

Reading Early Years Schools Federation AI Staff Policy



Chair of Governors: Julia Cottee

Executive Headteacher: Joanne Budge

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Proposed review cycle: Annual review, or sooner if national guidance, technology or school systems change

Proposed next review: February 2027

1. Policy statement

Reading Early Years Schools Federation recognises that artificial intelligence, including generative AI, is now part of professional life in education. Used well, AI can help staff reduce workload, improve the quality of planning and resources, support administration and give staff more time to focus on children.

This policy is intended to enable responsible use, not stop innovation. Staff are trusted to use AI professionally within clear boundaries. The key principle is simple: use the most secure approved school tool for school information, and only use public AI tools for non-identifiable general work.

The Federation approved AI route is Microsoft Copilot, accessed through the school Microsoft account and used with documents stored in the Federation Microsoft 365 environment, including OneDrive and SharePoint.

This policy applies to all employees, governors, agency staff, contractors, consultants, volunteers and any other person working for or on behalf of the Federation.

This policy should be read alongside the Federation's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff Privacy Notice
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy

2. Legal and guidance framework

This policy operates in line with current UK legislation and education guidance, including:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Education Act 2002 safeguarding duties
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, current edition
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, current edition
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Department for Education guidance on generative AI in education and AI data protection in schools
- Information Commissioner's Office guidance on AI and data protection
- Local Authority policies and procedures where applicable

3. What AI means in this policy

Artificial intelligence means computer systems that can carry out tasks that normally require human judgement or intelligence. This may include generating text, creating images, summarising information, analysing data, identifying patterns or suggesting actions.

This policy covers:

- Generative AI, which creates text, images, audio, video or other content from prompts.
- Extractive AI, which summarises, searches or retrieves information from documents.
- Analytical or predictive AI, which identifies patterns, trends, risks or possible outcomes from data.

4. Our Microsoft first approach

REYS uses Microsoft 365. For Federation business, the approved AI route is Microsoft Copilot when used through a school Microsoft account. Staff must not use a personal Microsoft account for Federation work.

Microsoft Copilot may be used with school documents and school information held in approved Federation systems, such as:

- OneDrive
- SharePoint
- Microsoft Teams
- Outlook
- Word, Excel, PowerPoint and other Microsoft 365 tools where the school licence permits Copilot use

Copilot should only be able to access documents the user already has permission to view. Staff must not use Copilot to bypass permissions, access documents they should not see or summarise documents that have been shared with them by mistake.

Even when using Copilot, staff must use the minimum information needed. Identifiers should be removed wherever possible, especially pupil names, parent names, staff names, dates of birth, UPNs, addresses, medical information, safeguarding information and the school's name where it is not needed for the task.

5. Public AI tools

Public AI tools include tools accessed through websites, apps or personal accounts outside the Federation Microsoft 365 environment. Examples may include ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, image generators and other public AI writing or research tools.

Staff may use public AI tools for general professional support where no identifiable or confidential school information is included. Examples include:

- general lesson ideas
- example activities
- generic worksheets or quiz questions
- proofreading text with no school or personal information
- drafting a general parent letter template with no names and no school specific information
- finding simpler wording for a generic message
- creating resource ideas or display wording

Staff must not enter any information into public AI tools that could identify a child, parent, carer, member of staff, governor, school or specific school situation. This includes names, initials, class names where the context is identifiable, school name, addresses, email addresses, medical details, SEND information, safeguarding information, behaviour records, assessment data, attendance information and parent communications.

6. Quick decision guide for staff

Information or task	Use Microsoft Copilot?	Use public AI tools?	Example
Generic lesson ideas with no school details	Yes	Yes	Give me ideas for a Reception lesson on floating and sinking.
Drafting a parent letter with no names or school details	Yes	Yes	Write a general letter about a trip reminder.
A letter about a named child or family	Yes, if needed and held in Microsoft 365	No	Use Copilot only if the draft is in OneDrive or Outlook and remove identifiers where possible.
Internal staff briefing or policy document	Yes	No	Use Copilot with documents held in OneDrive or SharePoint.
Assessment data or tracking data	Yes, only if minimised or anonymised	No	Remove child names, dates of birth and other direct identifiers first.
Safeguarding, child protection or highly sensitive records	Only with explicit senior/DPO approval	No	Do not use AI unless a clear, authorised and risk assessed purpose exists.
Creating images for displays or resources	Yes	Yes, with care	Do not create images of real children, staff, parents or identifiable school events.

