

# Biometrics

## **How is the fingerprint stored?**

These systems work in the following way. A numerical value is derived from the child's fingerprint when it is first placed on the reading device. It is this numerical value which is then stored. Each time the child's fingerprint is subsequently re-read, a numerical value is again generated. This is compared with the set of stored values, uniquely identifying the child within the population of the school if a match is found. The school does not keep an image of the fingerprint.

## **What does the law that relates to school say about biometrics?**

The Information Commissioner considers all biometric information to be personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act 1998; this means that it must be obtained, used and stored in accordance with that act. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 changed the way that schools are allowed to use biometric data in schools and colleges when used as part of an automated biometric recognition system. (See the link below for Government Guidance on biometrics in Schools). Lathom High School is registered under Data Protection Act and must act in accordance with that registration.

## **Are schools required to ask/tell parents before introducing an automated biometric recognition system?**

Schools are not required by law to consult parents before installing an automated biometric recognition system. However, they are required to notify parents and secure consent from at least one parent before biometric data is obtained or used for the purposes of such a system.

## **Can biometrics be used by any other agency?**

No, the software we use turns your child's biometric(fingerprint) image in to a mathematical algorithm. The image of the biometric is then discarded. The information that is stored cannot be used to recreate an image of the child's biometric fingerprint.

## **What happens when a student leaves the School?**

When a student leaves school all data relating to their biometric will be permanently deleted.

## **What happens to the fingerprint?**

When a pupil registers to the biometric system, their finger is placed on to a fingerprint scanner. The fingerprint is then converted into a collection of data points via a mathematical algorithm. This data is then encrypted and stored on the pupil's account to be used as their unique identifier.

## **Are the fingerprints stored?**

No. The fingerprint is only used to generate a collection of data points which is then encrypted. The fingerprint reader looks for specific patterns and unique identifiers on the finger, assigning specific data to each point - the fingerprint is never actually recorded.

## **Can the secure data be reversed to produce a fingerprint?**

No. The data points produced by the algorithm can't be reversed to produce a full fingerprint. The data is fully encrypted to military grade standards and even if this was to be broken, trying to reproduce a fingerprint from the data points could never produce anything usable.

## **Is my child's data secure?**

Our database is stored within the school on a secure server system. The database is fully password protected and cannot be accessed by the copying of the physical data files. The biometric data itself is encrypted within this database. For more information on data protection in school our Data Protection Policy is available on request from the school.

**Can the police use the biometric data as a fingerprint?**

Our solutions only store encrypted data points from a finger scan. Even if we were asked to decrypt and reverse the algorithm for the police, the image produced would not be accurate enough for forensic matching and would not be admissible in court. The police also would not be able to use the data points for their databases as the algorithms don't match.

**Do schools need to renew consent every year?**

No. The original written consent is valid until such time as it is withdrawn. However, it can be overridden, at any time being in writing.

**Can consent be withdrawn by a parent?**

Parents will be able to withdraw their consent, in writing, at any time. In addition, either parent will be able to object to the processing at any time but they must do so in writing.

**Can the school notify parents and accept consent via email?**

Yes – as long as the school is satisfied that the email contact details are accurate and the consent received is genuine.

**I have identical twins, won't they have the same fingerprint?**

Identical twins share many physical similarities but will have different fingerprints/ digital signatures, so there would not be any mistakes made when the system identifies them.

**What about cuts, or other injuries?**

Unless the injury resulted in a severe disfigurement to the finger, then a biometric solution will have no problem identifying the user. Alternatively, an alternate finger can be registered for identification.

**I don't want my child to be entered in to the biometric database, what alternatives are there?**

Any pupil who wishes to opt out of our biometric database will be issued with a 4 digit PIN number.