

Workshop in a Box: Independent Evaluation Report

April 2026

“Just so pleased to see an AI project focusing on the voices of children rather than adults for a change – thank you for the opportunity for our school to be part of it”

“I think giving young people the voice and the connexion to something bigger, when you get that opportunity, you should take it. And it makes them feel like they have a say about their future.”

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1 Introduction

Connected by Data were commissioned by the Department for Education to deliver Workshop in a Box. This was an ambitious, time limited, opportunity trialling a distributed dialogue methodology in schools across England to help education policymakers understand student views of emerging uses of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the sector. This light touch evaluation, supported by funding by Northumbria University's Centre for Responsible AI, ran alongside to capture learning.

1.1 About Workshop in a Box

The Workshop in a Box toolkit materials aimed to use innovative methods to support balanced, informed and deliberative conversations. The workshop in a box aimed to:

- explore how Generative AI is being used in education and students' hopes and fears for AI;
- support student discussion of critical issues including bias, privacy, safety, cognitive offloading, environmental impact, emotional reliance, impacts on teaching, accuracy, student data use;
- encourage students to draw on their experiences, form opinions and contribute views to the January 2026 UK AI in Education Summit.

The Workshop in a Box was designed to help schools have informed and deliberative conversations with their pupils about generative AI in education, the ways it can be used and the issues it might raise. It was designed for use in the classroom with students aged 10 to 18 in either a single (50 minute) or double (100 minute) lesson.

The toolkit (available here <https://connectedbydata.org/ai-in-education/toolkit/>) provides a set of core content together with suggested additional activities and feedback questions. Schools were advised that if they wished their students' views to feed into the January 2026 AI in Education Summit they needed to use the feedback questions in their session and send feedback via the online portal by 15 December 2025.

The resources made available to all schools who chose to deliver the Workshop included:

- Guidance on using the resources, including suggested 50 minute and 100 minute session plans
- Presentation Slides – including an introduction and quiz, and additional slides supporting delivery of other activities
- Toolcard handouts designed to support small group discussion of different Generative AI tools that may be used in education
- Worksheets on different issues with AI in education
- Links to access Pol.is, an online portal used to share statements with students, on which they were then asked to vote, as a group, agree or disagree
- Worksheets outlining a choice of three creative feedback activities (writing, design, art)

- A information webinar (delivered live and recorded) explaining Connected by Data's vision and outlining how they envisaged the Workshop working.

Anonymised pupil views were provided to Connected by Data by teachers through online voting, online feedback forms and outputs from students' creative activities (drawings, app designs, letters, etc). Views were gathered and analysed by Connected by Data, informing a report to the UK Minister for Education, education leaders from 20+ countries, and AI companies attending the AI in Education Summit and expressing messages for 'AI Makers' (Ed Tech companies and AI model companies) about what students consider to be responsible AI.

Workshop in a box in numbers

Materials were made available from November 26 and updated in December 26 reflecting early feedback. A new version for ongoing school use was created in January 26 after the window for using materials to provide feedback to the Department for Education closed.

141 individuals representing 137 educational settings registered to access the toolkit

50-75 people attended the online briefing and approximately 50 viewed it later

23 schools took part involving pupils from year 6 to year 13

50+ individual workshop sessions

1089 students estimated to have taken part

Schools submitted the outcomes of their discussions in different ways:

- All 23 schools shared responses to the Pol.is voting
- 13 settings involving 22 groups submitted views on best 3 and worst 3 Generative AI tools
- 7 schools contributed creative contributions
 - 68 Visions of education with and without AI
 - o 22 Feedback to an AI Maker
 - o 23 Our education app

1.2 About the evaluation

The primary objectives of the evaluation were to evaluate whether:

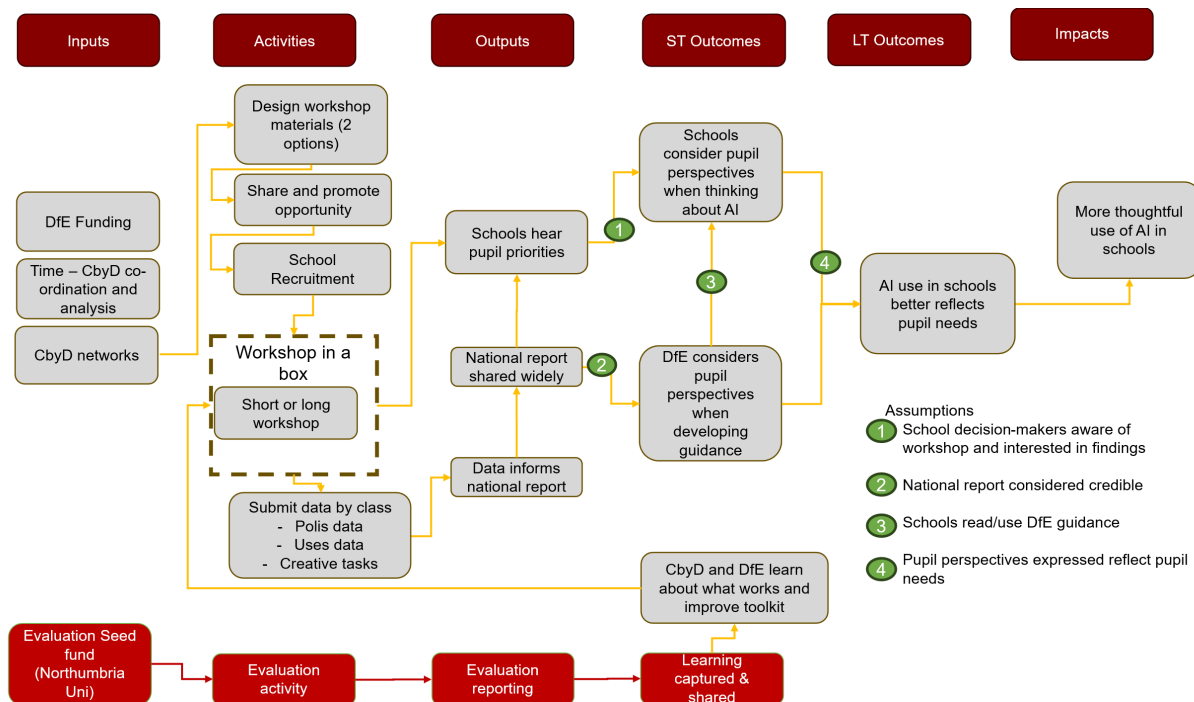
(a) the Workshop in a Box served as an effective tool for schools to explore, and assist students to form their own opinions on, the ways Gen AI is being used in education

(b) the toolkit, as designed or in modified form, could be rolled out as a wider lesson plan to develop pupil knowledge and understanding of Gen AI and its benefits and risks.