7. Traffic light guide

Green: allowed	Amber: use Copilot and reduce risk	Red: not allowed without specific approval
Generic planning ideas Generic quiz questions General display wording Generic letter templates Proofreading non-confidential text	Internal documents in OneDrive or SharePoint Drafting school communications Summarising meeting notes with no sensitive detail Analysing anonymised or minimised assessment data Preparing resources from existing school documents	Safeguarding records Child protection information Medical records SEND records with direct identifiers Passwords or login details Using AI to make final decisions about children, families or staff

8. Permitted uses of AI

Staff may use approved AI tools to support professional work, including:

- lesson planning and activity ideas
- resource creation
- drafting, editing or simplifying communications
- summarising non-sensitive information
- creating presentation outlines
- formatting or proofreading documents
- administrative efficiency tasks
- supporting reflection, coaching questions or professional development
- analysis of anonymised or minimised data using Microsoft Copilot within Microsoft 365

AI must not replace professional judgement. The member of staff using AI remains responsible for the final content, accuracy, tone, safeguarding implications and suitability of anything produced.

9. Use of Copilot with data analysis

Microsoft Copilot may be used to support analysis of school data where there is a legitimate professional purpose and the data is held within approved Microsoft systems.

Before using Copilot for data analysis, staff must reduce the data to the minimum needed. As far as possible, remove:

- pupil names and initials
- parent or carer names
- staff names where not needed
- dates of birth
- addresses and contact details
- UPNs and other unique identifiers
- the school name where it is not needed
- medical, SEND or safeguarding details unless specifically authorised

Copilot may be used to analyse anonymised or minimised datasets, for example attendance trends, cohort patterns or assessment gaps. It must not be used to make final decisions about individual children or staff. Any conclusions must be checked by a member of staff who understands the context.

10. Human oversight and decision making

AI must support staff. It must not make final decisions for the Federation.

AI must not be used to make solely automated decisions relating to:

- safeguarding or child protection
- behaviour, suspension or exclusion decisions
- admissions
- attendance action
- SEND provision
- medical needs
- staff recruitment
- disciplinary decisions
- performance management
- complaints
- formal assessment judgements

Any AI output that affects a child, family, member of staff or governor must be reviewed, checked and owned by an appropriate member of staff before action is taken.

11. Safeguarding and online safety

The welfare of children is paramount. AI must never delay safeguarding action, replace professional curiosity or reduce the responsibility of staff to report concerns.

Staff must not use AI in any way that could:

- compromise safeguarding

- create or alter safeguarding records without professional oversight
- generate inaccurate records about pupils or families
- create inappropriate or harmful content
- impersonate a child, parent, staff member or other person
- produce realistic images, audio or video of children, parents or staff

Any safeguarding concern linked to AI use must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and recorded through the Federation's normal safeguarding systems.

12. Data protection, confidentiality and information security

All AI use must comply with the Federation Data Protection Policy and UK data protection law. Staff must use the right tool for the sensitivity of the information.

Public AI tools must never be used with identifiable or confidential school information.

Microsoft Copilot may be used with school information where:

- the member of staff is signed in with their school Microsoft account
- the information is stored in approved Microsoft 365 systems
- there is a legitimate school purpose
- the minimum necessary information is used
- identifiers are removed wherever possible
- the output is checked before being used or shared

Staff must never enter the following into any AI tool unless there is explicit approval from the Executive Headteacher and DPO, and a DPIA or risk assessment has been completed where required:

- safeguarding records
- child protection information
- medical information
- SEND reports containing direct identifiers
- highly sensitive staff information
- passwords or login details
- legal advice or privileged information
- information copied from systems where AI use is not approved

Any suspected data breach involving AI must be reported immediately using the Federation data breach process.

