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Advancing
TEACHING & LEARNING

ADVANCE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Artificial Intelligence

AI IGNITES CREATIVE RESPONSES

Louise Templeton, Headteacher at Moorside Primary Academy, explains how staff are using Artificial Intelligence to support writing assessment across all age ranges to improve pupil outcomes and reduce teacher workload.

WHAT IS OLEX AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Olex is an artificial intelligence system that supports the marking and assessment of writing. It is structured in several parts:

- Olex Reader handwriting recognition;
- Olex.AI robust and accurate feedback linked to a range of mark schemes and curriculums e.g. National Curriculum outcomes, Primary Teacher Assessment Frameworks, GCSE mark schemes and specific teacher generated success criteria;
- Olex.AI EAL translation tools;
- Olex.AI whole class feedback and next steps planning to support teachers;
- The Imaginator which produces high quality images and story books to drive motivation.



Olex AI provides accurate and robust marking together with personalised feedback to support children in developing their writing. Feedback is provided in the form of What Went Well (WWW) and Even Better If (EBI).

Olex works by reviewing work against a set of benchmarks or rubrics. It then looks for specific criteria within the children's writing and identifies personalised examples of what children have done well, linked to the chosen criteria.

As a school we heard about Olex when some of the ALP team visited the BETT Conference in 2024. We had an initial meeting with the company and then undertook a trial with the Year 5 children in Moorside Primary Academy.

HOW DID WE IMPLEMENT THIS IN OUR SCHOOL?

As a school we initially set up a trial for Year 5 across the Summer term. Our first issue was infrastructure, and we worked with the ALP IT team to support this. Essentially, all children need to access all elements of Olex via the internet as it is a web-based platform.

As we were looking for improvements in pupil outcomes, we asked staff to collect baseline data in terms of writing and also collected staff and pupil voice linked to children's attitudes to writing and staff workload. Staff accessed CPD in terms of the programme and children's log-ins were created. Staff also met with a school from Yorkshire who were already using the programme to learn from their experiences.

"I really love using Olex. It's really easy to use and it helps make my writing brilliant, because I don't need to focus on my handwriting, I can concentrate on my grammar and ideas and just write. Now I can make a fantastic story with no issues. The imaginator makes my writing come alive and I feel proud when I see the image I have created."

Sophia S., Year 5 pupil



The programme is very simple to use in terms of setting up assignments for children and staff, and children quickly became proficient in using the it. We initially held weekly meetings with the company, and they listened and were very responsive to feedback. We evaluated work in books and had weekly discussions with children and staff to ensure that it was meeting our needs.

We initially went down the route of children typing in their work although there is a handwriting recognition tool which turns the children's written work into text and allows for editing and feedback in the same way. Children engaged fully with the Imaginator images which provided motivation to write. Images also developed and improved as children's writing was edited, linked to feedback.

IMPACT ON LEARNING

The use of Olex has resulted in many benefits for pupils:

- Increased productivity in lessons and a greater amount of quality work as children were able to edit and redraft within a session. Olex provides personalised quality feedback for a whole class within around 2 minutes. It also provides class areas for improvement and a lesson plan to address these.
- Children's independence improved as they accessed feedback independently and acted on this.
- We saw an increase in motivation to write and a passion for writing developed in reluctant writers, especially boys, linked to the use of the Imaginator.
- 100% of children made expected or better progress with 75% of children making good or better progress from Autumn term data to the end of Summer term data in writing.

IMPACT ON STAFF

- Decreased teacher workload linked to less time spent marking.
- Support for ECT's in terms of making judgements linked to writing as Olex benchmarks the writing against clear frameworks and can support with judgements.
- Support for staff in terms of next steps and moving writing forward linked to whole class feedback and support with lesson planning.

We have recently undertaken an ALP-wide writing task linked to Year 6, where we used the same stimulus and mark scheme to provide clear benchmarked data across all our primaries for year 6. The plan is now to continue to use this into the summer across both Year 5 and 6 across all ALP primary schools.

"Olex AI provides accurate and robust marking together with personalised feedback to support children in developing their writing."

"Using Olex and the Imaginator has given the children the drive to improve their vocabulary and the overall quality of their work. They have shown an eagerness to see their Imaginator images change after each redraft and are therefore seeking out new, richer vocabulary and showing greater attention to detail within their writing."

Hollie McMullan, Year 5 teacher

TRANSFORMING SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHING WITH AI

Michelle Archbold, Strategic Lead for English, shares the strategy for implementing Olex.AI across our Secondary schools.



