in experience.

Variation in teachers' AI use is not significantly shaped by differences in experience. Survey findings show that both overall use and the types of tasks teachers use AI for do not differ by years of teaching. Instead, variation appears to be driven primarily by individual differences, such as confidence, familiarity, and personal attitudes towards AI.

While variation between teachers exists, it tends to reflect individual comfort with AI rather than teaching experience itself. We heard that teachers often build confidence through experimentation and professional conversations with colleagues about different ways of using AI.

In some cases, familiarity with digital tools appears to influence uptake, with some teachers using AI more frequently than others. However, these differences are not consistent across schools or career stages, and overall patterns of use remain broadly similar regardless of teaching experience.

Teacher use of AI varies by learning area, with strongest uptake in text-based subjects.

Teacher use of AI varies by learning area, with stronger uptake in subjects that have a strong reading and writing component. Across the system, AI is more commonly used in areas where generating, adapting, and working with text is central, while use is less frequent in areas such as the arts, health and physical education, or technology.

Where AI is used in non-text subjects, teachers more often described it as a support tool (for example, helping to locate datasets in statistics) rather than generating teaching materials directly. AI is also used for adapting texts to different reading levels and supporting students with additional learning needs. These uses are particularly important where lower literacy levels are a barrier to accessing other parts of the curriculum.

The clearest evidence of subject variation comes from primary schools, where 73 percent of teachers report using AI to some extent in English, compared to mathematics and statistics (51 percent), social sciences (51 percent), science (41 percent), and technology (40 percent). This pattern aligns with what we heard from teachers, with greater use in text-based learning areas and fewer examples of use in other curriculum areas.

In secondary schools, overall AI use is high (82 percent), and reported use does not vary greatly depending on the subject taught. Among the most commonly taught subjects in the survey respondents, more than four in five social sciences teachers (86 percent) report using AI, along with around four in five English (80 percent) and science teachers (77 percent). Thus, differences in subject-specific use are less clearly defined than in primary schools.

How confident are teachers in using AI?

Seven in ten teachers are confident using AI in their work.

Most teachers are confident using AI for their work. Half (50 percent) report being quite confident and a further quarter report being very confident (23 percent). Only a small minority (5 percent) report having no confidence at all.

Confidence does not vary significantly by teacher experience or school characteristics (e.g. socioeconomic level, size, primary or secondary, or whether a school is urban or rural). However, confidence does vary within schools. Teachers report that confidence can differ widely between colleagues. Some feel comfortable using AI for routine tasks but are less certain about applying it to teaching and learning. Confidence can also be affected by concerns about the reliability of AI outputs, including errors, data security, and the safe use of student information.

Teachers describe building confidence through everyday use, experimentation, and professional learning. Confidence is often strongest for routine tasks such as planning and resource development, where outputs can be easily reviewed and adapted. However, many report greater caution in higher-stakes contexts, such as assessment, where concerns about accuracy and reliability can have greater consequences. Teachers express strong interest in learning how to use AI tools most effectively.

“Something that can lower the workload is always welcome. We just have to make sure that we’re doing it safely. Teaching needs a teacher, and you simply can’t replace that.”

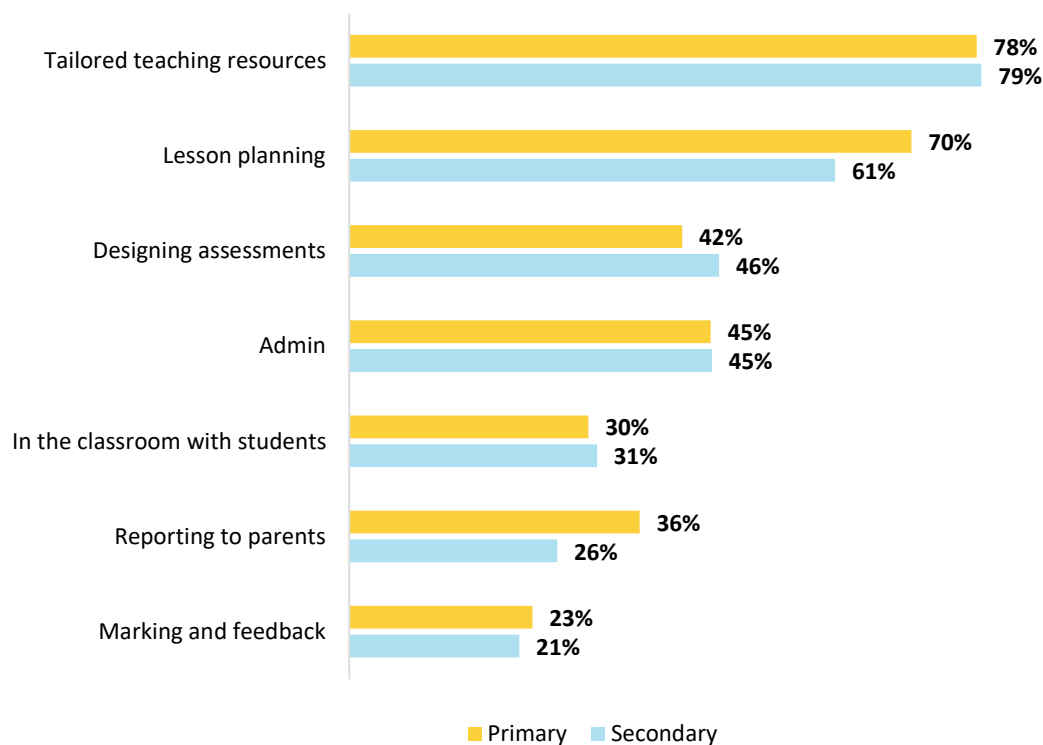
LEADER



How are teachers using AI for different elements of their work?

Teachers use AI for a variety of tasks. The most common usage is for preparing and planning teaching and resources.

Figure 2: *Teacher use of AI for different tasks, by school type.*



Teachers most commonly use AI to create tailored teaching resources.

The most common use of AI for teachers is creating tailored teaching resources. Almost four in five teachers who use AI report doing this (79 percent).

Teachers describe using AI to generate and adapt classroom materials such as quizzes, posters, slideshows, and differentiated texts. Many use it to personalise tasks to suit students' abilities, interests, and reading levels, helping make learning more accessible. We also heard how some teachers use AI to insert students into stories as a way of helping them stay engaged.

AI is also used to support responses to current curriculum changes in New Zealand. Teachers report using it to support implementation of the new curriculum by breaking down new content and creating resources tailored to different levels of prior knowledge, reading ability, and student interest. Teachers report using it to interpret new expectations and quickly create aligned classroom materials, including activities and exemplars. This can help reduce workload, particularly

during periods of change, although impact varies depending on teacher confidence with the tools. Primary teachers often highlight the value of AI for differentiation across multiple curriculum levels, including in composite classes, while secondary teachers more commonly describe subject-specific applications.

Teachers who don't use AI say they value the greater control that comes from creating their own resources.

Teachers frequently use AI to support lesson planning.

Lesson planning is the second most common use of AI, with around two thirds of teachers who use AI (65 percent) reporting they use it for this purpose.

Teachers describe using AI as a starting point for planning. This includes generating lesson outlines, activity ideas, exemplars, and supporting materials, which they then refine. This can be particularly valuable for time-poor teachers, helping to speed up planning and prompt new approaches.

Primary teachers more often highlighted the value of using AI for planning across multiple curriculum areas and year levels, while secondary teachers described similar but often more subject-specific uses. We also heard that AI can help teachers break down large amounts of curriculum content into manageable steps and generate age-appropriate activities, particularly in the context of recent curriculum changes.

Some teachers are using AI to support feedback and assessment processes.

Teachers are using AI to support a range of feedback and assessment processes, although uptake is lower than for planning and resource development.

“AI can be quick to provide high-quality feedback as long as you keep prompting it.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Just under half of teachers report using AI to design assessments (44 percent). Use is lower for reporting to parents and whānau, with just under a third using AI for this (31 percent). Around one in five teachers use AI for marking and feedback (22 percent).

Teachers most often describe using AI as a drafting and refinement tool for generating first drafts of student reports, shaping tone, and rewording feedback to make it more clear or constructive. AI is also used to help provide targeted student feedback in areas like grammar. Some teachers also encourage students to use AI to generate feedback on their own work, under supervision.

There is variation in how this is applied. Some teachers see clear benefits, particularly in saving time and improving clarity, while others are more cautious.

Concerns include outputs being too generic and the need for careful checking to ensure accuracy of feedback.

While many parents and whānau are comfortable with teachers using AI to support reporting, they emphasise the importance of professional judgement and careful review. Some express concern about limited visibility of AI use and its potential impact on the authenticity of feedback.

The largest difference in AI use between primary and secondary schools relates to reporting to parents and whānau, where use is higher in primary schools (36 percent, compared with 26 percent in secondary schools). Primary teachers more often report about multiple parts of a student's learning and development compared to secondary teachers. Secondary teachers highlighted the need to ensure subject-specific accuracy and alignment with assessment expectations. In both settings, teachers emphasised the importance of reviewing AI-generated content to ensure it accurately reflects individual students.

Fewer than half of teachers use AI for administrative tasks.

Just under half of teachers in both primary and secondary schools are using AI for administrative tasks (45 percent). Teachers describe AI as a practical support tool that can save time and improve efficiency of a range of tasks. This includes drafting communications like emails to parents and whānau or colleagues, and helping to structure or reword written material.

“I sometimes use it for a first draft of parent comms... Having that written for you is actually quite helpful because sometimes when you're going backwards and forwards and you're trying to do things in between periods, when you can get that first draft done really quickly... Having that as a way of minimising the amount of time that teachers have to spend doing those tasks is very helpful.”

LEADER

AI is often used as a 'first draft' tool in these contexts, allowing teachers to quickly generate content that can then be edited and tailored. This can be particularly valuable for streamlining day-to-day responsibilities. One teacher described AI as a “personal assistant”. However, AI use varies. While many teachers see clear efficiency benefits, others are more cautious, noting that outputs still need careful checking and adaptation. Concerns about accuracy, tone, and professionalism mean that teachers typically need to check and revise work.

Use is similar across primary and secondary schools. However, primary teachers more often referred to communication with parents and whānau, where maintaining a personal and authentic voice is particularly important. Secondary teachers described using AI to help manage communication across larger numbers of students and families, including standardising messages and presenting information clearly.

Conclusion

AI is widely used by both leaders and teachers, particularly for planning, communication, and resource development. Across schools, AI is most often used as a practical tool to support efficiency and reduce workload rather than to replace professional judgement.

While patterns of use vary between individuals and contexts, leaders and teachers generally see AI as a practical tool that can support their work when used thoughtfully, with appropriate oversight and review.

In the next chapter, we look at the different approaches New Zealand schools are taking to manage AI use.



Part 3: What are schools' approaches to AI?

With widespread use of AI for teaching and learning, there is an increasing need for schools to regulate and manage AI use. While there are national guidelines for schools, there is also an expectation that schools create their own policies for both staff and student use. In this chapter, we examine school policies for managing AI use, and potential gaps in areas such as teaching practice, assessment, and data privacy. We explore how useful school policies and external guidance are in practice, and how widely they are used. We also examine how schools teach students about AI, with growing demand for cleared and more consistent learning opportunities.

What we found: an overview

- School approaches to AI use and management are either 'planned/strategic' or 'unplanned'. A 'strategic' approach is most likely to support future-focused practice, maximising opportunities for teaching and learning, while managing potential risks associated with AI use.
- Around three in four schools are in the 'unplanned' category – many schools don't yet have guidance for teachers or students, and where guidance exists, it is not always useful. Around seven in ten leaders say they don't have a policy for data privacy and security around teachers' use of AI.
- With only a third of school leaders reporting that their school has a policy for student use of AI for learning, many are relying on individual teachers to set expectations.
- More than three in four leaders in secondary schools say their school has a policy for use of AI for assessment, reflecting NZQA requirements. Fewer than one in four leaders in primary schools report having established rules for AI use in assessments.
- Demand for guidance on how to use AI is high, with three-quarters of parents and whānau and around half of students wanting support to use it appropriately for schoolwork. However, only a third of leaders report that their school explicitly teaches how to use AI for learning. Schools want national guidance to improve consistency within and across schools.

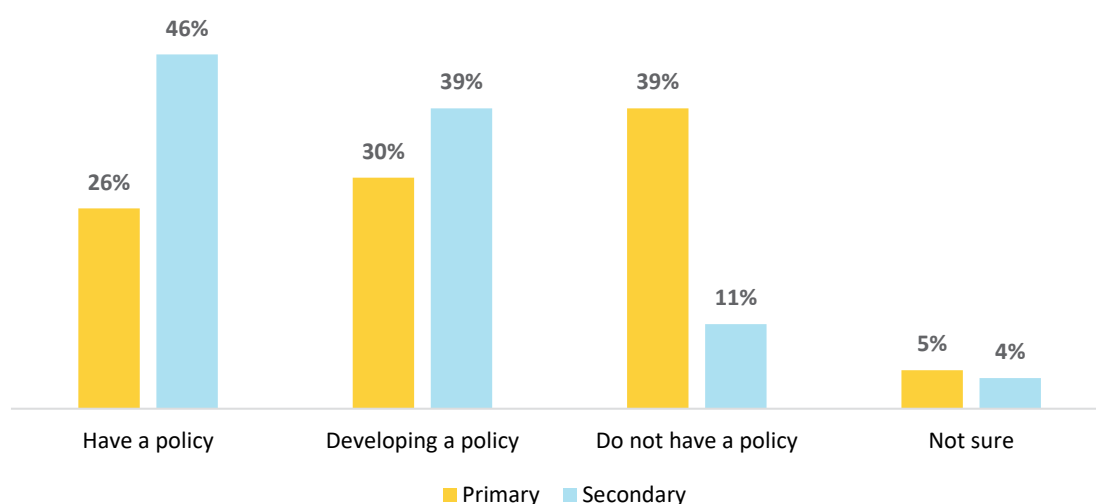
These findings are set out in detail below.

Do schools have policies for how teachers use AI?

Seven in ten leaders say they don't have a policy regulating how teachers use AI in their teaching practices.

Fewer than three in ten leaders report that their school has a policy for teachers' use of AI for teaching (28 percent). An additional four in ten leaders say they are currently developing this policy (41 percent). Having a policy is more common in large schools (34 percent) than small schools (15 percent).

Figure 3: Leaders' reports of schools having a policy for teacher use of AI for teaching, by school type.



Across schools, we heard that policies around teacher use generally set broad boundaries, rather than providing detailed direction. Teachers can typically use AI to support developing teaching materials, preparing lessons, or refining content.

In schools where there are no clear or overarching policies for teacher use, there is limited shared understanding of what effective or appropriate use looks like. Staff told us that decisions about AI use are often left to individual teachers, resulting in varied practices across the school.

Some parents and whānau shared how their children's schools used their feedback to inform the development of AI policies. Parents and whānau see potential value in teachers using AI to support teaching and learning in the classroom, but they expect clear policies with oversight from leaders, especially around things like drafting student reports. Parents and whānau we spoke to are also broadly supportive of teachers using AI to analyse patterns and trends in achievement data. However, they do not want AI to be used to assess individual students.

In primary schools:

Only around a quarter of primary schools (24 percent) have a policy in place to guide teachers' use of AI for teaching. In many primary schools, AI use has developed ahead of formal policy. This reflects the fact that AI is already embedded in widely used software, enabling teachers to use these tools before schools have established clear expectations for appropriate classroom use.

In the absence of formal policies, teachers may be using AI without clear, school-wide guidance or agreed parameters for safe and appropriate use. This creates a risk of inconsistent practice and uncertainty about expectations.

By contrast, in some schools where guidance is more developed, leaders with specialist expertise take an active role in shaping practice, explicitly demonstrating how AI can be used to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

In secondary schools:

Secondary schools are more likely than primary schools to have policies guiding teachers' use of AI for teaching, with 41 percent reporting a policy in place. While this represents a higher proportion than in primary schools, it still means that most secondary schools do not yet have formal rules.

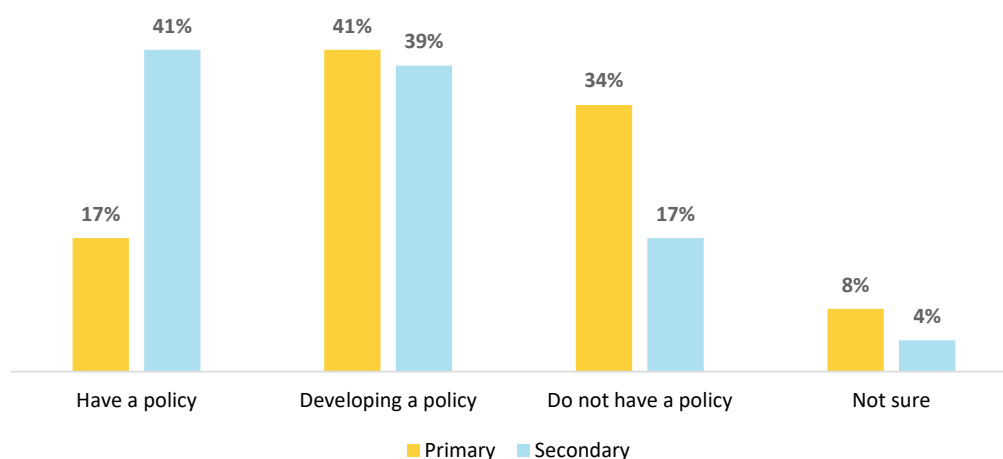
Teachers described a 'period of uncertainty' when AI tools first became widely available and were rapidly adopted, before policies had time to catch up. Despite some progress, the absence of policies in many schools means that teachers may be using AI without clear, school-wide expectations or safeguards, creating risks of inconsistent and potentially inappropriate use across classrooms.

In some schools, policy development has involved IT specialists and in-school champions, providing more structured guidance. However, even where policies are in place and expectations are consistent, teacher use of AI continues to vary depending on confidence, attitudes towards AI, and subject area. This suggests that policies alone are not sufficient to ensure consistent practice across a school.

Around one in five leaders say they don't have a policy regulating how teachers use AI for assessment.

Overall, only around one in five school leaders (23 percent) report having a policy for teachers' use of AI for assessment. While a further two in five (40 percent) report that policies are in development, this indicates that clear, established guidance is still not yet in place in most schools. Larger schools (29 percent) are more likely than smaller schools (12 percent) to have a policy, pointing to uneven access to structured guidance.

Figure 4: *Leaders' reports of schools having a policy for teacher use of AI for assessments, by school type.*



Staff indicated that existing policies for AI use in assessment are often high-level and provide limited direction for practice. Where expectations are outlined, they typically emphasise that teachers retain responsibility for assessment judgements, but do not clearly specify how AI can be appropriately used for marking, feedback, or moderation. This lack of specificity creates a risk that expectations are interpreted differently across schools and between individual teachers or teams.

In primary schools:

Primary schools have policies for teacher's use of AI for assessments less often than secondary schools, with less than one in five reporting that they have this policy (17 percent).

The lower number of teacher policies relating to assessment in primary schools may reflect the different nature of teaching and assessment compared to secondary settings. Primary teachers are less likely to be managing high-stakes assessments and subject-specific reports. This may reduce the immediate pressure on primary schools to develop guidance for teachers around assessment.

In secondary schools:

Policies guiding teachers' use of AI for assessment are more common in secondary schools than in primary schools, which is likely to be partially driven by compliance with NZQA requirements. 41 percent of leaders report that a policy is in place across all of teachers' use of AI for assessment. NZQA requirements relate to NCEA assessments, and are considered through the Managing National Assessment (MNA) process. However, more broadly, we heard that the majority of secondary schools still lack well-embedded and consistently understood and implemented guidance in this area.

Teachers described a need for clearer, more consistent policies to guide how AI can be used in assessments. Where policies do exist, they often do not consistently specify how AI can or cannot be used for key assessment activities such as marking,

generating feedback, or supporting moderation. This lack of clarity means that, even where policies are in place, they may not provide sufficient guidance to ensure consistent practice.

Lack of, and inconsistency of policies can have important implications for assessment, particularly in the context of NCEA where teacher judgements directly determine student outcomes. Variability in the use of AI in assessment could undermine consistency, transparency and confidence in assessment and moderation processes.

Seven in ten leaders say they don't have a policy for data privacy and security around teachers' use of AI.

Three in ten leaders report having a policy for data privacy and security around teachers' use of AI (28 percent). A further four in ten leaders are reporting this policy being developed (40 percent). Having this policy is more common in large (35 percent) compared to small (17 percent) schools.

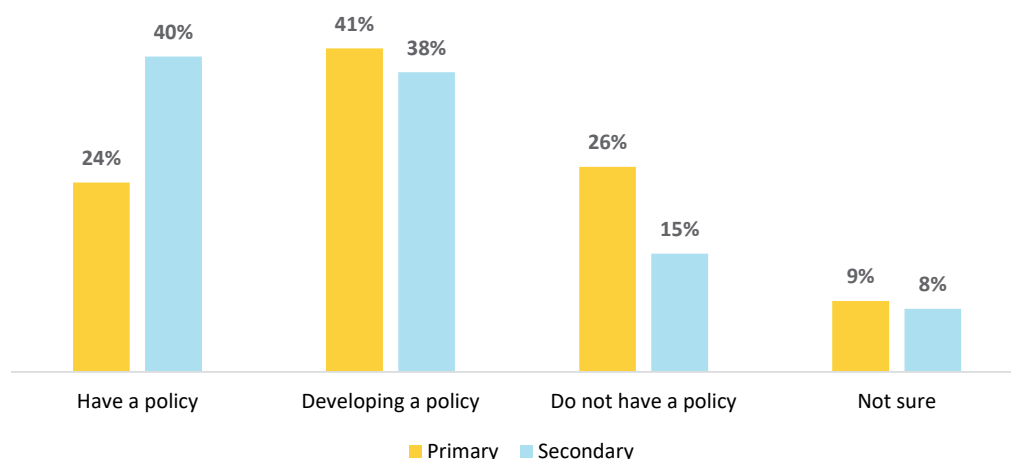
Across primary and secondary schools, policies relating to data privacy and security tend to focus on protecting student information when using AI. Common expectations for teachers include not entering personal or identifiable information into AI tools, such as student names, photographs, assessment information, or other sensitive data.

“I would be absolutely sure that the majority of all of our teachers are using various parts of AI without having checked through whether it's OK to use them.”

LEADER

We heard that some schools have specified which AI tools teachers are allowed to use based on their privacy and security features, and that many teachers are cautious about what happens to information after it's entered into the AI tool. However, leaders also raised concerns that teachers may not always be aware of all the privacy implications of different AI tools. Consequently, even where a school has a clearly defined policy around data privacy and security, consistent understanding of safe AI use is not guaranteed.

Figure 5: *Leaders' reports of schools having a policy for data and security, by school type.*



Only one in four primary leaders (24 percent) report having a policy addressing privacy and security when using AI, indicating that this area of guidance is still developing in many primary schools. We heard that teachers are expected to not enter identifiable student information into AI tools, such as names, assessment data, or photographs, but more detailed policies or guidance are less common. Several primary school leaders noted varying awareness of privacy considerations and understanding amongst their teachers, for example when uploading student photographs or information in AI systems to create classroom materials.

Policies addressing privacy and security in relation to AI are more common in secondary schools (40 percent) than in primary schools. Here, privacy and security policies are often closely linked to protecting student data when using AI for marking student work (including assessments). This reflects the more structured and high-stakes nature of secondary assessment, with more considerations around data handling and student information.

