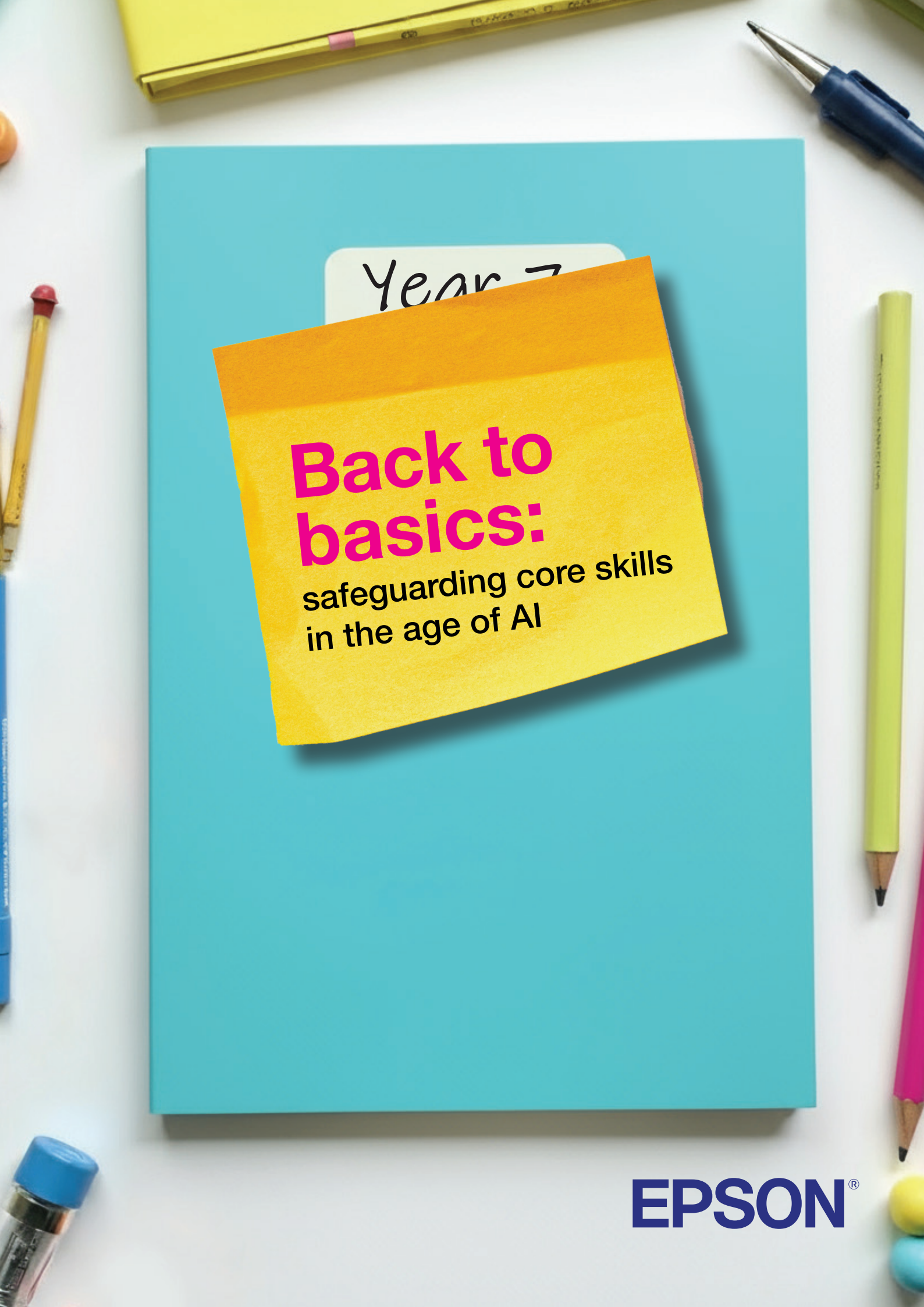

Year 7
Back to basics:
safeguarding core skills in the age of AI
EPSON



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"Artificial intelligence is a tool with great educational potential, provided it's used with sound pedagogical judgment. AI can help personalise learning, support teaching tasks, and open new ways of understanding and creating knowledge. However, people must remain at the centre, ensuring that technology always serves the holistic formation of our students."

