

Briefings

Thought leadership for the independent schooling sector

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RESEARCH FEATURE: Navigating Artificial Intelligence in Education

Foreword

In the years ahead, few innovations will reshape education as profoundly as artificial intelligence (AI). For Queensland's independent schools, this presents both a challenge and a great promise. At its best, AI offers the capacity to personalise learning, relieve teachers of repetitive tasks, and uncover insights about students that guide more responsive teaching. But without a considered, ethical, and strategic approach, it also risks undermining academic integrity, exacerbating inequities, and eroding the human dimensions so central to schooling.



This briefing is offered as a compass for school leaders navigating that terrain. It is thoughtfully structured around global principles, actionable steps, and a grounded Queensland-based case study. The experience of Rockhampton Grammar School—as it moved from banning AI to embedding a whole-school AI framework—serves not only as proof of concept, but as a practical model for change management, stakeholder engagement, and policy design.

Importantly, this document has itself been crafted with generative AI tools—a demonstration of AI's potential when used intentionally. That choice underscores a central message: AI is not a distant future, but a present force. As you read, I encourage you to reflect on how your school can adopt a purpose-driven AI mindset—one that safeguards student and staff welfare, aligns with your educational mission, and invests in human capacities even as it leverages new capabilities.

We invite you to explore the insights and strategies outlined in this article as you lead your school into a future where AI is not just present, but purposefully and responsibly integrated into the fabric of education.



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RESEARCH FEATURE:
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This briefing has been written using generative AI tools

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the educational landscape, presenting both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges for Independent Schools in Queensland. As school leaders, understanding and strategically integrating AI is crucial to ensure safe, ethical, and effective use that enhances learning and prepares students for an AI-enabled future. This AI generated briefing outlines key considerations, drawing on global insights and a local case study from Rockhampton Grammar School, to help your school navigate this evolving domain.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

AI refers to technology that analyses its environment and acts with some autonomy to achieve goals. It is not a new concept, but recent advancements, particularly in Generative AI (GenAI) like ChatGPT, have created a ‘perfect storm’ that is quickly permeating social and professional life. GenAI models can produce bespoke content, from text and images to computer code, by analysing vast datasets and recognising patterns. Understanding AI requires knowing that it relies on data, algorithms, and computing power to behave intelligently. Crucially, AI is intended to **augment human intelligence, not replace it**.

Opportunities for AI in Education

AI brings significant opportunities to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative tasks within schools:

- **Adaptive and Personalised Learning:** AI can adjust tasks and support based on individual student needs, abilities, and contexts, helping students avoid getting stuck and providing differentiated instruction. This can help to close achievement gaps and promote self-regulation skills.
- **Automated Marking and Feedback:** AI tools can automate routine assessment tasks, such as generating multiple-choice quizzes or rubrics, and provide immediate feedback to students. This frees up teacher time, allowing them to focus on higher-order pedagogical tasks.

- **Teacher Support and Workload Reduction:** AI can assist teachers with administrative tasks, such as generating lesson plans, drafting communications (emails, recommendation letters), and creating diverse learning activities. Research has shown this can help offset teacher burnout.
- **Increasing Human Intelligence and Critical Thinking:** By offloading lower-level cognitive tasks, AI can enable a focus on developing human intelligence, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. AI can be used as a ‘cognitive apprentice,’ prompting students to question and evaluate AI-generated outputs.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** AI-powered dashboards can provide educators with valuable insights into learner progress and behaviour, helping to identify patterns in attendance, attainment, and engagement, which might reveal unexpected dilemmas or support effective interventions.

Challenges and Risks of AI in Education

While beneficial, AI also presents significant challenges and risks that schools must proactively address:

- **Academic Integrity:** AI tools can be used to generate essays or complete assignments, making it difficult to assess what students truly know and potentially undermining skill development and independent thinking.

- **Data Privacy and Security:** AI systems require data, and concerns exist around where data is stored, how long it is kept, and the potential for personally identifiable information to be unintentionally shared or misused. Parental consent for data use is also a significant issue.
- **Bias and Fairness:** AI models are trained on vast datasets that may contain biases, leading to outputs that reflect gender or cultural stereotypes or disadvantage certain groups. Ensuring non-discrimination and fairness is a critical ethical principle.
- **Over-reliance and De-skilling:** There is a risk that students and teachers may become overly dependent on AI tools, leading to a reduction in critical thinking, creativity, and essential human skills.
- **Transparency and Explainability:** It can be difficult to understand how AI tools determine their outputs, raising questions about their reliability, limitations, and potential ‘black box’ effects.
- **Rapid Evolution and Staying Up-to-Date:** AI technology is evolving quickly, making it challenging for schools to keep policies, training, and resources current.

