

The Landline Switch-Off

What schools need to do now

01. What the switch-off is

The UK is retiring the old analogue phone network, including PSTN and ISDN services, and replacing it with digital, internet-based telephony. For schools and trusts, the planning deadline is now **January 2027**.

This is happening because the old landline network is reaching the end of its useful life. It is becoming harder to maintain and no longer fits with the way communications infrastructure is now being built.

In schools, this reaches beyond the main phone system. Analogue lines may still sit behind alarms, lift emergency phones, intercoms, gates, door entry systems and other older services across the site. The Department for Education is now advising education settings to audit their estates and identify copper-based services that need attention before switch-off.

02. Why schools need to act now

For many schools and trusts, the main issue is not knowing exactly what still relies on analogue lines.

Some of that knowledge may sit with ICT. Some may sit with site teams. Some may sit with a supplier or in an older contract. That is why the DfE is advising schools to review now rather than wait for a provider-led migration timetable.

Acting early gives schools more control over timing, cost and risk. It also reduces the chance that an older service is only discovered when a contract changes or a problem forces it into view.

03. What schools should check

Schools should review the site as a whole, not just the phone system.

That review should cover:

- ✓ telephony and main office lines
- ✓ alarm signalling and monitoring
- ✓ lift emergency communication
- ✓ intercoms, gates and door entry systems
- ✓ any older service still connected through a copper line
- ✓ contracts tied to legacy voice or broadband services

The purpose is to establish: what is still analogue, what is critical, what can be migrated easily, and what needs more careful planning.

04. Why this matters beyond ICT

Where older landline connections still support alarms, lifts, entry systems or emergency communication, the issue reaches well beyond ICT. It touches continuity, site safety, safeguarding and governance.

SLTs need a clear view of which services are affected and which of them are critical. Governors and trustees do not need the technical detail, but they do need assurance that leaders understand the position, have identified the main risks and are dealing with them in a planned way.

Ofcom guidance highlights that digital landlines will not behave in the same way as analogue lines during a power cut unless suitable backup arrangements are in place. Providers have responsibilities during migration, but schools still need to understand the practical effect on any critical systems connected to those lines.



05. What MATs should do

For MATs, the position is often uneven across the estate. One school may already have modern systems and clear records. Another may still be working around older infrastructure, inherited contracts and limited documentation.

Trust leaders therefore need visibility across schools: where analogue-dependent services still sit, which of them are critical, and where further review is needed. Some decisions will remain local. What matters is that the trust has a clear enough view to coordinate priorities, budgets and procurement across the estate, rather than leaving schools to work through the same issue in isolation.

06. Planning the next stage

Once schools and trusts have a clearer view of which services still rely on analogue lines, decisions become easier to sequence.

Services linked to safety, safeguarding, access and continuity are likely to need attention earlier than others. Main telephony may be more straightforward, but it still needs to be considered as part of the wider site picture.

Where telephony or related infrastructure needs to be replaced, procurement sits alongside technical planning. Everything ICT provides a compliant route to market and makes it easier to compare suitable options. For schools and trusts that are ready to start that process, our framework can support telephony and wider ICT infrastructure procurement.



Frequently asked questions

- ?** **What is PSTN?**
PSTN stands for Public Switched Telephone Network. It is the traditional analogue landline network that has supported phone services in the UK for decades.
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- ?** **What is being switched off?**
The old analogue landline network, including PSTN network and ISDN services, is being retired and replaced by digital, IP-based services.
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- ?** **When is the deadline?**
The key planning deadline for most customers is **January 2027**.
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- ?** **Is this just about school phones?**
No. It may also affect alarms, lift emergency phones, intercoms, gates, door entry systems and other services still running over copper lines. The DfE's school-specific guidance tells education settings to audit these services now.
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- ?** **Why does a power cut matter more with digital lines?**
Traditional analogue lines could still work in some power-cut scenarios because power came from the exchange. Digital services may rely on local power or backup arrangements instead. Ofcom requires providers to protect access to emergency services and provide minimum resilience in certain cases, but organisations still need to understand the practical impact on their own systems.
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- ?** **Do schools need to replace everything now?**
No. The immediate priority is to identify what still relies on analogue lines, determine which services are critical, and then plan change in a sensible order.
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- ?** **What should governors ask for?**
Governors and trustees should ask whether the school or trust knows which services still depend on analogue lines, which of those are critical, what the resilience implications are, and whether there is a clear plan for sequencing, funding and procurement.

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➔ [How it all works](#)