This evaluation report is based on the following information sources:

- An online form which collected feedback from teachers who delivered the workshop, completed by 11 teachers
- Follow-up online interviews with 6 teachers.
- Evaluator Observations of one session being delivered and notes provided by a member of the Connected by Data team who observed one further session
- Evaluator review of the Workshop in a Box materials and report prepared by Connected by Data
- Meeting between evaluators and Tim Davies from Connected by Data discussing material provided by schools and Connected by Data's analysis and report writing

Underpinning the evaluation is a Theory of Change which is shown below.



The evaluation framework (see Appendix) includes questions about design, delivery and impact.

This report includes overall reflections and then talks through each aspect of the evaluation framework in more depth.

2 Overall reflections

The evaluation sought to test whether the Workshop in a Box served as an effective tool for schools to explore, and assist students to form their own opinions on, the ways Gen AI is being used in education. The evidence collected, including survey responses from teachers, interviews with teachers, observations and a review of the materials used, demonstrates that this objective was met. The materials were valued by teachers and were perceived to be a useful resource which supported students to think through different questions about AI. The fact the project also enabled school's responses to feed up to DfE policy-makers was an additional incentive to use the materials within the time period available.

Additionally, the evaluation explored whether the toolkit, as designed or in modified form, could be rolled out as a wider lesson plan to develop pupil knowledge and understanding of Gen AI and its benefits and risks. Again, teachers were confident that this would be possible, and some of those we spoke to were already planning to repeat some of the exercises. Survey feedback and interviewee responses suggested that teachers valued the resources not only for their ability to support students to express their views to Government, but as informative and engaging teaching materials in their own right. Some teachers offered suggestions for ways that materials might be refined, to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils across diverse settings. The main change they proposed was simplifying the materials so that they were easier and quicker to read.

At this stage it is still too early to say with confidence whether all the assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change will hold. However, the evaluation found evidence that, for the schools involved in delivering the workshops, school decision-makers were aware of, and interested in, the findings.

2.1 Impact

Connected by Data's report on the project was published on 18 January 2026. The report was shared with the Department of Education, has been shared with participating schools, is available online (<https://connectedbydata.org/resources/generative-ai-in-education-report>) and was discussed at the international Generative AI for Education Summit held in London on 19 January. Key messages from that report were shared with attendees (see here the Education Secretary's speech to the summit <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-speech-at-global-ai-safety-summit>). Students' views have therefore already reached a wide audience across government, the education sector and those involved in the design and implementation of educational AI.

At the summit the Education Secretary heralded the launch of the Department for Education's updated 'Product Safety Expectations for Edtech developers'. These updates include new sections on cognitive, emotional and social development, mental health and manipulation. An early draft of Connected by Data's report was shared with the DfE before Christmas and a complete draft at least a week before the summit, a video reporting the views of students' who attended the workshops was shared with the DfE the week before the summit and in regular update calls Connected by Data were also able to share some of the students' creative work from an early stage. The updated Product Safety Expectations therefore, at least to some extent, can be expected to reflect the views expressed by students about their hopes and fears for Generative AI in education. It is difficult for the evaluation to establish how far the expectations were influenced directly by the workshops.

This evaluation report is being written in April 2026. It is unclear to what extent students' engagement with the Workshop in a Box may impact upon future Department for Education policy or how it is or may impact upon participating schools or schools more generally. As the evaluation framework acknowledges, this toolkit will lead to change in schools only if schools are aware of the workshop and interested in its findings and while some schools have already identified clear routes to impact, for others this was less apparent and their main use of the toolkit both now and in the future was mainly as a teaching tool.

2.2 Key learnings

Given the ambitious timeline for this project (with most workshops in the run up to Christmas) the workshop in a box received an impressive number of contributions from schools up and down the country. The open approach to recruitment, publicising the toolkit on a number of channels (e.g. Short (<100 words) mention in the DfE's all school email bulletin circulated to over 20,000 email addresses, plus comment on Connected by Data social media and newsletters etc) and the hook of being able to input into a specific event supported take-up. The salience of the topic, and perceived lack of good quality resources to support conversations about AI in schools also were likely to have contributed to this response.

There were three different ways to provide feedback, and some schools only used one of the feedback mechanisms. The process of submitting creative activity outputs in pdf format was perceived to be particularly time consuming, while using Pol.is required some time up front to ensure that the technology would work as expected in the classroom. Collecting all the data through one mechanism may have been easier for the schools.

There is evidence that the toolkit will continue to be of value, if teachers know it exists. Ten survey respondents suggested the workshop grew students' understanding of AI (7 agreeing, 3 strongly disagreeing; the eleventh respondent strongly disagreed (but qualitative comments suggested she may have meant to strongly agree). Teachers who have been involved in this work are likely to keep using some of the materials in their lessons and potentially with parents and governors. Some are

also sharing the materials with other teachers and schools. They would welcome the opportunity to share and compare results of activities such as the Pol.is voting, which might be of interest even without the potential to change national policy. To support and encourage further sharing it would be good to edit the materials to reduce the word count.