Our journey into the world of AI began in 2024, when ALP was approached to take part in a trial with an exciting, innovative company called Olex. Olex.AI is a Bett award-winning platform aiming to transform the way schools, teachers, and students approach English writing, feedback and assessment.

In June 2024, we dipped our toes into the uncharted waters with a small trial of three secondary schools who contributed to a sample of Year 10 mock exam papers to be marked by AI. We sent our papers off to Olex with minimal expectation of what would return. When we met to review the feedback from Olex, there was an admitted air of scepticism in the room as we waited to see if our jobs would be secure for another day or whether AI had made us redundant overnight! What was returned to us was accurate, robust and personalised feedback, specific to GCSE criteria, as well as a (extremely accurate) notional level on the mark scheme. The overwhelming consensus was that AI had provided these students with detailed feedback which would take a class teacher hours to produce: time we just simply do not have to spare.

> "What we quickly realised is that Olex could bring a whole new level of innovation and creativity to our departments."

What we did agree, however, was that the role of the class teacher is crucial when using AI. AI is certainly not perfect and will not replace the highly skilled eye of an English teacher who knows the intricacies and nuances of the GCSE mark schemes, as well as knowing their students as only a human could. What we quickly realised is that Olex could bring a whole new level of innovation and creativity to our departments, speeding up the time-consuming processes English teachers are all too familiar with, and allowing us the freedom to adapt and develop our teaching quicker and more accurately than ever before.

In January 2025, we extended the reach of Olex to all Year 7 and 10 students across the Trust. Born out of this exciting development, is an established network of AI leads in all schools who are trialling and implementing Olex.AI. Our collective goal is simple: to provide our students with the highest quality feedback to improve their reading and writing skills, across all key stages. Our long-term vision for Olex.AI is that it will be used in all schools to improve the consistency and accuracy of both KS3 and KS4 English marking, alongside the critical eye of the classroom teacher who will then be able to use Olex's array of features (such as whole class feedback, lesson plans, model answers and personalised story books) to feedback, plan and adapt their next steps in order to facilitate rapid progress for all.

Currently, our schools are in a very exciting experimentation phase and there has been some wonderful – and at times necessarily critical – feedback given to the team at Olex who are constantly on hand to support our schools and enhance their products. Every school is on their own journey with AI, with some at the forefront of development, and even contributing to product design with the Olex team.

It is an extremely exciting time for our Secondary English departments as we witness the endless possibilities of AI unfold right before our eyes; and even better, ALP is at the heart of that journey.

AI: A FRIEND OR FOE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Laura Anderson, Head of English, and *Robert Kenmure*, Lead Practitioner at Durham Academy, explain the practicalities of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom.

At Durham Academy, our staff (and students) are on a transformational journey in how we assess English writing, provide feedback, and use AI-powered tools like Olex.AI to improve learning outcomes.

Olex.AI is an educational platform that saves time on marking and feedback, allowing teachers to focus on what truly matters – providing students with the guidance and resources they need to make progress. The platform delivers feedback tailored to age-related performance levels.

Year 7 and Year 10 students can see their work come to life with illustrated storybooks and receive accurate, high-quality, personalised feedback, fostering rapid progress. The software then collates responses and generates lesson plans to address misconceptions and areas of improvement with the highest impact.

"The time saved by Olex.AI in generating specific, targeted exercises and feedback has been transformative in terms of reducing workload."

HOW ARE WE USING IT IN ENGLISH AT DURHAM ACADEMY?

The most significant advantage of using Olex.AI in the English classroom is its ability to automatically generate personalised future learning. In a single classroom, students who struggle with areas such as grammar, sentence variety, or figurative language receive feedback targeted specifically at their knowledge gaps. Feedback lessons at Durham Academy are bespoke for each student. The feedback is timely and actionable, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to progress and develop their skills.



The time saved by Olex.AI in generating specific, targeted exercises and feedback has been transformative in terms of reducing workload. Teachers now have more time to plan and deliver adapted lessons focused on the gaps identified by Olex.AI. A full-class set of GCSE responses can be marked, with feedback generated, in no more than five minutes.

We use the data provided to identify weaknesses and tailor assignments that challenge students at the right level – something that can be difficult when students have varying targets and needs for support. This approach not only benefits students who are struggling, but also provides enrichment for those requiring additional stretch and challenge.

The Imaginator feature of the software, which generates an AI image based on student input, has proven to be far more than a tokenistic tool. It has allowed students to self-reflect on their writing, helping them determine if it matches their intended message and is clear. If not, they can edit accordingly. Students feel that this is one of the most impactful elements of the feedback. At a glance, they can visually see how to improve their written communication.