Introduction

Artificial intelligence is now woven into almost every aspect of daily life – from how people work and communicate to how decisions are made in business and government. Education is no exception. Students today have access to AI-powered tools that can summarise texts, draft essays, or solve equations in seconds. And it's changing the way young people learn.

The question is whether that change is for the better. New research from across Europe (see methodology), commissioned by Epson, reveals that three-quarters of teachers **(75 per cent)** have noticed students often or sometimes use AI tools like ChatGPT to complete schoolwork or homework assignments. The figure climbs even higher among those teaching older students, with **86 per cent** of teachers working with 15+ age groups reporting AI use in assignments – the stage where independent thinking and exam performance matter most. While this may suggest digital fluency, most educators see it differently.

In fact, more than half **(58 per cent)** agree that when children use AI to complete schoolwork, it has a negative impact on learning. This report explores what's at stake: how AI is reshaping the classroom, where teachers see risks, and why many are calling for a renewed focus on the fundamentals of learning.

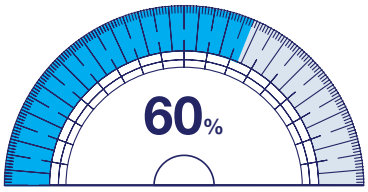
75%



of teachers have noticed students often or sometimes use AI tools like ChatGPT to complete schoolwork or homework assignments

When technology bypasses learning

Teachers across Europe are clear on the risk: when students lean too heavily on AI, it can erode the very skills education is meant to build. **Sixty per cent** of teachers agree that using AI to complete assignments allows learners to bypass their own education. The concern is even higher in some countries; in the UK, the figure climbs to **67 per cent**, while in Poland and the Netherlands, nearly seven out of ten teachers **(69 per cent)** share the same concern.



say that using AI to complete assignments allows learners to bypass their own education

However, the worry is not only that students are outsourcing tasks to machines, but that this reliance is eroding their ability to think and work independently. Nearly three-quarters **(73 per cent)** agree that an over-reliance on AI reduces students' ability to spot false information or think critically. Two-thirds **(65 per cent)** of teachers surveyed also agreed that it undermines knowledge retention and independent thinking, while more than half **(54 per cent)** agree it translates into poorer exam performance when students cannot rely on AI to support them.

The European Commission has warned that basic skills like literacy and numeracy are slipping, with too many pupils already underachieving

Teachers' concerns about AI align with a wider trend across Europe. The European Commission has warned that basic skills like literacy and numeracy are slipping, with too many pupils already underachieving.[1] Employers, meanwhile, are only set to demand more from the future workforce, with skills such as technological literacy and analytical thinking ranked among the top ten core skills needed for the future of jobs.[2]