3 Design

As outlined above, the Workshop in a Box was designed to help schools have informed deliberative conversations with their pupils about generative AI in education, the ways it can be used, and the issues it may raise. By providing a range of materials and ways to feed back, the toolkit was designed to be flexible for use in different settings.

The evaluation explored three questions and found:

- There is evidence that **appropriate stakeholders were involved**, resulting in high quality materials that generally worked well in the classroom setting, although some felt that they needed to be less detailed, especially for pupils who may struggle to read large amounts of text.
- While the **materials developed were balanced and clear**, during delivery of the workshops **teachers adapted them based on their own understanding** (as observed by the evaluators, and reflected by some teachers) which might have led to differences in how they were presented to the students. Due to the distributed nature of the dialogue, it is not possible to assess the extent to which this occurred, or may have influenced the outputs.
- Overall **most teachers felt well prepared**. Not all teachers watched the explanatory video, but those who did found it helpful. Some suggested that there was too much material and would have valued a quicker way to prepare for the lesson.

3.1 Appropriate stakeholders involved

This resource was commissioned by the Department for Education, and written by Connected by Data, the campaign for communities to have a powerful say in decisions about data and AI. Draft resources were reviewed for accuracy, balance and approach by individuals from across civil society, academia and the education sector: Beckett LeClair (5Rights Foundation), Florence Ackland (PSHE Association), Graham Tavener (Connected by Data Fellow, FE Lecturer), James Vincent (Bath Spa University), Jen Persson (Defend Digital Me), Jeni Tennison (Connected by Data), Louise Couceiro (Department of Education, University of Oxford), Melvin Riley (National Youth Technology Council), Rebecca Eynon (Oxford Internet Institute and Department of Education, University of Oxford), Sarah Turner (University College London), Tania Duarte (We and AI). The lead author was Tim Davies. Editorial support was provided by Emily Macaulay and Jeni Tennison. Illustrations by Imogen Shaw.

The toolkit appeared to reach two 'kinds' of teacher: firstly teachers working on digital learning and AI policy in their school, trust or group of schools, who were interested in finding ways to hear student voices as part of developing their policy and practice; secondly, computing or computer science teachers who were looking for materials about AI to support their students to learn about AI (although at least one was also interested in affording their students the opportunity to contribute their views and 'feel that they had a chance at feeding something back'). These different routes to the toolkit were also reflected in how it was used, which students became involved and also how teachers suggested it might be used in future.

Several of the computer science teachers that evaluators spoke to used the toolkit with single year groups of students studying computing/computer science, students who potentially may already have some knowledge or interest in AI. Some teachers responsible for digital learning and AI, plus

one computer science teacher, appeared more open to using the toolkit with students across all year groups and even across schools irrespective of interest or knowledge in AI.

“We also made sure that we had representation from all the year groups. ... We wanted to get a sort of cross representation from across the school of different students from different backgrounds so that we were getting more of a picture of the general thoughts really.”

Because the workshop in a box appealed to different teachers and was used in different ways, it was used in diverse settings (see 4.4 below).

3.2 Clear, well-defined (and balanced) question / scope / framing

Due to the distributed nature of the workshops, the overall research questions and objectives were naturally interpreted differently in each location. Teachers were able to tailor the topic guide and materials to their particular students which was both a benefit and a potential risk for the project. Rather than asking one overarching question, the toolkit included activities which would illicit responses to a number of different questions.

Overall teachers appreciated this level of flexibility as it enabled them to ensure the session fitted well with what they had already done with the students and what they perceived that their students would enjoy. Some teachers reflecting upon their experiences offered advice for schools considering using materials in future, suggesting teachers should not be afraid to move things around, play with the materials and do what works for your setting.

The flexibility afforded to teachers did mean, however, that some schools provided more limited feedback than others.

- 100% of schools engaged in whole class online voting on online statements (all schools fed back students' views)
- 56% of schools (13 settings involving 22 groups) submitted student groups' views on their 'top' and 'bottom' AI in education tools
- 30% of schools (7 settings) submitted over 100 creative outputs including students' visions of education with and without AI, letters to the Department of Education and application designs.

Thus, whilst all schools submitted responses to statements which students viewed on Pol.is, for some schools this was the only feedback activity some schools engaged in.

The toolkit sought to explore students' hopes and fears for AI and to encourage them to form opinions and contribute their views, with a related objective of the toolkit being to provide a toolkit which would support students to learn about AI, to develop their understanding of critical issues relating to AI such as bias, privacy and environmental impact, and to complement what they might already know. Teachers described finding it difficult to find appropriate resources, and welcomed the Workshop in a Box materials, finding them to be a helpful way to start discussions. Despite many having expertise in ICT and knowledge of AI, none of the teachers raised any concerns about the balance of the materials or their framing.

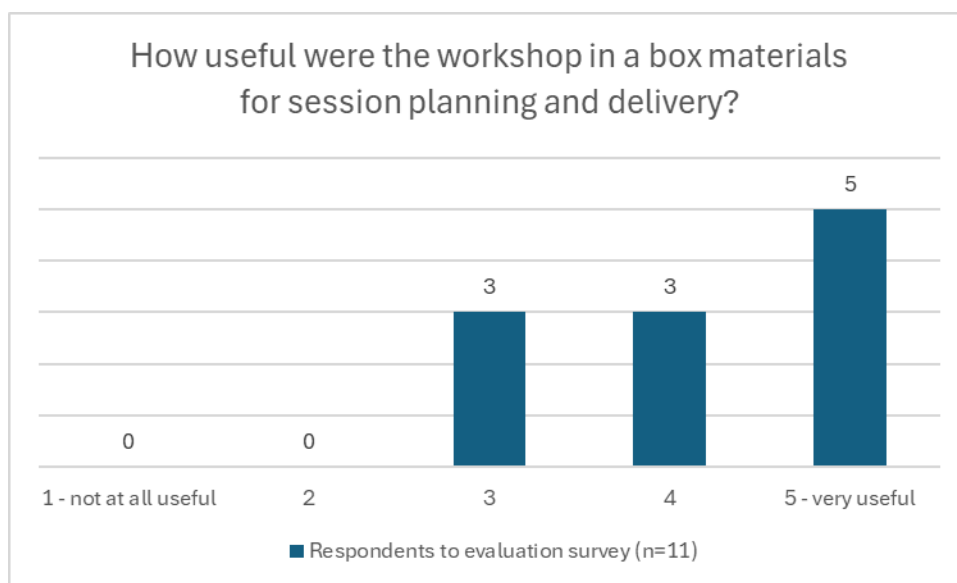
Although the two versions of the guide included several tasks, not all classes were able to complete all the tasks suggested for their session length and so different classes answered different questions and their responses were based on different levels of information provision. Some teachers added their own content to link the material to things they had already discussed. Therefore, the approach was not consistent across the different schools. Based on information provided in the interviews, and on observation of delivery, the teachers also ran the tasks differently, which will also have influenced the feedback that was captured.

