

2026 ISC DIGITAL CONFERENCE

HUMAN STRATEGY, DIGITAL EXCELLENCE



PROGRAMME

ISC Digital Conference – Agenda

9:30 – 10:00	Registration, coffee and networking		
10:00 – 10:15	Gary Henderson Conference Opening and welcome		
10:15 – 10:30	Prof Philippa Velija Welcome to the University of Roehampton		
10:30 – 11:15	Prof Miles Berry Academic misconduct and academic integrity		
11:15 – 12:00	Laura Knight and Hannah Meeham Staines Tradition Meets Transformation: Leading AI Strategy in Independent Schools		
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch		
Rooms	Ma002	Ma106	Ma107
13:00 – 13:30	Dawn Taylor Protecting the Learning Process in the Age of AI	Luke Ramsden Seeing the School Clearly: How AI Turns Free Text into Leadership Insight	Julie Carson and Charlotte Milburn Removing Barriers with AI: Inclusion Beyond the Strategy Document
13:35 – 14:05	Emma Darcy and James Garnett Replaced? Why your students are talking to AI instead of you (and what you can do about it)	Sam Wray The incremental benefit of technology integration - how to make your investments more than the sum of their parts.	Esther Chesterman The Cost of Inclusion: Building Budget-Friendly, Highly Personalised Digital Pathways for SEND Learners
14:05 – 14:25	Comfort Break		
Rooms	Ma002	Ma106	Ma107
14:25 – 14:55	Dr Rebecca Mace Beyond Spellchecker: How AI is Transforming Voice, Authorship and Writing in Schools	Rachel Evans It's different for girls: how technology helps girls learn without limits in the GDST	Victoria Hedlund Why AI Bias Is Now a Governance Priority
14:55 – 15:25	Waqas Ali Vibe Coding Beyond the Hype: Building Tools That Genuinely Support Learning	Abid Patel Building Strong Digital & Cyber Security Foundations	Kirsty Nunn AI for Flourishing: Building Digital Cultures Where Students and Teachers Thrive
15:25 – 15:35	Comfort break		
15:35 – 16:05	Al Kingsley – Panel Session Answering the tech questions you are all thinking about		
16:05 – 16:35	SWGfL Why is online safety education more important than ever? A look at the current landscape		
16:35	Gary Henderson Conference Close		

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Academic misconduct and academic integrity



Prof. Miles Berry

This session explores how schools can sustain academic integrity in a period shaped by generative AI and wider digital change. Drawing on experience as a disciplinary officer in higher education, alongside work with Georgian universities on academic integrity at national scale and involvement in institutional AI development, the paper offers grounded guidance for teachers and school leaders.

The first section considers how a culture of academic integrity can be promoted in schools. It argues that integrity is learned through curriculum design, classroom routines and shared language, rather than enforced through surveillance. Attention is given to how expectations can be made explicit for pupils and parents, including where AI tools sit within acceptable practice.

The session then examines how academic misconduct can be identified with professional judgement, rather than reliance on detection software. Common indicators of misconduct are discussed, alongside the limits of automated approaches in an AI context.

A further section focuses on responding to misconduct in ways that support learning. Restorative approaches, proportionate sanctions and consistent processes are presented as means of maintaining trust while addressing breaches.

The session concludes by exploring how assessment design can be rethought to improve reliability and validity in an AI age. It argues for assessment that values process, judgement and authenticity, reducing incentives for misconduct while strengthening educational purpose.

Tradition Meets Transformation: Leading AI Strategy in Independent Schools



Laura Knight



**Jules
O'Loughlin**



**Hannah
Meehan-
Staines**



John Doherty



Jane Basnett

Artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping the educational landscape, yet for many traditional independent schools the challenge lies not in whether to engage with AI, but in how to do so in a way that aligns with institutional values, culture, and long-established educational principles. This fireside chat, led by Laura Knight, brings together four Directors of Digital Learning from traditional independent schools to explore what it means to develop AI strategy with clarity, care, and purpose.