13. Communication with parents, carers and stakeholders

AI can help staff draft or improve communication, but it must not remove the personal, caring and professional tone expected across the Federation.

Staff may use AI to draft messages, but must always check:

- the facts are correct
- the tone is kind, human and appropriate
- the message reflects the Federation's values

- no confidential or identifiable information has been placed into a public AI tool
- the final message has been edited by the member of staff sending it

Letters or emails about a specific child, family or member of staff should be drafted within Microsoft 365, using Copilot only where appropriate. Public AI tools must only be used for generic templates with all identifying details removed.

14. Equality, bias and fairness

AI tools can produce inaccurate, biased or unfair outputs. Staff must check all AI generated content carefully, especially where it relates to protected characteristics, small groups, vulnerable children or families, SEND, language, culture, sex, race, disability or religion.

Staff must not use AI in a way that could result in discrimination, stereotyping or unfair treatment. Where an AI output appears biased or inappropriate, it must not be used and should be reported to a senior leader if it raises a wider concern.

15. Copyright and intellectual property

Staff must check that AI generated content does not breach copyright or other rights. AI should not be used to copy protected material or recreate paid resources in a way that would avoid proper licensing.

Work created by staff in the course of employment, including work supported by AI, belongs to the Federation subject to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and any relevant employment terms.

Pupil work must not be uploaded into public AI tools. Pupil work should not be used to train or test AI tools without appropriate approval and a clear lawful basis.

16. Pupil use and AI literacy

REYS is an early years Federation. Pupils must not create accounts for public AI tools or use public AI tools independently in school.

Where children learn about AI, this will be age appropriate, teacher led and linked to online safety, critical thinking and understanding that online content may not always be true or real.

Children should be helped to understand, in simple terms, that computers can create pictures, words or sounds, but adults must check whether these are safe, kind and accurate.

17. Approval of new AI tools

Staff are encouraged to suggest AI tools or uses that could reduce workload or improve provision. New AI tools must not be introduced for Federation business without review.

Before approving a new AI tool, the Federation will consider:

- data protection and whether a DPIA is required
- safeguarding implications
- cyber security and account controls
- whether the tool uses prompts or uploaded files for training
- where data is stored and processed

- age appropriateness
- equality and bias risks
- value for money and workload impact
- alignment with Microsoft 365 and existing school systems

Approval will be given by the Executive Headteacher, taking advice from the DPO, IT provider, DSL and governors where appropriate.

18. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Governing Board	Oversee safe and lawful AI use, hold leaders to account and review this policy at least annually.
Executive Headteacher	Lead the safe use of AI, approve AI tools and ensure staff understand this policy.
Senior leaders	Model safe AI use, support staff and monitor compliance in day to day practice.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Advise on safeguarding risks, manage AI related safeguarding incidents and ensure concerns are recorded through normal safeguarding systems.
Data Protection Officer	Advise on data protection compliance, DPIAs, data breaches and lawful use of AI tools.
IT provider or IT lead	Support security settings, access controls, Microsoft 365 configuration and technical advice.
All staff	Use AI safely, protect data, check outputs, keep professional responsibility and report concerns.
Governors and volunteers	Follow this policy when working with Federation information and use approved systems only.

19. Training and staff agreement

Staff must receive appropriate guidance before using AI for Federation business. Training will cover safe prompting, Microsoft Copilot, public AI restrictions, data protection, safeguarding, bias, copyright and how to report concerns.

Staff will be asked to confirm that they have read this policy and understand the difference between Microsoft Copilot in the school Microsoft environment and public AI tools.

Training should be refreshed at least annually, and sooner if there are significant changes in AI tools or guidance.