The teachers we spoke to during the evaluation understood that DfE was involved and this had motivated some to take part. However, while they were aware that the feedback was informing a report to be presented at a conference, there was less clarity about how DfE would utilise the feedback received.

3.3 Training and approach met stakeholder needs (capacity, interest, support)

Overall, most teachers felt that the toolkit met their needs and enabled them to deliver successful workshops within the time available. Eleven people completed the evaluation survey. Of these, none rated the materials 1 or 2 out of 5 and nearly half (5 respondents) rated it 5/5 for how useful the materials were.

Figure 1: How useful were materials (evaluation survey)



3.3.1 Approach to preparation

As outlined above, teachers came to the project from different perspectives and as such approached delivery in different ways. There was limited information in the toolkit about whether or how delivering the sessions might differ from a standard classroom discussion, beyond providing information about how feedback could be captured, especially for those who did not watch the video.

Certain teachers spent several hours, thinking about how exactly to tailor the session to their specific classes. On balance, however, most found it relatively straightforward to prepare. One teacher reflected that the first couple of times they ran the session it was challenging but it got easier over time. Other teachers only ran the session once or twice so did not get to the point it was straightforward.

Some teachers struggled to determine what activities they should or could fit within their session, and although many teachers welcomed the flexibility and choice offered to them, this was not the case for all.

“I can understand the slides were adaptable, but it could be nice to have like a sample 50 minutes. So like, here’s the whole thing and then here’s a few 50 minutes ones which you can either follow, or you can make your own from them.”

3.3.2 Using the preparation video

Teachers approached the toolkit in different ways – some watched the introductory video, spent an hour or so preparing and printing and were good to go.

“Very easy to use and the short film talking you through it was very helpful.”

Those who watched the video seemed to find it invaluable, one noting:

“I think if I hadn’t watched the video and I tried to deliver it cold, that would have been much harder, not because the resources weren’t straightforward but just because there was obviously a slight element of technical setup.”

Some who didn’t watch the video suggested they would have benefitted from more specific guidance or teaching models, particularly tailored to class size, offering advice on how to ensure that all tasks fitted within the suggested time frame:

“If you want to get more activities in, probably needs just that model to guide us as to, okay, if you’ve got a large group do this, if you have a small group do that ... here’s how you can wrap it up within 5 minutes and get on to the next task.”

4 Delivery

4.1 Time and space to deliberate / learn

Ten of the eleven survey respondents suggested that the Workshop enabled group debate about AI (the eleventh provided a strongly negative response, in conflict with positive written feedback). However, the lack of time available to engage in in-depth deliberations was a key challenge for the sessions, even when the teachers used the longer lesson plan. There was a lot to cover. The lesson plan, although scaled back after the pilot, remained very ambitious with a lot of content to read out and cover in the time available.

The impact of this was that while the students and teachers all appeared to be learning, from examples shared with each other as well as those provided in the materials, teachers considered the opportunity to deliberate and apply the learning was limited. This was noted in survey responses:

“They were interested and had a lot to say, but there wasn’t much time to hear all points.”

A lack of time for reflection was also noted in interviews:

“It would have been really good if each pupil had done an evaluation or some kind of reflection at the end.”

In the evaluation survey, the teachers who responded all agreed that the session enabled the group to debate about AI and nearly all agreed it was engaging for students. Slightly fewer strongly agreed that the workshop grew student’s understanding of AI – perhaps reflecting the fact the session was more discursive rather than focussed purely on learning new things.

Most teachers suggested their students found the materials engaging, the quiz in particular being praised as ‘a good introduction’ that helped set the tone. Teachers suggested students enjoyed voting on Pol.is, although the lack of clarity on how many Pol.is statements could appear (and no progress bar) made it difficult for teachers to calibrate how long the Pol.is task would take and what time they could take on different tasks. One teacher who had not watched the explanatory video was unsure what to expect. He suggested his students might also have benefitted from a demonstration video.

“You’re now going to see X, Y, Z. This is going to be where you vote as a class. ... official government voices explaining ... all rote, here’s what you’re going to do.”

One concern mentioned by a few respondents was that there was too much content and too much detail.

“Plenty of good quality resources provided - we just found we didn't have enough time to use them all as our timetables are very tight.”

Although the Workshop in a Box materials were available to primary and secondary pupils, tailored for students in different key stages, it appears that they were perceived to be of most value to secondary schools. One teacher who used the Workshop in a Box with secondary and primary school pupils identified that secondary school pupils in the lower years learned a lot from and benefitted most from the workshop, already having some knowledge and experience of AI. She did not use it with the oldest students, who she perceived would have learned less. She recognised that there is ‘an education piece around AI in primary’ but considered the workshop of more limited relevance to her primary school students who had limited access to devices, are even in year 6 are only learning what AI is. She suggested ‘the age cap’ means they cannot use AI the same way as older students.

4.2 Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints

As each school approached the tasks differently, with some teachers using the workshop directly ‘out of the box’ and others doing more tailoring it is not possible for the evaluators to establish whether or not the information used in every classroom was balanced. Even with the Pol.is statements, the way the teachers read out and then encouraged discussion on the different statements might have influenced the young people’s views.