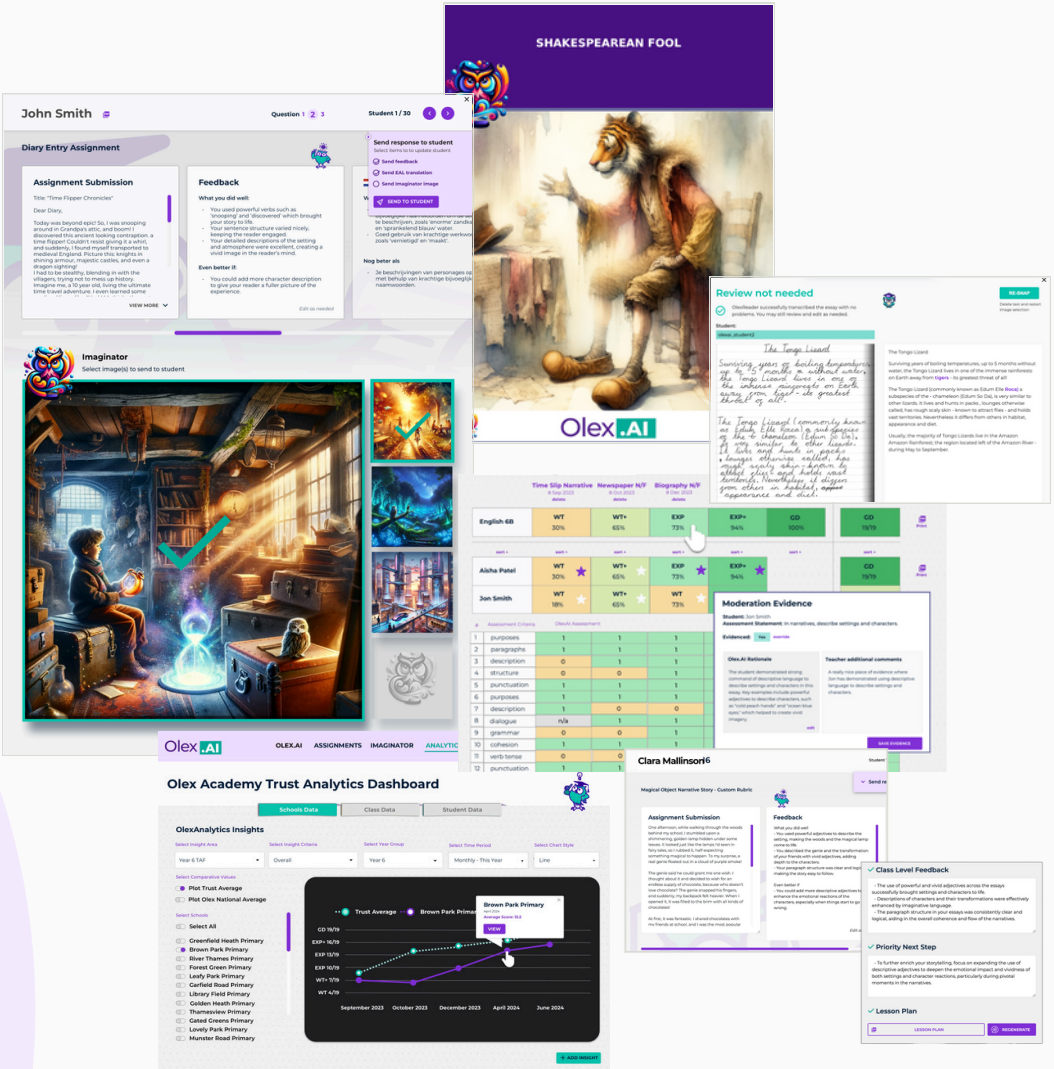
Department meetings are now heavily influenced by AI, as it has become a hot topic of discussion. We've taken time to standardise the use of AI, leveraging the expertise within the department to moderate the levels and targets set by the system. The accuracy of the AI has been startlingly precise.

AI has not only been a lifesaver in terms of marking and planning, but it is also used as a method of continuous professional development (CPD). With teaching experience ranging from decades to just a few months, the AI has become a valuable tool for Early Career Teachers (ECTs) to deepen their knowledge of the KS4 mark schemes and identify key areas for student development.

At Durham Academy, we are still at the beginning of our Olex.AI journey, but the benefits we've seen in student engagement and teacher workload have been revolutionary.

Olex.AI

Transforming English Teaching and Assessment With AI





To find out more about Olex.AI visit olex.ai or scan the QR code.