



Aka Kōrero - Hopuāhua

Touchpoint - Snapshot

2025



Te reo o ngā kura mō ngā kaupapa haumarū tuihono
me te whakamahi AI me āna whakaritenga

The voice of schools on topics of online safety and
AI usage and readiness

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Kōrero whakataki

Introduction

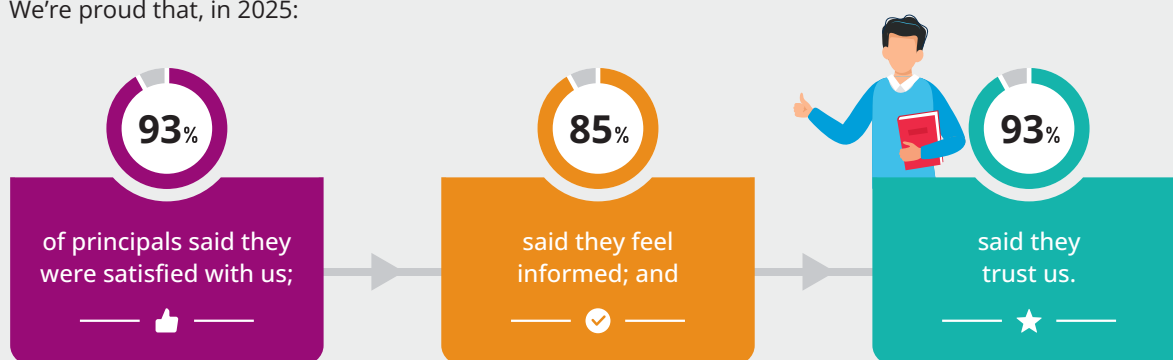


Touchpoint is N4L's yearly survey, sent to nearly 3,400 principals and IT leads at schools connected to the N4L Managed Network. The survey helps N4L understand what schools think about us and our products and services. It enables us to listen to our customers and drive constant improvement within our organisation, resulting in better customer service and support for schools and kura.

As part of the survey, Touchpoint also asks additional research questions to understand the wider context and provide unique insights into the thoughts and concerns of leaders at schools and kura across Aotearoa. This year's research themes were in the areas of online safety and AI readiness and usage.

Executive summary

We're proud that, in 2025:



Online safety

- 91% of schools are confident or very confident in their ability to keep students safe online.
- N4L's Internet Safety & Security Services is the most widely adopted self-reported online safety tool, mentioned by 88% of schools. The actual percentage of schools compliant with N4L's Internet Safety & Security Services recommended settings is 96%.
- The biggest concerns among schools about online safety are with students' outsmarting of systems, online behaviour out of school, emerging AI risks and educators' lack of visibility of student online activity.
- Online safety tools being adopted include N4L's products and services (e.g. Internet Safety & Security Services), educational platforms (e.g. Google Classroom), content management tools (e.g. YouTube Permissions) and classroom management/monitoring tools.

AI usage and readiness

- 55% of schools say they're confident and ready to use AI tools, while 45% say they're not confident and unready.
- The most common AI tools being used are ChatGPT (74%), Google Gemini (52%) and Microsoft Copilot (15%). Use of Microsoft Co-Pilot in secondary schools (40%) is particularly notable.
- Schools are using AI for lesson planning, research and material generation (76%), drafting school policies or correspondence (46%), and data analysis (35%).

Responses to the survey (26 May - 12 June 2025) came from 622 unique schools (up 32% from 473 in 2024), representing more than 25% of all eligible state and state-integrated schools currently in operation and connected to the N4L Managed Network. Responses came from principals, deputy principals or the school's nominated IT representative. 71% of schools have responded to the Touchpoint survey once or more between 2018-25.

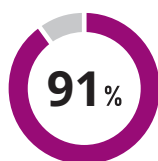
Please note: Based on standard statistical methods, we can say with 95% confidence that the true satisfaction level (93%) across all schools is within +/-2%, which is better than the typical 3-5% margin of error.

Haumaru tuihono

Online safety

Online safety has increasingly become part of the national conversation. Keeping ākonga safer online is a shared responsibility, involving families, schools, government, online platforms and technology providers. We wanted to understand how confident schools are feeling about online safety and what tools they're using, so we know how to better support them.

How confident are schools in their ability to keep students safe online?



of schools are **confident** or **very confident** in their ability to keep students **safe online**.

Principals and IT Leads both share this high level of confidence.

What online safety tools are schools using?

