

# Blackout Education: Impact Assessment Report - December 25

## About This Document

This impact assessment has been prepared to provide a clear, concise and evidence-led overview of Blackout's early implementation across partner schools. Designed with an understanding of the depth and rigour often required in central and local government assessments, this document brings together the key data, insights and risks in a format that is detailed enough to inform decision-making, yet concise enough not to demand extensive time to interpret. Drawing on experience preparing similar assessments for the DfE and local authorities, the aim here is to provide a balanced and accessible picture of progress to date, highlighting both emerging strengths and the areas that will require continued embedding to achieve sustained impact.

We are happy to adapt this assessment to meet the needs of foundations, philanthropists and ESG partners and welcome any feedback or comments. The data and analysis will continue to be updated termly as partner schools progress through implementation, ensuring that impact towards shared goals is monitored, evaluated and strengthened as Blackout continues to make a positive difference.

## Contents:

1. **Blackout Impact Assessment Overview**
  - 1.1 Scope of Schools Included
  - 1.2 Summary of Purpose
    - 1.2.1 Context and Challenge
    - 1.2.2 Purpose of Blackout
    - 1.2.3 How Blackout Works
    - 1.2.4 Purpose of this Assessment
    - 1.2.5 Scope and Variation
2. **Methodology**
  - 2.1 Illustrative Data
  - 2.2 Contextual Factors
3. **An Overview of the Impact Areas**
  - 3.1 Adoption & Registration
  - 3.2 Focus & Behaviour
  - 3.3 Compliance & Device Health
  - 3.4 Engagement, Communication & Cultural Change
4. **SMART Targets by Impact Area**
  - 4.1 Adoption & Registration
  - 4.2 Focus & Behaviour
  - 4.3 Compliance & Device Health
  - 4.4 Engagement, Communication & Cultural Change
5. **Summary Judgement**
  - 5.1 Key Impacts of Blackout
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation**
  - 6.1 Half-termly Monitoring
  - 6.2 Quarterly (Termly) Evaluation
7. **Risks, Mitigation and Alternatives**
  - 7.1 Key Risks and Mitigations
  - 7.2 Alternatives and Complementary Approaches the Mitigate Risks
8. **Overall Assessment**
9. **Appendix: Qualitative Feedback from Schools, Staff and Parents**

# 1. Blackout Impact Assessment Overview

## Scope of Schools Included

School Examples A–I represent schools participating in a 3-month pilot across 1–3 year groups, each at different stages of onboarding.

## 1. Summary of Purpose

### 1. Context and challenge.

Schools are navigating a rapidly shifting digital landscape where smartphones shape attention, behaviour, relationships and wellbeing. Traditional hand-in systems and blanket bans offer simplicity on the surface but rarely create the lasting behaviour change that young people actually need. Much of the challenge sits in the design of the technology itself: addictive platforms, constant notifications and blurred home–school boundaries. As School H put it: *“Using a digital solution for a digital problem feels like the right way forward for us.”*

### 2. Purpose of Blackout.

Blackout provides a structured, education-led approach that helps schools manage devices during the school day while still allowing pupils to learn how to use their phones responsibly. It is not a quick fix, and it requires time, consistency and staff resources to embed well. But it offers a balanced alternative to bans by supporting focus in classrooms, reducing digital distractions and building a culture where pupils understand the “why” behind healthier device habits.

### 3. How does Blackout work?

Blackout places pupils’ existing smartphones into a restricted school-day mode that blocks social media, entertainment and other high-distraction apps, while keeping essential functions such as emergency calls and SMS available. The app does not track location, store personal data or access any content on a pupil’s phone. It is designed to be privacy-first, using only the minimum information needed to support a school’s existing phone policy and help pupils manage their devices responsibly.

### 4. Purpose of this assessment.

This Impact Assessment reflects the mixed and emerging progress across partner schools. It draws on dashboard data, behaviour reporting, staff and pupil feedback, and in-person visits to understand where impact is strongest and where routines are still developing.

## 5. Scope and variation.

Schools are at different stages of onboarding and operate with varied staffing capacity, structures and levels of digital readiness. Progress therefore differs across settings. This assessment highlights where strong routines, consistent leadership and clear structures are driving meaningful change, and where further embedding is needed to achieve sustainable impact.

## 2. Methodology

This impact assessment draws on a blend of quantitative and qualitative data gathered across the term. Schools provide weekly updates through check-in calls, alongside dashboard data on registration, device health and compliance. Behaviour and safeguarding logs are reviewed where available to track changes in phone-related incidents. Insights are supplemented by in-person visits, in-school observations and informal user research with pupils to understand lived experience and cultural impact. This assessment will continue to be updated as new data, feedback and observations are collected.