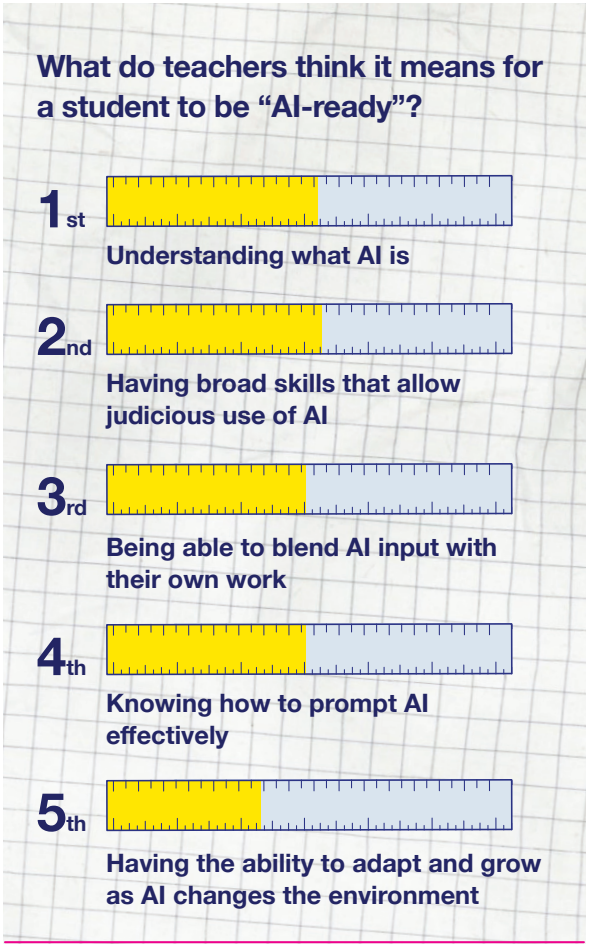


Figure 1

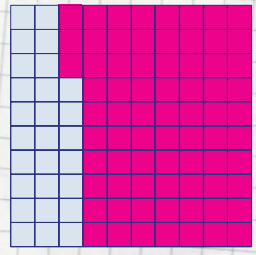
For teachers, this imbalance creates a paradox. Digital tools are ubiquitous and needed, but an over-reliance on them risks weakening the very foundations – literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking – that remain the bedrock of student success. It's why many teachers are, therefore, reframing what it means to be "AI-ready" (Figure 1). Their emphasis goes well beyond technical fluency: it's about judgment, adaptability, and the ability to blend AI with independent work – the very skills feared to be in decline.

72%

believe an over-reliance on AI reduces students' ability to spot false information or think critically

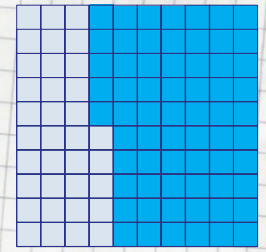


Teachers' concerns about AI's impact on learning



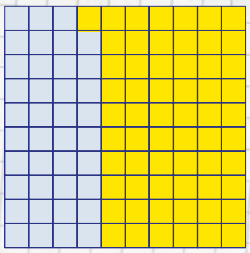
73%

agree that AI is reducing children's ability to spot fake information or think critically



65%

also agree it leads to poorer outcomes as learners struggle to retain knowledge and think for themselves



61%

believe it is diminishing the overall value seen in learning

Nearly three-quarters **(73 per cent)** agree that AI is reducing children's ability to spot fake information or think critically. Two-thirds **(65 per cent)** also agree it leads to poorer outcomes as learners struggle to retain knowledge and think for themselves, while **61 per cent** believe it is diminishing the overall value seen in learning. Taken together, these findings highlight a deeper unease: that AI risks narrowing, rather than strengthening, students' intellectual growth.

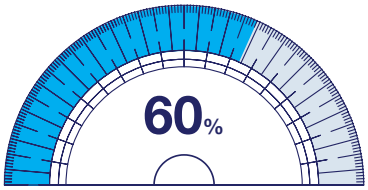
say traditional resources, like worksheets and textbooks, are being used less than they were five years ago

At the same time, teachers are aware of how the landscape in schools has shifted. Nearly two-thirds **(63 per cent)** agree that traditional resources, like worksheets and textbooks, are being used less than they were five years ago. For many, this decline is not a sign of irrelevance but a warning; the foundations of the necessary skills are being pushed aside just when they're needed most. It's this gap that prompts many to call for a stronger balance between digital tools and proven, paper-based methods.

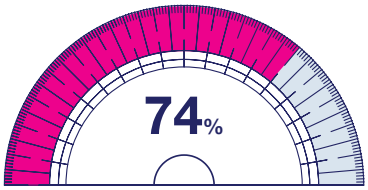


Back to basics with balance

Across Europe, teachers are not calling for technology to be abandoned, but they are clear that the basics must come first. **Sixty-one per cent** agree they want a greater focus on traditional resources such as worksheets and textbooks, and nearly three-quarters **(74 per cent)** believe these remain essential to ensuring the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy are firmly in place.



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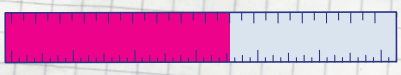
This study also found that **60 per cent** say students learn better on paper than on screens, and **66 per cent** argue that traditional methods provide the groundwork for life-long learning. Support for this is even stronger in France, where **77 per cent** of teachers agree, underlining just how strongly teachers see the value of traditional resources. Academic experts echo this view; Dr Lili Yu from Macquarie University's School of Psychological Sciences in Australia states, "Comprehension drops when we are using a screen to read information-dense text, like a textbook for study."[3]

65%

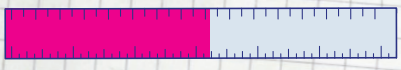


argue that traditional methods provide the groundwork for life-long learning

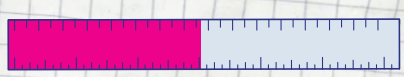
Teachers' views on traditional learning resources (worksheets, textbooks, etc.)