However, generally the teachers agreed that the materials themselves were balanced and helpful in presenting different viewpoints. While it is possible different teachers approached the questions in different ways which might have impacted the results, it was interesting to observe that where the task and response were visible on screen the young people could ensure that their views were being appropriately captured and be assured that the process of discussion and capturing views was fair.

4.3 Participants all feel that they have a voice / are heard

The evaluators did not talk directly with students about their experiences, although in the session that one evaluator observed it was clear that each class member got involved in the discussion and activities such as the Pol.is discussion where teachers had to record what the ‘majority’ thought meant that the teachers ensured everyone contributed. The teachers who agreed to be interviewed explained that they gathered pupil views about the statement displayed on Pol.is in different ways, from a simple ‘hands up,’ through to asking people to line up based on their views. Some took a ‘headcount’ providing numbers of students who agreed or disagreed with a statement, whilst others submitted what they considered the ‘majority’ view.

One teacher explained that despite having been speaking to their students about AI for two years, using the toolkit they learned new things about their students’ perceptions of AI. They put this down to the toolkit design, ‘how it was structured and we were asking them to give their opinions on things that we hadn’t done before,’ for example, asking the students how they felt about teachers using AI.

The teachers’ feedback in the evaluation survey suggested the workshop helped a diverse range of students feel empowered to make and express decisions about AI (2 strongly agreed, 6 agreed, 2

were undecided)¹. This was confirmed through interviews with teachers from very different schools (e.g an independent school, a school situated in a deprived area, special school).

“I was just really excited about the fact that, you know, our kids could have a voice ... as a very small school and quite a niche special school, we don’t get involved in those big things. ... for them to be able to have that opportunity was really powerful because I think often the way they see things can be quite different to some of their mainstream peers.”

“the fact that they were listened to and that they were contributing to this wider piece of national work felt very, very, very important to them. And they were all really proud to have taken part. ... One of the things that the children loved was the fact that there was a slide that had Bridget Phillipson on it, and it just said that, you know, you were inputting this back to the DfE and to the government. That made them feel really important and really heard.”

At least one senior school teacher, who used the workshop with students across the school, considered the workshop genuinely captured her students’ diverse viewpoints:

“it genuinely was the pupils talking about what they thought and their voices being captured in a range of ways. And they all had an opinion on it. They’ve all used AI. They’re all aware of AI. They all have strong opinions of AI.”

4.3.1 Creative tools

As one teacher recognised, however, the final report did not fully capture all pupils’ views. It was observed, and it was noted in one survey response that the standard of the creative outputs was low. Not all of the creative submissions made it into the final report, in some instances because teachers self-selected the best ones to submit, but also because Connected by Data could not include all of the 100+ outputs in their report. Whilst one teacher was able to identify specific feedback his pupils had provided within the report, inclusion of more creative outputs would have allowed more young people to see their work directly reflected.

4.3.2 Pol.is

When providing students’ views on Pol.is, as noted above, teachers adopted differing views, some reporting head counts and others reporting the majority view. Teachers recognised that group responses had their benefits: allowing the teacher to explain to the full group what statements meant if students did not fully understand, and encouraging group conversations, which would have been less likely to occur if individual responses were sought. However, they acknowledged there were some issues.

“The only issue I had was like when we were doing the live statements, because I had so many of them, there were some that didn’t agree, but we just sort of had to go with the majority.”

One teacher described the Pol.is exercise as ‘basically just survey feedback’. There were limited opportunities for students to feedback an explanation of their views, and for schools to provide detailed qualitative information about why groups reached a particular consensus when voting live on the Pol.is statements leading one teacher to comment:

“I wonder whether we’ve just captured a bit of a utilitarian way there rather than like capturing the more of the nuances.”

When reporting student responses to the AI tools task it was possible for teachers to provide both the students’ written comments and additional information gathered from verbal discussions. When

¹ One teacher disagreed but based on their qualitative responses it is likely they misread the scale

voting on the statements, however, as one teacher explicitly recognised, the discussion, which that teacher viewed as ‘the valuable bit’ was not captured.

More guidance could, if the toolkit is used in future to gather pupil views, be afforded to teachers about how to capture and report upon how and why students have reached a particular view and potentially to ensure all teachers are approaching the task in the same way. One teacher when asked how confident he was that Pol.is voting results reflecting students’ views responded ‘marginally confident’.

“I had to sort of massage it a little bit... Sometimes they would put their hands up and we would go through. I’d say wait a minute, let’s just really understand what you’re saying here ... ”

4.4 Diversity and representation

The approach was intentionally designed to be open to all schools (assuming they were aware of the opportunity and were able to find the time to take part). This meant that sessions were more likely to be held in schools where teachers were actively searching for tools to support students to discuss AI. Around half of the schools were Academy Converters, other school types included Further Education, Specialist Schools and Informal Education. Most schools were mixed, with 3 girls only and 2 boys only.

Type of school	Count of School
Academy converter	11
Academy 16-19 converter	2
Further education	2
Other independent special school	1
Informal Education	1
Academy sponsor led	1
Other independent school	1
Community school	1
Specialist SEND School	1
Foundation school	1
Free schools 16 to 19	1

Across the schools, students were involved from across Year 6 to Year 13, with most responses in year 6, 7 and 8. This largely reflected which age-groups the teachers felt would best respond to the content, although some reflected that the content could be difficult for year 6 who were not yet old enough to have online accounts themselves.

Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
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205	92	75	30	35	27	46	28
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Law School

4.4.1 Representation of pupil views

Schools were given the choice as to which pupil groups they would involve. One teacher reflected after the workshops that they only involved computer science students, but could see the benefits to involving a wider range of pupils.