- **Environmental Impact:** The training and use of large AI models require significant computing power and energy, contributing to carbon emissions, which raises concerns about environmental sustainability.
- **Emotional and Social Wellbeing:** Concerns exist regarding the impact of AI on students’ social and emotional development, potential for cyberbullying, and the importance of maintaining human relationships.

The Importance of a Strategic Framework and Policy

Given these opportunities and challenges, schools are encouraged to have an AI policy and safeguarding measures in place. **Leaders are responsible for ensuring AI use does not detrimentally affect educational outcomes, provision quality, or decision-making.** A clear policy framework is essential for consistent, safe, and effective AI use, protecting wellbeing, meeting safeguarding responsibilities, managing risks, and preparing students for the future.

- Developing such a policy involves initial steps such as:
1. **Assessing current AI use** and identifying concerns.
 2. **Forming a working group** with diverse stakeholders (leadership, teachers, IT, governors, safeguarding, data protection).
 3. **Identifying key priority areas** like safeguarding, acceptable use, data protection, and staff development.
 4. **Starting with basic, clear guidelines** on approved tools, safety protocols, data protection, expected standards, and reporting procedures.
 5. **Prioritising staff awareness and training.**
 6. **Regularly reviewing and updating** the policy.

The goal is to adopt a **purpose-driven approach to AI (PAI)**, ensuring alignment with educational goals, enhancing human intelligence, being evidence-based, adaptable, personalised, ethical, and transparent.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUTHERAN EDUCATION



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Case Study:
Rockhampton Grammar School
– Implementing a Whole-School AI Framework

The Rockhampton Grammar School (RGS) provides a valuable case study for independent schools in Queensland seeking to implement a whole-school AI framework using a structured change management approach.

Background and Vision

Triggered by the release of ChatGPT, RGS initially banned AI but quickly recognised its transformative potential for personalising learning, enhancing teaching, and streamlining administration. Their primary goal was to ensure **ethical and effective AI use** aligned with their educational mission and values.

Stakeholder Involvement

RGS understood that a collaborative approach was key. They involved:

- Headmaster and Board Members
- Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff
- Parents
- Students.

A dedicated **AI Leadership Group** was established, comprising representatives from primary, secondary, business, and ICT, along with the Headmaster. This group brought diverse expertise, focusing on areas like community communication, teacher professional development, academic integrity, primary education integration, and data coordination.

Policy Design and Implementation Strategy

RGS designed their AI policy and governance framework based on principles addressing **ethical considerations, inclusivity, intellectual property, and student privacy**. Their implementation followed a phased approach for smooth integration and adaptation:

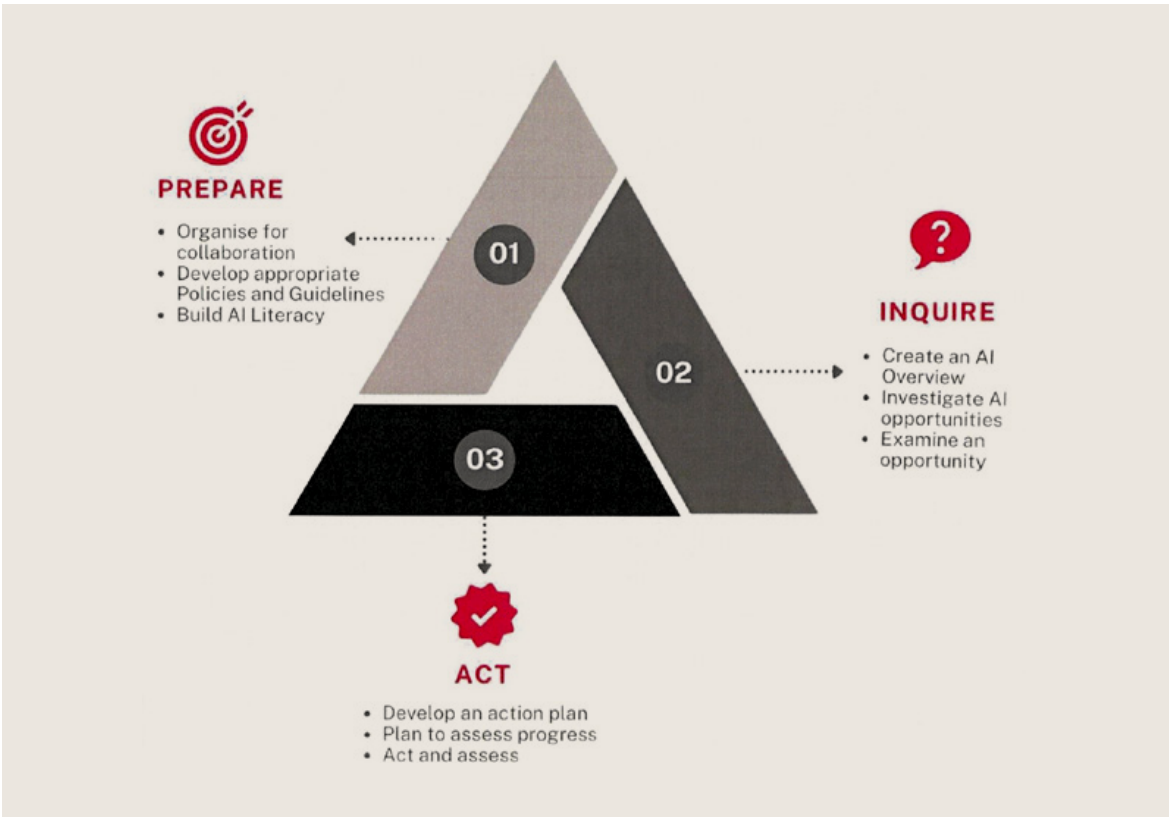
- 1. Initial Phase:** Educating staff and parents through workshops, informational sessions, and materials.
- 2. Pilot Programs:** Small-scale trials of AI tools to gather feedback and make adjustments before wider rollout.
- 3. Implementation:** Integrating AI tools and policies fully after successful pilots, supported by ongoing professional development and ‘AI playground sessions’ (sand-pits) for experimentation in a controlled environment.