### Illustrative Data

- Registration rates across pilot schools range from medium to high uptake in most cohorts to full cohort registration in more structured rollouts, including pupils with brick phones or no-phone arrangements where this meets the school's policy expectations.
- Several schools have shown marked reductions in confiscations when compared with the same period last year.
- Schools usually experience a brief settling period with some disabling events, after which routines embed and the numbers remain low.

### Contextual Factors

The impact seen in each school is influenced by several contextual variables. Schools are at different stages of onboarding, with some still embedding routines while others have run full-term pilots with a range of 4-12 weeks onboarding depending on school's needs. Registration rates may be affected by pupils using brick phones or choosing no phone e.g. School C have 87% registered for the Blackout option. Behavioural data is shaped by wider school systems, staffing capacity and the consistency of daily checks, e.g. schools averaging 2-5 disabling events, post settling period. Cultural change also progresses at different speeds depending on communication, parental engagement and the strength of staff ownership. These factors are taken into account when interpreting outcomes and comparing progress across schools.

### 3. An Overview of the Impact Areas

Impact Area	Benchmark	What "Good" Looks Like	School Data
<b>1. Adoption &amp; Registration</b>   <b>Developing</b>	>65% registered, with 100% following school phone policy e.g., brick phone's or hand their phone in.	Strong week-on-week growth in first month; clear onboarding routines; high compliance across target year groups.	<b>School B:</b> Years 8–9 all registered; strong onboarding across cohorts. <b>School C:</b> >87% of students are registered, the rest of the pupils have brick phone's or hand their phones in. <b>School A:</b> >70% registered, with Blackout and the rest of pupils have brick phone's or hand their phones in.
<b>2. Focus &amp; Behaviour</b>   <b>Developing strongly</b>	>50% reduction in phone-related incidents	Fewer confiscations; reduced corridor wandering; decreased "toilet breaks" linked to phones; improved lesson engagement.	<b>School D:</b> 8–10 confiscations per lunch duty reduced to zero. <b>School E:</b> as of 2/12/25 confiscations 55 vs 195 last year; last year 40 repeat offenders vs 3 this year; fewer toilet-break excuses. <b>School B:</b> 1 confiscation across Y8–9 (on Blackout) vs 7 in Y11 (not on Blackout). <b>School I:</b> Saw a drop in notifications from 90-120 to 7-10 a day.
<b>3. Compliance &amp; Device Health</b>   <b>Developing</b>	<7% disable the app during the school day.	High proportion of healthy devices; minimal number of students disabling the app during the day. Sanctions lists monitored daily then weekly; follow-up embedded.	<b>School A:</b> On average <2 students disable their phones during the school day. <b>School B:</b> A continual decrease in the number of disables, for now <4 student disables daily.
<b>4. Engagement, Communication &amp; Cultural Change</b>   <b>Developing</b>	Positive staff and pupil sentiment	Visible internal communication; consistent routines; staff champion leading implementation; pupils articulate the "why".	<b>School C:</b> Planning Year 8 Digital Detox Day to deepen culture change. <b>School E:</b> No in school safeguarding incidents using photos or video in Term 1. <b>School C &amp; A:</b> Planning a Digital Detox day to deepen culture change. <b>School B:</b> Strong tutor engagement; embedded routines; calm corridors. <b>School F:</b> David Costen reported a smooth inspection where Blackout Tech was featured. Showing how Blackout is becoming implemented as part of school-wide policy.

## **4. SMART Targets by Impact Area**

To support consistent progress across partner schools and provide clear indicators of what we expect to see as routines embed, the following SMART targets have been set for each impact area. These targets align with the benchmarks and examples outlined in the table above.

### **1. Adoption & Registration**

SMART Target 1:

Increase registrations in pilot year groups to at least 65% within six weeks, accounting for brick/no-phone pupils in line with school policy.

SMART Target 2:

Ensure any new pupil joining the pilot year group is onboarded and fully registered within five school days.

### **2. Focus & Behaviour**

SMART Target 1:

Reduce phone-related incidents by 50% by the end of the first term, measured against the same period in the previous year.

SMART Target 2:

Demonstrate improved overall behaviour and school readiness through observable reductions in phone-related behaviours during structured and unstructured times, including break, lunch, corridors and toilet visits, over the first half term, evidenced through behaviour logs or staff observations.