“I only did it with the computer science students, maybe it’s not diverse because these are students that have chosen it. ... you’ve got students that are interested in this particular area ... I could see that you probably would want other people who are not doing computing to do it”

Some schools chose to include pupils from across the whole school to capture views from across the pupil body or indeed to capture views from across different schools. Observation of one of the workshops highlighted, however, that involving students across year groups who don’t know each other well may limit debate between students. This illustrates that there may be potential issues both with focusing on students with an interest in AI and seeking to draw from a diverse pupil body.

Given the self-selecting nature of the schools engaged in the project, students’ views cannot necessarily be said to be representative of the national pupil body. However, due to the diversity of schools engaged, it is reasonable to assume that the workshops provide insight into a range of students’ views.

4.4.2 Consideration of the needs of diverse students

The relevance of materials to a range of students was widely recognised and appreciated.

“What they liked about it was they could see the relevance directly to them and what they’re doing straight away. And it made them more empathetic, I think, of thinking about not just them, but other people in the classroom and how AI can help...”

Responding to the survey, however, one tutor noted ‘for our dyslexic learners in Y7 & 8 some of the statements were a little wordy.’ The inclusivity of the materials was, therefore, further explored in interviews. Whilst one teacher suggested ‘I don’t think there’s any group that couldn’t access this’ she suggested children with SEND may also struggle with the level of reaching required.

The issue of ‘wordiness’ was repeated by several teachers, particularly in respect of the issues sheets, although one teacher also considered the wording of the tools cards an issue.

“The issues cards I thought were great. I really wanted to use them, and we tried it but I ended up not being able to get to them at all, because they meant they would have to read it, and you know their attention spans like that ... Even the tools, the way I did it was I shortened them down and just put the main topics in there.”

One teacher suggested two possible ways materials might be designed to be more accessible.

“It’s looking at either reducing the words on there, because that’s certainly for our dyslexic children, that would have made it more accessible ... they couldn’t read it fast enough to be able to then have time to talk about it. Equally I could have, and it was only after the event that it kind of twigged, if I’d have shared the slides directly with them because they’re used to assistive text ... they could have done that themselves.”

Whilst overall teachers praised the content and design of the materials and their tailoring for a range of age groups, some teachers consequently decided to cut out content to make it more appropriate for their students. It was also suggested that some of the creative tasks were also less suited to the

younger students, particularly providing feedback to an AI maker, while one school reflected that the creative tasks did not feel like a good fit with their year 10 boys. Often with creative tasks, they will work if the person setting the task is confident in it, but not otherwise, which might explain the range of responses.

“Feeding back to the AI maker, that’s quite challenging when you don’t have AI in your fingertips like you do when you’re 15.”

4.5 Other reflections

4.5.1 Advice on room choice, session length and facilities

The materials included information to help guide teachers through the process of setting up and delivering a workshop. These were comprehensive and covered a lot of factors including providing a safe learning environment. However, some teachers might have benefitted from more guidance on how to set up the classroom to run the workshop – for example, choosing a room with space to move around – as otherwise it could be difficult to do some of the activities as suggested.

Knowing that they would need to send creative tasks to Connected by Data at least one teacher opted to use computers to support completion of creative tasks, rather than having to spend time scanning in handwritten or hand-drawn outputs. The logistics of sending information to Connected by Data were commented on explicitly by others who noted how time consuming the process was particularly where creative outputs were submitted as pdfs (This is a particular issue related to the use of outputs for the report and summit but would not necessarily be relevant for future use). The evaluator observing this session noted that with many students spending a lot of time looking for pictures, they ran out of time, and that therefore output quality was ‘highly variable’. The teacher commented that they would send ‘the best’ ones, meaning that not all students’ views will have been represented.

One teacher made clear that they deliberately chose to run the workshop using minimal technology and only for the specific task of students designing their own AI tools, noting that physically moving around to vote was more engaging for students than inputting their views in an online form.

The fact they had to physically stand up and when it came to those statements, position themselves, you know, I don’t think it would have been so powerful if we’d just been getting them to input an online form, because they actually had to own their decision making.”

Several teachers split either the one-or-two-hour sessions so that they could fit to school timetables. One teacher commented that even for secondary students the workshop was quite cognitively demanding on the children, suggesting that where longer sessions were used a break would be necessary to ensure children are not too overloaded.

In observing one session, the evaluator noted that where the session had been divided over two sessions and delivered to multiple groups the teacher struggled to recall what discussions had occurred in the class’s previous session. Another teacher strongly advised against dividing the workshop into two. In terms of the length of sessions, most teachers suggested a 1 hour session as the ideal, to cover all key issues (or for primary schools potentially shorter sessions of 45 minutes. The limitations of shorter 1 hour sessions were, however, recognised:

“If you do it for longer, you’ve got more scope to get far more in-depth in the issues rather than just skim it at the surface. ... if it’s a shorter one, I don’t think you will get under the skin of the issues in the same way as if you did it for a longer period of time.”

5 Impact

As outlined above, teachers chose to get involved for different reasons. While both teacher groups valued the toolkit they also took different things from being involved in the project – those interested in student voice were particularly engaged because of the opportunity to provide feedback to the Department for Education, while the computing teachers were happy to have found a resource that they thought was credible and useful. For the latter group, taking part in this process did not appear to influence their views towards participation (ie it did not change their views towards involving students in decision-making).

5.1 Transparency / clarity on potential to impact (national)

The fact that the team were able to get so many schools involved over a short period ensured that there was a clear route to impact for the workshops: specifically, the UK Government's Generative AI for Education Summit, January 2026. The Connected by Data team had already been building relationships with schools so when the opportunity presented itself, they were able to hit the ground running. These networks were vital for getting the word out quickly. The involvement of the Department for Education was also key, with at least one teacher finding out about the toolkit because they followed a member of Department of Education staff on LinkedIn. The fact that AI is such a topical issue meant that teachers were willing to find time for the sessions at relatively short notice.