Drawing on Laura Knight's extensive experience in digital leadership, governance, and AI strategy, the session moves beyond tools and trends to focus on the strategic and human dimensions of AI adoption. Through facilitated discussion, panellists will reflect on how AI strategy has emerged in their schools, the early questions and tensions they have encountered, and the realities of leading change in values-driven, tradition-rich environments.

The conversation will examine key strategic considerations including ethics, academic integrity, safeguarding, data protection, staff confidence, and reputational risk. Panellists will share how these concerns have shaped decision-making at senior leadership and governor level, and how schools have sought to balance caution with opportunity. The role of governance, policy development, and transparent communication with staff, pupils, parents, and boards will be explored, highlighting the importance of trust, coherence, and shared understanding.

Protecting the Learning Process in the Age of AI



Dawn Taylor

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the conditions under which learning develops. As intelligent technologies become embedded in everyday learning, schools face a defining pedagogical challenge: how do we harness the power of AI while ensuring it augments, rather than bypasses, the cognitive effort required for deep and durable learning?

This session explores the pedagogical responsibility to design learning environments in which thinking remains visible, effortful, and intellectually demanding. Moving beyond narratives of efficiency and automation, it introduces the concept of students as cognitive partners to AI and examines how schools can intentionally develop the knowledge, skills, and judgement learners need to question, interpret, and extend what intelligent systems produce.

Informed by research into learning and cognition and grounded in pedagogical practice, the session presents a clear framework for integrating AI in ways that strengthen learning and support inclusive practice. It considers what curriculum, assessment, and instructional design must become when access to generated answers is no longer scarce.

Seeing the School Clearly: How AI Turns Free Text into Leadership Insight



Luke Ramsden

AI is reshaping the way school leaders can understand what is actually happening within their communities. Much of our sector still relies on labour-intensive surveys and blunt tick-box metrics that flatten nuance and rarely give senior teams a clear sense of lived experience. What has changed, and what many have not yet appreciated, is the power of treating free text itself as data. With the right AI tools, comments from parents, teachers and students can be analysed at scale with a level of nuance that has simply never been possible. Tone, sentiment, themes that recur across different groups, and even the language choices respondents make can all be surfaced with a sophistication that gives leaders a far more truthful picture of school culture.

This presentation would set out what is now possible, why it represents a significant shift in how leadership teams can understand their schools, and how it can be implemented safely and responsibly. It is an approach that removes guesswork, reduces administrative burden, and gives leaders access to the kind of nuanced analysis that has long been missing from school improvement work.

Removing Barriers with AI: Inclusion Beyond the Strategy Document



Julie Carson



Charlotte Milburn

As interest in artificial intelligence continues to grow across the education sector, many schools and trusts have developed digital or AI strategies that reference inclusion, accessibility and equity. However, there remains a significant gap between strategic intent and the lived reality of classroom practice. This session focuses on how schools can move beyond the strategy document to explore the practical application of AI in removing barriers to learning.

The session is structured around four commonly identified barriers to learning: language and comprehension, cognitive load and task entry, delayed or inaccessible feedback, and adult capacity and consistency. For each barrier, practical classroom examples will be shared to demonstrate how AI has been used to support understanding, increase pupil independence and improve access to learning without lowering expectations or removing teacher agency.

Replaced? Why your students are talking to AI instead of you (and what you can do about it)



Emma Darcy



James Garnett

Students are already talking to AI, often more than they are talking to us...

From homework help and revision to emotional reassurance and decision-making, generative AI tools are becoming a default source of support for children and young people. This shift is happening rapidly, largely invisibly, and regardless of school policy. The question for school and trust leaders is no longer “Should we allow AI?” but “What happens if we pretend it isn’t already here?”

This session takes a clear-eyed, future-facing look at how pupils across all phases are engaging with AI right now, drawing on emerging evidence, real school examples, and leadership experiences. We will explore why students turn to AI (convenience, anonymity, instant feedback, and perceived authority) and what this means for teaching, safeguarding, and the adult/child relationship at the heart of education.