However, teachers and leaders highlighted a need for clearer, more consistent national guidance on which AI tools are safe and appropriate for use in schools, particularly in relation to privacy and data security. This suggests that, while school-level policies are developing, there is an ongoing demand for system-level clarity to support decision-making.

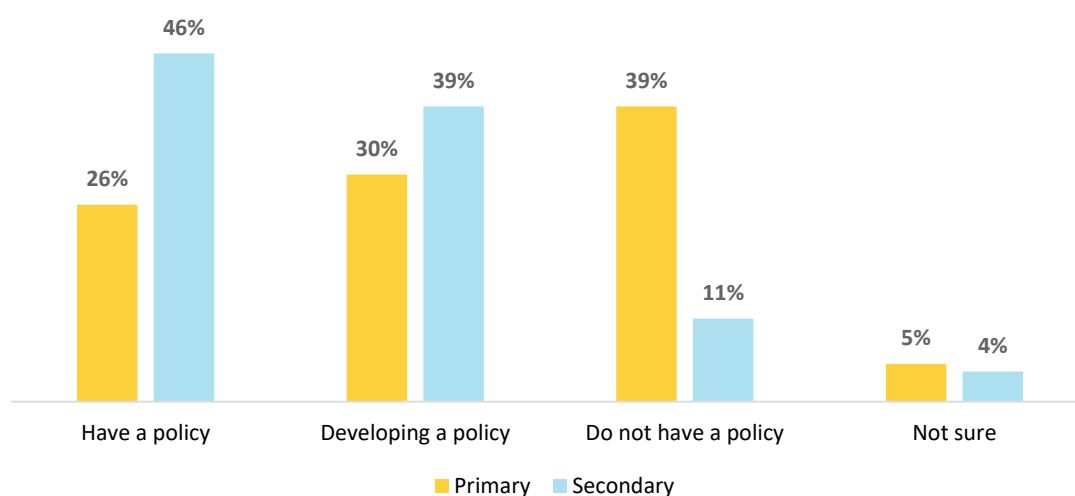
Do schools have policies for how students use AI?

A third of leaders say that their school does not have a policy in place for student use of AI for learning.

Just under a third of leaders report that their school has a policy for student use of AI for learning (31 percent), while a similar proportion are developing a policy (33 percent), and a further third report having no policy in place (31 percent).

Around a quarter of leaders also say that individual teachers develop rules for their students (25 percent). This suggests that many schools are still working through how to formalise expectations, and that clear, consistent policy guidance is not yet widespread.

Figure 6: *Leaders' reports of schools having a policy for student use of AI for learning, by school type.*



Where policies do exist, we heard that they tend to focus on defining acceptable and unacceptable use. Students are generally allowed to use AI to support certain learning tasks, but policies emphasise that students must produce their own work and not submit AI generated content as their own.

However, policies alone do not fully determine how AI is used in practice. We heard that students' experiences are shaped heavily by teacher-level expectations, which can vary widely within the same school. Students told us that while they are often clear on AI rules around assessment, what is acceptable use during class often depends on the teacher and the specific classroom context, which can create uncertainty about expectations.

We heard from some primary and secondary leaders who found School Docs resources helpful when developing their own AI policies and guidance.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, formal policies for student use of AI are less commonly established, and a substantial proportion of schools report having no policy in place. Around a quarter of leaders say their school has a policy for student use of AI (26 percent), while a third are developing it (30 percent), and almost two in five (39 percent) report having no policy.

We heard that where policies exist, they are often restrictive in nature. Students are typically expected to use AI only in teacher-directed ways, with tight controls on when and how it can be used. Expectations are generally clearer in individual classrooms, but are less often codified into formal, school-wide policies. One in five leaders say that individual teachers are developing rules for their students (21 percent).

As a result, use tends to be shaped through direct guidance and classroom practice, rather than through established policy frameworks.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, policies for student use of AI are more likely to be in place or actively developing, although not yet fully consistent. Nearly half of schools report having a policy (46 percent), and a further 39 percent are developing one. Only a small proportion report having no policy around appropriate AI use (11 percent).

We heard that policies at this level are more likely to permit AI use within defined limits, reflecting the broader role AI plays in supporting learning tasks in secondary schools. Students are generally allowed to use AI for activities such as idea generation, research, and improving their work, but are expected to ensure that final outputs reflect their own thinking.

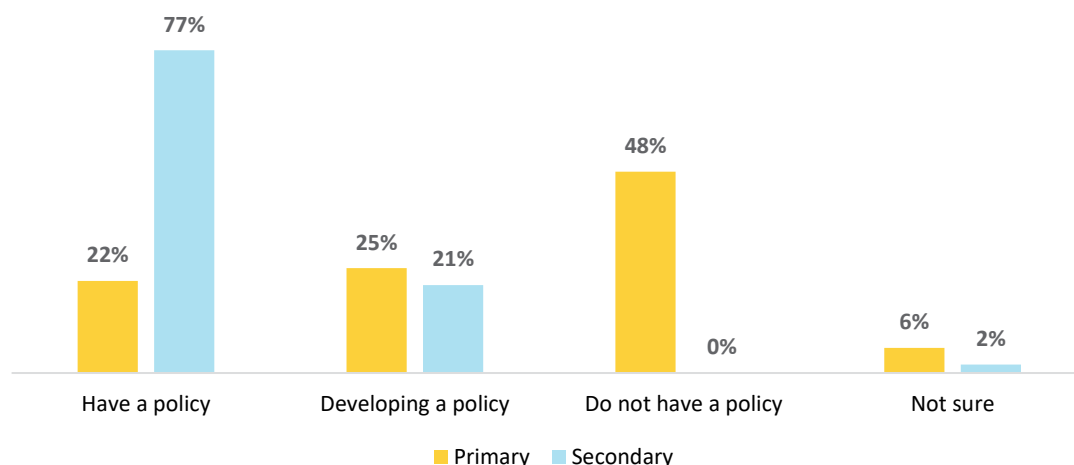
At the same time, students described considerable variation in how these policies are applied in practice. Students told us that expectations can differ between teachers, even within the same subject. Some teachers encourage transparent and appropriate use, while others discourage or restrict AI use more heavily. This is consistent with around a third of leaders reporting that individual teachers develop rules for their students (36 percent).

We also heard that while some teachers are requiring explicit approval for AI use, others are taking a more flexible approach. This variation means that, while formal policies are more common in secondary settings, students often experience inconsistent boundaries, and must interpret what is acceptable within different classroom contexts. Overall, policy in secondary schools provides a broad framework for acceptable use, but day-to-day practice is shaped by how individual teachers interpret and apply these rules.

Only a third of leaders say that their school does not have a policy in place for student use of AI for assessment. Primary schools are more likely to be lacking or still developing formal policies.

Policies for student use of AI in assessments are more established and explicit than for learning, but remain uneven and are still developing in many schools. Around a third of leaders report that their school has rules for AI use in assessments (36 percent), with a further quarter developing them (24 percent). This indicates that while expectations are more clearly defined in assessment contexts, a substantial proportion of schools are still formalising their approaches.

Figure 7: Leaders' reports of schools having a policy for student use of AI for assessment, by school type.



We heard that policies tend to be framed primarily around restriction and protecting the integrity of assessment. Students are generally not permitted to use AI in ways that contribute directly to assessed work.

Policies typically focus on preventing inappropriate use, such as copying or generating answers with AI, rather than clearly outlining how AI might be used appropriately. Students often experience variation in how rules are applied, particularly where guidance is interpreted differently at classroom level.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, formal policies for AI use in assessment are less commonly established, with many schools reporting no formal policy at all. Around 22 percent of leaders report having a policy, 25 percent are developing, while nearly half of schools (48 percent) report having no policy in place.

We heard that AI use is generally not permitted for assessments, but is also less actively managed. This reflects the nature of assessments at this level, which do not carry the same stakes or formal requirements as in secondary schooling.

Where expectations are set, they tend to be communicated through teacher direction and classroom practice, rather than through formalised school policies. Students are typically expected to complete assessment tasks independently, with limited or no use of AI.

Overall, policies in primary settings are less formalised and less prominent, with expectations around AI use reinforced through supervision and guidance rather than structured policy frameworks.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, policies for AI use in assessment are much more firmly established and widely implemented. Over three quarters of leaders report having a policy in place (77 percent), and a further 21 percent are developing it. No secondary schools report not having a policy, indicating that expectations around AI use in assessment are now nearly universal in these contexts.

We heard that these policies place a strong emphasis on maintaining the authenticity of student work, particularly for assessments that contribute to formal qualifications in Years 11 to 13. Students are generally expected to produce responses that reflect their own thinking, with clear limits placed on the use of AI.

At the same time, the way these policies operate in practice is less consistent. Students told us that expectations can vary between teachers, including differences in whether AI use is permitted at any stage, what counts as acceptable support, and how strictly rules are enforced.

We also heard that assessment type plays an important role. For internally assessed work, which can sometimes be completed over time, there is more variation in how AI use is monitored and managed. This creates challenges for consistency, with some leaders raising concerns about how differences in practice may affect comparability of results.

For external assessments, conditions are more controlled, but variation in guidance during the year can leave students uncertain about what is acceptable when preparing. This means that, even where policies are clear at a school level, students still need to interpret how these rules apply in different contexts.

Some leaders described the use of digital platforms to manage assessment processes, including tools designed to limit or control AI use while students are completing assessments on their devices. However, access to these tools is uneven, and for some schools cost is a barrier. This further reinforces differences in how AI is managed and used across schools, especially for assessments.

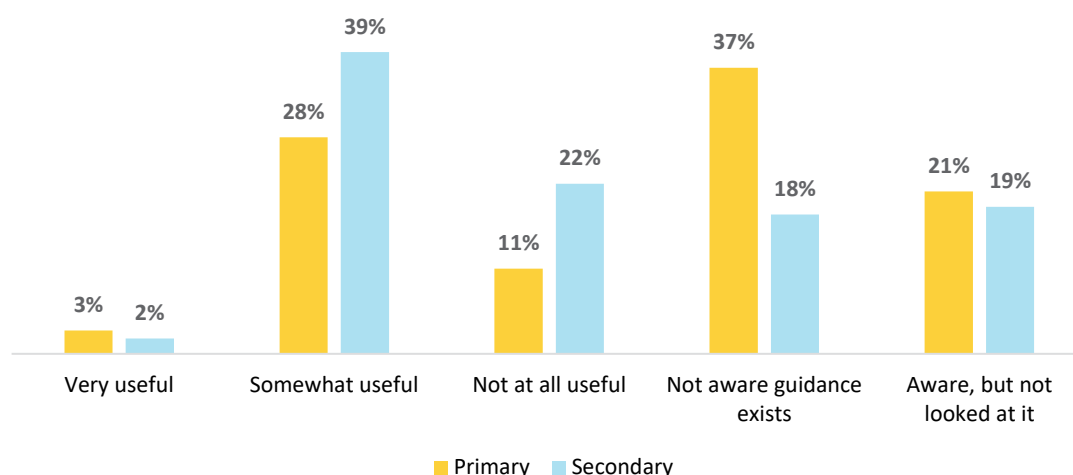
Are policies for AI use helpful?

External AI guidance is unevenly used by leaders and often seen as too general to support decision-making.

Leaders report mixed views on the usefulness of external AI guidance, with its value varying depending on relevance, clarity, and applicability to school contexts. While some leaders find available guidance helpful, particularly as a starting point, others consider it too general or lacking practical detail. This limits its usefulness for supporting decision-making about AI use in teaching and assessment.

A key issue affecting usefulness is that many leaders have not engaged with the guidance at all. More than half of leaders (53 percent) have not looked at Ministry guidance, and a quarter of secondary school leaders have not looked at NZQA guidance (25 percent). This means that, even where resources are available, their impact is constrained by both limited reach and variable perceived value.

Figure 8: *Leaders reporting usefulness of Ministry guidance for supporting school approaches to AI, by school type.*



Leaders consistently expressed a desire for clearer and more specific central guidance. In particular, schools are seeking greater clarity about what constitutes acceptable use of AI in teaching and assessment. Some suggested that more detailed, practical resources (e.g., a checklist outlining what an AI policy should include) would better support schools to develop their own approaches.

There were also calls for guidance on which AI tools are safe and appropriate to use, particularly in relation to privacy and data security. At the same time, leaders recognised the challenges in this area, noting that it may not be appropriate for the Ministry to endorse specific commercial products, and that the AI landscape is evolving rapidly. The rapidly changing AI landscape was also raised as a concern in terms of having guidance that was up to date, relevant and responsive.

In primary schools:

In primary schools, perceptions of the usefulness of Ministry guidance are shaped by relatively low levels of engagement and exposure. More than half of leaders report they have not engaged with the guidance, including 37 percent who were not aware it exists and 21 percent who were aware, but had not accessed it. Among those leaders we spoke to directly, several had not yet examined the guidance, indicating that awareness and uptake are still developing.

Among those who have engaged, views are generally positive. Most leaders describe the guidance as somewhat useful (67 percent), with a small proportion (6 percent) finding it very useful. The guidance is typically seen as helpful for building general awareness and supporting early thinking about AI. However, its usefulness is often limited by its high-level nature, with leaders noting that it does not always provide sufficiently detailed or actionable direction to inform school-level policy and practice.

Lower perceived urgency in primary settings also shapes how guidance is used. Because AI is less embedded in day-to-day teaching and assessment, guidance is not always seen as immediately relevant, which can reduce both engagement and its perceived value.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, perceptions of usefulness are more closely linked to assessment needs and the clarity of expectations for practice. Around two in five leaders report they have not engaged with Ministry guidance, indicating that uptake remains incomplete even in contexts where AI use is more embedded.

Among those who have engaged, around two-thirds (65 percent) describe the guidance as useful, while approximately one-third (35 percent) consider it not useful. Similar to primary settings, the Ministry's guidance is often seen as helpful for setting general expectations, but limited in its ability to support detailed decision-making. Leaders noted that its high-level nature does not always provide clear direction on what acceptable use looks like in practice, particularly in relation to assessment.

Engagement with NZQA guidance (which is required) is higher among leaders, and it is more consistently viewed as useful. Among leaders who have accessed it, 80 percent report that it is useful. This reflects its closer alignment with assessment and qualification requirements, particularly in Years 11 to 13, where expectations are more clearly defined and directly applicable.

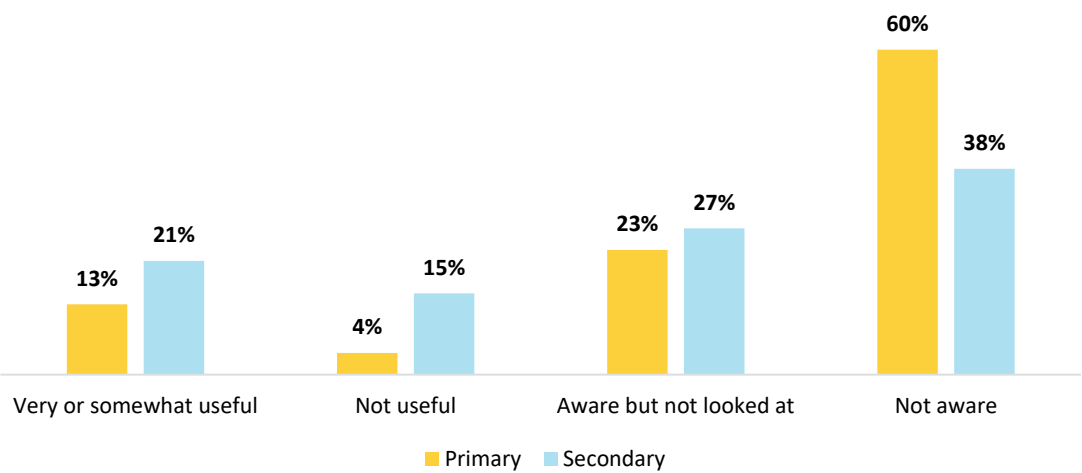
We heard that leaders in secondary schools are more likely to be actively applying guidance in practice. As a result, they are also more likely to identify where it lacks clarity, specificity, or consistency across subjects. This is particularly evident for internal assessments, where differences in interpretation can lead to variation in practice between teachers and departments.

Where guidance does not keep pace with developments in AI, schools are often required to fill gaps themselves. Leaders described developing local approaches in the absence of clear or timely direction, which can limit the overall usefulness of guidance where it does not fully support consistent and confident decision-making.

Nearly three-quarters of teachers have not engaged with external guidance around AI. Most of those who have accessed it find it useful.

Almost three quarters (73 percent) of teachers haven't seen the Ministry guidance on AI use in schools, either because they didn't know about it (48 percent) or they knew about it but haven't looked at it (25 percent). Of those who have seen it, 64 percent found it useful and 36 percent found it not at all useful. NZQA guidance for assessments is not being accessed by all teachers in secondary schools, but most teachers who have seen it find it useful (72 percent).

Figure 9: Teachers reporting usefulness of Ministry AI guidance, by school type.



In primary schools:

Engagement with Ministry guidance is particularly low in primary schools. The majority of teachers (83 percent) report they have not accessed it, including 60 percent who were not aware it exists and 23 percent who were aware but had not looked at it.

Among those who have engaged with the guidance, perceptions are largely positive. Around three-quarters (78 percent) find it somewhat or very useful, while 22 percent consider it not useful.

This indicates that, where guidance is accessed, it is generally seen as useful by teachers. However, low awareness and uptake mean that this usefulness is not widely realised across primary schools.

In addition, the guidance is often used to support general awareness and early thinking rather than detailed decision-making. This affects its usefulness at the policy level, as high-level guidance does not always translate into clear, actionable expectations that schools can apply consistently.

In secondary schools:

Awareness and engagement with Ministry guidance are higher in secondary schools, although uptake is still incomplete. Around two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report they have not accessed it, including 38 percent who were not aware of it and 27 percent who were aware but had not looked at it.

Among those who have engaged, views are more mixed than in primary settings. Just over half (58 percent) find the guidance useful, while 42 percent consider it not useful.

Engagement with NZQA guidance on AI use in assessment is also not universal. More than half of teachers report they have not accessed it, either because they were unaware of it (32 percent) or had not yet looked at it (23 percent). While most teachers who have engaged with NZQA guidance find it useful (72 percent), uptake remains uneven.

This means that, even where guidance is considered useful, it is not consistently shaping practice across schools. The usefulness of both Ministry and NZQA guidance is therefore limited by uneven engagement, reducing their ability to support coherent practice.

Teachers also noted that current external guidance can be high-level or lack sufficient detail, particularly given the pace of change in AI. As a result, its usefulness for informing policy is further constrained, as general guidance does not always provide the clarity needed to support consistent interpretation and application across subjects and classrooms.

Teachers in secondary schools find policies for student use of AI more useful than primary teachers. Not all students find the policies useful.

Around half of teachers do not see their school's policies for student use of AI as clearly useful. While 46 percent report that policies for learning are useful and 49 percent report that policies for assessment are useful, a similarly large proportion are either unsure or do not find them useful (48 percent for learning and 45 percent for assessment, with a small minority of 6 percent saying not useful).

Student views follow a similar pattern. While around half find policies for AI use in learning useful (47 percent), fewer find policies for assessment useful (38 percent), meaning a majority are either unconvinced or unsure.

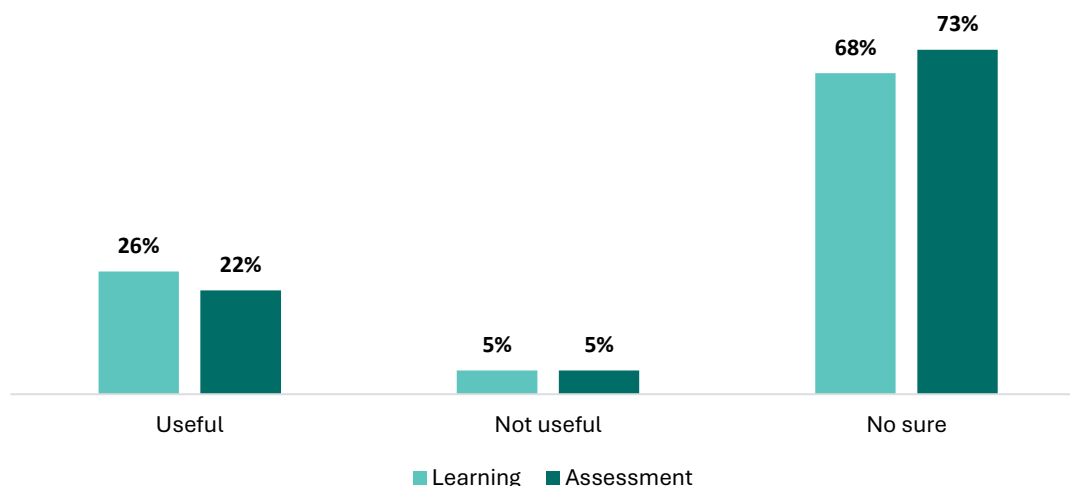
Across the schools we visited, we often heard that policies around student use are clear at a high level, but are not always applied consistently in practice. This is especially the case for secondary schools, where AI use among students is more widespread and harder to police than in primary schools.

While schools may have established expectations for appropriate use, how useful they are depends on students understanding them, teachers applying them consistently, and schools being able to identify and respond to breaches when they occur.

In primary schools:

In primary schools, uncertainty about usefulness is particularly pronounced. In schools that have them, only around one-quarter of teachers (26 percent) report that the policies for learning are useful, while most (68 percent) are unsure. A similar pattern is seen for assessment, where only 22 percent find policies useful and 73 percent are unsure.

Figure 10: *Primary teachers reporting usefulness of their school's policies for student use of AI.*



Student views are somewhat more positive, but still mixed, with around half finding policies for learning useful (46 percent) and around one-third for assessment (35 percent).

This indicates that in primary settings, policies are often not yet established or applied in ways that allow teachers to see them as clearly useful. Instead, their usefulness is limited by uncertainty and relatively infrequent or informal use.

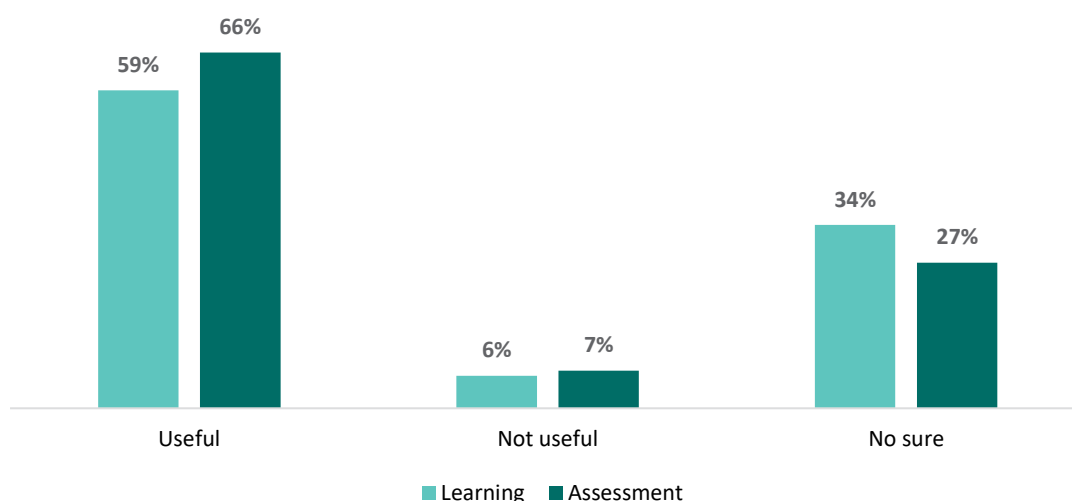
At the same time, some approaches illustrate how policies can become more useful when they are clear, visible, and consistently applied. Primary schools often use simple, practical methods (e.g., posters or shared classroom routine) to communicate expectations. One example is a school that developed a simple “traffic light” system to guide student use of AI: red indicated AI was not permitted, yellow allowed limited use with teacher supervision, and green signalled that AI use was expected as part of the task. This system was developed with input from students and shared across classrooms, as well as with parents and whānau. This type of approach strengthens usefulness by translating high-level expectations into clear, actionable guidance. Students reported that expectations were easier to understand and follow when they were explicit, had a clear purpose for learning, and were consistently reinforced.

