Glossary of AI governance terms

Thirty terms, one honest line each. Enough to follow any meeting where these words are used at you.

Term	What it means
AI (artificial intelligence)	The umbrella marketing term. In schools it almost always means one of the entries below.
Generative AI	Tools that produce new content (text, images, audio or code) on request. Chatbots are the familiar face, and the assistants now built into office, search and school software are the quiet one.
Large language model (LLM)	The engine inside a chatbot, trained on vast amounts of text to predict plausible continuations. It predicts; it does not know.
Prompt	Everything you type or attach. Prompts can contain personal data, which makes them a data protection matter as well as a writing one.
Hallucination	A fluent, confident output that is wrong, produced because the machine's job is plausibility, not truth. The DfE's word for the remedy is critical judgement.
Training data	The material a model learned its patterns from. Whether a supplier trains on your data is a contract question; the DfE's standards forbid commercial use of pupils' and teachers' work without the copyright owner's consent.
Agentic AI	Tools that take actions rather than only producing content: browsing, connecting to software, completing multi-step tasks, sending messages. The shift from creates to does.
Deepfake	Convincing fake audio, images or video of a real person. In a school it is a safeguarding matter, never a prank, and KCSIE's definition of nudes and semi-nudes now includes images wholly generated by AI.
Nudification app	A tool that turns an ordinary photo into a fake nude image. Making or supplying one has been a criminal offence since 29 June 2026. KCSIE 2026 does not use the word; its rules on nudes and semi-nudes cover the images such tools make.
Automated decision-making (ADM)	A decision with a legal or similarly significant effect on a person, taken with no meaningful human involvement. Since 5 February 2026 UK GDPR Articles 22A to 22D set the rules: people must be told, be able to object, get a human to look again and contest the outcome.
Controller and processor	The controller decides why and how personal data is used; for pupil data that is the school or the trust. The processor handles it on the controller's instructions; most edtech suppliers, on paper at least. Accountability stays with the controller.
Lawful basis	The legal footing for using personal data. For a state school, academy trust or college doing its core work it is usually public task; legitimate interests is closed to public authorities for their public tasks, and consent is rarely the right answer.

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Special category data	Personal data with extra legal protection: health, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, biometrics and a few more. SEND and medical information about pupils is the kind schools hold most.
DPIA (data protection impact assessment)	A written assessment of the risks of a new use of personal data, done before it starts, required where the risk is likely to be high. AI plus pupils' data almost always meets that test.
DPA (data processing agreement)	The contract that binds a processor to the controller's instructions. It is where a supplier's promises about training, storage, deletion and breaches become enforceable.
DPO (data protection officer)	The data protection officer, which every maintained school, academy and college must have. The DPO advises, monitors and challenges; the DPO does not draft, approve and sign everything, and must not decide on their own advice.
UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025	The UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 are the data protection law schools work under. The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 amended them; its main changes, including the new automated decision-making rules, came into force on 5 February 2026.
ICO	The UK's data protection regulator. On 30 September 2026 the Information Commission replaced the Information Commissioner and kept the name ICO. It also owes a statutory code of practice on AI and automated decision-making, with no deadline set.
Children's Code	The ICO's Age Appropriate Design Code, for online services children are likely to use. It is why consumer AI tools carry age limits. It binds the providers; schools are not in scope, though the edtech they buy often is.
KCSIE	Keeping children safe in education, the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges in England. Revised every year; the 2026 edition applies from 1 September 2026, and schools must have regard to it.
DSL (designated safeguarding lead)	The designated safeguarding lead. AI-related harm, whether a fake image or a worrying conversation with a chatbot, goes to the DSL the same day, not to IT. The DSL also leads on online safety, including understanding the filtering and monitoring in place.
Filtering and monitoring	Filtering blocks harmful destinations; monitoring watches activity and raises alerts. KCSIE asks for an annual review of their effectiveness, and the DfE's separate filtering and monitoring standard asks every school to consider whether its solution can handle AI-generated content.
JCQ and Ofqual	The Joint Council for Qualifications publishes the regulations approved exam centres follow, including the rules on AI in assessed work. Ofqual regulates qualifications and assessments in England, and its guidance sets what awarding bodies may do with AI.
NEA and the declaration of authentication	Non-examined assessment is coursework, where most AI assessment risk lives. The declaration of authentication is the candidate's signed statement that the work is their own and any AI use is acknowledged; whether it has been signed decides whether a concern stays in the centre or goes to the awarding body.

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AI detector	Software that claims to spot AI-written text. JCQ does not require it, endorses none, and says a detector's output is one part of a holistic judgement; Ofqual says it is evidence, never the sole determinant. A score is never proof on its own.
Shadow AI	Staff using unapproved tools quietly, usually because the approved ones are worse or nobody has said what is allowed. The reason for rule one, and a policy problem before it is a people problem.
Approved Tools Register	The live list of every AI tool the school allows, who may use it, for what, with which data, and when it is next reviewed. Appendix A to the AI policy, and the answer to the question inspectors, parents and auditors ask first.
Product safety standards (DfE)	The DfE's "Generative AI: product safety standards", written for suppliers and useful to schools when judging a product. Renamed from expectations and extended in January 2026 to cover cognitive development, emotional dependence, mental health and manipulation.
Ofsted and AI	Ofsted's inspection information says inspectors do not directly evaluate AI tools and there is no expectation that a school uses AI. What they look at is the quality of decision-making about AI, which is what a policy and a register show.
Clause library	The fixed, human-written clauses the policy builder assembles into a school's AI policy. No AI writes any of it; the same answers always give the same policy, and every output carries the library's version number.