57% Students' handwriting has become worse



52% It's harder to get students to use pen and paper in a world of tech



49% Traditional learning materials help ensure basic literacy and numeracy are gained



38% Students find it hard to engage with traditional resources in a world of tech



25% Traditional materials help remove "always on" access to AI



14% Have seen a student try to swipe/enlarge a paper resource, forgetting it isn't a screen



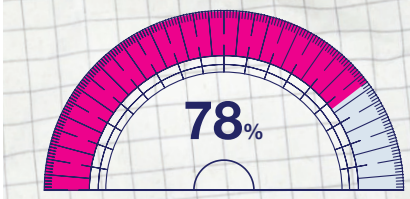
14% Students enjoy using traditional resources

Figure 2

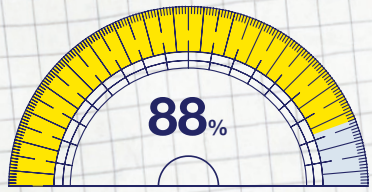


“Writing is still essential... Exams are still, on the whole, written, so students must continue to develop writing [skills].”

Martin Macdonald, Lead Practitioner, Geography, Longdean School, UK



agree that AI has an important role to play in education, but that it needs to be used with care



say there must be a balance between digital technologies and pen and paper

While schools are increasingly shifting to online homework models and digital devices, many educators still see hardcopy materials as a fail-safe to make sure technology doesn’t hinder core learning. Their wider views highlight both the challenges and the continued value of traditional resources, from concerns about handwriting decline to their role in securing basic literacy and numeracy (Figure 2).

The balance, then, is not about rejecting AI or other digital tools outright. In fact, **78 per cent** of teachers agree that AI has an important role to play in education, but that it needs to be used with care. An overwhelming **88 per cent** agree there must be a balance between digital technologies and pen and paper. The message is unambiguous: technology should complement, not replace, the methods that ensure students can think, write, and learn independently.



68%

believe policymakers should explicitly keep printers in mind when making decisions about how to improve educational outcomes

Securing skills for an AI future

AI is already reshaping classrooms, but when it becomes a shortcut, students lose the opportunity to build those core skills that underpin independent learning. Teachers are, therefore, clear that balance is needed: digital tools have their place, but only alongside traditional resources.

This is why practical tools matter. Printers, for example, make sure students can still access and engage with the hard-copy materials that reinforce these foundations. **Fifty-four per cent** of teachers even say printers are a vital part of education and essential for helping students learn from traditional materials **(41 per cent)**.

However, even where teachers are clear about the need for balance, many lack the means to deliver it. Almost a third say they do not have enough printers in their school to provide hard-copy resources whenever they're needed, with the problem even more prominent in Portugal **(37 per cent)** and Italy **(40 per cent)**.

This sense of constraint extends beyond schools. More than **68 per cent** of teachers agree policymakers should explicitly keep printers in mind when making decisions about how to improve educational outcomes.

For those on the frontlines of education, access to hard-copy resources is not about nostalgia or tradition – it's about ensuring that every student has the tools to master literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking before layering on emerging technologies.

Preparing students for an AI future isn't about teaching them how to use the latest tool or prompt effectively – it's about equipping them with the enduring skills needed to think, question, and adapt for themselves.

With those foundations secured, AI can then become an enabler rather than a crutch: supporting learning without replacing the human judgment and adaptability that will remain irreplaceable in the future.

To learn more about Epson's education solutions, please visit our website

Methodology

This research was commissioned by Epson Europe and carried out by FocalData. Fieldwork took place in September 2025, via Focaldata's proprietary technology platform, connected via API to online panels. The sample included 1,624 teachers from a range of school types and subject areas, covering both primary and secondary education from across France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

Results are reported as percentages, rounded to the nearest whole number, with country-level and demographic crossbreaks provided where relevant.

1 European Commission, New European Commission action plan on basic skills
2 World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025
3 Science X, Reading on screens instead of paper is a less effective way to absorb and retain information, suggests research

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