Primary students were generally clear about core expectations, particularly that AI should not be used without permission. This clarity may be supported by classroom structures, where students typically have the same teacher across learning areas, enabling more consistent messages about appropriate use.

In secondary schools:

Teachers in secondary schools are more likely than those in primary schools to report that policies for student use of AI are useful. However, this usefulness is not consistently reflected in student views. While 59 percent of teachers say that policies for learning are useful, only 48 percent of students agree – meaning around half of students do not find these policies clearly useful.

Figure 11: *Secondary teachers reporting usefulness of their school's policies for student use of AI.*



Assessment follows a similar pattern. Around two-thirds of teachers (66 percent) report that policies are useful, with relatively low proportions saying they are not useful (7 percent) or are unsure (27 percent). In contrast, just under half of students (43 percent) find policies for assessment useful, while the remainder either do not find them useful (25 percent) or are unsure (33 percent).

This suggests that, although policies are more established and often seen as useful by teachers, their usefulness is less consistent from the student perspective.

A key factor shaping usefulness is variation in how policies are applied in practice. Students described considerable differences across classes and teachers, even within the same school. In some classrooms, AI use is encouraged for specific tasks, while in others it is restricted or replaced with more traditional approaches.

Some variation reflects the nature of secondary schooling, where subjects differ in their requirements, teaching approaches, and assessment conditions. Teachers may also exercise greater autonomy in how they interpret and apply school-level policies, particularly where guidance is not highly specific.

Despite this, one expectation is consistently understood: AI should not be used for assessment unless explicitly permitted. Students generally recognise this boundary, and schools use a range of approaches to reinforce it.

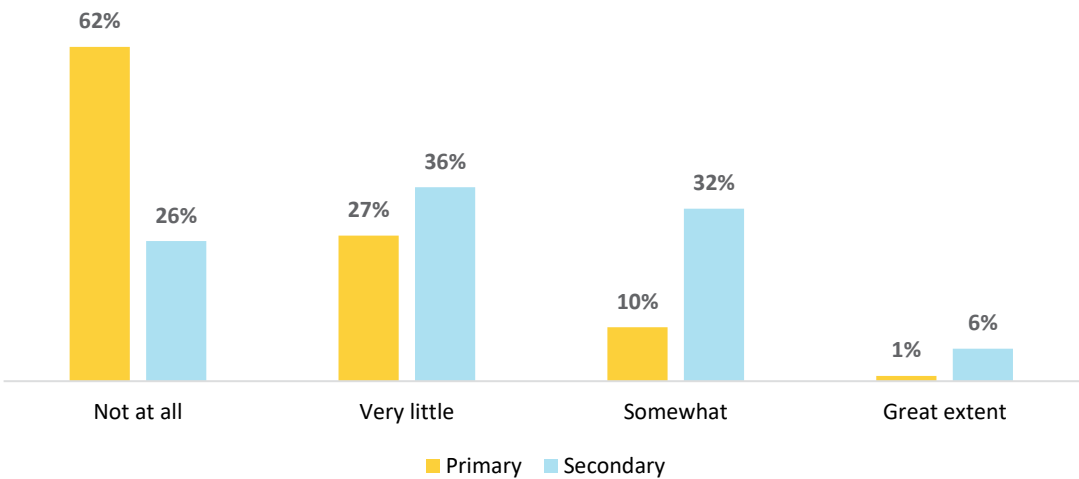
Students highlighted that clear explanations from teachers improve their understanding of when and how AI can be used. Where expectations are explicit and consistently reinforced, policies are more likely to be useful. Where expectations vary or are less clearly defined, usefulness is reduced.

How do schools explicitly teach students about AI?

Around half of schools are explicitly teaching students about AI.

Explicit teaching about AI is not yet widespread or consistently embedded across schools. While around half of teachers (57 percent) and students (53 percent) report that AI is taught, only a very small proportion of teachers (4 percent) say this occurs to a great extent. Around one-third of school leaders (31 percent) report that their school teaches AI explicitly.

Figure 12: *Teachers who explicitly teach students about AI, by school type.*



This indicates that, although exposure to AI in schools is relatively common, it is not yet consistently established as a core part of teaching and learning.

Schools are at very different stages of their AI journeys. Some schools have developed their own AI literacy programmes and modules for students, while in other schools what students learn about AI is entirely dependent on the individual teacher. Many students are self-taught.

Most schools have not developed formalised, consistent, whole-school approaches to teaching about AI and how to use it. Learning is often dependent on individual teachers. Generally, teachers aim to position AI as a tool for learning, rather than something students should use to do their work for them. However, whether they are explicitly taught how to use AI responsibly or are informally encouraged to do so by their teachers can vary within and between schools.

In primary schools:

A quarter of leaders (25 percent) and just over a third of teachers (38 percent) in primary schools say they teach students explicitly about AI. Only one percent of teachers teach it to a great extent, and nearly two thirds (62 percent) say they don't teach students about AI at all. Around half of students in primary schools report learning about AI at school (52 percent).

Several schools did describe intentionally teaching students to think critically about AI-generated content, yet most primary students told us that their understanding of how AI works and the different uses comes from experimentation at home, or following what their peers or family members are doing.

In secondary schools:

Nearly half (48 percent) of leaders and three quarters of teachers (74 percent) in secondary schools say they teach students explicitly about AI. More teachers say they teach it somewhat (32 percent) or to a great extent (6 percent) in secondary schools. The proportion of students learning AI in school remains consistent at around half (54 percent) across school type.

In secondary schools, AI learning overall seems more visible but can vary from teacher to teacher. Secondary teachers describe students as already largely confident and comfortable using AI, and some students don't feel the need for formal 'teaching' at all.

Around one in two teachers say they're teaching students how to use AI for schoolwork, including practical applications within learning tasks.

Around half of teachers report teaching students how to use AI appropriately for schoolwork, although this is often done in practical, task-based ways rather than systematically. Just over half of teachers (54 percent) say they teach students how to use AI appropriately, although only a small proportion (6 percent) do so to a great extent. Parents and whānau report lower visibility of this teaching, with around two in five (39 percent) saying their child is learning how to use AI for schoolwork at school.

We heard that teachers generally aim to show students how to use AI as a support tool, rather than something that replaces their thinking. This includes modelling use, guiding when AI can be used, and embedding it within learning tasks. However, this teaching varies across classrooms, meaning students receive inconsistent guidance on what appropriate use looks like.

In primary schools:

Only a third of teachers in primary school say they teach students how to use AI appropriately for schoolwork (31 percent). A quarter of leaders in primary schools say their school is explicitly teaching students about AI (25 percent).

The use of AI is generally much more limited in primary schools than in secondary schools. However where students do use AI, teachers described showing students how to use the tools to check or proofread their work for spelling a grammar, as well

as for research. Some teachers explicitly model how AI can be used appropriately as a support tool without ‘replacing’ student thinking. For example, one teacher showed students how to prompt AI to help them structure their ideas, while making it clear that students are still expected to complete the writing themselves.

To help students think critically when using AI, we heard how teachers encourage students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of AI outputs and consider when AI should, and should not, be used. We also heard examples of teachers showing students how to check that AI-generated information is correct, rather than automatically accepting it as true.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, teaching students how to use AI for schoolwork is more common, but still varies in how it is delivered. Three in four teachers say they teach students how to use AI appropriately for schoolwork (75 percent). Half of leaders (48 percent) say their school is teaching students about AI, and two in five parents and whānau think their child is being taught how to use AI for schoolwork in secondary school (42 percent).

We heard that teaching in secondary settings places a stronger emphasis on responsible use for schoolwork, particularly in relation to plagiarism and appropriate use within tasks. Teachers described guiding students on where AI can support activities such as idea generation, research, translation, and accessibility, while placing clearer limits on its use in producing written work.

Much of this teaching is embedded within schoolwork tasks rather than delivered as standalone instruction or formal teaching. Students often learn how to use AI through its application in specific subjects and assignments, leaving great variability in how much explicit AI teaching students encounter.

More than half of students and most parents and whānau want schools to teach students about AI and how to use it.

Students and parents and whānau generally support schools teaching about AI, with particular emphasis on how to use it appropriately for learning. Around half of students (50 percent) say it would be useful to learn how to use AI for schoolwork. Parents and whānau show stronger support, with more than eight in ten (84 percent) wanting their children to learn how AI works, and three in four (75 percent) wanting them to learn how to use it appropriately.

We heard that both students and parents and whānau see a clear role for schools in building understanding, setting expectations, and shaping how AI is used. Students are looking for practical guidance on how to use AI effectively and safely, while parents and whānau emphasise the importance of developing critical thinking skills alongside AI use, so students can use it without relying on it.

Without explicit teaching, students develop habits through trial and error. As we discuss in the next chapter, this can lead to overreliance or misunderstanding of what is appropriate. Teaching about AI is therefore not just about skills, but about guiding how students think about and use the technology to enhance their learning.

In primary schools:

In primary schools, students are somewhat less likely to express a strong need for AI guidance, while parents and whānau emphasise the importance of early, structured introduction. Around half of primary students (47 percent) say it would be useful to learn how to use AI for schoolwork. Among parents and whānau, around three in four (77 percent) want their children to learn how AI works, and around two in three (67 percent) want them to learn how to use it appropriately.

We heard that primary students are particularly interested in safe and appropriate use, including how to protect their personal data and follow school policies. Students also describe wanting clearer guidance on how AI can support their learning, rather than simply providing answers.

Parents and whānau stressed that AI should be introduced carefully and progressively, with clear boundaries in place. They raised concerns about risks such as misinformation, AI hallucinations, and cultural inaccuracies, and emphasised the importance of teaching students how to question and check AI-generated content.

They noted that this is particularly important at this stage, as students are still developing foundational habits of thinking and learning. Early guidance can shape how students understand the role of AI, helping prevent patterns of overreliance before they become established.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, both students and parents and whānau express stronger demand for explicit teaching about AI, reflecting higher levels of use and greater independence. Just over half of students (55 percent) say it would be useful to learn how to use AI for schoolwork. Parent and whānau support is higher, with around nine in ten (90 percent) wanting their child to learn how AI works and more than eight in ten (82 percent) wanting them to learn how to use it appropriately.

We heard that while some students feel confident using AI independently, some students also described uncertainty about what constitutes appropriate use and concern about unintentionally breaking policies. This matters more in secondary settings because students are engaging in higher-stakes and more independent work, including assessments that contribute to qualifications. Without clear and consistent teaching, there is a greater risk that students will use AI inappropriately, over-rely on it, or fail to develop the skills expected of them.

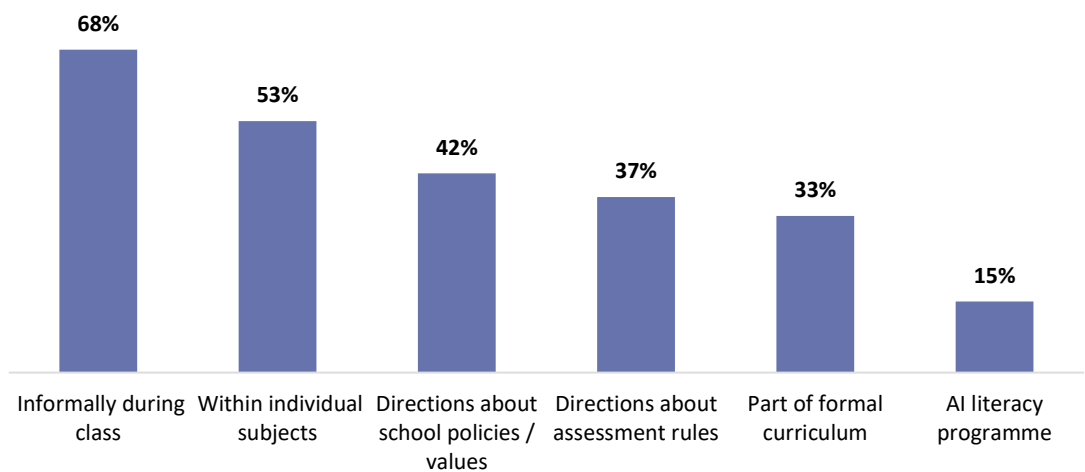
Parents and whānau reinforced this, emphasising that students need strong subject knowledge and critical thinking skills first, with AI introduced as a supporting tool rather than a substitute.

Students also see school as the right place to learn these skills, particularly understanding how to use AI to best support learning without replacing their thinking.

AI is mainly being taught informally in the classroom, with some examples of more structured teaching.

AI is most commonly taught through informal, classroom-based activities, with fewer schools embedding it in structured or whole-school approaches. More than two thirds of leaders (68 percent) report that use of AI is taught informally during classroom activities, and more than a quarter of teachers (27 percent) say they teach AI in this way to a moderate or large extent. Just over half of leaders (53 percent) say it is taught within individual subjects, while only around a third (33 percent) report that AI is included in the formal curriculum.

Figure 13: *Leaders reporting the different ways students are taught about AI.*



We heard that, in most schools, teaching about AI use is not systematically planned or consistently delivered. Instead, it depends heavily on individual teachers and how they choose to incorporate AI into their classroom practice. Teachers generally position AI as a tool to support learning rather than replace it, but how explicitly this is taught varies.

This is important because students are already using AI and looking for guidance. Where teaching is informal and inconsistent, students are likely to develop uneven understandings of how to use AI appropriately, shaped by their individual classroom experiences rather than shared expectations.

In primary schools:

In primary settings, teaching about AI use is largely informal and limited in scope, reflecting lower levels of use among students and a more gradual approach to introduction. Around three in five leaders (60 percent) report that AI use is taught through informal classroom activities, while fewer than one in three say it is part of the formal curriculum (27 percent). Even smaller proportions report teaching through assessment-related instructions (17 percent) or explicit AI literacy programmes (13 percent).

Teacher responses reinforce this. More than eight in ten teachers report that they do not teach AI through the formal curriculum (83 percent), assessment requirements (92 percent), or explicit programmes (90 percent). Only a small proportion report teaching it to any meaningful extent through informal classroom activities (24 percent very little, 14 percent somewhat or a lot).

We heard that this reflects both lower integration of AI in learning tasks and a deliberate, cautious approach. Schools tend to introduce AI gradually, often through specific activities or teacher-led examples, rather than as a standalone focus.

As a result, students' understanding of AI is often shaped by incidental exposure rather than explicit teaching. This creates a risk that students begin using AI without a clear understanding of how to use it safely, effectively, or appropriately.

At the same time, this approach reflects the importance of building foundational learning skills first, with the intention of introducing AI in controlled ways to avoid overreliance at an early stage.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, teaching about AI use remains largely informal, but is more developed and more closely linked to assessment and subject learning. Around nine in 10 leaders report that AI use is taught through informal classroom activities (90 percent). However, secondary schools are more likely than primary to include more structured elements – around nine in ten leaders (91 percent) say AI is taught through instructions related to assessment requirements, and half (50 percent) report that it is part of the formal curriculum. Only around one in five (20 percent) report having an explicit AI literacy programme.

Around two in five teachers (37 percent) report teaching AI in relation to assessment requirements to at least some extent. We heard that this results in a mix of approaches. In some cases, students receive more explicit teaching about appropriate AI use, including through structured programmes. In others, learning remains tied to specific tasks, with little formal teaching about how or why to use AI.

This variation means that, even where AI is used more extensively, students' understanding remains inconsistent and context-dependent.

Examples from classrooms highlight the focus on reinforcing independent thinking. One teacher described learning as “going to the gym,” emphasising that students need to do the “intellectual lifting” themselves, with AI used only for support.

This is concerning for some parents and whānau and teachers alike, because secondary students are using AI more independently and in higher-stakes contexts, including assessment. Without consistent, structured teaching, there is a greater risk that students will use AI inappropriately, or rely on it in ways that undermine their learning, rather than using it as a tool to support thinking.

Conclusion

Most schools are still in the early stages of responding to AI and do not yet have clear policies, consistent guidance, or structured approaches for supporting effective use of AI. While external guidance does exist, uptake is varied and a meaningful number of schools have not yet engaged with it. While some schools are currently in the process of developing school policies for staff and student use, this is happening too slowly to keep up with the rapidly changing role of AI. Secondary schools tend to have policies around student use for assessments, which have been developed as a response to the requirements from NZQA. Large schools have policies more often than small schools, which reflects the increased burden placed on smaller schools – with less people available to distribute responsibilities. As a result of inconsistent practice, expectations are often set by individual teachers, creating variation within and across schools.

There is also strong demand for greater support. Leaders, teachers, students, and parents and whānau all want clearer guidance on appropriate AI use, particularly for learning, assessment, and privacy. While many schools are beginning to develop policies and teach students about AI, these approaches are often informal and still evolving. Moving from unplanned responses towards more strategic, school-wide approaches will help schools make the most of AI's opportunities, while managing its risks and responding to the rapid development of these technologies.

In the next chapter, we look at how students are currently using AI across New Zealand schools.





Part 4: How are students using AI?

In this chapter, we examine how students are using AI in school, for both learning and assessment. We explore differences in AI use between primary- and secondary-aged students. We also look at confidence using AI, as well as inappropriate use of AI in school. Going forward, students will need support around how to use AI responsibly and effectively.

What we found: an overview

- Three in four students are using AI for schoolwork and they mainly use it for finding information and generating ideas. Some students report they don't like using AI due to ethical concerns.
- Reported AI use differs in scale between secondary and primary students, but there are similarities in what they use AI for. Both primary and secondary students use AI to support research and idea generation, but secondary students report more sophisticated use for independent learning tasks, such as refining written work. Primary students are more likely to use AI to generate music and images.
- One in five primary students and two in five secondary students report using AI in ways they know they shouldn't for assessments.
- Teachers are concerned that students are using AI inappropriately and end up bypassing learning. They are also concerned about inappropriate use in assessments.

These findings are set out in more detail below.

“It's a very good tool to like, me previously, I use it to get inspiration for when I'm doing my work. But at the same time, I know students who use it as a crutch to do all their work for them.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT



How much are students using AI?

Student use of AI varies markedly by schooling level, with clear differences in scale between primary and secondary.

AI is being used by students in both primary and secondary schools, but the scale and visibility of use differ. More than half of both primary (55 percent) and secondary (66 percent) students say they like using AI for schoolwork. Just under one in five secondary students report not using AI at all (18 percent), compared with around a quarter of primary school students (26 percent).

There are also indications that student use may be underestimated by adults. Only one in seven parents and whānau of children in primary school believe their child is using AI for schoolwork (14 percent), compared with around a third of parents and whānau of secondary students (36 percent). However, a substantial proportion of parents and whānau are unsure about whether their child uses it for schoolwork (39 percent for primary and 27 percent for secondary). In the highest year groups (Year 11+), almost half of parents and whānau say their child is using AI for schoolwork (45 percent).

Teachers in primary schools generally report lower student use than teachers in secondary schools. Around three in four primary teachers (72-86 percent) say students don't use AI for a given task, compared with around a third (21-36 percent) of secondary teachers.

In primary schools:

In primary schools, we heard that AI use is generally limited and more closely managed by teachers. Most exposure occurs through teacher-directed activities, embedded features in learning platforms, or supervised classroom use rather than frequent independent use. This reflects the high level of oversight in primary settings, where teachers closely manage learning activities and access to digital tools.

Student age and access also shape patterns of use. Younger students are less likely to have independent access to devices, accounts, or AI tools, and expectations around safe and supervised use are stronger. As a result, AI is less often used independently or as a routine part of day-to-day schoolwork.

However, there are indications that use may be higher than adults perceive. Leaders reported that some intermediate-aged students are already using generative AI despite age restrictions, and that much of this use is self-directed and learned through peers, making it less visible to teachers and parents and whānau. We also heard examples of students using AI tools to support their schoolwork without their teachers being aware.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, AI use is more widespread and embedded in everyday learning. Students describe using AI both in and out of class, suggesting it is becoming a routine part of their learning environment. Greater independence, wider access to personal devices, and fewer restrictions on tool use support more frequent and self-directed use.

“It’s totally normalised, you don’t really even think about using it”

SECONDARY STUDENT



However, use remains variable. Some students use AI regularly across multiple tasks, while others use it only occasionally, such as when working under time pressure. Students report that use is influenced by school policies, teacher expectations, and parent and whānau attitudes. Social norms also shape use. Some students view AI as “cheating” or a shortcut that undermines learning, while others are concerned about becoming dependent on it. We also heard that use can vary by subject, with students describing greater use in writing-intensive subjects such as English, but see it as less appropriate in subjects they see as more “creative”, such as music or art.

“For me, it’s got this stigma – if I’m using it, I’m cheaping out on the actual study or not doing what I’m supposed to do... I guess I’m conditioned to think that way, to do the work properly or study properly. But as time has gone on... as you use it to compile sources... or ask questions to get I’m not quite clear about or I’m not quite satisfied with the answer that an internet search has given me... you find it has a real use. It could be beneficial if you know how to use it properly or expand my knowledge on it.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT



“I think we shouldn’t be using AI in creative spaces like music and art, because that takes away from the authenticity of your creativeness in your work.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT



How does AI use differ for different types of students?

Student AI use can differ based on student age, confidence, and perceived ability.

Patterns in AI use suggest that behaviour differs across groups of students, particularly by age, confidence, and perceived ability. These differences shape both how AI is used and how visible that use is. Many generative AI tools require students to be at least 13 years old or have adult supervision.³⁶

There are clearer and more frequent examples of boundary-crossing use among secondary students than among primary and intermediate students. Students and teachers described secondary students using AI to complete substantive parts of their work, such as drafting essays or generating responses, and having a greater awareness of how to work around restrictions on AI use. These patterns appear to reflect greater access to devices, more complex and high-stakes assessment demands, and increased independence in how students manage their work. Some secondary students described increasingly sophisticated strategies for avoiding detection.

In primary and intermediate schools, AI use tends to be more limited and closely supervised. Students have fewer opportunities to use AI independently and generally have less access to devices. While examples of inappropriate use were reported, particularly in later primary years, these were less frequent and less sophisticated. Rather than using AI to complete schoolwork, students were more likely to use it for activities such as generating images. Younger students also more often expressed discomfort with using AI in ways that did not feel like their own work.

