



ESHER CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL  
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Headteacher : Mr A King

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Dear Families,

**Re: Blackout Mobile App**

As a school, our vision drives everything we do to support the growth, wellbeing and success of every young person. As you may be aware, the impact of social media through mobile phone use among children is something we take extremely seriously.

Following careful consideration, we are excited to announce that we will be piloting a new mobile phone initiative in partnership with [Blackout Technologies](#) across the whole school.

**What is Blackout?**

Blackout is an innovative mobile app that helps students manage their phone use during the school day. It works by blocking access to distracting apps (such as social media, games and web browsers) while keeping essential services (calls, SMS, maps, calendars) available. It also disables cameras and recording features during school hours. The app is set to activate for the hours of the school day.

This ensures that students can remain focused on their learning and relationships while at school. If urgent contact is required with your child, please always phone the school office to do so.

The app does not have access to files, information, location details or personal information. The education version of the app also does not track location. We have completed extensive research into possible solutions and believe this is a proactive step to help our students. We are excited to work with Blackout as one of their first seven schools in the UK.

**When?**

The pilot will begin after the May half-term for Year 7 & 8, with all other years starting in September. To give the pilot a fair trial we want every student to get involved by downloading the app. We are delighted to be one of the first seven schools in the UK to use this app and the very first with a plan to roll it out across the whole school. We will review this pilot in the Spring Term 2026.

**Why are we launching this pilot?**

We know that smartphones have become a huge part of young people's lives and while technology brings many benefits, research including *The Anxious Generation* and recent studies, shows that increased smartphone usage is linked to anxiety, reduced focus and disrupted sleep.

We believe smartphones are a major distraction. Banning them helps students concentrate, reduces hours of wasted time, dramatically improves academic performance and increases enthusiasm for extra-curricular activities.

Research conclusively proves smartphone use in school-age children severely affects mental health, contributing to anxiety, depression, stress, sleep deprivation, suicide, unemployment, gaming addiction, body dysmorphia and social isolationism.

Although mobile phone use is not currently a major issue within school, we believe this pilot is a proactive step to help our students build healthier digital habits, improve focus in lessons and support their overall wellbeing.

### **Why not Smart Phone Free or a total ban?**

A complete smart phone ban is a big step and at the moment it would be wrong for us as a school to make such a change after the new Year 7 parents have chosen schools. Another factor is the need for a smart device to access the best bus fares on some of our providers. We are working with them to have other options available but at present they have not confirmed this. It is an option we are exploring for future intakes. The Blackout app offers the best of both worlds: allowing students to keep their phones for the essentials but limiting the distracting elements during school hours.

### **Next Steps**

We understand that parents will have concerns and questions about this pilot roll-out and so we will be hosting a parent webinar on Tuesday 3 June at 6pm, a link to which will be sent via Edulink. On Wednesday 4 June we will have dedicated downloading time at school for Year 7 and Year 8, with support from tutors and Wi-Fi available for a ten-minute period to help downloading. The FAQs for the app are available on [our website here](#).

We will be gathering feedback throughout the trial from students, parents and staff to help us assess the impact and decide on next steps. Alongside this, we will be adjusting our behaviour policy, with those who do not use the app facing escalated consequences. This will be shared on Tuesday 3 June.

We are excited about the potential of this initiative to help our students to be more focused and resilient, and to develop healthy habits for the future.

Yours faithfully



Andy King  
Headteacher