20. Reporting concerns and incidents

Staff must report the following immediately:

- suspected data breaches
- safeguarding concerns linked to AI
- inappropriate AI outputs
- bias or discrimination concerns
- use of public AI with identifiable school information
- security risks or accidental sharing of documents
- concerns that AI has been used to mislead, impersonate or create harmful content

Reports should be made to the Executive Headteacher, School Business Manager, DPO, DSL or IT support depending on the concern. Safeguarding concerns must always go to the DSL without delay.

21. Breach of policy

Failure to follow this policy may result in action under the Federation Disciplinary Policy, Staff Code of Conduct or other relevant procedures. Serious breaches may constitute gross misconduct, a data protection breach, a safeguarding failure or, in some circumstances, a criminal offence.

Staff must cooperate with any investigation into suspected misuse of AI.

22. Monitoring and review

AI technology and national guidance change quickly. This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, technology, Microsoft licensing, Local Authority advice or Federation practice.

The Federation will keep a list of approved AI tools and will review safe use regularly.

Appendix 1: Staff quick guide

The simple rule

If school information is involved, use Microsoft Copilot through your school Microsoft account and keep the file in OneDrive or SharePoint. If you are using a public AI tool, use general ideas only and remove anything that could identify a person, school or situation.

You can use AI to help with:

- lesson ideas
- resource ideas
- quiz questions
- presentation outlines
- draft letters or emails
- summarising documents in Microsoft 365
- proofreading
- administration tasks
- anonymised or minimised data analysis in Microsoft 365

Never put this into public AI tools:

- child names or initials
- parent, carer or staff names
- school name or identifiable school context
- class lists
- assessment data
- attendance data
- behaviour records
- SEND information
- medical information
- safeguarding information
- parent communications
- staff personal information
- internal school documents

The five key rules

1. Use Microsoft Copilot for school information.
2. Use public AI tools for general ideas only.
3. Remove identifiers wherever possible, even in Copilot.

4. Check, edit and own every AI output before using it.
5. Report safeguarding, data or security concerns immediately.

Appendix 2: Staff AI agreement

1. I have read and understood the Federation AI Staff Policy.
2. I understand that Microsoft Copilot, used through my school Microsoft account, is the approved AI route for Federation information.
3. I understand that documents used with Copilot should be stored in OneDrive, SharePoint or another approved Microsoft 365 location.
4. I will use the minimum information needed and will remove names, dates of birth, UPNs, school name and other identifiers wherever possible.
5. I will not enter identifiable school information into public AI tools such as ChatGPT or other public AI websites or apps.
6. I will not use AI to replace professional judgement or make final decisions about children, families, staff or governors.
7. I will not use AI with safeguarding, child protection, medical or highly sensitive information unless I have explicit authorisation and the correct risk assessment has been completed.
8. I will check all AI outputs for accuracy, bias, tone, copyright and suitability before using them.
9. I will keep communication with parents, carers and stakeholders personal, accurate and appropriate.
10. I will report any AI related data breach, safeguarding concern, security issue or inappropriate output immediately through the correct Federation process.

Appendix 3: Approved tools list

This list should be maintained by the Executive Headteacher or delegated AI lead and reviewed regularly.

Tool	Status	Approved use	Key restriction
Microsoft Copilot	Federation approved AI route	School documents, drafting, summarising, planning and anonymised or minimised data analysis within Microsoft 365.	Use school Microsoft account only. Keep files in OneDrive or SharePoint. Minimise data.
Microsoft 365 Copilot features in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams and Outlook	Approved where included in school licensing	Document support, spreadsheet analysis, presentation drafting, meeting and email support.	Do not use to process safeguarding or highly sensitive records unless explicitly authorised.
Public AI tools, including ChatGPT and similar tools	Restricted	Generic planning, ideas, proofreading and non-identifiable drafting.	No child, parent, staff, school or confidential information.
AI image tools	Restricted	Generic teaching images, displays or resource ideas.	No real children, parents, staff or identifiable school events. Check copyright and appropriateness.
Other education AI tools	Requires approval	Only once reviewed and approved.	May require DPO, IT and safeguarding review before use.