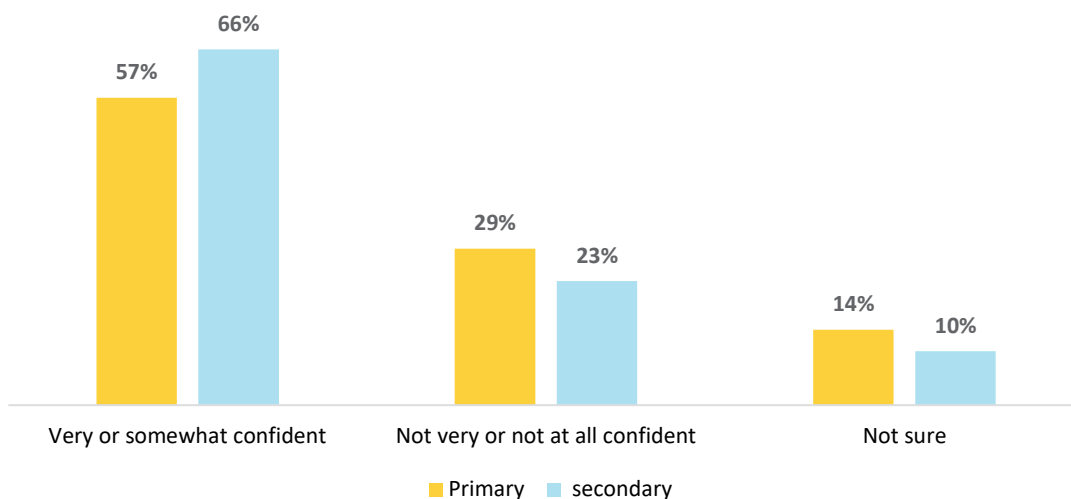
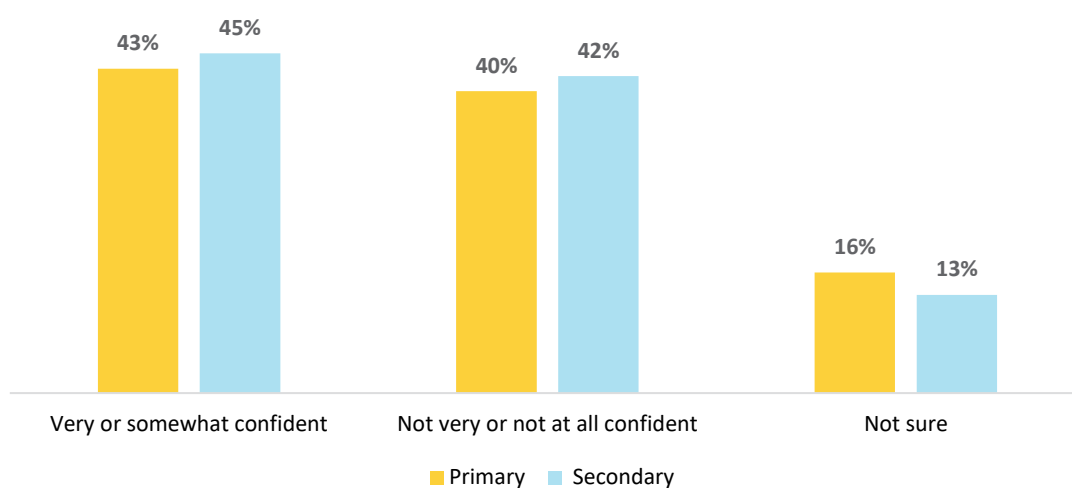
Differences are also evident within schools. Teachers described how higher-performing and more confident students were often better able to edit, adapt, and integrate AI-generated content in ways that were less visible. In contrast, less confident students were more likely to rely directly on AI outputs, making their use easier to detect. This suggests that AI may reinforce existing differences in capability, with some students better positioned to benefit from or conceal its use.

Teachers also emphasised the importance of their professional knowledge in identifying when students have used AI inappropriately. Knowing students' writing styles and usual patterns of work allows teachers to detect inconsistencies. One teacher described how students who had relied on AI would often 'crumble' when asked follow-up questions about their work, indicating a gap between the submitted work and their own understanding.

How confident are students in using AI?

Most students are confident about using AI for schoolwork, especially in secondary schools.

Student confidence in using AI for schoolwork is relatively high. Three in five students (60 percent) report being somewhat confident or very confident. When it comes to using AI for assessments or tests, confidence is lower, with fewer than half of students (44 percent) reporting that they feel confident.

Figure 14: *Student confidence in using AI for learning, by school type.***Figure 15:** *Figure 15. Student confidence in using AI for assessments or tests, by school type.*

Teachers also report that students often appear confident in using AI tools. Many students described learning independently, through experimentation and observing peers, rather than through explicit instructions. This suggests that students are developing familiarity with AI tools, even where structured teaching or guidance is limited. However, confidence is not always matched by depth of understanding. Students' self-directed learning means they may feel confident using AI, but may not always apply it critically or effectively.

“It’s pretty intuitive [using AI]. It’s basically like google.”

PRIMARY STUDENT

Confidence is generally higher among secondary students than primary students when using AI for learning. Two thirds of secondary students (66 percent) report being confident using AI for learning, compared with just over half of primary students (57 percent). Confidence in using AI for assessments and tests is similar across both primary students (43 percent) and secondary students (45 percent).

Students across both sectors described building confidence through practice, experimentation, and peer learning. However, confidence varied by context. Students were generally more confident using AI for everyday schoolwork than for assessments and tests, where expectations and appropriate use were often less clear. The reasons for confidence differed somewhat across schooling levels.

Primary and intermediate students typically encounter AI in more structured and supervised contexts, meaning confidence is often closely linked to teacher support and opportunities for guided use. Younger students are also still building foundational digital and literacy skills, and may be less familiar with how to use AI tools for schoolwork. Overall, confidence in primary settings tends to be developing, context-dependent, and closely linked to teacher support and opportunities for guided use.

Secondary students described using AI more regularly and across a wider range of contexts, both in and out of school. This creates more opportunities to build confidence through independent experimentation and learning from peers.

“Students are way ahead of us in adaptation and knowledge about how to use AI... but not in the ability to discern what is going to be acceptable or not.”

LEADER

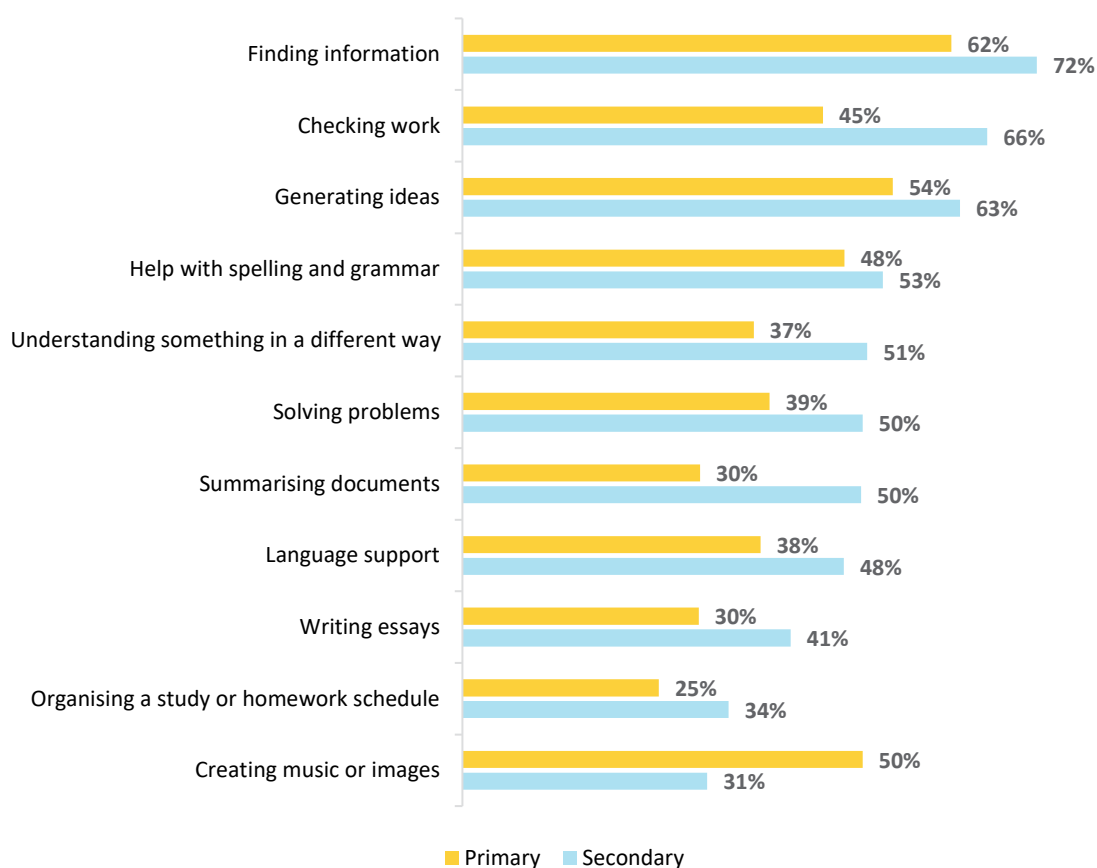
How are students using AI for learning?

Students use AI for a wide range of learning tasks, spanning both the early stages of work and final checks. Most commonly, students use AI to find information, with around two-thirds (65 percent) reporting this. This includes quickly locating facts, explanations, or background material to support their learning.

Beyond information-finding, more than half of students use AI to generate ideas (57 percent), such as brainstorming how to approach a topic or exploring different angles for a response. Many also use it as a support tool for reviewing their work: 53 percent report using AI to check their work, including sense-checking answers or identifying possible errors, while 50 percent use it to help with spelling and grammar.

Together, this shows that students are using AI across the full learning process – from getting started, to shaping their thinking, through to refining and improving their final work.

Figure 16: *Student use of AI for learning, by school type.*



Most students use AI to find information, with some also using it to solve problems and manage their learning.

Students are commonly using AI to support finding information (65 percent), which is the most common use of AI for both primary and secondary students. Students also use it for solving problems (43 percent) and managing their learning (28 percent). These uses appear across both primary and secondary schooling, though the intensity and sophistication differ.

We also heard that using AI to locate information is the most widespread pattern. Alongside this, students are turning to it to help work through problems and, in some cases, to organise their learning. Together, these uses position AI as a tool for navigating tasks more efficiently, particularly when students need quick access to answers or support deciding how to approach their work.

As learning demands increase, so too does the way AI is used. In settings where students are expected to handle more complex material or manage competing deadlines, AI becomes more embedded in how they plan, organise, and complete tasks.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, AI is used mainly to retrieve information quickly and support immediate task completion. Around six in ten students (62 percent) report using AI to find information, while smaller numbers use it for problem solving (39 percent) or organising study or homework (25 percent).

Students described using AI to find facts, answer questions, check understanding, and identify next steps in their work. Problem solving tends to follow a similar pattern, with AI used to support individual questions or tasks rather than extended or complex problems. Use of AI to organise learning is relatively uncommon, reflecting the fact that learning is typically structured by teachers, and students have less responsibility for planning or sequencing their work over time.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, AI is used not only to find information, but also to manage more complex tasks and coordinate different aspects of learning. More than seven in ten students (72 percent) report using AI to find information, half (50 percent) use it for problem solving, and one in three (34 percent) use it to organise study or homework schedules.

Students described using AI to gather, filter, and condense information, generate summaries, identify key points, and quickly build background knowledge before starting assignments. AI is also used to help work through multi-step problems and unfamiliar tasks. While less common, some students use AI to organise their learning by creating study schedules, breaking assignments into stages, and planning revision during assessment periods. These examples suggest AI is beginning to support not just task completion, but also how some students plan and manage their workload over time.

“Not everyone learns the same, so AI could be a beneficial tool to help learn something in the way we find learning easiest.”

STUDENT

Half or more students are using AI to check, improve, and refine their work.

Students are using AI to check, improve, and refine their work across both primary and secondary schooling levels. More than half of students use AI for checking their work (53 percent) and half use it for help with spelling and grammar (50 percent). This can include checking spelling and grammar, reviewing the quality of writing, and improving clarity, tone, or structure.

Across school levels, AI is most often used to support the editing and polishing stage of learning, helping students strengthen work they have already produced. Students describe using it to correct errors, refine phrasing, and ensure their work meets expected standards. These uses align closely with existing writing processes such as proofreading and revision.

The extent and sophistication of AI-supported refinement varies by schooling level. This reflects differences in the complexity of tasks, expectations for written work, and the level of independence students have when completing their work.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, AI use for checking and refining work is present but generally focused on basic accuracy. Around 45 percent of students report using AI to check their work, and 48 percent report using it to support spelling and grammar.

Students mainly use AI to correct spelling, punctuation, and simple sentence structure. This reflects the focus on developing foundational literacy skills, where written tasks are typically shorter and less complex. Use is also shaped by the structured and supervised nature of primary classrooms. Students have less independence in how they approach editing tasks, and AI supported refinement is more likely to occur within bounded activities or through embedded tools. This limits the extent to which students use AI to iteratively improve larger pieces of writing.

“I’ll ask it to improve my spelling and paragraphs and my full stops, exclamation marks, and stuff like that. Sometimes, if I’m not sure how... I’ll just go, ‘could you improve this?’”

PRIMARY STUDENT.



In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, students use AI more extensively to refine written work. Around 66 percent report using AI to check their work, and 53 percent report using it to support spelling and grammar.

Students describe using AI not only to identify errors, but also to reword sentences, improve clarity and tone, strengthen structure, and check whether responses meet expectations. Some reported pasting paragraphs or full drafts into AI tools to generate suggestions for improvement. This reflects the increased complexity and higher stakes of secondary learning, particularly in Years 11 to 13. Students are required to produce longer, more structured responses across subjects, with greater emphasis on coherence, argument, and meeting assessment criteria. AI is used to support these demands by helping students refine their work to a higher standard.

Students describe pasting paragraphs or full drafts into AI tools and asking for improvements, including making writing more formal, ensuring ideas are clearly expressed, or checking that responses are complete. AI is also used to sense check

whether work is coherent and meets expectations, reflecting the more complex nature of secondary level assessment tasks.

Greater independence and access to digital tools also shape this pattern. Greater access to digital tools also enables more iterative use, with students using AI multiple times to progressively refine their work.

AI is widely used by students for idea generation, with more limited use for generating complete content.

Students are using AI to generate content for learning tasks in a range of ways, with idea generation being one of the most common forms of use across both primary and secondary schooling levels (57 percent). This includes generating initial ideas, outlines, or starting points for tasks.

A smaller proportion of students use AI to generate written content, such as paragraphs or essays (34 percent), while others use it to generate creative outputs, including images or music (43 percent). Across both contexts, students tend to position AI primarily as a tool for supporting them to start content creation, rather than completing pieces of work for them.

There are also indications that some forms of AI-supported content generation are not fully visible to teachers, particularly when they occur informally or within embedded tools. Overall, while content generation is occurring in both primary and secondary settings, the type and extent of generated content varies by schooling level.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, AI use for content generation is generally limited and often embedded within other tools or teacher-directed activities. Over half of students (54 percent) report using AI to generate ideas, while 30 percent use it to generate written content, and 50 percent use it to create images or music.

We heard that primary students often encounter AI in embedded forms, such as within design platforms or search tools, where content generation may involve producing short text suggestions or visual outputs rather than full assignments. Teacher-directed use is more common than independent generation, and where content is generated, it is typically small-scale and supported within structured activities.

Students most often described using AI to generate simple ideas, prompts, or visual content rather than extended written responses. Teachers reported substantially lower levels of student use for generating ideas, written content, and creative outputs (around 10 to 12 percent), suggesting that some student use may occur independently or through embedded tools that are less visible in classroom settings.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, students use AI more extensively to generate both ideas and written content. Nearly two thirds of students (63 percent) report using AI to generate ideas, 41 percent use it to generate written content, and 31 percent use it to create images or music.

Students described using AI to generate essay structures, opening paragraphs, arguments, summaries, and, in some cases, full drafts. While idea generation often serves as a starting point, many students also use AI to create more substantial content that contributes directly to assignments. Teacher reports are broadly aligned with these patterns, with around half reporting that students generate ideas and written content using AI (51 percent), and around a third reporting creative content generation (32 percent).

Overall, AI plays a more expansive role in secondary settings, supporting both early-stage idea development and the generation of more substantial written outputs.

AI is used by around two in five students to support understanding and access to learning.

Students are using AI to support understanding and access learning across both primary and secondary schooling levels. These uses include explaining unfamiliar concepts or rephrasing information (42 percent), summarising content (37 percent), and supporting language comprehension (41 percent).

Students told us that AI is commonly used to help them make sense of learning material, particularly when they find existing explanations difficult to understand. Students describe using AI to simplify content, highlight key points, or provide alternative explanations that are easier to follow. AI is also used to improve access to learning, including through language support and tools that make content more accessible.

The way students use AI for understanding reflects its role as a supplementary support tool, particularly when students need clarification, or want to engage with content in a way that better suits their learning preferences. While these uses are present across both primary and secondary contexts, the complexity and independence of use varies by schooling level.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, AI is often used to make learning content more accessible. Just under two in five students report using AI for language support (38 percent) and to support understanding of learning content (37 percent), while around three in ten use it to summarise material (30 percent).

Students described using AI to explain unfamiliar words, simplify passages of text, and break tasks into clearer steps. Much of this use occurs through embedded features in search engines and learning platforms rather than standalone AI tools. AI also plays an important role in supporting accessibility, particularly for students with additional learning needs, through functions such as reading text aloud, simplifying instructions, and supporting language comprehension.

“It helps us break down concepts for better understanding.”

PRIMARY STUDENT



In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, AI is used more extensively to support understanding of complex and content-heavy learning, including interpreting subject-specific material and preparing for assessment. Around half of students report using AI for language support (48 percent), to support understanding of learning content (51 percent), and to summarise documents (50 percent).

These uses reflect the increasing complexity and volume of content in secondary education, particularly in Years 11 to 13, where students are working with more advanced texts, abstract concepts, and detailed subject knowledge. Students described using AI to explain difficult concepts, summarise textbook content, clarify instructions, and identify key points from longer texts. This often involved pasting sections of text into AI tools and asking for simplified explanations before beginning a task.

Students also reported using AI to rephrase material or provide alternative explanations until they achieved understanding. Many highlighted the value of receiving explanations in different ways, particularly when classroom teaching or written material did not immediately make sense. This points to AI's role as a flexible, on-demand tool that supports both comprehension and independent learning.

“I could benefit from it because lots of the time, I don't understand what the teacher means by that, or if I'm reading something, I won't be able to understand it fully. So I'll put it into AI and just get it to explain it to me in depth so I'd be able to learn from that.”

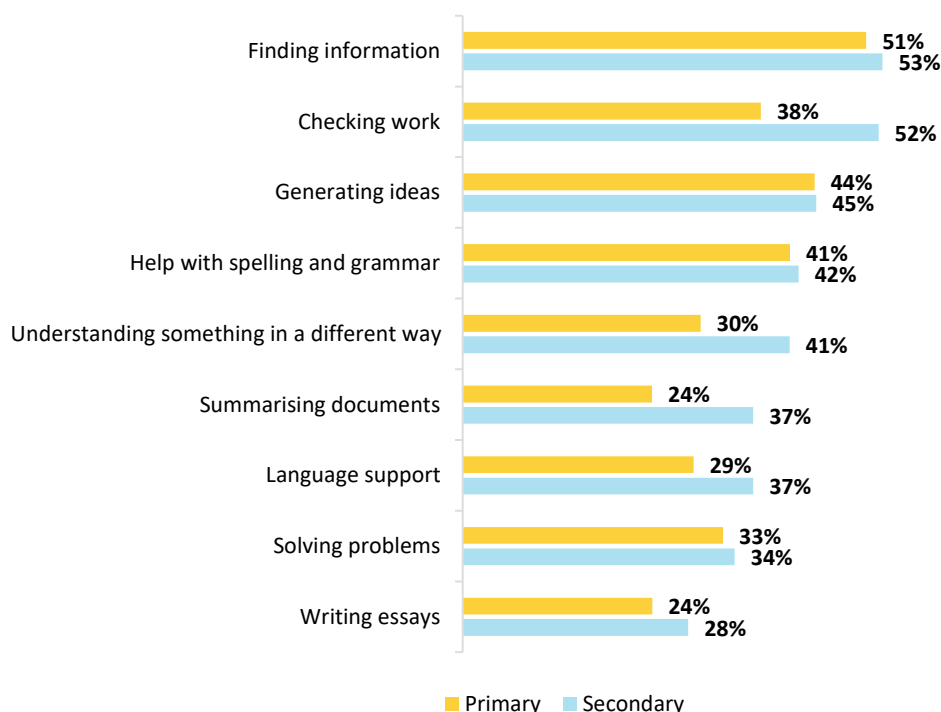
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

“If you can have someone or something that can help you learn in the way you find learning easiest, then that can really help you out.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

How are students using AI for assessments?

Students are using AI in similar ways for assessments as they are for learning, although use is less widespread across both primary and secondary schools. The most common type of use is for finding information (52 percent).

Figure 17: *Student use of AI for assessments and tests, by school type.*

Students are using AI to generate and develop assessment content.

Students are using AI to generate and develop content for assessments, although this remains less common than other types of use. Across both primary and secondary schooling, reported rates are very similar, with just under half of students using AI to generate ideas (44 percent) and around a quarter using it to write essays (25 percent).

The similarity in rates is notable given the different purposes, structures, and expectations of assessment at each level. It suggests that while the extent of use is comparable, the ways in which AI is being used and the contexts in which it is applied may differ.

Across both contexts, AI is most often used to support early-stage thinking, such as generating ideas or approaches, rather than producing complete assessment responses. This shows a common pattern of using AI to initiate assessment work, even where the surrounding environment for completing that work can be different.

In primary and intermediate schools, 44 percent of students report using AI to generate ideas and 24 percent report using it to write essays. Assessment tasks are usually shorter, more closely supervised, and focused on demonstrating individual skill development. Students generally described using AI to help generate ideas or suggest ways to begin a task, rather than to produce substantial assessed work.

We heard that primary students mostly use AI to generate simple ideas or starting points, rather than to produce full pieces of assessed work. For example, some students told us they use AI to help them start a task, rather than to complete it for them.

In secondary schools, rates are very similar, with 45 percent of students using AI to generate ideas and 28 percent using it to write essays. However, students described using AI within a broader range of assessment contexts, including longer assignments, reports, and internally assessed work, particularly in Years 11 to 13. Students at this level have more opportunities to engage with AI over longer periods of time. We heard that students use AI to generate ideas, suggest approaches, provide examples, develop drafts, and help structure responses.

Despite having greater opportunities to use AI in assessments, secondary students did not report much higher rates of use than primary students. Students and teachers suggested that assessment policies, expectations around authenticity, and classroom norms influence when and how AI is used. Across all schools, AI was more commonly described as supporting and shaping assessment work than replacing it.

Students are using AI to review and improve their assessed work.

Students are using AI to review and improve their work in assessment contexts, particularly as they prepare submissions. These uses centre on checking accuracy, improving clarity, and strengthening the overall quality of responses. Just under half of students report using AI for checking their work (43 percent) or helping with spelling and grammar (42 percent). Use is common across both primary and secondary schools, although secondary students are more likely to use AI to check their work. Around two in five primary students report using AI to check their work (38 percent), compared with just over half of secondary students (52 percent).

AI is most often used during the final stages of assessment work, when students are focused on correcting errors and refining what they have already produced. We heard that students use AI to identify mistakes, improve phrasing, and ensure their work meets expected standards. Students told us they see it as a useful way to check and polish their work before submission. These patterns indicate that AI is functioning as a revision and feedback tool, supporting the improvement of work rather than its initial creation.

Primary students most often told us about using AI for correcting spelling, punctuation, and sentence-level issues. This reflects the shorter, more closely supervised nature of many assessment tasks at that level. Secondary students described using AI more extensively, including reviewing essays, improving clarity and tone, strengthening arguments, and checking their work against assessment criteria.

