

The Parent, the Learner and the Machine

A useful AI learning tool does not need to become a hardened software system. It needs a clear purpose, honest limitations, thoughtful teaching behaviour and a parent who remains involved.

Operating model

Parent leads. Learner engages. AI supports.

The framework supports a family learning arrangement. It does not replace a parent, teacher, school, therapist, safeguarding service or emergency service.

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Artificial intelligence is already part of teenage learning.

Young people use it to explain difficult ideas, revise for tests, improve writing and work through mathematical problems. Some use it openly with parents and teachers. Others use it privately, often without anyone knowing what they asked or whether the answer was reliable.

The question is no longer whether teenagers will use AI.

The question is whether parents can give that use a simple structure without pretending the structure is a technical lock.

A parent-led model

The strongest version of this idea is not a specialised safeguarding platform. It is a parent-led, trust-based learning framework.

The parent agrees the purpose and boundaries. The learner understands the arrangement and engages with the work. The AI supports the process.

Parent leads. Learner engages. AI supports.

That is the operating model.

Agreement before use

Parental involvement should not become hidden monitoring. Before the first session, the parent and learner should agree why the tool is being used, what subjects it may cover, that a parent review may be requested and what that review can contain.

The learner should know that a review is possible. The review should be read together where practical. Trust is part of the framework, not an inconvenience to be engineered away.

Five choices

The setup should remain simple. The parent chooses the learner's age, subject, activity, preferred AI teaching tone and approximate learning time.

The parent should not need to write a sophisticated prompt, estimate a formal attainment level or describe a psychological profile.

The AI can calibrate difficulty from a few questions and then adapt the teaching method. It may change the examples, pace and format. It should adapt the teaching, not its role.

A wrong answer should begin support, not end the thinking

One of the clearest lessons from classroom practice is that an incorrect answer should not always be followed immediately by correction.

The first response can be a scaffold: a hint, a guiding question, the first step of the method, a reminder of a rule or a smaller version of the problem.

Where the idea is naturally visual, the AI can use an array, number line, bar model, table, timeline or simple diagram. The purpose is not to reveal the answer in another form. It is to make the underlying structure visible so that the learner can try again.

If a learner answers thirty-six divided by four incorrectly, showing thirty-six objects arranged into four equal rows may help them see the relationship. The AI should then ask for another attempt before supplying the answer.

This small change turns correction into guided learning.

Prompt rules are guidance

A prompt can establish boundaries. It can tell the AI not to act as a friend, therapist or secret-keeper. It can tell it to avoid diagnosis, minimise personal information and pause when a serious safety concern appears.

But the prompt is not a digital deadbolt. A teenager can ignore it, challenge it or attempt to bypass it. A general-purpose AI may also apply instructions inconsistently.

That does not make the framework useless. It means the limitation must be stated honestly and the parent must remain responsible.

Account rules matter too

The young person must meet the chosen provider's age rules and have any required parental permission. A parent should not solve this by sharing account credentials. Families should use an account and supervision arrangement allowed by the provider.

Learning without hidden reporting

An adult summary should not automatically appear at the end of every learning session. Immediate reporting can make the interaction feel clinical and may discourage natural engagement.

Instead, the parent can request a review whenever it is useful: after one session, after three, after nine or at another agreed point. The parent types PARENT REVIEW, and the AI summarises the learning visible since the previous review.

The review may cover what was studied, what appeared confident, what remained difficult, what helped and whether anything in the visible conversation raised a wellbeing concern.

What a review cannot do

A general-purpose AI cannot guarantee a hidden running record, retain information across unrelated chats or notify a parent independently. Related learning sessions must remain in the same conversation if they are to be included. PARENT REVIEW is a family checkpoint, not authentication or an alerting system.

Voice, text and practical limits

A learner cannot complete genuine reading comprehension if the passage is not visible. The activity becomes listening comprehension instead.

Short verbal maths problems can work well by voice. Longer questions, writing tasks and detailed feedback usually require visible text. If an image, diagram or array cannot be displayed, the AI should fall back to a concise verbal or step-by-step explanation.

Where the AI must stop

The AI may respond naturally when a learner says the work is boring, too easy or too hard. It can change the format, offer a different example or stop. That is ordinary learning resistance.

Serious wellbeing and safeguarding concerns are different. If a learner mentions abuse, exploitation, grooming, sexual coercion, self-harm, suicide, serious bullying, immediate danger, fear of going home or a worrying secret involving an adult, the learning activity should pause.

The AI should not investigate, provide therapy or promise secrecy. It should direct the young person towards a trusted real-world adult immediately. It cannot contact the parent or emergency services. If somebody is in immediate danger in the UK, call 999. A young person can also contact Childline free on 0800 1111.

A rhythm, not a system

The framework is best understood as a family learning rhythm.

- The parent creates the plan.
- The learner understands the arrangement and uses the tool.
- The AI adapts the teaching and offers support before correction.
- The parent and learner return to a review when it is useful.

This is not legally enforced. It is not technically tamper-proof. It is not designed to replace a teacher or professional.

It is a practical way for an informed parent to guide a teenager's use of AI without surrendering responsibility to the machine.

Why this matters

AI can make explanation available at almost any hour, but availability is not the same as educational value. A machine that supplies answers too quickly may make a task easier while leaving the learner less able to complete it independently.

The parent-led model does not try to block AI or pretend that teenagers will wait for adults before using it. It gives families a modest structure: agree the purpose, protect the learner's privacy, make the machine scaffold thinking and return human judgement to the points where it matters.

The ambition is deliberately limited. The framework does not claim to make a general-purpose AI safe. It attempts to make family use more intentional, more transparent and more educationally useful.

Publication status

This is an experimental framework for informed parent-led use. It has not been independently certified as a safeguarding product, formally assessed as an educational intervention or approved by government.