Framework for Change:
Prepare, Inquire, Act

RGS adopted a three-phase *Framework for Change* to guide their AI integration:

- 1. Prepare Phase:**
 - **Organise for Collaboration:** Establishing the AI leadership group to manage technical and organisational aspects, plan for teaching, assessment, and administration, and inventory AI tools.
 - **Develop Appropriate Policies and Guidelines:** Articulating an overarching framework aligned with school values and mission, with guidelines for all staff, students, and parents.
 - **Build AI Literacy:** Developing AI literacy among staff to understand different AI tools and models, fostering candid discussions about AI and school governance.

FIGURE 1: FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE: PREPARE, INQUIRE, ACT



2. Inquire Phase:

- **Create an AI Overview:** Developing graphic displays of AI-generated insights to help stakeholders understand opportunities and challenges.
- **Investigate AI Opportunities:** Staff identifying learner-centred problems that AI could solve through deep investigation.
- **Examine an Opportunity:** Reframing learner-centred problems as ‘problems of practice’ and developing a shared understanding of effective implementation. This included pre-implementation surveys for students (Years 6–11) and staff to gauge current use, confidence, and emotions.
 - **Student Findings:** Higher excitement in primary years, moderated in secondary, with concerns about academic integrity, lack of usage guidelines, and accuracy. Limited understanding of AI terminology.

– **Staff Findings:** Positive beliefs about AI’s potential for workload reduction and enhanced teaching, but varied confidence levels and concerns about academic integrity and data protection.

3. Act Phase:

- **Develop an Action Plan:** Collaboratively deciding on strategies, documenting roles, responsibilities, and professional development needs.
- **Plan to Assess Progress:** Setting clear short, medium, and long-term goals to measure success before implementation.
- **Act and Assess:** Implementing the plan and continuously reflecting on how AI addresses learning or administrative issues, involving continuous assessment and iteration.

Issues and Concerns for Younger Students

RGS specifically identified and addressed concerns for younger students:

- **Academic Integrity and Ethical Use:** Recognising the need to teach ethical AI use to prevent cheating.
- **Data Privacy and Security:** Implementing a risk management process for AI tools to ensure compliance with privacy and security standards.
- **Parental Consent and Involvement:** Launching the AI policy with parents, explaining benefits, and considering alternative options for non-consenting parents.
- **Pastoral Education and Human Relationships:** Incorporating guidance on the value of human relationships and critical thinking into the AI policy, addressing concerns about AI replacing human interaction.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROCKHAMPTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL



Role of the Board, Headmaster, and AI Consultants

The RGS Board provided approval, oversight, and resources. Headmaster, Dr Phillip Moulds OAM, was instrumental in driving the initiative, ensuring financial sustainability and efficient resource allocation. AI consultants provided specialised expertise, guidance, and ‘train the trainer’ sessions, empowering the AI leadership group with hands-on learning, confidence-building, and real-world applications.