Crucially, this is not a session about replacing teachers or promoting unchecked technology use. Instead, it reframes AI as a safeguarding, literacy and leadership issue. When pupils rely on AI for answers, reassurance or validation, leaders must consider questions of bias, misinformation, data privacy, dependency, and emotional vulnerability alongside academic integrity.

The Cost of Inclusion: Building Budget-Friendly, Highly Personalised Digital Pathways for SEND Learners



**Esther
Chesterman**

Providing high-quality, personalized education for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is widely, and often rightly, seen as resource-intensive, placing a significant strain on school budgets. A major issue is that many current EdTech tools merely digitize traditional, rigid classroom structures, failing to address the complex and diverse needs of neurodiverse and SEND learners.

This workshop directly challenges the notion that deep inclusion must be costly. It presents a practical, scalable, and cost-effective solution based on the Online Learning Accessibility Design Principles developed by the National Extension College (NEC).

Built upon 60 years of charitable experience, NEC successfully transitioned its entire curriculum to a pure, self-directed, adaptive learning model. This successful design, which earned a shortlisting for the Learning Technologies Award for Excellence, proves that genuine inclusion—where learning truly adapts to the individual user—can be delivered affordably and at scale.

Beyond Spellchecker: How AI is Transforming Voice, Authorship and Writing in Schools



Dr Rebecca Mace

How is the concept of ‘good writing’ being reconstituted in education through pupils’ interactions with generative AI, and what does this imply for notions of authorship, agency, and voice?

As schools being to navigate the rapid growth of tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Microsoft copilot teachers are increasingly grappling with pupils differing understanding of voice, authorship and originality. My current research project examines how AI influences pupils’ ideas about what constitutes ‘good’ writing and what this means for teaching writing. It focuses thinking on pupil agency, especially when emerging studies show that students view it as a shared task, not created by a single author but written in hybrid style as a shared task between human and machine.

This raises important questions for teachers. As writing becomes increasingly co-produced then how do we meaningfully assess learning? How do we nurture distinctive pupil voice? And how do we teach creativity in a world where AI can produce seductively fluent and convincing answers in seconds?

In this presentation I will share examples of pupil’s work, discuss emerging patterns of how voice is strengthened or diluted through AI use. I will offer practical strategies that teachers can apply in their own classrooms and address how to guide pupils in using AI critically. The aim will be to protect a space where young writers develop as thinkers and meaning makers.

It's different for girls: how technology helps girls learn without limits in the GDST



Rachel Evans

Public narratives around digital technology - particularly artificial intelligence - tend to swing between hype and fear. How can we find a way through that recognises young people's own perspectives and desire to experiment with technology, while remaining pedagogically rigorous?

This workshop explores the GDST 'Designing the Future of Girls' Education' framework of Classroom, Curriculum and Culture. How can we ensure that every girl in a classroom - co-ed or single sex - is able to learn effectively? And what part can technology play?

The session will draw on research and practical school experience to explore how we might critically evaluate digital products and practices through a feminist, inclusive lens that benefits everyone. You'll have a chance to share your own school experiences, evaluating them against the Classroom, Curriculum and Culture framework.

Why AI Bias Is Now a Governance Priority



Victoria Hedlund

AI bias is no longer just a technical issue. It now directly shapes classroom practice, learning pathways, wellbeing, and equitable student outcomes. Bias shows up in multiple places and in multiple forms across both teacher-facing and student-facing uses of generative AI. When these biases go unnoticed, they can compound over time and directly impact the attainment and wellbeing of pupils who sit at the intersection of known biases (such as race, gender, SEND, and disability).

This session draws on my research into how science explanations generated by AI differ by gender, using this as a practical lens to surface how biased outputs can affect explanation quality and access to learning. You will explore real examples and take part in hands-on activities to examine what bias looks like within your own school contexts.

We will then shift to the leadership question of bias governance. The focus will be on what decisions, strategies, and everyday practices can be embedded to ensure that bias awareness becomes operational across your school. The session supports leaders to move from awareness to implementation and impact; therefore beginning to build the structures needed for a genuinely #BiasAwareSchool.