- Schools see online safety as a multi-faceted challenge and are layering diverse online safety tools from different providers for different, specific needs.
- N4L's products and services are foundational, with Internet Safety & Security Services the most widely self-reported online safety tool (88%).
- Other online safety tools include educational platforms (Google Classroom - 45%), content management tools (e.g. YouTube permissions - 34%) and third-party classroom management / monitoring tools.

What are the biggest concerns about online safety?

- The key challenges schools are grappling with are:
 - **Students outsmarting systems:** Students bypassing current online safety protections (e.g. VPNs, direct hacking), allowing access to inappropriate content. N4L's Web Filtering helps block known VPNs, which come under the Proxy Avoidance category within Internet Safety & Security Services recommended settings.
 - **Out-of-school impact:** Online behaviour outside of school, particularly on social media and gaming platforms, causing issues like cyberbullying and addiction.
 - **Lack of visibility for educators:** Schools would value better real-time tools to monitor student online activity in the classroom and on the school network.

Note: respondents are able to select multiple answers, hence percentages total up to more than 100%. Questions with open text responses can be open to interpretation and may be subject to change if we update our system or method of processing responses.

"N4L offers amazing support for all aspects related to the use of the internet at our school. N4L are great problem solvers and proactive in ensuring that we are always online."

Principal, Natone Park School

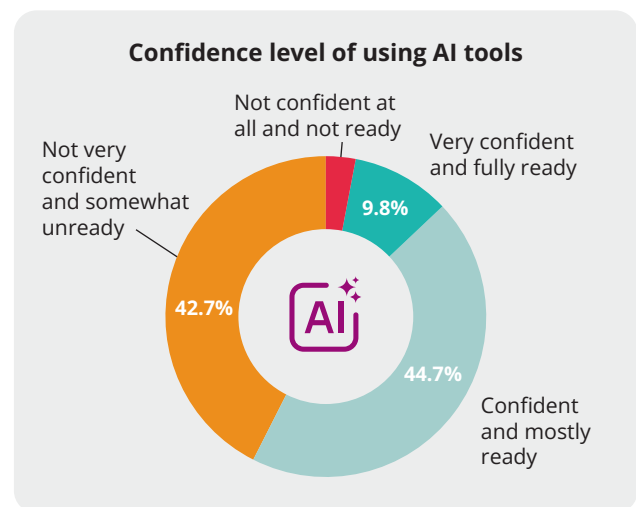
He whakamahi AI me āna whakaritenga

AI readiness and usage

With the rapid rise of AI tools like ChatGPT, schools are navigating an exciting but sometimes overwhelming new chapter. These technologies open doors to creativity, personalised learning, and powerful support for teachers, but also challenge schools to consider responsible use of AI. Realising these opportunities depends on having a connected digital ecosystem that enables schools to adopt these tools with confidence. This research helps N4L understand how schools are dealing with and preparing for the new world of AI, and how best to support them in this evolving landscape.

What level of confidence do schools have in using AI tools?

- A mixed bag of confidence with AI overall, with 55% of schools saying they're confident and ready, while 45% say they're not confident and not ready.
- Intermediate schools (60%) are mostly confident and ready, closely followed by secondary schools (59% confident/ready) and primary schools (55% confident/ready).



What tasks are schools using AI for?

- Overall, schools are using AI for lesson planning, research and material generation (70%), drafting school policies and correspondence (43%) and data analysis (33%).

What AI tools are schools using?

- Schools are adopting a multi-platform approach to AI, primarily using ChatGPT (73%), but also Google Gemini (52%) and Microsoft Copilot (15%). Secondary schools are more active in adopting a wider variety of AI tools beyond the market leader. Use of Microsoft Copilot in secondary schools (40%) is significantly higher than the overall result.



What do schools believe AI can help with the most?