These differences between these groups reflect the increasing complexity of assessment tasks at secondary school, particularly where students are producing longer and more structured assessment work. While primary students tend to use AI for quick, targeted improvements, secondary students are more likely to use it as a source of feedback to help refine and strengthen their work. For secondary students, AI is a useful source of feedback during the final stage of assessment.

“In English where you used it to compile sources or during the end of the year exams, [you can use AI] to ask questions that I’m not quite clear about or I’m not satisfied with the answer. So it could be beneficial if I knew how to use it properly to expand my knowledge.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT



Some students are using AI to support understanding of assessment content and expectations.

Students are using AI to support their understanding of assessment tasks and related content. This includes clarifying content (34 percent), summarising material (29 percent), and supporting comprehension of unfamiliar language (32 percent).

We heard that students turn to AI when they are unsure what a task is asking or when explanations are difficult to follow. Students told us they use it to break down instructions, summarise content, and access clearer explanations. These uses reflect the same pattern seen in learning contexts, where AI supports understanding and access to content, now applied specifically to making sense of assessment requirements.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, use is lower than in secondary schools across all areas. Around a third of students report using AI to understand content in a way that works for them (33 percent) and for language support (29 percent), while less than a quarter use it to summarise documents (24 percent).

Students described using AI to explain unfamiliar words, read text aloud, simplify instructions, and break down assessment tasks into clearer steps. As with learning activities more broadly, AI is mainly used to support basic comprehension and accessibility, helping students understand what a task is asking them to do.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, use is consistently higher. Around two in five students report using AI to understand content in a way that works for them (41 percent), for language support (38 percent), and for summarising documents (37 percent).

Students described using AI to clarify assessment requirements by simplifying task descriptions, summarising readings, and identifying key points. This mirrors wider learning uses, where AI helps students interpret more complex content. In assessment contexts, however, the focus shifts towards understanding expectations and connecting supporting material to the work they need to produce.

“I’ll put my work in there, and then I’ll also give [the AI tool] excellence exemplars. And I’ll be like, ‘Tell me the steps I need in order to make this into an excellence for schoolwork’.”

STUDENT



Students are using AI to support research and problem-solving for assessment tasks.

Students are using AI in assessment contexts primarily to find information (52 percent). Around a third also use it to support problem solving (33 percent). Common uses include locating information, generating summaries, and helping students work out how to approach questions. Students told us this helps them get started more quickly and progress more efficiently towards their responses.

Use is very similar across primary and secondary for finding information (51 percent for primary, 53 percent for secondary), and problem solving (33 percent for primary, 34 percent for secondary).

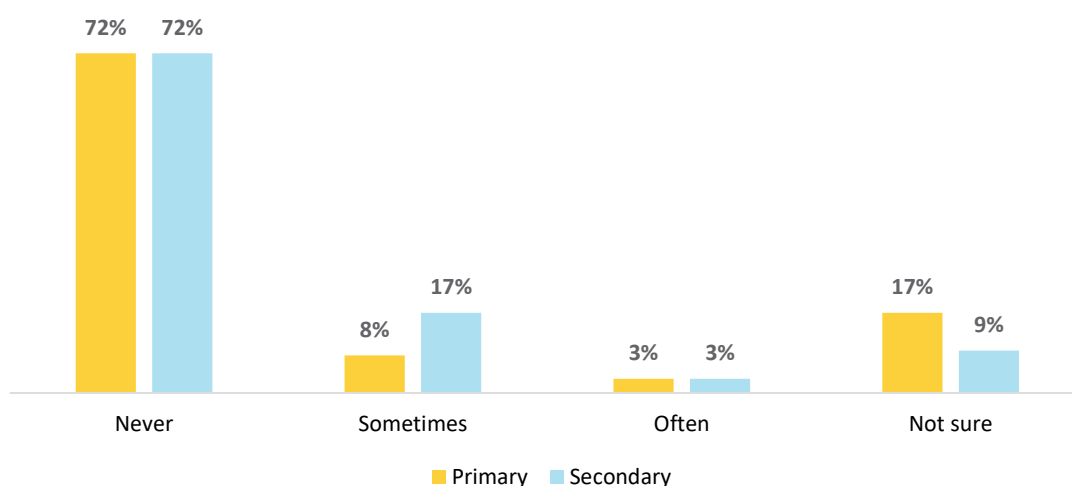
Across both sectors, students described using AI to quickly locate information and answer questions needed for their work. Students valued the speed with which AI could provide answers, summaries, and key points. Secondary students were somewhat more likely to describe using AI to build an understanding of a topic and work through multi-step assessment tasks, while primary students more often referred to finding information or working through individual questions. Overall, students described AI as a tool that helps them access information and decide how to approach assessment tasks more efficiently.

How are students using AI inappropriately?

Students are using AI in ways that do not align with assessment expectations.

Overall, relatively few students report knowingly using AI inappropriately for assessments, with 14 percent reporting that they have used AI in ways they know they should not for assessments or tests. Almost three quarters (72 percent) say they have never done so. However, a further 14 percent are unsure whether their use is inappropriate.

Figure 18: *Students reporting inappropriate use of AI for assessments or tests, by school type.*



Across both primary and secondary schools, AI use is generally not permitted in assessments or tests. Despite this, students and teachers described examples where AI is used in ways that do not align with expectations. This suggests that inappropriate use may be underreported or not always clearly understood by students.

Teacher and leader confidence in appropriate use is mixed and often low, particularly for internal assessment contexts. This reflects ongoing uncertainty about how AI is being used, the visibility of that use, and the effectiveness of current controls.

Students' reasons for using AI in these contexts often relate to time pressure and performance expectations. Students described turning to AI when struggling to complete work on time, facing tight deadlines, or trying to manage workload. Some also use AI to improve the quality of their work or gain an advantage in achieving higher results.

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, reported inappropriate use of AI appears lower (11 percent) and is characterised by greater uncertainty and limited visibility. Students are more likely to be unsure whether their use of AI is appropriate (17 percent), reflecting less clarity about policies and expectations at this level.

This pattern is shaped in part by the lower-stakes nature of assessment in primary schools. Assessment is typically focused on supporting learning rather than determining high-stakes outcomes, and tasks are often shorter, more structured, and completed under closer teacher guidance. As a result, there may be less incentive or pressure for students to deliberately use AI in ways that do not align with expectations.

We also heard that expectations for AI use in primary and pre-NCEA contexts are often less clearly defined. Without consistent guidance, students may not recognise when use crosses into inappropriate use, and teachers may find it difficult to identify or respond to it. This contributes to lower visibility of inappropriate use, even where it may be occurring.

Patterns of inappropriate use are often linked to embedded or incidental use of AI tools. Students encounter AI through search engines and learning platforms, meaning some use occurs within everyday learning activities and may not be clearly recognised. Teachers also described instances where AI was used during e-asTTle diagnostic testing, raising concerns about whether results accurately reflect students' capabilities. Despite lower reported inappropriate use, teacher confidence in identifying inappropriate use remains low, suggesting that some student use is not always visible in primary classrooms.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, inappropriate use of AI is more visible and more closely linked to assessment pressures and performance expectations. Almost one in five students report using AI inappropriately for assessments (19 percent), while around one in ten (9 percent) are unsure whether their use is appropriate.

This pattern reflects the higher-stakes nature of assessment, particularly in Years 11–13. Students are working towards formal qualifications, and longer, more complex assessment tasks create greater opportunity to use AI during drafting and completion of work.

We heard that some students actively manage not only their use of AI, but also its visibility. Students described adapting or reworking AI-generated content so it aligns with their own style and is less noticeable. Teachers suggested this may be easier for higher-performing students, who can integrate AI outputs more effectively into their work.

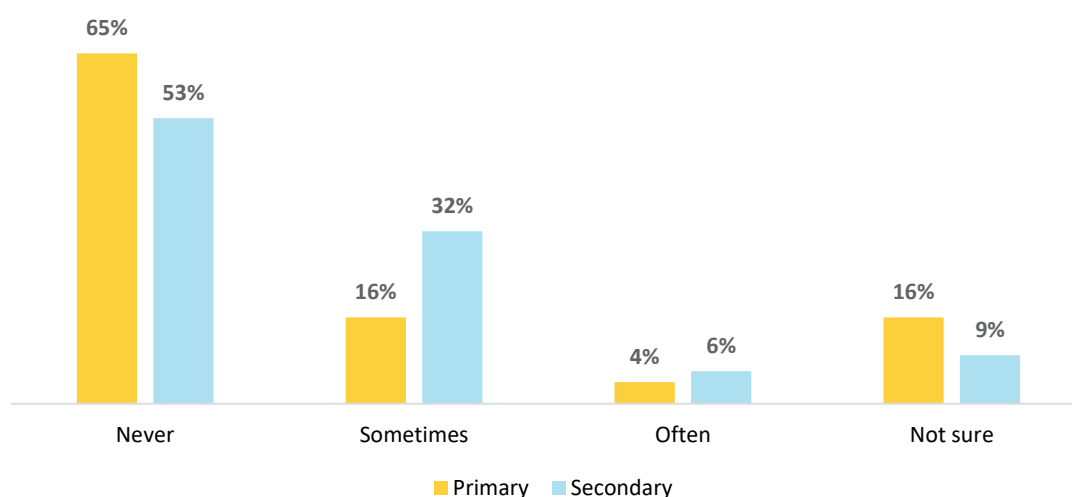
Teacher confidence in identifying inappropriate use also varies across assessment contexts. Confidence is generally lower for internal assessments than external assessments, reflecting the more flexible and less controlled conditions under which internal assessments are completed. While external assessments have clearer, though still evolving, expectations, internal assessments often involve more open conditions and fewer explicit boundaries.

Students were aware of measures used to manage AI use, such as supervised assessment conditions and secure digital platforms, but some described ways of working around these controls, including through external tools. At the same time, students noted a stigma associated with inappropriate AI use and a perception that work produced in this way lacks authenticity. Many linked inappropriate AI use to workload pressures, tight deadlines, and expectations to produce high-quality responses, suggesting AI can be seen as a way to manage competing demands even when its use falls outside intended boundaries.

Students are using AI during learning in ways that extend beyond intended use.

Reported inappropriate use is more common in learning contexts than in assessments, suggesting fewer constraints on how AI is applied in day-to-day learning activities. Around one quarter of students (26 percent) report that they have used AI in a way they know they shouldn't for learning.

Figure 19: *Students reporting inappropriate use of AI for learning, by school type.*



These patterns suggest that, during learning, students may be testing boundaries or using AI in ways that are not always aligned with task expectations, particularly where oversight is lower or expectations are less clearly defined.

There are also important equity dimensions in how this inappropriate use occurs. We heard that students with stronger literacy and digital skills are often better able to use AI in more sophisticated ways, including in ways that are harder for teachers to detect. In contrast, students with lower literacy levels may rely more directly on AI outputs, making inappropriate use more visible and more likely to be identified. This creates a risk that some students benefit from more advanced or hidden inappropriate use, while others are disproportionately caught or penalised.

“It’s addictive, if you use it once then you just can’t stop using it. I can think for myself, but if it’s anything more in depth, then I have to use [AI] – I can’t think that deep.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, reported inappropriate AI use for learning is lower than in secondary schools, but still present (19 percent). Students appear to have greater awareness of what appropriate use looks like in the classroom, particularly when expectations and consequences are clear.

We heard that students often recognise when AI use is not appropriate and does not align with the purpose of a learning activity, with some saying it “wouldn’t feel right”. At the same time, students continue to experiment with AI during learning activities, including generating images or using AI for entertainment rather than learning. Inappropriate use in these settings tends to be incidental and exploratory, rather than planned, and is shaped by students testing what AI can do within relatively structured learning environments.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, reported inappropriate use is higher (38 percent) and is more closely linked to how students use AI during everyday learning tasks rather than formal assessment settings.

Students told us they sometimes turn to AI to complete parts of tasks more quickly, particularly when work feels repetitive, when they believe they already understand the content, or when they are managing competing demands across subjects. The easy availability of AI tools, combined with lower levels of oversight than in assessment contexts, creates more opportunities for this type of use.

We also heard that some students are able to integrate AI into their work in ways that are less visible, particularly students who are more confident or higher performing. These students may adapt AI-generated content so it fits naturally within their work, making use harder to identify. Alongside curiosity and experimentation, students frequently linked this use to efficiency, workload management, and meeting multiple deadlines.

Students’ behaviour is shaped by monitoring, consequences, and perceptions of acceptability.

Reported rates of being caught using AI inappropriately are low. Most students say they have never been caught (83 percent), even though teachers report encountering inappropriate use more frequently. Ten percent of teachers say they come across student inappropriate use very frequently, another 13 percent frequently, and 31 percent somewhat frequently. Only 47 percent of teachers report never coming across inappropriate use. This suggests that detection is uneven and that some inappropriate use may go unnoticed or unacknowledged.

Students’ decisions are also influenced by how likely they think they are to be caught. Where students perceive a higher likelihood of detection, they are more cautious about how they use AI.

We heard that schools are actively managing AI use through a mix of monitoring approaches and consequences. Students told us that consequences such as warnings, loss of device access, or being required to redo work reinforce expectations, particularly when they are applied consistently.

At the same time, behaviour is not shaped by policies alone. Students also draw on their own sense of what is appropriate, with some describing clear boundaries between using AI to support their work and using it in ways that do not reflect their own thinking. Social factors, including peer perceptions and stigma, also influence these decisions.

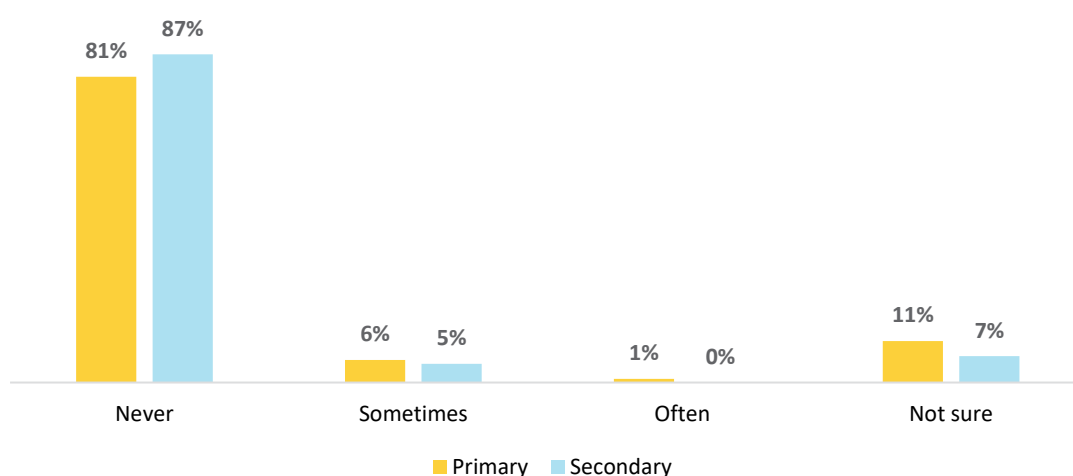
“You can get around getting caught by logging into your home account, but teachers can spot it in the tabs you have open. Some teachers know, but others don’t know or can’t tell as easily. It depends on the teacher you have. Some don’t realise – but the older teachers can’t tell as easily when students have used AI.”

STUDENT

In primary schools:

In primary and intermediate settings, reported inappropriate use is low, and students are less likely to encounter consequences or monitoring related to AI use. Eight in ten students (81 percent) say they have never been caught misusing AI, and only a quarter of teachers report having come across students using AI inappropriately (27 percent). Only 4 percent of teachers say this has happened frequently or very frequently. Students are also less likely than those in secondary settings to believe they would be caught.

Figure 20: *Students reporting being caught by a teacher using AI in ways they know they shouldn’t, by school type.*



Fewer schools at this level report having established consequences for inappropriate use. Just over a third of leaders (37 percent) report having no formal consequences in place, although some described responding through conversations with students (48 percent) or contacting parents and whānau (29 percent).

We heard that responses to inappropriate use are often educational rather than punitive, focusing on reinforcing expectations and helping students understand appropriate use. Students generally appeared aware of classroom rules and, in many cases, cautious about breaking them. Teachers also noted that students often experiment with AI outside school, meaning their understanding of acceptable use is shaped by both school and home environments.

Overall, behaviour in primary settings is shaped by relatively light-touch monitoring, fewer formal consequences, and a stronger emphasis on guidance and developing understanding.

“Because we’re a small school, and teachers know students well, they can tell really easily whether the work is their own or not, and with a few sharp questions, you know [if] they have no understanding of what’s been generated... But it gets harder as they get older and become more confident with their skill level.”

LEADER IN A SMALL SCHOOL

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, behaviour is shaped more strongly by formal monitoring, clearer consequences, and higher awareness of potential risks. Most students report that they have not been caught using AI inappropriately (87 percent), although a small proportion have (6 percent). At the same time, 77 percent of teachers report encountering inappropriate use at least occasionally, suggesting that not all inappropriate use is formally identified or recognised by students.

Secondary students are more likely to believe inappropriate use will be detected, with around three in five saying it is likely a student would be caught (62 percent). Secondary schools are also more likely to have established consequences. We heard that this includes conversations about academic integrity, contacting parents and whānau, assigning Not Achieved grades, issuing formal warnings, and requiring work to be redone.

We heard that monitoring approaches range from digital monitoring and supervised assessment conditions to teachers relying on their knowledge of students’ usual work. A recurring example was teachers asking students to explain their work. As one leader noted, asking “a few sharp questions” can quickly reveal whether a student understands what they have submitted. Teachers also reported that this can be easier in smaller schools, where they know students well and deviations from normal work are more noticeable.

Despite these controls, students described ways of working around monitoring, including using external tools or adapting AI-generated content to make it less obvious. Students' behaviour therefore reflects not only the presence of monitoring, but also their perceptions of how effective that monitoring is. At the same time, students described a stigma associated with inappropriate AI use and concerns about authenticity. Many also linked inappropriate use to workload pressures, tight deadlines, and expectations to produce high-quality work, highlighting the tension between meeting expectations and following the rules.

Conclusion

Students are already using AI across a wide range of learning and assessment activities. They most commonly use it to find information, generate ideas, improve their work, and better understand content. While use is more widespread and sophisticated in secondary schools, particularly in Years 11-13, students across all year levels describe AI primarily as a tool to support and enhance their learning rather than replace it.

At the same time, AI is creating new challenges for schools. Some students are using AI in ways that do not align with expectations, particularly where guidance is unclear or oversight is limited. Teachers and leaders often report low confidence in identifying inappropriate use, while students' confidence with AI is not always matched by a strong understanding of its limitations.

As AI becomes more embedded in education, students will need clear expectations and support to use it effectively, critically, and responsibly. This will involve strategic approaches to teach and manage use of AI for learning and assessments and accessible guidance for all students.

In the next chapter, we look at what is working well and what the challenges are regarding AI in New Zealand schools.



Part 5: What is working well in schools, and what are the challenges?

As schools increasingly explore the use of AI, there is a need to develop safe and enabling ways of managing this in a school context. In this chapter, we examine how schools are positively integrating use of AI, including the role of leadership, policy development, guidance, and supportive environments. This includes real-life examples from one primary and one secondary school. We also outline the main challenges schools face, such as gaps in knowledge, limited guidance, concerns about reliability, and student uncertainty about appropriate use.

What we found: an overview

- When schools are taking a strategic approach, they support safe and effective use by: putting in place clear school-level guidance for staff and students, building AI capability and confidence, and providing structured opportunities for teachers and students to use AI appropriately.
- Some challenges that schools face include: concerns about the reliability of AI tools, not knowing enough about how to use these tools well, and not having clear and specific guidance.

These findings are set out in more detail below.

What positive approaches are schools using to integrate and manage the use of AI?

Having an AI champion helps schools use AI better.

Having AI champions and staff with specialist or technical expertise supports more deliberate and informed use of AI in schools. They can act as early adopters and advocates and lead AI literacy and professional learning for staff and students within the school.

Schools we visited with a dedicated AI champion were better placed to move beyond simple awareness or reactive responses to AI, towards more purposeful and informed use. These staff act as a critical bridge between technical and educational perspectives, helping identify opportunities for learning while also raising important considerations around privacy, security, assessment integrity, and appropriate use.

Across many schools, initial responses to AI centred on concerns about plagiarism and the credibility of assessment. In schools with AI champions, this thinking shifted from basic awareness and sometimes inconsistent practice to more active and informed engagement. These champions help staff see not just the risks, but also the opportunities for teaching and learning.

One secondary principal described initially being highly concerned about assessment credibility and plagiarism, but conversations with the school's IT team helped reframe this thinking, highlighting how AI could support both staff practice and student learning, and prompting more purposeful engagement across the school.

AI champions play an important role in building staff capability, sharing emerging knowledge, and supporting the development of school guidance and policies. They often draw on external networks and are supported to attend professional learning, conferences, and undertake research, bringing new insights back into their schools.

“Our IT guy, who’s not a teacher, was coming from the ‘we need to teach kids how to use this’ angle. We first did some PLD [with] staff... an hour or two of ‘this is what’s out there’... We talked about the issues around authenticity and security as well. Some of the apps that staff were using there were security concerns with.... These [previously] weren’t conversations that we were having out in the open.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

“I have to be two steps ahead of everybody, new sites and tools are released daily, so I am always making sure we block those. We have a set of approved tools that we allow.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL AI CHAMPION

We also heard that AI champions can help create a culture where staff feel comfortable discussing AI use, asking questions, and reflecting on practice. This supports more informed decision-making by leaders and helps schools develop balanced guidance that supports innovation, while maintaining student safety and educational integrity.

As champions build their knowledge and confidence, they contribute to developing in-house expertise, identifying emerging risks and opportunities, and creating space for ongoing discussion as AI technologies continue to evolve.

However, we also heard practical concerns about building an AI school approach around one specific champion. While this has been highlighted as a success for schools, there is a risk of the expertise leaving if the one staff member fronting it leaves the school or changes to a different role. This has to be taken into consideration and contingencies put in place to avoid schools being too dependent on a single person moving forward.

Including teachers and students in the development of AI policies supports stronger buy-in, clearer expectations, and more consistent use.

We heard that some schools are involving both students and teachers in developing AI policies and guidance. Gathering these perspectives helps schools better understand how AI is already being used, what support is needed, and where clearer expectations are required.

Joint development also strengthens buy-in. Students told us they are more likely to understand and follow policies when they have helped shape them, while teachers are better able to apply guidance consistently when it reflects classroom realities.

Schools described using surveys and consultation to inform policy development. This helps identify gaps in knowledge, and target guidance and professional learning. Involving students also supports the development of policies they see as relevant and fair. This is particularly important given students' strong interest in guidance on how to use AI to support learning, rather than simply being told what is and is not allowed. We also heard from parents and whānau who were consulted by their children's schools.

We also saw examples of schools clearly outlining shared responsibilities. For example, students may be required to declare when AI is used in their work and use it only with teacher permission, while teachers are expected to model responsible and appropriate use.

Overall, involving students and teachers helps create policies that are better understood, more practical to implement, and more likely to support safe, effective use of AI for teaching and learning.

Having clear context-specific guidance helps ensure teachers and students understand when and how AI can and cannot be used.

Clear guidance is important for both teachers and students. We heard that while some schools specify what isn't allowed, this needs to be complemented by clear, practical examples of appropriate use. Leaders support more confident and effective use of AI when guidance goes beyond restrictions and sets out when and how AI can be used to support learning.

In schools where guidance is clear, students are better able to understand when AI can support their learning and when it shouldn't be used. Both primary and secondary students reported concern about breaking rules unintentionally. In one school, students described a period of uncertainty about what 'appropriate AI use' looked like, before guidance was developed.