### **3. Compliance & Device Health**

SMART Target 1:

Reduce daily disabling events to below 7% of active devices within eight weeks of rollout.

SMART Target 2:

Ensure daily dashboard checks are completed on at least 80% of school days, increasing as more staff (e.g. tutors) gain access to the system.

#### **4. Engagement, Communication & Cultural Change**

SMART Target 1:

Deliver one digital wellbeing activity per term, such as an assembly, Digital Detox Day, pupil survey or tutor-time resource.

SMART Target 2:

Collect staff and pupil feedback once per term through in-school visit days, using this to track increases in positive sentiment or understanding of the purpose behind Blackout.

These targets establish a realistic and measurable pathway for schools to build on early progress and move towards more consistent, sustainable impact.

## 5. Summary Judgement

Across the case-study schools, implementation is showing clear and consistent positive impact, with all core indicators moving in the right direction. Behavioural change is emerging strongly, compliance is improving across most schools, and early cultural shifts are evident. While schools sit at different stages of onboarding, the overall trajectory is positive and aligns well with what we expect from effective rollout.

**Overall Impact:** *Promising and increasingly consistent development across schools, with progress closely tied to implementation consistency.*

### Key Impacts of Blackout

Across all case-study schools, Blackout is contributing to a calmer, more predictable, and less phone-dominated school environment. The most consistent impact reported so far is the reduction in phone-related incidents, for example School D reduced lunchtime confiscations from 8–10 per duty to zero. Schools that previously experienced daily confiscations are now reporting only occasional issues, or in some cases none at all. For instance, School B recorded one confiscation across Years 8–9 (using Blackout) compared with seven in Year 11 (not using Blackout). This improvement is especially visible during unstructured times such as break, lunch and movement between lessons, where phones were previously most difficult to control. School I also tracked a fall in pupil notifications from an average of 90–120 per day to just 7–10 after Blackout was introduced, with staff reporting that pupils were noticeably more present and engaged in socialising with one another during social times.

Staff across different contexts are also noticing steadier routines and fewer disruptions linked to device use throughout the school day. Some schools have observed a decline in repeat offenders, for example School E reported 40 repeat offenders last year compared with 3 this year (2/12/25), and a clearer understanding among pupils of when and how they should be managing their devices. These shifts suggest emerging changes in habits and expectations rather than temporary compliance.

These behavioural improvements align with stronger device compliance. As more pupils become properly registered and the number of Healthy devices rises, schools are seeing fewer unreachable or unblockable devices, with steady week-on-week improvement as Blackout becomes part of the daily routine. Daily checks remain an important part of maintaining consistency, but with far fewer issues appearing on the dashboard, follow-up becomes significantly more manageable and less time-consuming. This allows staff to keep routines tight without the process becoming burdensome.

Culturally, Blackout is helping to reinforce a consistent whole-school message around digital wellbeing and responsible device use. Where communication has been clear and a staff champion has guided the rollout, pupils are more able to explain the purpose behind Blackout and recognise its link to safety, wellbeing and healthier digital habits. For example, the School B pupil survey showed strong sentiment around understanding the 'why' and broad support for the use of Blackout. Several schools are now extending this work through assemblies, Digital Detox Days and pupil surveys to build a wider programme of education and



reflection. Progress varies between schools, but the strongest and most consistent improvements are evident where routines are embedded and the recommended structure has been followed closely. School F, for example, highlighted Blackout in their inspection as part of their whole-school routines.

Overall, the evidence shows that Blackout is most impactful when schools follow the recommended onboarding model: steady early planning, clear expectations and consistent follow-up. When these foundations are in place, the shift in behaviour is not only measurable but sustained, leading to calmer social spaces, fewer incidents and a more controlled environment across the school. We recognise that this work takes time and resources, which is why our approach is centred on fully supporting schools and all involved stakeholders, ensuring the process feels manageable, achievable and aligned with wider priorities.

## **6. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will ensure that progress is captured accurately, challenges are identified early and support can be adapted to meet each school's needs. The impact assessment will be updated termly, with a more detailed review completed quarterly to track changes over time.

### **Half Termly Monitoring**

- Review dashboard data across all partner schools, including registration, Healthy devices, disabling events and Unreachables.
- Analyse behaviour and safeguarding logs to assess changes in phone-related incidents during lessons, transitions and unstructured times.
- Gather staff and pupil feedback during in-school visit days to understand lived experience, sentiment and emerging cultural shifts.
- Evaluate fidelity to onboarding routines, including daily checks, tutor engagement and consistency of staff expectations.
- Update the SMART targets, progress indicators and contextual notes based on new data.

