The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Monday 28th April 2025

Sent via email sec-of-state.ps@education.gov.uk

Dear Bridget,

GMB Report on Technology Standards and AI in Education

I recently raised a concern directly with you at a meeting of the Improving Education Together Board on 4th April in relation to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technology in education settings.

I explained that GMB recently surveyed members on this subject and survey responses indicated that there is a huge lack of knowledge in this area for support staff. I asked if we could give this some thought as to how we can work together on this going forward.

The board agreed that the IET secretariat would return with a proposal on how we can work together through IET on technology and AI.

I am pleased to share a copy of the report in advance of any discussions, so that you are briefed on the findings of the survey.

In respect to current Digital and Technology Standards for schools, it is evident that there is a distinct lack of knowledge of the standards. Even more concerning is that over half of our respondents involved in the procurement or governance of, or delivering training for, digital technology had not heard of the standards. It is of utmost importance to GMB that when new standards are introduced, consideration is given to how we can use IET as a vehicle to improve communication to ensure support staff are not left behind.

The DFE have given their support for the AI Opportunities Action Plan and recognise there will be both opportunities and challenges. Our survey report discusses the views of GMB support staff members on the opportunities and challenges technology and genAI present in educational settings.

Respondents expressed that technology and genAI could present opportunities around innovation, tools to aid teaching across a range of abilities, creating programmes for specific children's needs and reducing workload by utilising AI for routine admin tasks. However, reduction of workload must not come with a reduction of workforce, which is a legitimate concern for GMB members.

GMB members expressed multiple concerns about the use of genAI, ranging from cheating and plagiarism, privacy, data security and online safety to the loss of human touch in education. In particular, members' concerns about the dehumanisation of certain areas of education remind us that the increase of technology in schools may lead to a devaluing of the tangible aspects of education, like the social and emotional development that schools support, and the workers who do this. This work must not be forgotten in the drive to introduce new technologies and genAI into education.

Members are directly quoted throughout the report, highlighting these concerns and others.
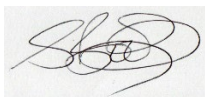
I have ensured that the Digital Strategy Division have a copy of our report for their awareness and consideration.

We ask you to respond to our members concerns and affirm that the government commits to working with GMB on its plans for genAI and technology in education, and prevent the common scenario described by the member below.

"Technology moves so fast that when new things are introduced or programmes/apps are upgraded we, TAs, are rarely if ever given time or training to understand how to use them. We muddle through, learning as we go. Consequently, we don't use this technology to its full potential because we don't truly know what it can do. Imagine what we could do with it if someone took the time to show us"

Yours sincerely

Stacey Booth

GMB National Officer (Schools)