



AI Awareness Guidance for ARK AEP

Linked policy context: This guidance should be read alongside ARK AEP's safeguarding, online safety, behaviour, data protection, staff conduct and acceptable use procedures. It supports ARK Alternative Education Provision's commitment to safeguarding learners in line with Keeping children safe in education 2026 and the ARK AEP Online Safety Policy 2026.

1. Purpose

Artificial intelligence is increasingly part of children's lives, education, communication and online experiences. This guidance explains how ARK AEP will promote safe, responsible and informed use of AI while recognising that AI can create safeguarding, online safety, conduct, equality, privacy and wellbeing risks. The aim is to help staff, learners, parents and carers understand AI, recognise potential harm, use approved tools safely and report concerns promptly.

2. Link with KCSIE 2026

KCSIE 2026 sets out the legal duties that schools and colleges must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under 18. It confirms that all staff must read Part One in full and follow their school or college safeguarding policies and procedures. ARK AEP will therefore treat AI awareness as part of the whole-school safeguarding culture, not as a separate technical issue.

KCSIE 2026 strengthens expectations around online safety, including risks associated with AI-generated or digitally altered content. ARK AEP will ensure

that staff understand that AI-related incidents may involve child-on-child abuse, bullying, harassment, image-based abuse, impersonation, exploitation, grooming, misinformation, disinformation, data misuse or professional conduct concerns.

3. What Staff Need to Know About AI

- AI tools can generate text, images, audio, video, summaries, answers, recommendations and simulations.
- AI outputs can be inaccurate, biased, misleading, unsafe or inappropriate, even when they appear confident or authoritative.
- AI can be used positively to support learning, accessibility, planning and creativity when tools are approved and used responsibly.
- AI can also be misused to create deepfakes, manipulated images, impersonation, harmful messages, scams, misinformation or content that targets a learner or member of staff.
- Personal, sensitive or confidential information about learners, families or staff must not be entered into AI tools unless the tool has been approved for that purpose and data protection requirements have been met.

4. AI Safeguarding Risks

- **Deepfakes and image manipulation:** realistic images, videos or audio may be created or altered without consent.
- **Image-based abuse:** AI may be used to create or circulate nude, semi-nude, sexualised or humiliating images, including material that has been digitally altered or wholly generated.
- **Impersonation:** AI-generated messages, voices or images may be used to pretend to be a learner, parent, carer, staff member or trusted adult.
- **Grooming and exploitation:** AI-generated content may be used to build trust, coerce, intimidate or manipulate children.
- **Misinformation and disinformation:** AI can produce convincing but false content that may affect safety, wellbeing, behaviour, relationships or trust.
- **Data and privacy risks:** AI tools may collect, store or reuse submitted information in ways that are not suitable for safeguarding or data protection.

- **Bias and discrimination:** AI outputs may reinforce stereotypes or produce unfair, offensive or inaccurate content.
- **Over-reliance:** staff and learners must not rely on AI outputs without professional judgement, checking and appropriate supervision.

5. Responsibilities at ARK AEP

Leadership and governance: ensure that AI awareness is embedded within safeguarding, online safety, curriculum, behaviour, data protection and staff conduct arrangements. Leaders will review AI-related risks as part of online safety monitoring and will ensure filtering and monitoring arrangements remain effective.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: lead the safeguarding response to AI-related concerns, advise staff on risk, record and escalate concerns, identify patterns and ensure learners affected by AI misuse receive appropriate support.

All staff and volunteers: complete required training, model safe digital behaviour, use only approved tools for work purposes, avoid entering confidential information into unapproved AI systems, supervise learner use, challenge unsafe use and report concerns immediately.

Learners: use technology safely, respectfully and honestly; do not use AI to bully, impersonate, harass, deceive, exploit, create harmful content, bypass rules or share information about others without permission.

6. Safe and Acceptable Use of AI

- AI tools may only be used for ARK AEP work where they are approved or authorised by leadership.
- Staff must check AI outputs before use and remain responsible for professional decisions, safeguarding judgements and communication with learners or families.
- AI must not be used to make automated decisions about safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, risk, referrals, sanctions, placement suitability or learner support.
- Staff must not upload learner names, addresses, dates of birth, safeguarding records, medical information, SEND information, family details, photographs, recordings or other confidential information into unapproved AI tools.

- Learners must be taught that AI-generated work should be used honestly, with acknowledgement where required, and must not replace learning, reflection or original effort.
- Any AI-generated content that targets, humiliates, threatens, sexualises, impersonates or harms another person must be treated as a safeguarding and behaviour concern.

7. Responding to AI-Related Concerns

1. Listen carefully, reassure the learner and avoid promising confidentiality.
2. Report the concern immediately to the DSL using ARK AEP safeguarding procedures.
3. Preserve evidence where safe and appropriate, but do not ask learners to forward harmful images or continue viewing harmful content.
4. Do not investigate beyond your role, search devices without authorisation, contact alleged perpetrators directly or ask leading questions.
5. The DSL will consider immediate safety, welfare, consent, peer dynamics, online spread, police or children's social care advice, parental involvement and support for any learner affected.
6. Where content may involve nude or semi-nude imagery, sexual harassment, coercion, threats, exploitation, hate content, criminality or significant harm, the DSL will follow statutory guidance and local safeguarding partnership procedures.

8. Teaching AI Awareness

ARK AEP will teach AI awareness through PSHE, online safety education, digital literacy, pastoral work and responsive conversations. Learning will be age-appropriate, trauma-informed and adapted for learners' needs. Topics should include what AI is, how AI can be helpful, why AI can be wrong, how to identify manipulated content, consent and image-sharing, respectful communication, privacy, misinformation, reporting routes and the impact of online harm on others.

9. Staff Training and Professional Awareness

Staff training will include AI-related safeguarding risks, deepfakes, image-based abuse, misinformation, data protection, professional boundaries, safe tool

use, filtering and monitoring responsibilities and reporting procedures. Training will be updated when guidance, tools, risks or ARK AEP procedures change.

10. Links to ARK AEP Policies and Procedures

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- ARK AEP Online Safety Policy 2026
- Acceptable Use arrangements for staff and learners
- Positive Culture and Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct and professional boundaries guidance
- Data Protection and Information Sharing procedures
- Filtering and Monitoring review arrangements
- Low-level concerns and allegations procedures

11. Monitoring and Review

This guidance will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner following significant incidents, changes to statutory guidance, new AI risks, updates to filtering and monitoring arrangements or changes in ARK AEP practice. The DSL and leadership team will monitor AI-related concerns to identify patterns, training needs and opportunities to strengthen learner education and safeguarding practice.