Clear guidance also supports teachers to apply expectations consistently across classrooms. It helps them know what students are allowed to do, how to respond to inappropriate use, and how to use AI safely themselves, including protecting student information and maintaining professional judgement.

Some schools make expectations visible and easy to understand through approaches such as graduated expectations across year levels. We also heard how

visual prompts, such as posters, alongside more detailed policy documents, help reinforce and embed expectations for both students and staff.

Creating safe, well-supported environments for experimentation helps schools build confidence and capability in using AI.

Schools that invested in appropriate AI tools, and created space for experimentation, were better able to support both teachers and students to use AI effectively. This included identifying approved tools that protect student data, and clearly setting out when, where, and how AI could be used. Schools used a range of approaches to make this visible, from visual guides to clear expectations and active teacher oversight.

Providing teachers with training and time to experiment was critical. In these schools, open discussion about AI was encouraged through staff meetings and professional learning, helping to build confidence and shared understanding. As teachers developed their own capability, they were better equipped to guide and supervise students' use of AI.

Students consistently expressed a desire for clearer guidance on how to use AI appropriately. Some schools responded by introducing structured approaches, such as AI literacy learning, to help students understand how to use AI to support their learning. This included developing skills in effective prompting and using AI as a tool to support teaching and learning, rather than relying on it to complete work for them.

Creating systems for ensuring academic integrity supports more confident and appropriate use of AI.

Schools are taking different approaches to maintaining the integrity of assessment in the context of AI. Some have returned to more controlled conditions, such as completing internal assessments in class or using pen-and-paper tasks. While this can help ensure authenticity, it can also be time-consuming and reduce available teaching time.

Clear policies about when AI can and cannot be used in assessments are critical. In schools with well-developed policies, these expectations are clearly signposted, helping students understand boundaries and reducing uncertainty about appropriate use.

Some schools are also using classroom monitoring tools to support oversight. Students described how teachers can view screens and identify when AI tools are being used inappropriately, allowing timely intervention.

There is also a growing focus on designing assessments that consider both the process and the final output. This includes checking how work is developed, not just what is submitted, to better measure student progress and achievement of learning outcomes. These approaches help ensure that assessment results remain credible and meaningful in an AI-enabled environment, giving schools, students, and parents and whānau confidence that qualifications reflect genuine learning. They also support students to build a clear understanding of academic integrity and responsible AI use, preparing them for further education and work where these expectations are critical.

What do real life examples of positive approaches towards AI in schools look like?

We have highlighted the key approaches that are working well in schools. In the next section, we offer real life examples of what these approaches look like in one primary and one secondary school.

There is no single approach that will fit every school, and schools need to make decisions that reflect the needs of their community. The case studies below highlight how two schools have responded to their own contexts and challenges, and explore some of the practical ways that schools can support learning, manage risks, and build capability in AI as the technology becomes more widely used.

Case study 1: A carefully planned, school-wide AI policy in a primary school that protects students and supports their learning

A large, urban primary school serving Years 1-8 in a high socioeconomic community.

Needing to 'get ahead of the students'

School leaders recognised early that AI was rapidly entering students' lives and learning, often faster than schools were responding. Rather than reacting once AI use became entrenched, leaders wanted to 'get ahead of the students' by establishing shared expectations, building staff capability, and ensuring AI use supported learning rather than undermined it. As a full primary school with students aged up to 13 years old, concerns around assessment credibility were less immediate than in secondary schools. However, leaders and teachers emphasised the importance of instilling good habits early, before students move on to secondary school. AI was viewed as a tool with potential benefits, but one that required explicit teaching, modelling, and clear boundaries.

Variation in how AI was already being used in school

Rather than banning AI outright, leaders chose to first understand existing practice and develop a deliberate, informed response. They engaged both staff and students through surveys, to learn how AI was being used, how it might support teaching and learning, and what risks needed to be managed.

The staff survey explored which tools teachers were using, how confident they felt using AI in their role, and what support they needed. Confidence levels varied – not all teachers were using AI, but most were seeking clearer guidance.

Senior students (Years 7-8) were also surveyed and interviewed, giving leaders and the AI champion insight into students' confidence and patterns of use. Many students reported using AI for feedback on their work, editing writing, and research. However, they were concerned about using AI 'too much' or being assumed to be cheating. Students also reported higher confidence with AI than teachers, reinforcing leaders' concerns about the need for early, explicit guidance.

These insights directly shaped the school's emerging approach to AI use. Beyond providing valuable data, the principal noted that the consultation process itself helped teachers and students feel heard and supported, which was important for 'bringing them along on the journey'.

Developing an in-house 'AI Champion'

Leaders also supported an associate principal to act as the school's AI champion. The purpose of this role was to build in-house expertise, support staff learning, and inform the development of clear guidance. The appointed champion had been at the school for over a decade, with a background in English teaching, and was head of the senior school. They had also previously led a local school cluster, which gave them visibility of emerging practice across other schools and sparked their interest in AI.

With leadership support, the AI champion undertook a sabbatical in 2024 to deepen their understanding of AI tools and their implications for teaching and learning. This included attending seminars delivered by AI experts. At the same time, the principal used conference opportunities to connect with other schools and learn how they were approaching AI use. By the end of the sabbatical, the champion was well positioned to lead the development of the school's AI policy. As they noted, from that point *"it all happened very quickly."*

The AI champion emphasised the importance of establishing clear guidelines before *"the horse bolted,"* observing that in many schools, students were already more confident and experienced with AI than their teachers. This insight shaped the school's decision to prioritise building staff understanding and shared expectations before formalising policies for student use.

Targeted PLD and giving teachers 'time and permission' to experiment

Teachers participated in extensive professional learning and development at the start of 2025. This PLD focused on building practical understanding of what AI tools can do and how they might support teaching practice.

Some sessions were facilitated by an external IT provider looking at the ethics of AI, and included opportunities for teachers to see AI tools demonstrated in real teaching contexts. Other sessions were held in-house, led by the AI champion, who showed teachers how to use prompts and demonstrated how AI could be used to make teaching resources.

While some teachers had already experimented with AI, many were unfamiliar with its full capabilities. The principal described staff surprise at how easily AI could produce a polished resource from a photo of handwritten planning notes.

Following PLD sessions, teachers were encouraged to experiment with AI tools to help them tailor learning resources and support administrative tasks. One PE teacher described using AI to help organise the school's swimming programme. Although some staff were already using AI, leaders believed it was important to explicitly teach teachers about both AI capabilities and limitations before actively encouraging wider uptake.

“When teachers are busy working... it’s very hard to take time to incorporate new practice into your program. [The PLD] was just about introducing and giving staff time to explore... [as] a starting point for them... It was all about getting people playing with the tools, giving them time and the permission to explore.”

LEADER

The staff survey revealed teachers were using a range of generative AI tools, each with different strengths. Rather than subscribing to a single premium platform, the school adopted an approval process – AI tools are reviewed by the school AI champion or principal before it can be approved for classroom or administrative use. Students and staff are then allowed use any of approved tools, provided they comply with the clearly articulated guidelines and policies.

Clear, school-wide policy for staff and students

Using the AI champion’s expertise alongside insights gathered from staff and students, leaders deliberately aligned their approach with the school’s digital citizenship framework and the New Zealand Curriculum key competencies. What emerged was a detailed policy document with rules for both staff and students.

The policy sets out overall ‘guiding principles’ for everyone. These include academic integrity and transparency about when and how AI is used, and the need for ongoing human oversight. The policy also includes a commitment to continuous learning, where staff and students are encouraged to experiment with AI and reflect on its use, to develop greater digital literacy and confidence. To protect data privacy, the policy explicitly prohibits entering sensitive or identifiable information into AI tools.

The policy also draws clear parameters of acceptable use for students. Students may use AI for activities such as brainstorming ideas and drafting writing outlines, but only with explicit teacher permission. All AI tools must also be age-appropriate and comply with the school’s cyber-safety policies. Students are expressly prohibited from using AI to complete work on their behalf.

There are specific principles for teachers’ use as well. While staff may use AI to support tasks such as marking, they must not rely on AI to make final decisions about student grades. Teachers are responsible for modelling appropriate use of AI in class, teaching students how to critically evaluate AI-generated content, and closely supervising student use.

Helping students to follow the rules

The school takes a graduated approach to student AI use in school work – no use in Years 1-4, very limited use in Years 5-6, and carefully permitted use in Years 7-8. To make expectations clear and memorable, leaders developed a visual guide showing when AI use is, and is not appropriate. This guide emphasises that AI should support learning (e.g. by helping students plan or check their work), but must never replace their own thinking or effort.

A key feature of this approach is that AI is explicitly taught. Teachers do not assume students know how to use AI effectively or responsibly; instead, they provide direct instruction on how to write effective prompts and use AI to generate useful, appropriate feedback. This is seen as critical, as students can be tempted to rely on AI because they believe it can produce better work than they can themselves.

Active teacher monitoring reinforces these expectations. Teachers use screen-monitoring software during class and respond to inappropriate use through a stepped approach. This begins with real-time conversations, followed by limiting access to devices or AI tools, and, if necessary, contacting parents and whānau. Teachers emphasised that these moments are treated as learning opportunities rather than punishment, helping students build a clear understanding of school expectations and responsible AI use.

Creating a safe sandbox for AI use in the school

Because the school took an open, consultative approach to developing its policy and actively sought student voice, students feel comfortable being honest about when and how they use AI, and are more likely to seek guidance from teachers. This creates a 'safe sandbox' environment, where students can explore AI within clear boundaries and with teacher support.

In this context, AI use is not hidden or discouraged, but carefully guided. Students are supported to experiment, ask questions, and learn from mistakes, while staying within agreed expectations. This reduces the likelihood of students relying on AI to do their work for them, and instead supports the development of their critical and creative thinking.

Case study 2: Championing learning about AI in a secondary school by creating an environment where students and teachers are taught to use AI safely and effectively

A large, urban secondary school serving Years 9–13 in a high socioeconomic community.

Responding to a rapidly changing landscape

Leaders noticed how students and staff were increasingly using AI without a clear understanding of how the tools worked, or how to use them 'appropriately' within the school rules. As a secondary school where students complete high-stakes assessments that can influence future pathways, the risks associated with inappropriate use of AI are more immediate. Leaders note that secondary students have greater access to devices, and staff need clear guidance to ensure AI use supports learning, while maintaining assessment integrity.

Rather than prohibiting AI, leaders prioritised establishing clear expectations and building capability. Led by a school AI lead, the school aimed to create conditions where students and teachers could use AI safely, thoughtfully, and in ways that enhanced learning.

Understanding how AI was already being used in the school

Leaders began by developing a clear picture of existing practice. A school-wide survey explored how both students and staff were using AI and where further guidance was needed.

Students reported using AI tools to support understanding of course content, develop study plans, and receive feedback on their work. However, teachers expressed concerns about students relying too heavily on AI, especially when short on time. In these circumstances, teachers felt that AI was being used as a shortcut, potentially bypassing the productive ‘struggle’ that helps learning. As in many secondary school contexts, teachers were particularly concerned about plagiarism and academic integrity, especially given the pressures students face to achieve strong assessment results.

Teacher use of AI varied widely. Some staff had begun experimenting with AI for tasks such as drafting communications or preparing feedback, noting benefits such as more accessible communication with parents and whānau for whom English is a second language. Others were at earlier stages of exploration or chose not to engage with AI.

Approaches to managing student AI use also differed, with some teachers returning to pen-and-paper tasks, while others began integrating AI into classroom learning. Despite this variation, there was a shared view that banning AI would be ineffective, and that schools have an important role in teaching students how to use these tools responsibly.

Developing a learning programme for staff

After getting a clear picture of AI use within the school, leaders took deliberate steps to develop a school-wide AI policy supported by an AI literacy programme for staff. The AI lead steered this work, drawing on external expertise, insights from other schools, as well as carrying out their own research. Leaders and selected staff also engaged in professional learning opportunities, including conferences and short university courses, to deepen their understanding of emerging AI practices.

A key outcome was the development of a modular training programme for teachers, designed by the school’s AI lead, and supported by AI champions across different learning areas. This programme supports both practical application and how to exercise professional judgement when using AI. For example, teachers learn about using AI to support planning, resource development, and safe handling of student data.

The training is differentiated across three levels – ‘beginner’, ‘intermediate’, and ‘advanced’ AI users – allowing teachers to engage according to their confidence and experience. AI training is also embedded into the onboarding process for new staff, and the programme is reviewed and updated regularly by the lead, to keep pace with changes in AI and school practice. As teachers build confidence, they too become ‘AI champions’, and are encouraged to share their knowledge and support colleagues.

“Staff did not feel confidence, and this programme has enabled us to have these conversations about AI beyond just discussing plagiarism.”

TEACHER



Explicit teaching of AI for students

Alongside learning modules for teachers, the school developed an AI learning programme for Year 9 students to set clear expectations as they start secondary school. This programme is split into four modules, with the possibility of expanding in the future to include content for other year groups. It is designed to encourage students to critically evaluate AI outputs and understand how AI systems can reflect bias. Leaders told us that this was considered especially important in the context of a girls school, noting the risk of gender bias in AI-generated content.

Teachers also described how AI has ‘sharpened’ the need to guide students in becoming ‘reflective and critical users’ of these tools. Rather than simply providing access to tools, teachers aim to support students to test AI outputs and explicitly teach them to use AI in ways that support their learning.

Comprehensive policy and guidance with safeguards

The school’s AI literacy programme is supported by a detailed policy that establishes clear expectations for both staff and students. Leaders sought to balance enabling innovation, while also maintaining robust safeguards.

The policy limits student and staff use to a set of approved AI tools, selected by the AI champion and other leaders based on criteria like privacy, age-appropriateness, and educational value. Throughout the policy there is a strong focus on maintaining human oversight of decision-making.

Maintaining the integrity of assessment is a central focus in the AI policy. Existing cheating and plagiarism policies remain in place, with AI use prohibited in assessment unless explicitly permitted by a teacher. Students are required to complete authenticity declarations when submitting assessments, and the school uses secure online assessment platforms and VPN blockers to reduce opportunities for inappropriate use of AI. Consequences for inappropriate use of AI are consistent with those for other forms of cheating (i.e., a ‘fail’ grade, or having to re-do the assessment).

The school policy also includes specific expectations and responsibilities for teachers. While AI may be used to support tasks such as drafting feedback, teachers remain fully accountable for all professional judgements, and decisions informed by AI. Teachers must not rely on AI to determine student grades. This also aligns with Ministry of Education and NZQA guidelines. Teachers are also required to model ‘responsible’ use, ensure students understand the school’s AI policies, and actively supervise its use in the classroom.

Students are encouraged to use AI as a support tool, rather than a substitute for their own thinking. Teachers must give permission before AI can be used in class, and students must acknowledge when it has been used.

The policy has one clear rule for both teachers and students: they must never upload personal or identifiable information like names, addresses, or student records onto AI platforms. This rule includes clear reference to the Privacy Act 2020.

“I feel very confident in the tools we are using – we control the bubble as long as we are controlling the tools we are using.”

TEACHER

Monitoring and reinforcing responsible use

Because the school has such a clear policy, teachers are confident discussing AI use and its rules with students. Conversations about inappropriate use are framed as part of supporting responsible learning, rather than solely as disciplinary actions or hoping to ‘catch students out’. One teacher described enforcing the policies around AI as part of ‘normal behaviour management’.

Teachers draw on a range of approaches to monitor the authenticity of student work, including asking students to show notes, drafts, or other evidence to track how they planned and wrote their work themselves. Teachers also described using their knowledge about how their students usually write and perform, to make informed judgements about whether AI had been used inappropriately.

Monitoring a full class of students can be challenging, so teachers explicitly teach students how to use AI well, including how to give effective prompts, critically analysing outputs, and understanding when AI use is appropriate.

Teachers also encourage students to reflect on the purpose of using AI. For example, students are expected to explain how a tool will support their learning before being permitted to use it. This reinforces the expectation that AI should enhance – rather than replace – learning.

“Students are always asking me, ‘Can I use this tool?’ My first question is ‘What is the educational benefit?’ If they can’t answer that then we go no further.”

TEACHER

Policy and structured learning create a safe environment

The combination of a clear policy and structured learning has contributed to a more open, informed culture around AI use. Staff highly value the professional learning they have received and feel more confident integrating AI into their practice. Students have much clearer direction around how AI can support their learning, and are more likely to seek advice about appropriate use from teachers.

AI use is discussed openly, reducing stigma and the likelihood of intentional or unintentional inappropriate use. Teachers and students engage in ongoing conversations about how AI can support learning, moving beyond a narrow focus on plagiarism.

Leaders noted that while progress has been significant, further work is needed to build shared understanding with parents and whānau, particularly as AI becomes more embedded in students' lives beyond the classroom. Strengthening this partnership is seen as an important next step in supporting safe and effective AI use.

What challenges do schools face when trying to integrate and manage the use of AI?

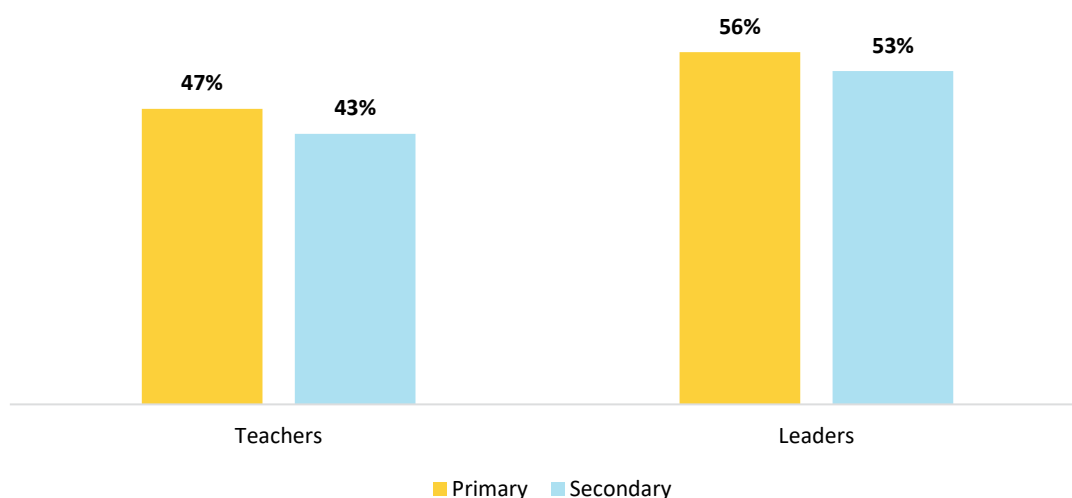
Around half of staff say they do not yet know enough to use AI tools effectively, or teach students how to critically engage with AI.

Over half of leaders (56 percent) and nearly half of teachers (45 percent) report they do not know enough to use AI tools properly. Around half of teachers (47 percent) are also concerned about how to use these tools well. This pattern is consistent across primary and secondary schools and does not vary by school size, location, or socioeconomic context, suggesting this is a system-wide capability gap.

“I know this [AI tool] would be really useful, but I’m not exactly sure how to do it properly so it’s effective. Everything is a time challenge because there’s so much time pressure on us to have everything done perfectly now that I’m spending evenings and weekends just trying to upskill myself.”

TEACHER

Figure 21: Teachers and leaders reporting they don’t know enough to use AI tools well, by school type.



We heard that the pace of change in AI makes it difficult for teachers to keep up. Many rely on the one or two tools they are most familiar with and find it challenging to build confidence beyond this. Teachers described the importance of developing skills in prompting and working iteratively with AI. While AI can quickly generate useful material, its value depends heavily on how well it is used.

“AI is good at processing, but the intelligence has to come from us... It shouldn’t be doing the thinking for us, but should be doing the heavy lifting.”

TEACHER

Teachers also described how AI can support aspects of their practice, such as drafting feedback, but emphasised that this requires strong professional judgement. As one secondary teacher explained, AI can produce “*pretty high-value feedback*” quickly, but only when prompts are specific and outputs are carefully checked and refined. This reinforces that limited staff capability directly constrains the quality and consistency of AI use in classrooms.

Gaps in teacher confidence also affect students. Students with stronger literacy skills are generally better able to use AI in more sophisticated ways, including crafting prompts and critically engaging with outputs. Students with lower literacy levels may struggle to access these benefits, and may rely on AI to complete tasks without developing their own understanding.

“How are students accessing AI if they have a reading age of seven to eight?”

TEACHER

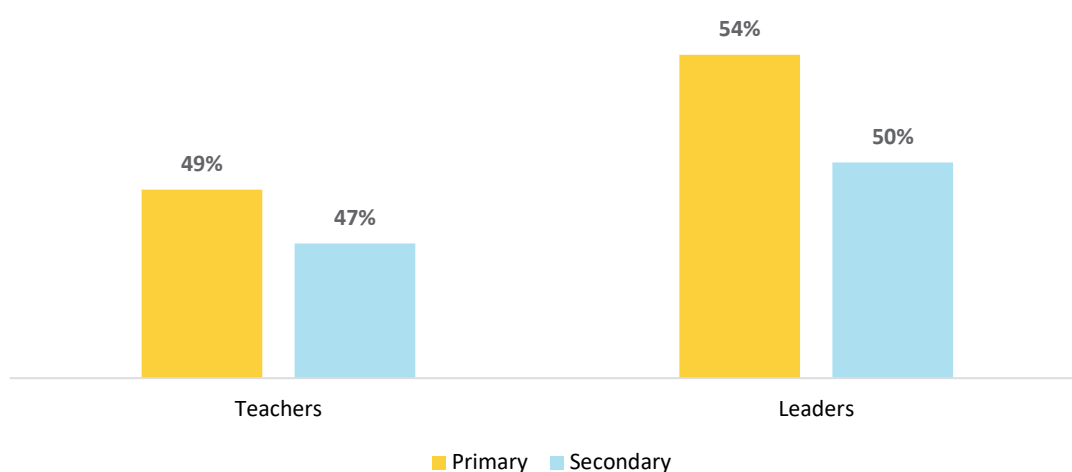
When teachers are confident with AI, they are better able to teach these skills explicitly – showing students how to prompt effectively, question outputs, and use AI appropriately. However, many teachers reported uncertainty about how to teach AI use. Even where they are beginning to build their own capability, this does not always translate into confidence in guiding students, setting clear boundaries, or addressing inappropriate use like plagiarism.

This capability gap matters, because it shapes both teacher and student use. Without strong knowledge and confidence, teachers are less able to model effective practice or support students to become critical, responsible users of AI. As a result, AI is more likely to be used in limited or inconsistent ways and students are more likely to use it inappropriately, or miss out on its benefits.

Around half of staff report there is not enough clear guidance to support their own use of AI.

Around half of leaders (53 percent) and teachers (48 percent) say they lack clear guidance on how to use AI. This reflects a wider concern about the absence of a strong national framework, resulting in significant variation in policies and expectations across, and even within, schools. As discussed in chapter 3, some external guidance exists, but not all schools are aware of it or have accessed it.

Figure 22: *Teachers and leaders reporting lack of guidance on how to use AI, by school type.*



“For me the priority is actually understanding the curriculum and the requirements and matching it to my students needs, rather than spending hours trying to work out how to use an AI tool.”

TEACHER

Teachers and leaders across all school types described wanting clearer, more centralised guidance, particularly in relation to assessment and what should be taught to students about AI. They also wanted practical tools, such as policy templates or development checklists. Uncertainty about legal and ethical boundaries was also a key concern, especially around privacy and professional responsibilities. Parents and whānau also expressed support for stronger national direction, including expert-led training for teachers and clearer accountability.