An early draft outline of the report was shared with the DfE before Christmas. They received a more complete draft at least a week before the summit. Regular update calls between CbD and the DfE meant that CbD were able to show the DfE some of the student creative work even before the draft report was finalised. It is CbD's perception that a draft video shared with the DfE (first cut at least 10 days before the summit, and cleaner cut at the start of the week before) is likely to have been particularly impactful. The DfE's update to their 'Generative AI: Product Safety Standards' was timed to coincide with the Generative AI for Education Summit on 19th January. The DfE continued drafting the Product Safety Standards until just before the Summit, and CbD understands from verbal conversations with the DfE Lead Civil Servant that student content on video or draft reports either raised new points, or reinforced to them the importance of pushing for inclusion of points in the recommendations.

For some schools, having a clear route to impact at the national level was a motivator for getting involved – those schools appreciated the chance to tell their students their voices would be heard, and many had already shared the findings with their students.

5.2 Routes to local impact identified

It is too early to confirm whether this project has led or will lead to more thoughtful use of AI in schools or to AI use in schools better reflecting pupil views and needs. However, there is some emerging evidence of potential to impact on both schools, teachers and the students themselves.

5.2.1 Impacts on schools

The teachers who agreed to take part in the evaluation had different perspectives on the local impact of the work. Some of the teachers hoped to use the work to inform changes in their own school. Some explained that their schools already had established processes for feeding pupil voice into AI policy or planned to develop AI focus groups advised that facts from the report would be shared with these committees or groups to help shape school use of AI. One teacher recognised the potential benefit of having used the toolkit to gather information both from their own students and to draw attention to how students feel about AI nationally:

“It’s not just a survey that I’ve made up or they’ve made-up. Here’s like, here’s that thing loads of schools have done. Here’s some suggestions, some tools ... I could probably bring a summary of the report to be like, here’s what students around the country are thinking as well.”

Some teachers talked about sharing the report findings with pupils, with teachers, with the school Senior Leadership Team, with governors and with parents. One referred to using the report to shape existing work on internet safety and about using the impetus provided by the Workshop in a Box for related activities, and for involving the whole school in ongoing conversations.

“The design an app idea, we got them starting to do that as part of Workshop in a Box. It was such a powerful thing. And the things that they came up with in just half an hour were so good that we were like, right, we’re going to enter this ... international competition called Create Code Change ... And they’ve all been set this task of creating their own app using Canva code that addresses AI and gender bias in some way ... We want to be getting them all involved in this sort of conversation.”

One teacher commented ‘I shared the report more widely and our executive head ... he did know that we were doing it, but obviously he has a very busy schedule and it had obviously passed him by.’ Positively, however, this teacher confirmed that the executive head ‘was absolutely astounded’ by students’ feedback and that ‘talking about AI is more on the agenda.’

There are some signs the toolkit will also have a positive impact in other schools, with one toolkit facilitator reporting that as a result of students’ feedback ‘we’re having much more nuanced conversations about things where we use it already.’ Their current hope is for the toolkit ‘to become something that we do at least annually’ to capture student voice.

For others, the main impact was simply being able to tell their young people, leaders and parents that the pupils had been involved in shaping national policy.

5.2.2 Impacts on students

Additionally, teachers suggested the workshop had some personal impact on participants. In the survey we asked whether the workshop grew student’s ability to critique AI. This question led to mixed responses – 4 agreed strongly and 2 agreed but 3 were not sure and one disagreed. Even if students ability to critique AI was not significantly enhanced, teachers more broadly recognised, the contribution that the materials made to student learning:

“What they did get was a little bit of a deeper understanding of what AI is. And there was a good part about how it broke down the different components of it, and then how you could use those things for tools.”

This teacher also recognised that the materials demonstrated to students how to talk about AI:

“We armed them with some ideas and with some terminology that they were able to use, they are now able to use in further learnings.”

5.2.3 Impacts on teachers

Teachers also reported gaining important information about students likes and dislikes, with one suggesting that as a result they would use less AI media or if using it explain how and why it was being used and addressing students’ concerns explicitly. Another noted they acquired new knowledge about how their students might use AI, and that such knowledge would be used to better support students in future.

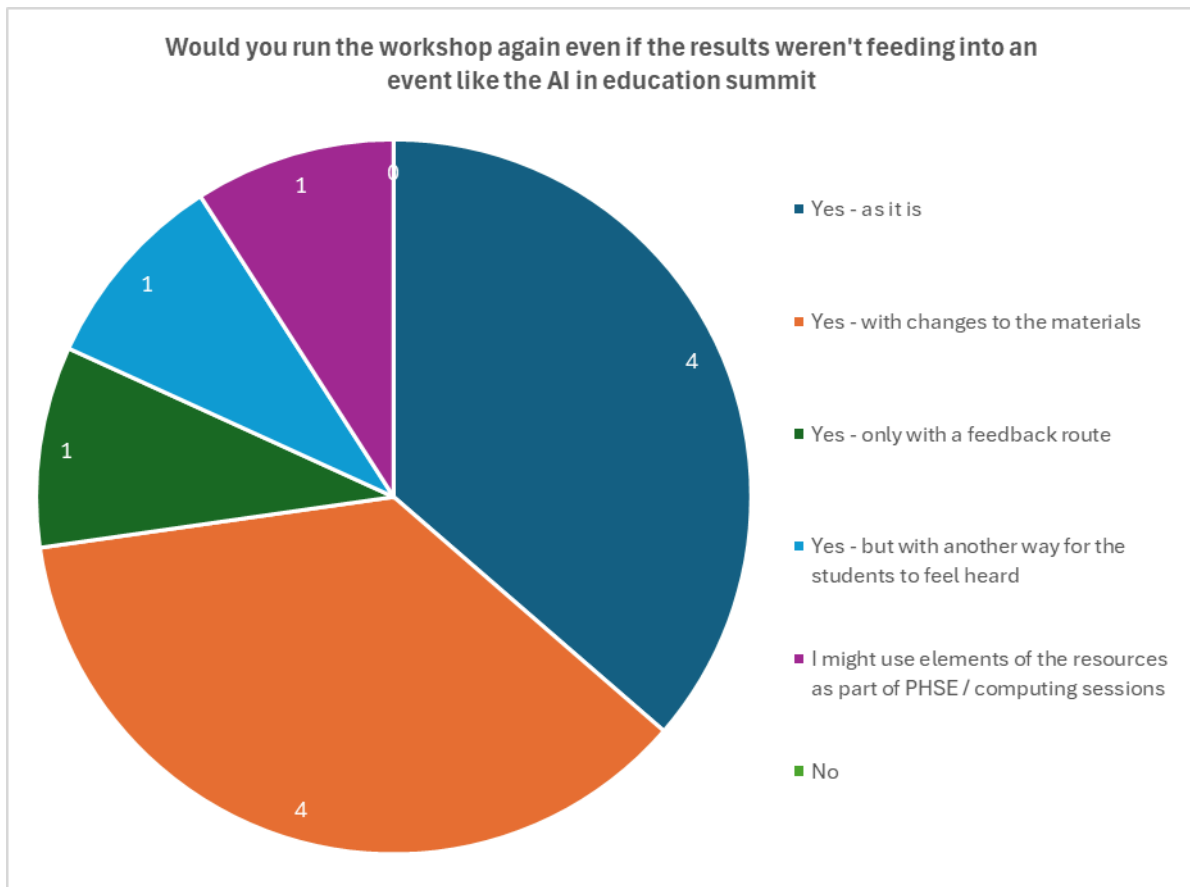
“With my year 10s, it’s surprising and worrying that they honestly thought that actually just letting, passing everything over [to Generative AI] was okay. But actually, that was a really valuable insight,

