WORKINGTON ACADEMY

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

October 2026 | Secondary | What parents and carers need to know about: Artificial Intelligence

Supporting our children to use AI safely, respectfully and responsibly

Artificial intelligence is becoming part of everyday life. Young people may use it to answer questions, generate images, plan ideas or support their schoolwork. AI can be a useful tool, but children need guidance to understand its limitations and use it in ways that protect themselves and others.

What is generative AI?

Generative AI creates new content in response to a request, known as a prompt. It can produce text, images, videos, music and computer code. Popular tools include ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot and image generators. AI can sound confident and convincing, but this does not mean that everything it creates is accurate, appropriate or fair.

How might AI be used in the wrong way?

Young people may rely on AI to complete schoolwork, trust inaccurate information or share personal details without understanding the risks. AI can also be misused to create fake or sexualised images, impersonate others, spread harmful content or bully and humiliate someone. What begins as a joke can have a serious impact on another person's wellbeing, reputation and safety.

Using AI safely

Children should never enter personal information, photographs, passwords or private details into an AI tool. They should check age requirements and tell an adult if AI produces anything upsetting, sexual or unsafe.

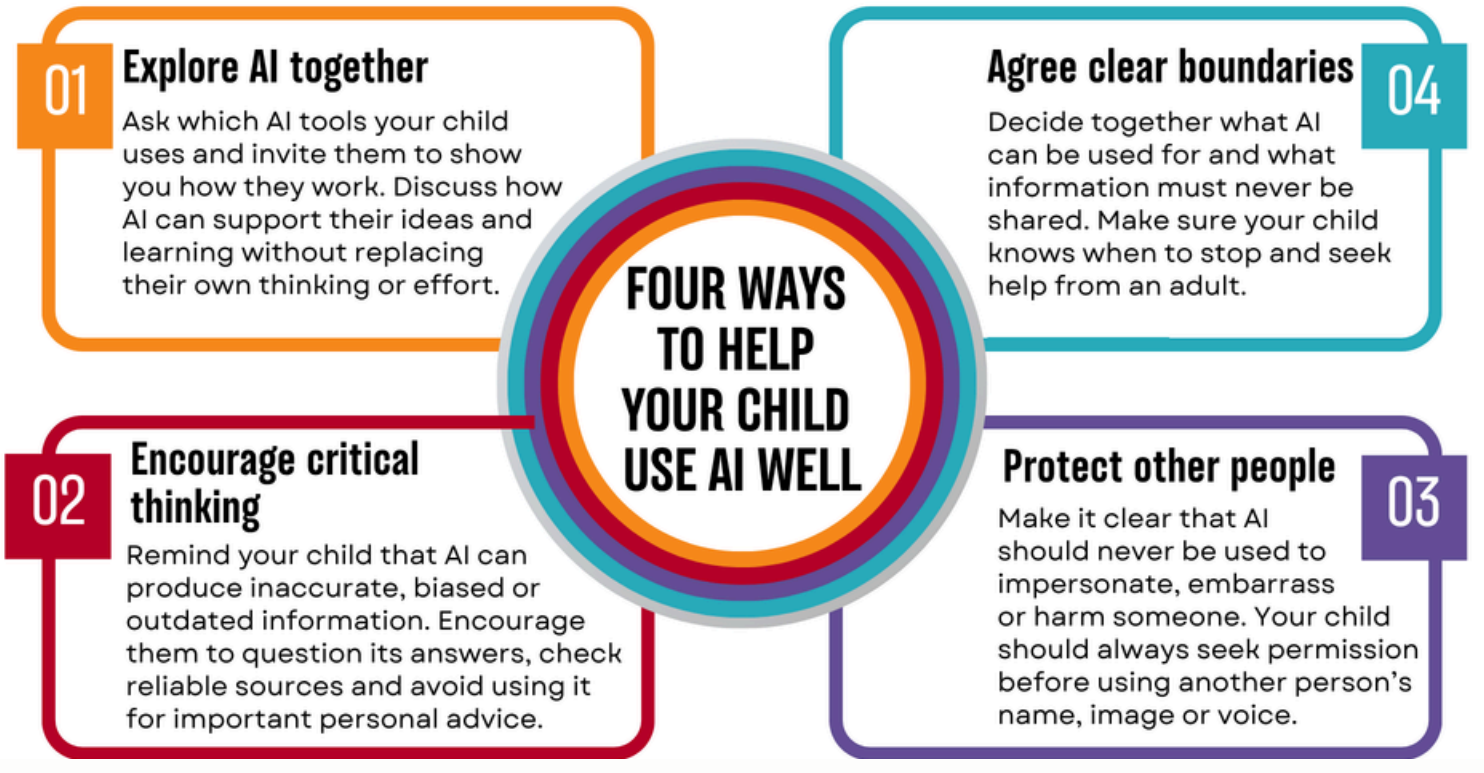
Using AI respectfully

AI should never be used to embarrass, bully or impersonate someone. Children must ask permission before using another person's image, voice or information and consider how their creation could impact them and others.

Using AI responsibly

AI should support children's thinking, not replace it. They should check information carefully, follow school rules and be honest when AI has helped with their work.