“The biggest challenge is knowing what we can and can’t do legally, in our professional capacity.”

TEACHER

In the absence of clear national direction, some leaders told us they develop their AI policy in-house, often led by IT specialists or individual staff with an interest in AI. While this can support innovation, it also contributes to inconsistency. We also heard that time and capacity constraints make it difficult for schools to develop and embed new policies and practices. Rural and smaller schools in particular noted challenges in accessing professional learning opportunities, and would benefit from more accessible formats such as webinars or short modules.

This lack of clear and consistent guidance creates uncertainty for schools, contributing to uneven practice and limiting their ability to use AI confidently, safely, and effectively to support teaching and learning.

“There is no consistency in terms of assessment practice [between schools]. We have met it head on and we are lucky that we have people and we have invested in the space and we have reaped the rewards of that. There are many schools that have gone ‘this is too hard’ and buried their heads in the sand. So we worry that our students are getting a tougher road in NCEA than kids at other schools, because we apply strict checks and measures to manage misuse.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADER

About half of leaders and teachers think AI tools aren’t reliable or don’t work well yet. This is a bigger concern in secondary schools.

Around half of leaders (48 percent) and teachers (53 percent) report that AI tools are not yet trustworthy or reliable. This concern is more pronounced in secondary schools, where 60 percent of teachers report this, compared to 45 percent in primary schools. Similarly, over half of primary leaders (59 percent) say AI tools cannot always do what they need, rising to 68 percent among secondary leaders.

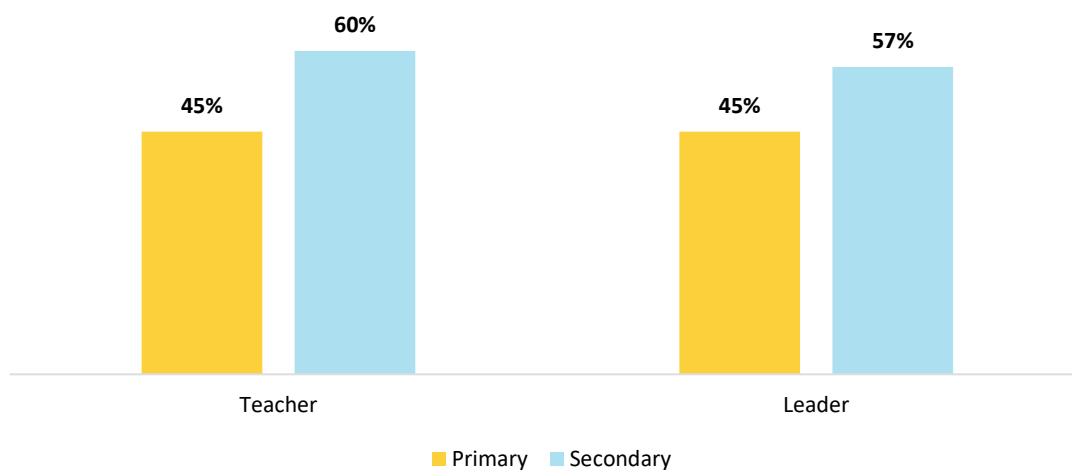
“How’s something that appears simple and harmless actually being used to harvest data?”

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“[AI] can be lazy... So you have to do a lot - your prompts have to be really clear... I think it's the most efficient way of giving you something, [but] is not necessarily always accurate.”

TEACHER

Figure 23: Teachers and leaders reporting AI is untrustworthy, by school type.



We heard wide-ranging concerns about the quality and relevance of AI-generated content. Teachers described outputs that were inaccurate, inconsistent, or not aligned with the New Zealand context, often requiring significant checking and editing. This makes effective use of AI time-consuming and dependent on teachers having the skills to carefully prompt and refine outputs.

Students also reported that AI responses can be confusing, irrelevant, or difficult to interpret. Both students and teachers highlighted uncertainty about whether AI outputs can be trusted.

“You can search up something about a butterfly, and it will tell you about pickles, but show you a picture of a strawberry.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

There are also important equity and cultural concerns. Students in Māori-medium settings (i.e., rumaki and reo rua units) told us AI tools are less useful in te reo Māori, with issues such as incorrect spelling, inappropriate word use, and difficulty generating accurate content. Teachers further emphasised that AI performs poorly when it comes to New Zealand histories, iwi perspectives, and indigenous knowledge, raising concerns about its appropriateness for teaching these areas.

“It can output things in Māori but it misspells or uses words in the wrong context. It’s not right... There’s no way you could fully use AI for Māori.”

STUDENT

“You don’t know if AI is telling the truth.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

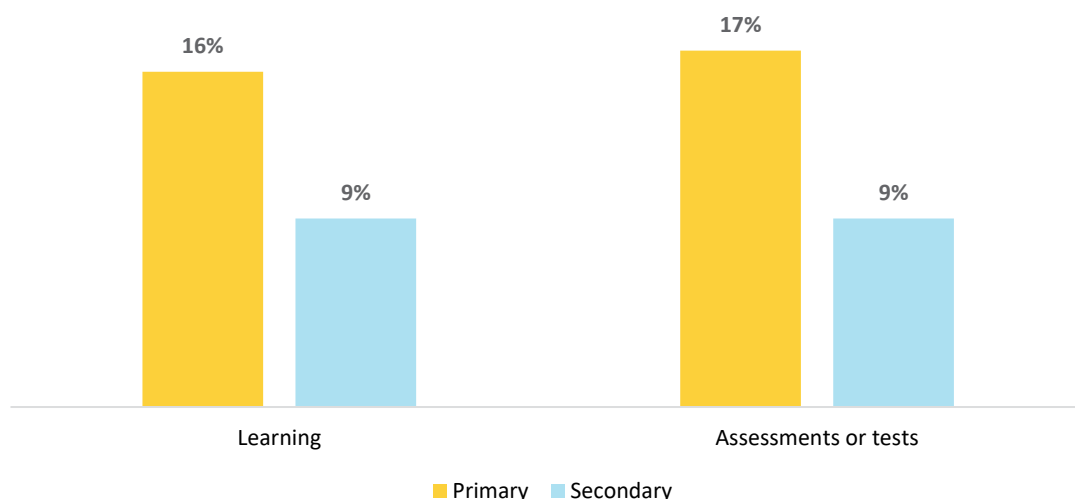
Teachers and leaders also raised broader risks, including bias, misleading or overly agreeable responses, and challenges in identifying AI-generated content. Using AI effectively was consistently described as an iterative process requiring careful prompting, checking, and professional judgement. Without this, outputs may be incomplete, inaccurate, or unsuitable for use in teaching and learning.

These limitations matter, because they reduce confidence in AI and increase the workload required to use it well. Where tools are not reliable or relevant, teachers are less likely to integrate them into practice, and students are less likely to benefit from them as learning supports.

Students are unsure what counts as proper AI use, including plagiarism, and some know it can be used inappropriately.

Students voice uncertainty about what constitutes appropriate use of AI, alongside growing awareness of how it can be used in ways that undermine learning and assessment integrity. One in seven students are unsure if they have ever used AI inappropriately (14 percent).

Figure 24: *Students reporting being unsure if they have used AI inappropriately for learning or assessment, by school type.*



“Sometimes I don’t know what’s allowed and what’s not.”

STUDENT

“It would be good to learn to use it properly, so people aren’t mucking up and getting mad at the teacher.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

We heard from students that expectations around AI use are not always clear. Some were unsure about what is allowed and what crosses the line into plagiarism or inappropriate use. At the same time, both students and teachers described how AI can be used in increasingly sophisticated ways that are difficult to detect. Students noted that they are aware of differences in teachers’ confidence and capability with technology, and may adjust their use of AI accordingly.

Teachers described the challenges of preventing inappropriate use, particularly in secondary settings. Monitoring student device use during class can help, but it is time-intensive and not foolproof. Some students actively seek to bypass safeguards, for example, by using personal accounts instead of school-managed systems.

There are also system-level barriers. Some schools reported that the cost of secure online assessment platforms is prohibitive, raising equity concerns. This means not all schools are able to replicate secure assessment conditions, such as those used for NCEA exams, which rely on centrally provided systems that are not available for regular school use.

These challenges matter, because they make it difficult for schools to consistently uphold academic integrity in an AI-enabled environment. Where expectations are unclear and monitoring is uneven, students may unintentionally use AI inappropriately or take advantage of gaps in oversight. These risks undermine the credibility of assessment, create inequities between schools, and limit opportunities for students to learn how to use AI responsibly.

“Workshops about AI would be helpful... More in-depth knowledge about how it works and how to use it. We only really know it at surface level – a tool you put things into and good stuff comes out.”

STUDENT



Conclusion

Some schools across New Zealand are starting to take more deliberate approaches to integrating and managing AI. In these schools, having AI champions, involving staff and students in shaping policies, and providing clearer guidance is helping build shared understanding and more purposeful use. These approaches are working in both primary and secondary settings, suggesting they can be adapted across different contexts.

Schools are facing competing priorities, while also having to learn to use AI tools effectively. Not all schools have the ability to take a strategic approach to managing AI – especially those with a small staff and limited time or resources. Many schools are still working through challenges such as staff confidence, unclear expectations, and concerns about inappropriate use and reliability. Where teachers are gaining confidence with AI, there are early signs they are better able to use it in their own practice and to support students to use it more thoughtfully, pointing to the importance of building capability and clearer guidance over time.

The next chapter examines the perceived impacts of AI use on teaching and learning in NZ schools.



Part 6: What are the emerging impacts on teaching and learning?

As a substantive proportion of leaders, teachers, and students use AI in schools, there is growing interest in how it is affecting elements of teaching and learning. In this chapter, we explore the perceived impacts on students' critical and creative thinking and independent learning, including the risks and benefits associated with students using AI for schoolwork. We also explore teachers' experiences of how AI is affecting different aspects of their job.

What we found: an overview

- More than half of teachers report that AI is making their job easier overall. Only 7 percent report AI is making their job harder, despite the challenges authenticating student work, experienced especially by secondary school leaders.
- How students use AI shapes the impact on their learning. More than half of teachers report concerns that current, unplanned use is having a negative effect on students' critical thinking. However, students and teachers report more positive impacts on learning when students use AI to generate ideas, help them solve problems, and check work, rather than to produce work for them.

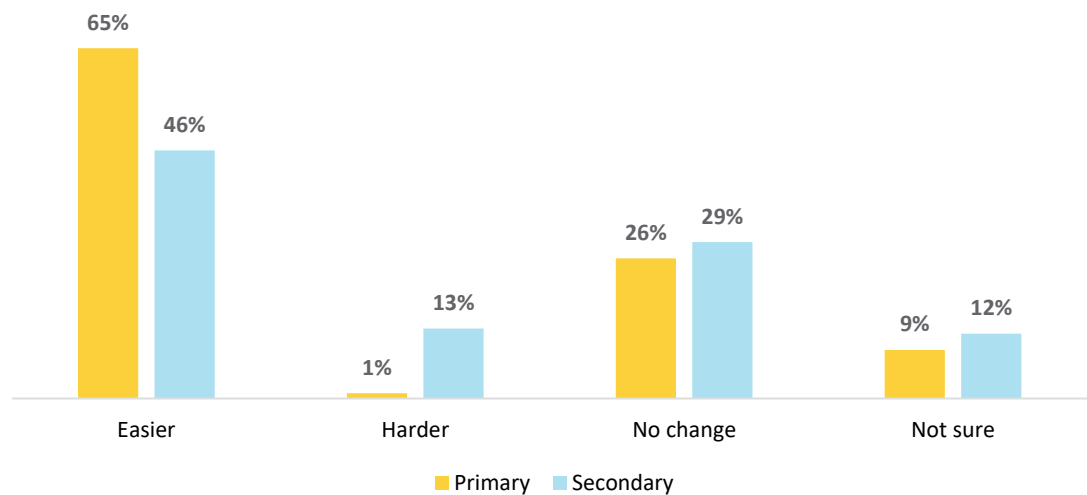
These findings are set out in more detail below.

What is the impact of AI use on teaching?

More than half of teachers say AI is making their job easier.

Many teachers report that AI is making their work easier, although experiences vary by context. More than half of teachers (55 percent) report AI use has made their job easier, and only 7 percent of teachers report that AI use has made their work harder. Leaders report even stronger effects on teaching, with nine in ten leaders (90 percent) believing that AI is making it easier for teachers to do their job.

Figure 25: Teachers reporting that using AI has made their job easier or harder, by school type.



We heard that AI can reduce workload by supporting tasks such as planning, preparation, and communication. However, these benefits are not uniform, and in some cases are offset by the need to review outputs, ensure accuracy, and manage risks associated with AI use.

“It doesn’t take away the teacher or the teaching... as long as you’re using it effectively. It makes your teaching more focused to meet the needs of the children.”

TEACHER

“I feel like I’m probably giving my children better teaching and more focused teaching because of it.”

TEACHER

In primary schools:

In primary settings, teachers are more likely than those in secondary schools to report that AI is making their job easier. Two in three primary teachers (65 percent) say AI has made their job easier, while only 1 percent report that it has made it harder.

We heard that this sits alongside strong pressure to upskill as teachers adapt to a rapidly evolving AI landscape. Teachers described needing to quickly build confidence in using AI effectively for teaching and planning.

AI is seen as particularly useful for lesson planning, curriculum implementation, and resource development. Teachers described using AI to interpret new curriculum requirements, generate teaching materials, and reduce preparation time. Many also noted that AI helps with administrative tasks, freeing up more time for teaching. As one teacher put it, AI helps by “saving time and brain power,” reducing the cognitive load associated with planning and preparation.

Primary teachers also emphasised the value of AI for differentiation and personalisation, using it to tailor activities to student ability and interests. This makes it easier to meet diverse learning needs and can improve engagement.

The benefits are strongest for teachers who use AI in specific ways. Those using AI for lesson planning are three times as likely to report that it makes their job easier,^b while those using it to tailor resources are twice as likely to say the same.^c

At the same time, teachers raised concerns about over-reliance. While AI can reduce workload, it is less effective for tasks that depend on professional judgement, relationships, and knowledge of students. Some teachers also worried that relying too heavily on AI could reduce opportunities for creativity and make the role less rewarding.

Overall, primary teachers see AI as a practical tool for reducing workload, while recognising the need to continue building their skills and adapting their practice.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, teachers are less likely than those in primary schools to report that AI is making their job easier, and are more likely to report challenges alongside benefits. Just under half of secondary teachers say AI has made their job easier (46 percent), while one in eight report that it has made their job harder (13 percent).

Secondary teachers told us that AI can improve efficiency in tasks such as writing reports, communicating with parents and whānau, and providing clearer and more consistent feedback.

However, these gains are often offset by the time needed to check AI outputs for accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness. Teachers also raised concerns about ethical risks, including data privacy when students upload their work into AI tools for feedback.

A key challenge in secondary settings is ensuring the authenticity of student work, particularly in Years 11 to 13 where assessment outcomes are high stakes. Teachers reported spending time monitoring AI use, tracking drafts, questioning students, and drawing on their knowledge of students' work to judge authenticity. This is especially difficult for internal assessments completed over time and outside controlled conditions, where AI-generated content can be hard to detect reliably.

As in primary schools, use matters. Secondary teachers who use AI to tailor teaching resources are more than twice as likely to say that AI has made their jobs easier,^d and those using it to design assessments are almost twice as likely to do so.^e

b Significance level $p < 0.001$

c Significance level $p < 0.05$

d Significance level $p < 0.05$

e Significance level $p < 0.05$

We also heard from secondary teachers that using AI to tailor resources for students (e.g., making the content more relevant) makes their job easier and also increases student engagement. In this way, we heard secondary teachers liken AI to a helpful ‘colleague’.

Using AI for some tasks can save teachers time, but it can also increase time spent on other activities – especially on verifying authenticity of student work.

AI use changes how teachers spend their time, often reducing effort on some tasks while increasing it on others. The most commonly reported time savings are in tailoring teaching resources (61 percent) and lesson planning (52 percent), indicating that AI is most effective when supporting preparation and content development.

“It’s just a way of doing things smarter sometimes... when you’re under time pressure, which is always.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADER

Figure 26: *Primary teachers reporting increased and decreased time spent on different activities by using AI.*

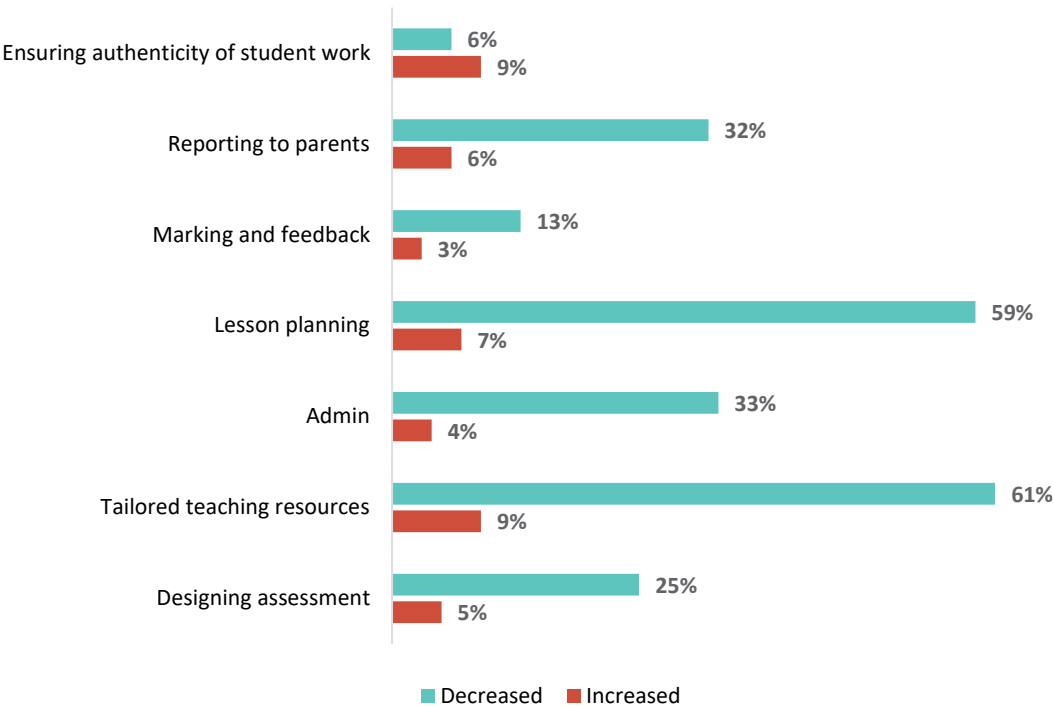
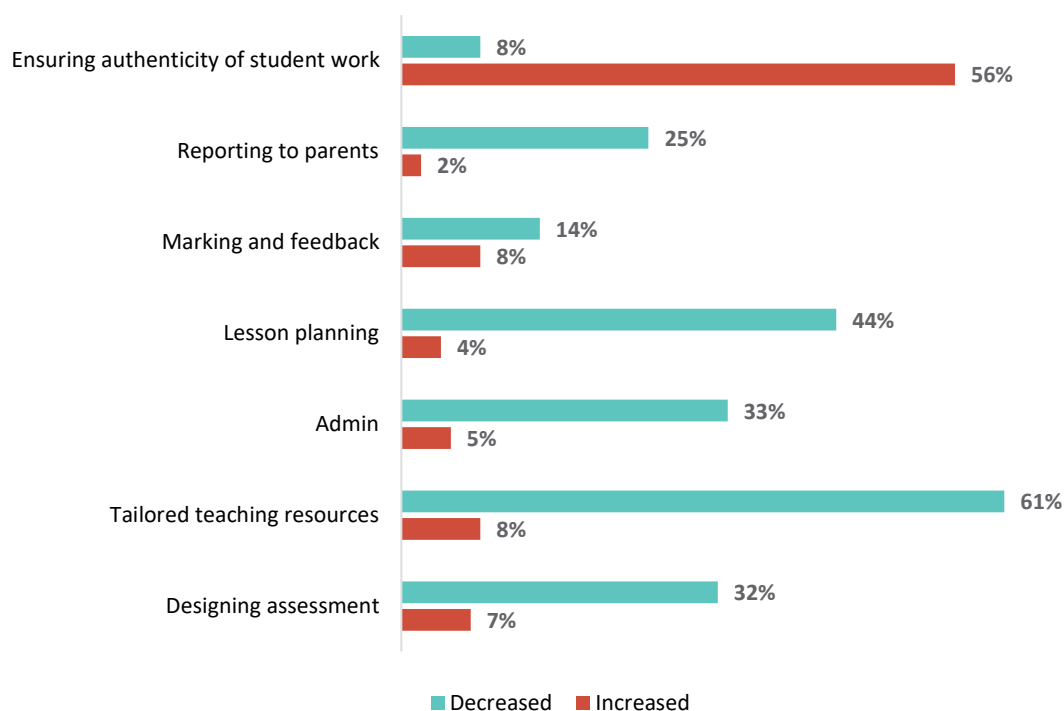


Figure 27: *Secondary teachers reporting increased and decreased time spent on different activities by using AI.*



Alongside saving time, this support can reduce the cognitive load associated with planning and decision-making, helping teachers move more quickly from curriculum intent to classroom practice. In this sense, AI not only speeds up tasks, but also makes them feel more manageable by reducing the effort required to plan and prepare.

At the same time, these efficiencies are often offset by time spent checking outputs, managing risks, and verifying student work, as discussed in earlier sections. Teachers described needing to review AI-generated materials carefully to ensure they are accurate, appropriate, and aligned with student needs. In some settings, particularly secondary, additional time is also required to ensure the authenticity of student work.

This highlights that AI may not simply reduce workload. Instead, it redistributes time, shifting effort from preparation to oversight and verification.

In primary schools:

In primary settings, teachers are more likely to experience clear time savings, with fewer trade-offs. Primary teachers generally report spending less time on a range of activities when using AI. For example, three in five say AI reduces time spent tailoring teaching resources (61 percent) and lesson planning (59 percent). Fewer than one in ten report any increase in time spent on specific tasks (3-9 percent).

“When I generate worksheets, sometimes you feel, ‘oh no, this is not linked to the New Zealand curriculum’... and then you have to go back and do a lot of editing.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

We heard that a key driver of these efficiencies is AI’s ability to help teachers interpret and implement curriculum requirements more efficiently. Teachers described using AI to break down complex curriculum content, generate examples, and translate expectations into practical classroom activities.

“Sometimes, if the curriculum is just overwhelming and confusing, I can put it into AI and it breaks it down for you – it gives you different ways of looking at it or reading it.”

PRIMARY TEACHER

These patterns reflect how AI is used in practice. Teachers use AI to generate materials, support planning, and adapt resources to student needs, reducing preparation time. As noted earlier, AI is often embedded in everyday teaching tasks that improve efficiency without significantly increasing monitoring demands.

This is also linked to the nature of primary teaching and assessment. Learning activities are generally more structured, completed in class, and lower stakes, with less need to formally verify the authenticity of student work. As a result, primary teachers spend less time on monitoring and checking than their secondary counterparts.

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, teachers also report time savings for preparation tasks, but these are more often offset by additional demands.

Around three in five teachers report less time spent tailoring resources (61 percent), and just under half report less time spent on lesson planning (44 percent). Teachers also described time savings in areas such as report writing and drafting communications for students and their parents and whānau, particularly for those for whom English is not their first language.