because having done that, we now know that we've got more work to do to try and help them to really grasp why that's not okay."

Whilst having fed back some of the students' views to governors and to teaching staff, some teachers considered the primary benefit to be the development of student knowledge. The benefit of the toolkit as a teaching tool, and its role in *educating* students rather than as a tool to inform school discussions about AI policy and practice was reflected in feedback from four of the teachers interviewed.

5.3 Learning for the future

The majority of the teachers who completed the feedback form confirmed they would run the workshop again – either as it is or with some changes to the materials.



All of the teachers interviewed indicated that they would use the materials again, either embedding elements of the workshop when updating or reviewing computing/computer science classes or offering the workshop to the wider pupil group. In the interviews, some teachers indicated that they would like to use the findings from this year as a benchmark so that they could discuss with classes whether their views were similar or different to others around the country.

However, a few teachers (both those surveyed and those interviewed) indicated that they would prefer to have a feedback route open to the students to encourage them to take part. Whilst recognising that it is probably not feasible for a workshop of this type to feed into an important AI summit every year, one secondary school teacher suggested there was merit in using such a workshop 'with as many students as possible on at least an annual basis', suggesting they would like

to see it feeding into a 'student AI voice event' either online or in person, as long as it remained a qualitative and discussion based activity.

"What we wouldn't want to do is turn it into an online activity where the kids fill it all in autonomously because that to me, having done it in person would take away."

This teacher, clearly impressed by the materials, welcomed the fact that materials remain available online (see <https://connectedbydata.org/ai-in-education/toolkit/>), indicating that she had directed other educators to the resources and had been advising other schools how it might be used.

"I'm saying if you don't have a student steering group, AI steering group, this is a really good way to start the conversation and to actually ... start teasing out what your pupils think about AI and how you're using it with them."

Whilst several teachers commented on the pace at which AI is moving, and that the materials as a whole may not be relevant even by next year, they identified certain resources which they considered would continue to be useful because they were directed towards principles and issues which would remain relevant.

5.4 Unintended impacts

Some of the teachers reflected that they were surprised by what their students said in the workshops. For some the surprise related to the level of knowledge in the class (several teachers interviewed commented that their students were wildly wrong in their understanding of when Generative AI emerged, one noting that some were quite shocked at the dates). Others were surprised about what the students said about particular tools and uses of AI (for example, how strongly they felt about how teachers were using AI) and the unexpectedly negative attitudes of students to AI. Teachers themselves reported that they gained a lot from the Workshop, in terms of developing understanding of students' preconceptions, misconceptions, views and opinions.

"The reason that it was so powerful was that we learned things that we didn't know about them already as a school."

"The enlightening part was, well, if it helps the teachers, they didn't want it. But if it helps them, they said, yeah, yeah."

One teacher was surprised to hear a pupil comment 'I don't think it's right that my data is harvested and monetised'. She reflected:

"Those go way beyond conversations about individual tools for in school and outside of school use and it starts to give them more of that digital citizenship education that is so important ... that's what was powerful about this as a piece of work."

The use of the tools beyond the classroom to support adult understanding of Generative AI was also highlighted by some teachers, who had either already used materials (introduction to AI and quiz slides) with school governors, were intending to use materials (issues sheets) for teacher training or envisaged using materials to support parents.

"The introduction bit in terms of the multiple-choice questions ... I think we would do it to parents ... some of them struggle in the same way that their children do. And to actually be able to say to them, these are the kinds of things that you need to be aware of."

This suggests that there is a possibility of repurposing these materials to support and empower these adult audiences to understand how AI is used in education and the issues it may pose to students.

This reflects suggestions made by Connected by Data in their Workshop in a Box guide in November that the toolkit could be adapted either for staffroom use or for use with parents.

6 Next steps

This evaluation has demonstrated that the Workshop in a Box successfully engaged teachers from a range of schools and with different motivations. As a result, Connected by Data was able to quickly gather feedback from a wide range of pupils across the country to feed into the policy-making process. There is widespread support for the project amongst those who took part, and the teachers in turn are advocating for the toolkit to be used more widely.

Future versions of the toolkit might benefit from even more extensive editing, to ensure the materials are widely accessible to students of different ages. Short attention spans and slow reading speeds mean that every unnecessary word should be cut. This work would be worth doing - Connected by Data might find a school who has done the work already – as even without a national route to impact, many schools felt the exercise was of value to both teachers and students.

Appendix: Evaluation Framework