Children should check information against reliable sources, rewrite ideas in their own words and be honest when AI has contributed to their work.



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What is Character.AI?

Character.AI is an entertainment platform where users interact with AI-generated characters. These may be fictional characters, celebrities, historical figures or completely invented personalities.

The conversations can feel personal and realistic, but the characters are not real people. They do not have feelings or genuine understanding, and their responses may be inaccurate.

Important age information

Character.AI states that users in Europe must be at least 16. Users identified as under 18 are placed in *Reading Mode*, where they can view content and use some creative features, but cannot have open-ended chats. Age checks are not foolproof, so parents and carers should check that their child has entered their correct age and is using the appropriate version.

Why might young people be attracted to it?

Character.AI can feel entertaining, creative and free from judgement. Some young people may also use it for companionship, reassurance or a space to discuss feelings they find difficult to share with others.

What are the risks?

- **Inappropriate content**

AI safeguards are not perfect. Characters may produce sexual, violent, discriminatory or otherwise unsuitable responses.

- **Emotional attachment**

Characters can appear caring and understanding. Some young people may become emotionally dependent on them or prefer AI conversations to real relationships.

- **Unreliable advice**

AI can give inaccurate or unsafe information. It should not be trusted for advice about health, relationships, sex, self-harm or personal safety.

- **Unhealthy relationship messages**

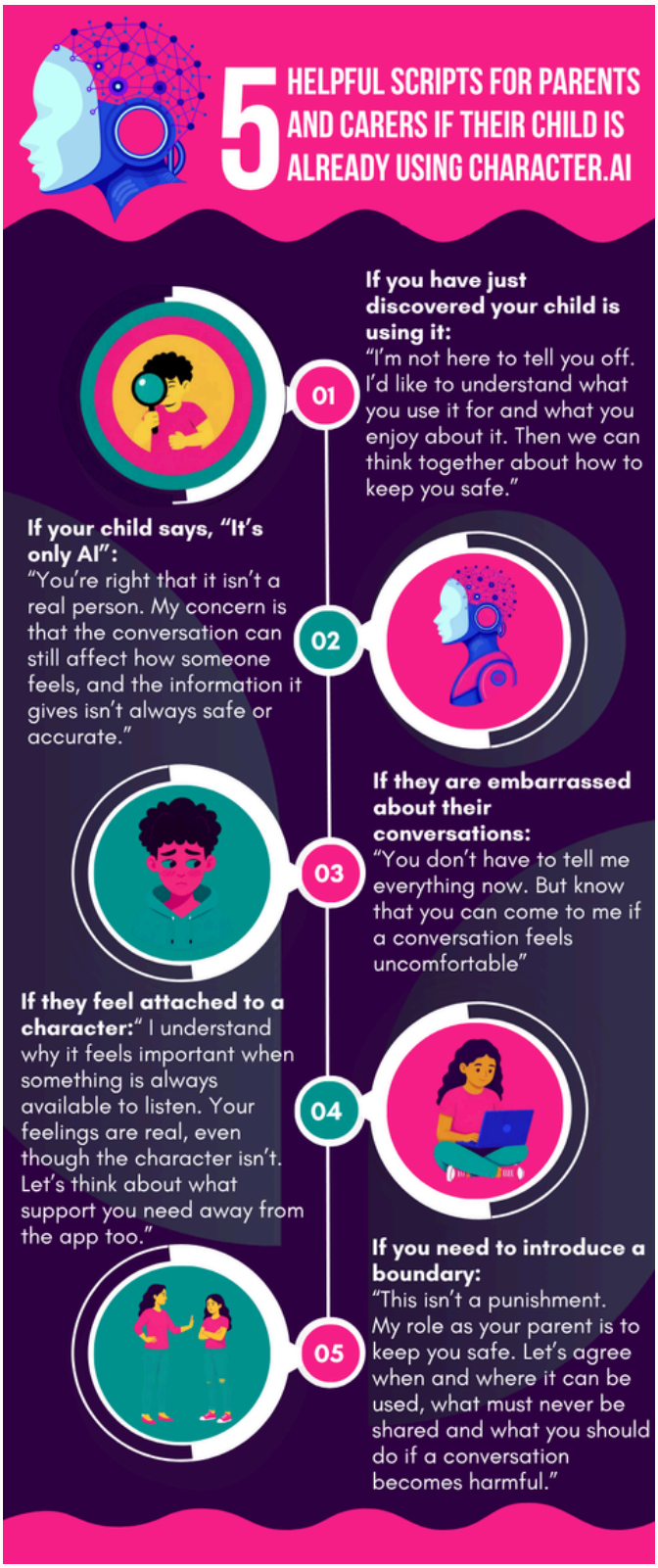
Some characters may present jealousy, control, coercion or sexual pressure as normal or romantic behaviour.

- **Privacy**

Young people may share personal information because the conversation feels private. They should never disclose identifying details, photographs, passwords or their location.

- **Excessive use**

Frequent use may affect sleep, schoolwork, hobbies and relationships. Secrecy, withdrawal or distress when access is interrupted may indicate a problem.



If you are concerned about your child's use of AI, please contact the school. A member of the safeguarding or pastoral team can offer advice, discuss any concerns and help you identify the right support for your child.