However, these gains are often offset by increased workload elsewhere. More than half of teachers (56 percent) report spending more time ensuring the authenticity of student work. As discussed earlier, this is linked to managing AI use in higher-stakes contexts such as NCEA internal assessments. Teachers described spending additional time checking work, tracking drafts, and confirming students’ understanding.

This is particularly true for teachers who encounter inappropriate student AI use. Secondary teachers who come across students using AI inappropriately are 5.5 times more likely to say that using AI has increased the time they spend ensuring authenticity of student work due to AI use than teachers who do not encounter this.^f

Schools are also adapting their assessment practices in response. For example, we heard that some schools are increasingly running internal assessments during school hours to reduce opportunities for inappropriate AI use.

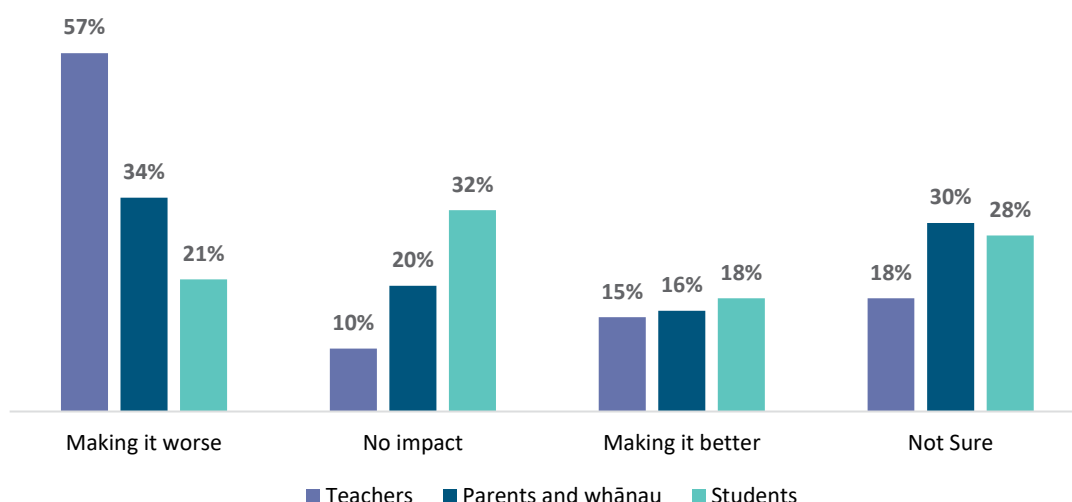
What is the impact of AI use on learning?

Half of teachers think AI use is negatively affecting students' critical thinking.

Teachers' concerns highlight the perceived risks of AI use reducing students' critical thinking, particularly when it is used in ways that replace rather than support learning.

More than half of teachers (57 percent) report that AI has had a negative effect on students' critical thinking, compared with 21 percent of students and 34 percent of parents and whānau. While students and parents and whānau are less likely to report harm, many report no change or are unsure, suggesting impacts may not always be visible to those using the tools.

Figure 28: *Teachers, students, and parents and whānau reporting the impact of AI use on students' critical thinking.*



We heard that when AI is used poorly, students may rely on AI-generated responses instead of generating ideas, evaluating information, or working through problems themselves. Teachers were particularly concerned about AI becoming a substitute for thinking, with students accepting or lightly editing responses, rather than questioning, refining, or building on them.

^f Significance level $p < 0.001$

“It gives you the answer, but you don’t do any thinking for yourself.”

STUDENT

Students also recognise this risk. Some described AI as an “easy way out” that can reduce learning when it does the work for them. However, others described using AI to generate ideas and perspectives that extend their thinking. This suggests that AI can either support or undermine critical thinking, depending on how it is used.

“[Some students] go straight to AI for an answer, so they are not doing the learning and continue to struggle. This requires constant monitoring in class to check they are doing the learning, and asking them ‘Why are you not coming to me?’... It is the struggling students who are most inclined to use it and this is exacerbating the problem. Weaker students go straight there.”

TEACHER

In primary schools:

In primary settings, reported negative impacts are lower than in secondary schools, but remain a concern given the importance of developing foundational thinking skills.

Two in five teachers (41 percent) say AI has had a negative effect, while just under one in five (18 percent) report a positive effect. Parents and whānau report similar concerns, with 35 percent saying AI is making critical thinking worse and 13 percent saying it is making it better. Two thirds of primary students are either unsure (33 percent) or do not think AI is affecting their critical thinking (33 percent).

“There is even more so a need to teach students the ability to discern sources.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers and students were concerned that AI can reduce opportunities for students to question information, evaluate sources, and develop their own ideas. Some students also raised concerns about fairness, noting that while some students work through tasks themselves, others use AI to do the thinking for them.

From what teachers report, there is no particular type of student use associated with more negative impacts. However, teachers who report that students use AI for problem solving and increasing accessibility of information are more likely to report better critical thinking^g. We heard from primary school teachers that, *if* used

^g Significance level $p < 0.05$.

purposefully, AI can help students to learn to think critically, and that real-time feedback from AI can help with this.

“I personally think that’s not so fair, ‘cause if people are just using AI to get the right answers. And then for people who actually tried... [it] feels not quite fair.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, reported negative impacts are substantially higher, reflecting stronger concerns about overreliance and reduced cognitive engagement.

Almost three quarters of teachers (72 percent) report negative effects of student AI use on critical thinking, while only 12 percent report positive effects. Around a third of parents and whānau (33 percent) and students (32 percent) say AI is making critical thinking worse, while fewer than one in five say it is making it better (19 percent of parents and whānau and 18 percent of students).

Teachers, students, and parents and whānau described concerns that students can become overly reliant on AI to generate ideas, solve problems, and complete work.

These concerns extend beyond the classroom. Parents and whānau expressed worries about their children’s overuse of AI, including the potential for unhealthy attachment to these tools. Parents and whānau told us that AI cannot replace human connection or real life experiences. Students also reflected on the possible effects of this reliance, particularly while their thinking skills are still developing. While AI can help students complete work more efficiently, they told us that it can also become a ‘crutch’ when used too heavily and reduce the need to think through tasks independently.

At the same time, students in secondary schools use AI in many different ways, and no single type of use is directly associated with more negative effects of AI on critical thinking. While the overall proportion of teachers reporting positive effects is low (12 percent), those who report that their students are using AI for problem solving are significantly more likely to report that AI use is making critical thinking better.^h

A similar pattern is evident in student responses. Students who say they use AI for checking work,ⁱ or to generate ideas,^j are more than twice as likely to say AI has improved their critical thinking skills compared to students who don’t use it for this.

Students described using AI to identify weaknesses, improve their work, and receive feedback on how to achieve higher grades, suggesting that AI can support critical thinking when it is used to prompt reflection, rather than replace thinking.

^h Significance level $p < 0.01$

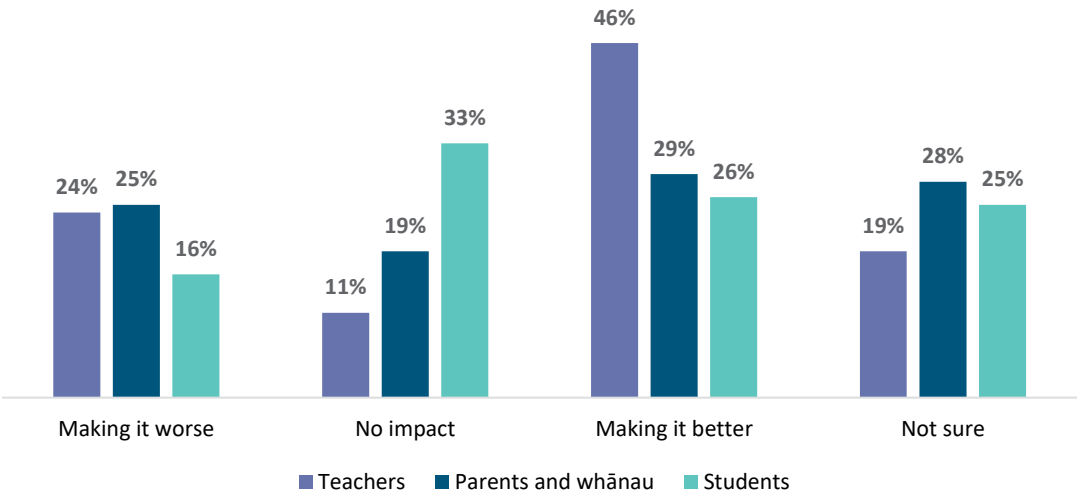
ⁱ Significance level $p < 0.05$

^j Significance level $p < 0.05$

When used well, AI can have positive effects on students’ independent learning.

Teachers and parents and whānau report that AI is having the most positive effects on student’s independent learning. Almost half of teachers (46 percent) and almost a third of parents and whānau (29 percent) say that use of AI has positive effects on this. However, a quarter of both teachers (24 percent) and parents and whānau (25 percent) say AI is impacting independent learning negatively, so there are differing views about this among teachers and parents and whānau. A quarter of students report positive effects on their own independent learning (26 percent), while 16 percent say it is impacting them negatively in this way.

Figure 29: Teachers, students, and parents and whānau reporting the impact of AI use on students’ independent learning.



“It’s positive if you don’t rely on it too much.”

STUDENT

“For me, the impact of AI is getting children back into writing ‘cause I want to see their own personal thinking, I want to see them developing their own ideas, and I don’t want them using AI to do that all the time.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

In primary schools:

In primary settings, teachers are more likely to report positive than negative effects, although students are less certain. Just under half of primary teachers say AI is positively impacting students' independent learning (43 percent), while less than one in five report a negative effect (17 percent). Parents and whānau are more evenly split, with 23 percent reporting a positive effect and 26 percent a negative effect. Around two thirds of students report either no change or uncertainty (65 percent).

We heard that while AI can support learning, it may also reduce opportunities for students to generate their own ideas and persist through challenges. Both teachers and students noted that when AI is used to bypass these processes, it can limit the development of important independent learning skills such as idea generation, persistence, and problem solving.

“I think people who use it heaps, they just don't learn to write well, and they just don't learn how to do the maths. They're just like, 'Why not? Why do I have to do that if I can just use AI? Why type a whole page, and I can type a sentence, and then it gives me a whole page?' [Students] don't have creativity and don't learn it.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, both positive and negative impacts are reported more strongly, reflecting greater use and more pronounced effects. Just under half of secondary teachers say AI is positively impacting students' independent learning (49 percent), while 30 percent report a negative effect. Parents and whānau report positive effects more often than in primary settings (33 percent), although one in four report negative effects (25 percent). Students also report both positive (22 percent) and negative (33 percent) outcomes more often than primary students.

“We need to evolve to meta-cognitive coaches not learning coaches, get kids to critically ask questions, because we will be collaborating with AI in the future.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

We heard AI supports independent learning by helping students understand content and fill gaps in instruction. However, teachers and students described situations where students become reliant on AI to provide answers, reducing their ability to complete work independently. This raises concerns from teachers and students about how students will perform in contexts where AI tools aren't available. Secondary leaders also raised concerns that students may 'pass' subjects by using AI, but without fully developing the underlying skills, although they note that it may be too early to determine whether this will have long-term impacts.

In terms of specific use, students and teachers have different views on what type of use is contributing to positive outcomes on independent learning. Students who say they use AI for checking work,^k or problem solving,^l are almost three times as likely to say AI has improved their independent learning. However, teachers who say students use AI for idea generation are almost twice as likely to say it has positively impacted independent learning.^m

We heard from secondary students that they use AI when teachers do not provide enough resources, showing how AI can support more independent learning. At the same time, students noted that AI can be unreliable for checking work, describing it as “too nice”, “trying to please”, or needing to be prompted to give more critical feedback. This suggests that using AI effectively can still require active judgement and decision-making.

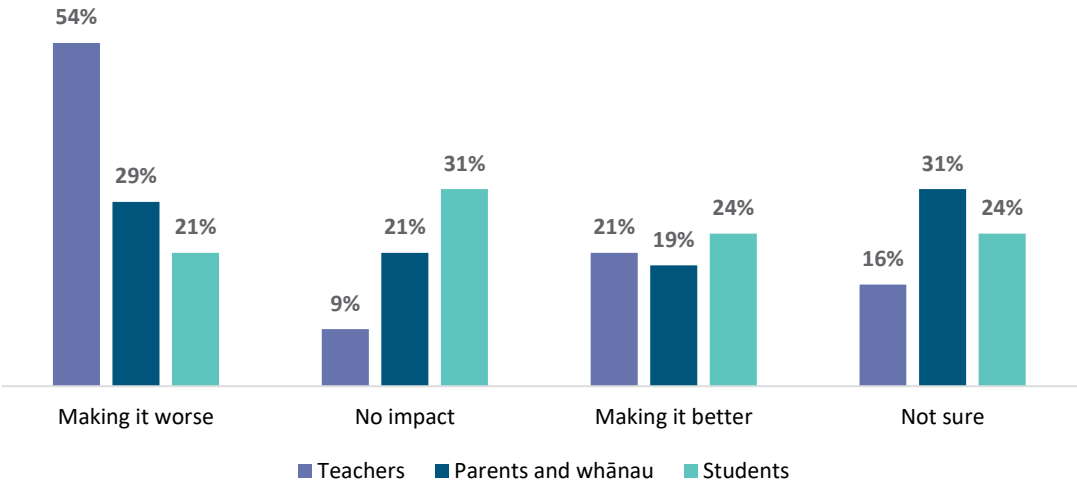
Overall, AI can both support and constrain independent learning. It can help students work more autonomously and provide a starting point for learning, but overreliance may reduce opportunities to problem solve, generate ideas, and persist independently.

More than half of teachers think AI use is negatively affecting students’ creative thinking.

Teachers are more likely than students and parents and whānau to report that AI use is negatively affecting students’ creative thinking.

More than half of teachers (54 percent) report negative effects, compared with around one in five students (21 percent) and just under three in ten parents and whānau (29 percent). A smaller proportion of teachers (21 percent) report positive effects, similar to students (24 percent) and parents and whānau (19 percent).

Figure 30: *Teachers, students, and parents and whānau reporting the impact of AI use on students’ creative thinking.*



k Significance level $p < 0.01$
l Significance level $p < 0.001$
m Significance level $p < 0.05$

These findings point to a key concern: when AI is used poorly, it may reduce opportunities for students to generate original ideas and engage in creative thinking processes. While students are more likely to report positive effects, this may reflect their experience of producing outputs more easily, rather than developing underlying creative skills.

“When people can’t be bothered thinking for themselves, they’ll use AI.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

“You only learn what you think hard about.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

In primary schools:

“It’s probably worse at this age, because our brains are developing.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT

In primary settings, reported negative impacts are lower than in secondary schools, but differences between teacher, parent and whānau, and student views are more pronounced.

Two in five teachers in primary school report negative effects of AI on students’ creative thinking (41 percent), which is lower than for secondary. Just over one in five say it has a positive impact (23 percent). Similarly, a higher proportion of parents and whānau of children in primary report negative impacts (29 percent) than positive (13 percent). By contrast, students more commonly report positive impacts (24 percent) than negative (15 percent) on creative thinking.

We heard that this difference reflects how creativity is experienced. Students may feel more creative because AI helps them generate ideas quickly or produce outputs, while teachers and parents and whānau are more concerned that AI is doing the creative work for them.

Primary teachers describe students being less able to come up with their own ideas. Primary students also told us how they lack the motivation and energy to be creative, because they are becoming used to AI doing work for them.

“I think what most people use it for is creativity. They can’t be bothered to think of an idea, and so they just type it in... I think it makes it harder for us to think of ideas, and they always just want to go at it.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT



In secondary schools:

In secondary schools, reported negative impacts are substantially higher, reflecting stronger concerns about reduced originality and independent idea generation. Two thirds of teachers (66 percent) report negative effects of AI on students’ creative thinking, while fewer than one in five report positive effects (19 percent). Parent and whānau and student views are more mixed, with around three in ten reporting negative impacts (28 percent of parents and whānau and 33 percent of students) and around two in ten reporting positive impacts (23 percent of parents and whānau and 23 percent of students).

We heard concerns from students, teachers, and leaders that overreliance on AI may reduce students’ ability to generate ideas, use their imagination, and develop original opinions. Some students were particularly concerned about the long-term impact on their creativity, while some teachers and leaders were reluctant to use AI in class because of these risks.

At the same time, patterns of use show that not all AI use is associated with the perception of negative outcomes. Teachers who report students using AI for idea generation are more than twice as likely to say that AI has made creative thinking better.ⁿ Similarly, students who use AI for writing essays,^o problem solving,^p or idea generation,^q are more than twice as likely to say that AI is making their creative thinking better. However, teachers who say their students are using AI for writing support are more than twice as likely to say that AI is negatively affecting creative thinking.^r

Secondary teachers and leaders told us about using AI to generate ideas in subjects like music. However, we also heard from secondary teachers that students use AI to get work done quickly, rather than to help them learn by prompting their deeper thinking. This seems reflected in teachers’ concern about negative impact when students use AI for writing and not just for the idea and research stage of learning.

n Significance level p<0.05
o Significance level p<0.01
p Significance level p<0.01
q Significance level p<0.05
r Significance level p<0.01



Conclusion

AI is already affecting both teaching and learning. For teachers, the biggest impact is on workload. Many report that AI helps with planning, creating resources, and other routine tasks, giving them more time to focus on teaching by redistributing their time. However, these benefits are often balanced by the time needed to check AI-generated content and, particularly in secondary schools, make sure student work is authentic.

The perceived impact of current AI use on learning is more mixed. Teachers are generally more concerned than students and parents and whānau about the effects of AI on critical thinking and creativity, while views on independent learning are more positive. Overall, the findings suggest that AI works best when it helps students think, learn, and improve their work. When it does the thinking for them, there are concerns that it can reduce opportunities to develop important skills such as problem solving, creativity, and independent learning. These early impacts also need to be considered in the light of current approaches by schools, with large discrepancies in how much schools as a whole and/or individual teachers are managing or supporting responsible use of AI for schoolwork.

The next chapter outlines the key findings and recommendations of this report.



Part 7: Key findings and recommendations

The six questions we asked for this review have led to 16 key findings that sit across this work. Based on these findings, we have identified three areas for action, which together have the potential to help schools effectively manage AI use for students, teachers, and leaders. This section sets out our findings and recommendations.

Key findings

We have developed 16 key findings across five areas.

Area 1: How is AI being used by leaders and teachers?

Finding 1: More than nine in ten school leaders are using AI to ease their workload, across administrative and strategic work. While leaders are mainly using AI for drafting communications and summarising information, many are also using it strategically to generate policies and guidance and to help plan the school curriculum.

Finding 2: More than four in five teachers are using AI, mainly to streamline planning and preparation. Teachers are mainly using AI to tailor teaching resources and to develop lesson plans. Close to three-quarters of teachers are confident using AI.

Findings 3: Where teachers and leaders are not using AI, or only using it a limited amount, reasons for this include reliability concerns and ethical objections.

Area 2: How are schools managing AI use?

Finding 4: School approaches to AI use and management are either 'planned/strategic' or 'unplanned'. A 'strategic' approach is most likely to support future-focused practice, maximising opportunities for teaching and learning, while managing potential risks associated with AI use.

Finding 5: Around three in four schools are in the 'unplanned' category – many schools don't yet have guidance for teachers or students, and where guidance exists, it is not always useful. Around seven in ten leaders say they don't have a policy for data privacy and security around teachers' use of AI.

Finding 6: With only a third of school leaders reporting that their school has a policy for student use of AI for learning, many are relying on individual teachers to set expectations.

Finding 7: More than three in four leaders in secondary schools say their school has a policy for use of AI for assessment, reflecting NZQA requirements. Fewer than one in four leaders in primary schools report having established rules for AI use in assessments.

Finding 8: Demand for guidance on how to use AI is high, with three-quarters of parents and whānau and around half of students wanting support to use it appropriately for schoolwork. However, only a third of leaders report that their school explicitly teaches how to use AI for learning. Schools want national guidance to improve consistency within and across schools.

Area 3: How is AI being used by students?

Finding 9: Three in four students are using AI for schoolwork and they mainly use it for finding information and generating ideas. Some students report they don't like using AI due to ethical concerns.

Finding 10: Reported AI use differs in scale between secondary and primary students, but there are similarities in what they use AI for. Both primary and secondary students use AI to support research and idea generation, but secondary students report more sophisticated use for independent learning tasks, such as refining written work. Primary students are more likely to use AI to generate music and images.

Finding 11: One in five primary students and two in five secondary students report using AI in ways they know they shouldn't for assessments.

Finding 12: Teachers are concerned that students are using AI inappropriately and end up bypassing learning. They are also concerned about inappropriate use in assessments.

Area 4: What is working well in schools and what could be improved?

Finding 13: When schools are taking a strategic approach to managing AI, they support safe and effective use by: putting in place clear school-level guidance for staff and students, building AI capability and confidence, and providing structured opportunities for teachers and students to use AI appropriately.

Finding 14: Some challenges that schools face include: concerns about the reliability of AI tools, not knowing enough about how to use these tools well, and not having clear and specific guidance.

Area 5: What are the early impacts of AI use?

Finding 15: More than half of teachers report that AI is making their job easier overall. Only seven percent report AI is making their job harder, despite the challenges authenticating student work experienced especially by secondary school leaders.

Finding 16: How students use AI shapes the impact on their learning. More than half of teachers report concerns that current, unplanned use is having a negative effect on students' critical thinking. However, students and teachers report more positive impacts on learning when students use AI to generate ideas, help them solve problems, and check work, rather than to produce work for them.

Recommendations

ERO used the key lessons from our findings to develop nine recommendations under three areas. These recommendations aim to establish a coherent and nationally consistent approach to AI in education, supporting schools to integrate AI safely, effectively, and equitably in ways that support teaching and learning.

Area 1: System leadership and coherence

Recommendation 1: Develop a **national AI in education framework**, drawing on international AI literacy frameworks (e.g., OECD, UNESCO, SAIL), but adapted for the New Zealand context. This framework will provide a coherent foundation for guidance, policies, curriculum integration, assessment, and capability-building across the education system.

Area 2: Nationally consistent guidance and expectations

Recommendation 2: Provide clear, nationally consistent policy on the appropriate and effective **use of AI by teachers** tailored to primary and secondary contexts. This will reduce variability across schools and support safe and confident use in teaching practice.

Recommendation 3: Provide nationally consistent **policy for student use** of AI in schoolwork, **tailored to primary and secondary contexts**. This will support consistent expectations and promote responsible use across schools for students in different year levels and with different learning needs.

Recommendation 4: Provide national guidance to support the **integration of AI literacy and use across learning areas**, aligned with the curriculum refresh. Evidence indicates that benefits for student learning are strongest when AI is embedded in teaching and learning contexts, rather than as a standalone subject.

Recommendation 5: Embed consistent **rules and guidance on the use of AI in assessment**. Strengthen existing guidance around NCEA assessment, and provide guidance for primary schools and other contexts where assessment expectations are less well defined.

Recommendation 6: Provide nationally consistent **guidance for parents and whānau** on the use of AI in schoolwork and assessment. This will support shared understanding of appropriate use, strengthen trust, and enable families to support their children's learning.

Area 3: Tools and system supports

Recommendation 7: Set national expectations and provide supporting resources to guide schools in selecting and using **AI technologies safely and effectively**.

Recommendation 8: Support the development of **teacher and leader capability** through targeted PLD.

Recommendation 9: Explore the feasibility of establishing **centrally-provided AI tools** and environments for educational purposes.



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