### **Quarterly (Termly) Evaluation**

- Compare term-on-term progress against benchmarks and "What Good Looks Like" indicators.
- Identify patterns across schools that reflect strengths, risks or common implementation barriers.
- Update the risk log and support plans, highlighting schools requiring additional onsite support, training or leadership reinforcement.
- Produce a quarterly summary report to share with school leadership teams, highlighting impact, areas for focus and recommended next steps.
- Feed insights back into product development, resources, and digital wellbeing materials to strengthen future rollout.

This monitoring cycle ensures that Blackout remains responsive, evidence-led and grounded in the realities of school life, supporting schools to embed healthier digital habits and sustain improved behaviour over time.

## 7. Risks, Mitigation and Alternatives

Effective implementation of Blackout depends on consistent routines, clear expectations and strong staff ownership. Progress inevitably varies between schools, and several predictable risks can slow or limit impact. The following risks, mitigations and alternative approaches illustrate how Blackout supports schools to maintain momentum, strengthen consistency and embed sustainable practice, while ensuring that any challenges are identified and addressed promptly.

### Key Risks and Mitigations

#### 1. Inconsistent Daily Checks

**Risk:** Daily dashboard checks are not completed regularly, often due to staff illness, limited capacity or wider pressures within school systems. This can lead to missed issues and weaker routines and typically reflects workload rather than lack of willingness.

**Mitigation:** Provide clear tutor guidance, ensure more staff have dashboard access, simplify expectations where possible, and reinforce routines through weekly check-in calls. Where capacity is stretched, identify alternative staff who can support checks, adjust routines to make them manageable, and offer short staff training sessions to increase confidence.

#### 2. Disabling Events

**Risk:** Some pupils intentionally disable the app during the school day, which goes against school phone policy and the expectations for Blackout. While occasional disabling may be valid (e.g. medical appointments or teacher-approved exceptions), repeated disabling is typically a behaviour issue and undermines the reliability of monitoring.

**Mitigation:** A daily CSV report identifies pupils who have disabled the app. Schools should review this in line with their behaviour policy, with form tutors or Heads of Year managing day-to-day follow-up. Persistent or concerning patterns should be escalated to the safeguarding lead. Weekly check-in calls support schools to monitor trends, reinforce expectations, and work with parents where appropriate.

#### 3. Unreachable Devices

**Risk:** Devices can appear as unreachable, often because the Blackout app has entered deep sleep mode or has not been opened recently.

This is usually a routine issue rather than deliberate non-compliance, but it can reduce monitoring accuracy and make it harder to identify pupils who may have deleted the app.

**Mitigation:** Embed a simple morning routine where pupils open the Blackout app at the start of the day. Schools are encouraged to build this into arrival routines or morning tutor time. Provide pupils with clear reminders and simple troubleshooting guidance. Use risk logs to monitor patterns and ensure consistency improves over time.

#### **4. Low Registration or Partial Onboarding**

**Risk:** Registration may stall below expected levels due to gaps in communication, limited tutor oversight or parental set-up delays or pushback, particularly in year groups with higher support needs.

**Mitigation:** Run structured onboarding sessions, provide clear home setup instructions and optional parent webinars, and ensure new joiners are added within five school days. Weekly calls allow identification of barriers early and support schools to maintain momentum.

#### **5. Limited Staff Buy-In**

**Risk:** Some staff may feel unsure about the approach or lack confidence in managing follow-up, which can affect consistency and communication.

**Mitigation:** Identify a staff champion, keep expectations simple, offer quick drop-in support, and maintain visibility through weekly check-ins. Sharing good practice from other schools helps build confidence and alignment.

#### **6. Behavioural Change Progressing Slowly**

**Risk:** Improvements in behaviour during break, lunch and unstructured times may take longer to emerge, especially in larger schools or where wider culture change is still developing.

**Mitigation:** Reinforce routines, provide pupils with clear expectations, and use live examples and success stories from other schools to model what good looks like. School visits and targeted coaching help refine routines where needed.

## 7. Inability to Survey Parents Regularly

**Risk:** External constraints mean parent surveys cannot always be completed widely or consistently, limiting one source of stakeholder feedback.

**Mitigation:** Rely more on pupil voice, staff feedback, incident logs and dashboard data. Use parent evenings, webinars, informal channels and in-school user research days or Digital Detox Days to gather additional insights and capture wider community perspectives.