Key Principles for Ethical AI Implementation

Beyond RGS’s specific approach, broader ethical guidelines are crucial for responsible AI adoption in education. These include:

- **Human-Centred Approach:** AI must be designed and used to augment human intelligence and agency, not replace it. Teachers and students should remain ‘in the loop’ for critical decisions.

- **Transparency and Explainability:** Clearly communicate what AI tools can and cannot do, their limitations, potential biases, and how they function.
- **Data Privacy and Security:** Robust policies and practices are needed to protect student and staff data, ensure informed consent, and mitigate risks of misuse.
- **Bias Detection and Fairness:** Continuously monitor and mitigate algorithmic bias to ensure AI systems promote inclusivity and non-discrimination.
- **Critical Thinking Promotion:** Actively encourage students to question, analyse, and critically evaluate AI-generated outputs, rather than passively accepting them.
- **Ethical Use Training and Awareness:** Provide mandatory, ongoing training for all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents) on ethical AI use, academic integrity, privacy issues, and responsible tool application.

- **Age-Appropriate and Safe Implementation:** Tailor AI use to developmental stages, recognising the unique vulnerabilities of children, and implement safeguards against over-reliance and potential harms.
- **Organisational Accountability and Governance:** Establish clear structures, roles, responsibilities, and processes for overseeing AI implementation, including risk management and documentation.
- **Impact Measurement Framework:** Implement methodologies to measure the real educational impact of AI interventions, combining quantitative and qualitative data to assess both short-term and long-term effects on learning outcomes and wellbeing.

The Australian Context

AI is already shaping how students connect with the world and how they live, work, and are entertained. The Australian Curriculum explicitly integrates AI content, particularly within Technologies and Mathematics, to provide students with knowledge, understanding, and skills about AI core concepts. This aims to increase students’ awareness of AI’s potential and limitations, and how to use it responsibly as users, solution designers, and creators. The Australian Government has also released the [*Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools*](#) to guide responsible and ethical use. Initiatives like the Safer Technology for Schools (ST4S) are trialling AI modules to reduce risks in choosing AI products.

Thought-Provoking Questions for School Leaders

As you consider the integration of AI within your Independent School, reflect on the following:

- How will your school ensure that AI augments, rather than diminishes, the unique value of human intelligence, creativity, and critical thinking in both students and staff?
- What proactive steps can be taken to continuously build AI literacy among all members of your school community – teachers, students, and parents – to foster informed and ethical engagement?
- How will your school establish a robust and adaptable framework for AI policy and governance that can keep pace with the rapid evolution of AI technology?
- In what ways will your school actively engage all stakeholders, including students, in the ongoing dialogue and development of AI policies to ensure a human-centred and inclusive approach?

- Given the privacy and bias concerns, what specific measures will your school implement to protect student data and ensure fairness across diverse student populations when deploying AI tools?
- How will your school measure the true educational impact of AI interventions, beyond simple metrics, to ensure they genuinely enhance learning outcomes and wellbeing?
- Are your current teaching and assessment practices sufficiently engaging and ‘AI-proof’ to discourage inappropriate use, or do they need fundamental re-evaluation in an AI-augmented world?
- How can your school leverage AI to address specific, ‘thorny challenges’ faced by your community, rather than adopting AI for its own sake?

Conclusion

The integration of AI into education is not a question of ‘if,’ but ‘how.’ By adopting a strategic, phased, and human-centred approach, as demonstrated by Rockhampton Grammar School, independent schools in Queensland can effectively harness the opportunities of AI while diligently mitigating its challenges. This requires continuous learning, collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to ethical principles to ensure AI serves as a powerful tool for enriching educational experiences and preparing students for their future.

ISQ support for AI in schools

ISQ’s 2026 AI Innovation initiative will support independent schools in Queensland to develop and implement a *Responsible AI in Schools Framework*. This initiative begins with a major sector-wide event and continues through targeted professional learning and a school-based framework development project.

Responsible AI Framework Project

Responsible AI in Schools Summit
20 March 2026

Adventures in AI one-hour webinar series

Specialised AI workshops including:

- AI for Business Managers: Governance, HR, finance, compliance.
- AI for Curriculum Leaders: Reducing workload with AI.
- AI in Secondary, Primary, and Early Childhood settings.
- AI for Child Safety and Wellbeing: Ethics, eSafety, legal issues.
- AI for Parent Engagement.

Further Artifacts generated to support this Briefing.

Podcast: [*Guiding AI Transformation in Schools*](#)

Presentation: [*Navigating-AI-in-Queensland-Independent-Schools*](#)

[*Mindmap*](#)

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