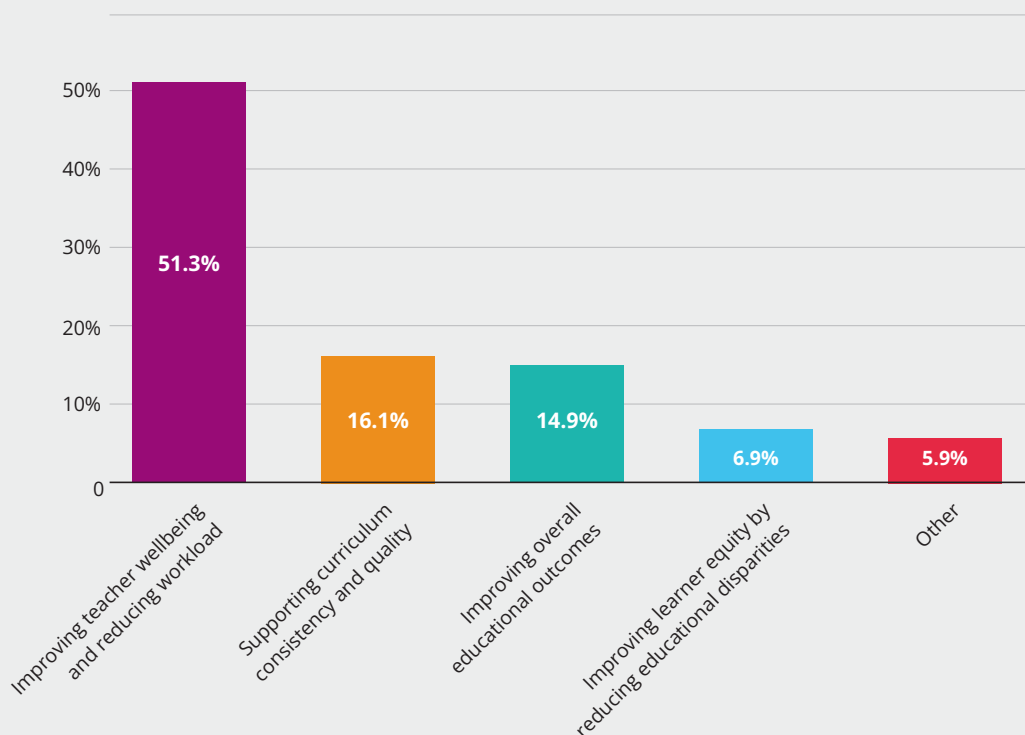
- The greatest potential benefit of AI flagged by schools is in improving teacher wellbeing and reducing workload (51%). Other areas of perceived value include supporting curriculum consistency (16%).

What are the most promising use cases for AI in schools?

- Schools primarily view the top use cases for AI as teacher-centric: “Tailoring lessons to individual student needs” (53%) and “Planning and sequencing lessons” (50%). This shows that schools view AI as a powerful tool for improving teaching efficiency.

- Schools nominate administrative processes highly (“Drafting school communications, reports & policy documents” - 49%), recognising the value in using AI to automate administrative and communication tasks, freeing up valuable staff time.
- Use cases that involve direct student interaction or feedback, such as “Marking work, giving personalised feedback...” (22%) and “Supporting students with subject choices...” (3%), are rated lower, suggesting a low level of confidence in the ability of AI to handle sensitive and complex tasks.

Which of the following do you think AI can help with the most?



Contact us

If you have any feedback or questions about this report, please contact reports@n4l.co.nz. Our dedicated Customer Support team is also available on 0800 532 764.



Mō mātou

About us



Network for Learning (N4L) delivers a wide range of managed internet, Wi-Fi and cybersecurity products and services, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, to schools and kura. The Crown company operates and secures one of the largest managed broadband internet networks in Aotearoa New Zealand, accounting for nearly 25% of the country's daytime business internet traffic. Their cybersafety solutions and security

expertise help around 905,000 tumuaki, kaiako and ākonga across 2,540 schools enjoy daily access to safer and more secure digital learning experiences. Working alongside its government, education and private sector technology partners, N4L helps connect, protect and support schools through award-winning customer service and smart, world-class technology solutions that are simply delivered. See www.n4l.co.nz



Connect

We provide fully-funded internet for all state and state-integrated schools and kura across the motu. N4L is currently upgrading our Managed Network to help futureproof digital learning and further enhance our ability to support schools effectively in their use of technology in the classroom.



Protect

From filtering, firewall and DDoS protection, to email security and segmented networks, our suite of safety and security solutions help keep school staff and ākonga safer online. Our dedicated security team proactively monitors networks and systems, providing an additional layer of protection for schools.



Support

N4L is very proud of our consistent track record of customer satisfaction, with satisfaction scores of over 90% since our inception. In 2025, 93% of principals said they were satisfied or highly satisfied with N4L. N4L has also listened to schools and developed more self-service options, which schools have previously said would make them feel more confident about cybersecurity. This includes MyN4L, a platform with smart and simple tools that provides them with more visibility and control of their online environments.