## 8. Technology Issues Affecting Individual Pupils

**Risk:** A small number of pupils may experience technical issues that interrupt normal Blackout functionality. Although rare, these issues can temporarily affect compliance or monitoring accuracy.

**Mitigation:** Blackout operates a rapid-response communication channel between Customer Success and the Technology team. Issues are triaged immediately, with direct follow-up to affected pupils or schools. Clear and proactive communication is central to this process: schools are kept informed, queries are acknowledged quickly and updates are shared as fixes progress. We establish agreed communication pathways with each school so staff know exactly who to contact and how concerns will be escalated.

## Alternatives and Complementary Approaches that Mitigate Risks

Blackout is most effective when used as part of a broader digital wellbeing strategy rather than as a standalone intervention. Schools may also choose to use:

- **Behaviour logs** to track readiness and movement patterns across the school day.
- **Tutor-time routines** to reinforce expectations and ensure pupils understand their responsibilities.
- **Digital wellbeing sessions** (assemblies, workshops, Digital Detox Days) to build cultural understanding.
- **Student digital ambassadors** to promote positive habits and peer-to-peer support.

These alternatives do not replace Blackout but can strengthen the overall approach and widen impact.

## 8. Overall Assessment

Across all case-study schools, the core indicators of successful implementation are visible:

- **Lower phone incidents** (some dramatic reductions) - e.g., School E: 55 vs 195 last year; School D reducing to zero
- **Higher compliance** and healthier device profiles - e.g., School A: <2 disabling events per day
- **Positive staff feedback** on focus and behaviour - feedback from school visits continually reflects a positive impact.
- **Clear emerging culture change**, especially in unstructured times.
- **Engagement** in wider digital wellbeing work (Digital Detox Days, surveys, assemblies).

This aligns closely with the “good” benchmarks and demonstrates that when schools follow the recommended onboarding process, the shift in behaviour and culture is both measurable and rapid.

## 9. Appendix: Further Qualitative Feedback from Schools:

**School E:** *“I appreciate the new phone rule and have seen a decrease in distractions since it was implemented. I think it has been a very beneficial change to attitudes to learning and overall focus.”*

**School B** - *“It’s not about taking phones away, but teaching young people to use them well. Blackout makes that possible.”*

### Parental feedback from School G:

- Several parents reported that Blackout has been “fantastic,” “helpful,” and a “great success” in reducing screen time and phone usage during the school day.
- Parents believe the restrictions may have led to improved concentration in class and encourage more engagement with school activities, especially in earlier years.
- ‘I think it is fantastic! We need to act as a community to get our kids off their phones and I’m grateful for school support in this, please keep it.’
- ‘In general I support it because if other kids can’t stick with the rules, this ensures they have to.’

**Pupil feedback from School G:**

- "I would seldom use my phone during the school day even before blackout began, but the implementation of this has really driven my phone's screen time to 0 during the school day."
- "It has worked well. I have seen less people on their phones which is a plus. It means you can talk to more people."
- "I think it makes us less reliant on our phones. It removes that compulsion to want to check notifications every so often." - likes to well being and mental health
- "It has made me more focused in lessons and I am able to socialise more with my friends at break and lunch."

**Parental feedback from School H:**

- "My daughter told me that she and her peers believe this to be a positive move by the school. We support it."
- "One of the best tools to help in education for our children."
- "The blackout has helped my daughter to not think about her phone all the time when she gets home."
- "I am delighted that School H has introduced Blackout. I don't want there to be the temptation of phone use during the day and I think better friendships will be made if others are not distracted by phones. In addition, it reduces the risk of children being covertly on their phones during lessons - which ultimately will impact on the whole class's learning experience. In addition, from a safeguarding perspective, I think this is really important"

**From teaching staff at School H:**

- "Direct impact on use of phones... We haven't had a reported issue in year 7 or 8 from the pupils that are black'd out"
- "Blackout is the right solution for us, as it's a technological solution for a technological problem"
- "It doesn't demonise mobile phones. We all need mobile phones in the modern world, so therefore having a solution that teaches and educates us on how to use those mobile phones responsibly, correlates very well with our overall digital strategy".

**From teaching staff at School B:**

- "I would recommend Blackout to any school that is looking for a solution that is positive about how we use mobile phones in schools"
- "Blackout very deliberately does not collect data"
- "Working with parents and young people, looking for a solution that allows them to keep their phones and think about how they are using them positively, I think you are already off to a good starting point."