Vibe Coding Beyond the Hype: Building Tools That Genuinely Support Learning



Waqas Ali

The emergence of AI coding assistants has opened a door that previously seemed closed to most educators: the ability to create custom digital tools tailored precisely to their students' needs. This approach, commonly known as vibe coding, allows teachers to describe what they want in natural language and receive functional, interactive resources in return, no programming expertise required.

The session begins by establishing what vibe coding actually is and how it works in practice, using accessible platforms such as Canva Code that require no prior technical knowledge. Participants will see real examples of classroom tools built using this approach, including an interactive Python Programming demonstrator that transformed how I taught programming concepts to my GCSE Computer Science class. The tool allowed my students to step through code line by line, visualising exactly what happens at each stage, turning an abstract process into something tangible and clear. The principles transfer readily: a History teacher could create an interactive timeline that reveals cause and consequence, or a Science teacher could build a model demonstrating particle behaviour. Crucially, the discussion will focus not on the technology itself, but on identifying a genuine learning challenge and using vibe coding to address it.

Building Strong Digital & Cyber Security Foundations



Abid Patel

Schools today rely on digital systems to function. Teaching, communication, safeguarding, operations and leadership all depend on reliable technology and secure data. Yet many schools still struggle with ageing systems, inconsistent processes and growing cyber threats that can disrupt learning in seconds.

This session explores why digital strategy and cyber resilience are no longer optional, with a strong focus on the DfE's Digital and Cyber Security Standards and the expectation for schools to meet the Core Digital Standards by 2030.

Rather than viewing these standards as technical checklists, the session will show how they provide a practical roadmap for safer, smarter and more resilient learning environments. It will explore how schools can build a positive cyber security culture, strengthen digital infrastructure, reduce risk and turn guidance into practical action that supports teaching, safeguarding, operations and long term school improvement.

AI for Flourishing: Building Digital Cultures Where Students and Teachers Thrive



Kirsty Nunn

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded in the daily life of schools, a new challenge emerges: how do we ensure that technology enhances not only achievement, but flourishing? Flourishing includes agency, purpose, engagement, creativity, connection, self-awareness and the feeling of being capable within a complex world. While many conversations about AI focus on operational efficiency, automation or risk, flourishing offers a broader and more hopeful organising principle for the future of digital education.

This presentation explores how schools can design digital ecosystems that harness AI in service of human growth. Drawing on organisational psychology, coaching practice and digital transformation research, the session reframes AI as a tool that can deepen reflective thinking, reduce friction, enhance metacognition, personalise learning and strengthen the relational fabric of a school.

Answering the tech questions you are all thinking about



Al Kingsley MBE

The most important questions about technology in schools are often the ones leaders are still grappling with.

This thought-provoking panel session, chaired by Al Kingsley MBE, will tackle the real questions submitted by delegates ahead of the conference, covering digital strategy, cyber security, AI, assessment, and beyond. Rather than rehearsed presentations, this session is driven by the issues that genuinely concern school leaders today. Drawing on the experience and perspectives of a diverse panel, the discussion will explore both practical challenges and strategic dilemmas, offering candid insights into what is working, what isn't, and what lies ahead. Expect a dynamic, fast-paced conversation that balances technical depth with leadership perspective, challenges assumptions, and surfaces new ways of thinking. Whether you are refining your digital strategy, navigating emerging risks, or grappling with the implications of AI for teaching and assessment, this session aims to leave you better equipped and perhaps asking even better questions.

Submit your questions using the below:



<https://app.sli.do/event/3NC8v57Bvcy5xxCRMPzTbW>

Why is online safety education more important than ever? A look at the current landscape



Gareth Cort

In this session, Gareth Cort will outline some of the current and emerging risks that affect children and young people online, and the steps that governments and industry are taking to protect them online. The session will consider the possible impact of recent legislation such as the Online Safety Act (2023) and the incoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act on online safety behaviour and explain why online safety education (for the whole school community) is a crucial foundation in the protection and empowerment of young people online. Gareth will also point to free existing resources from SWGfL and the UK Safer Internet Centre that can support schools in an ever-changing digital landscape.

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