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Epsom Schools Lead the Way in Pioneering Mobile Phone Pilot

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Glyn School and **Rosebery School** in Epsom are at the forefront of a groundbreaking initiative aimed at tackling smartphone distractions in the classroom. The schools, both part of the GLF multi-academy trust, are participating in a pilot scheme that restricts social media and messaging apps during school hours.

The initiative, which also includes Meridian High School in Croydon and Merstham Park School in Surrey, will see all students in Years 7-9—around 2,300 pupils—install an app called Blackout. This app blocks access to non-essential apps such as social media, games, cameras, and web browsers while still allowing calls, SMS, maps, and calendars. The restriction will only apply during school hours and term time.

Glyn and Rosebery schools, both well-respected within the Epsom community, have been chosen to help test whether this technology can improve student wellbeing and classroom focus. The rise in smartphone usage has been linked to increased anxiety and reduced concentration, and educators are keen to explore solutions that promote healthier digital habits.

A parent at Rosebery School voiced strong support for the initiative, saying: *“Well done to Rosebery and GLF Schools for trialling the Blackout technology. Teachers are on the front line every day, dealing with the disruption caused by smartphones. If this helps students focus and reduces distractions, I’m all for it.”*

The pilot will continue after the February half-term, with students required to install the app if they bring a phone to school. Glyn and Rosebery’s existing phone policies will remain in place, with additional checks to ensure compliance.

Julian Drinkall, CEO of GLF Schools, emphasised the trust’s commitment to exploring new approaches to mobile phone use in education: *“We understand why some schools have introduced outright mobile phone bans, but we believe technology can be part of the solution rather than just a problem. Blackout offers a way to encourage positive digital habits while still allowing essential communication between students and parents.”*

Amy Anderson, Headteacher at Meridian High School, echoed this view: *“This pilot allows us to take a more refined approach to phone management. Instead of just confiscating devices, we can use technology to help students engage more fully in their learning environment.”*

The effectiveness of the trial will be assessed through student, parent, and staff feedback, with key metrics including improved concentration, reduced classroom disruptions, and enhanced student wellbeing. If successful, the initiative could be expanded to more schools in the GLF network and beyond.

Privacy concerns have been addressed, with Blackout confirming that the app does not access personal data such as messages, browser history, or location tracking. It simply blocks non-essential apps during school hours.

Glyn and Rosebery’s participation in this pilot reinforces their reputation as forward-thinking schools, willing to embrace innovative solutions to enhance student learning and wellbeing. As local pupils and parents adjust to the new system, the Epsom community will be watching closely to see if this pioneering approach proves to be the key to a more focused and productive school day.

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