

THE CHALLENGE

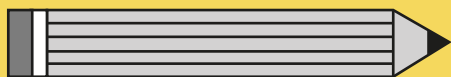
The amount of data that is collected from pupils by schools is increasing not only in number but also in the type of data that is being collected. We are seeing schools going from cash to cashless systems using fingerprint biometric scanners and even facial recognition systems. Schools often use private company systems to enable pupils to buy their lunch, open doors, use printers or school lockers.

Whilst some schools rolled back on their plans to introduce facial recognition systems due to a big backlash in 2021⁴, many schools are still using biometrics.

Many pupils and parents are unaware of how this data is being held and used, and the potential long term implications of this or of the risks if the data was compromised. Additionally, many pupils are unable to give informed consent. Is it really necessary for pupils to engage in high-tech border style checks, just to receive their lunch?

⁴ Schools rethink approach after data privacy watchdog advises 'less intrusive' policy
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/facial-recognition-systems-off-the-menu-a-s-schools-reverse-plans/>

YOUR RIGHTS



"Adoption of these technologies in our schools is certainly no less contentious than it is in law enforcement and in some ways it is more challenging."

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Professor Fraser Sampson, Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner (2022) The State of Biometrics 2022: A Review of Policy and Practice in UK Education report
<https://defenddigitalme.org/research/state-biometrics-2022/>

You have a choice. Pupils and parents do not have to consent — to biometric data collection and schools cannot make you use it. If you have previously given consent, you are allowed to withdraw consent at any time.

Each parent of the child must be notified by the relevant — authority that they are planning to process their child's biometrics and notified that they are able to object.

Schools are legally obliged to provide an alternative to — biometrics such as a swipe card or PIN access including for pupils in receipt of Free School Meals – pupils must receive the same access to school services and not be stigmatised by not opting in.

Pupils and their parents have a right to access the records and — information held about them by their school or educational institution as well as the catering company.

Schools cannot lawfully insist anyone uses biometrics, — and cannot discriminate on who must opt in or out, for example by making it compulsory for free school meals.

Unfortunately the rights in the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 — that are afforded to children in England and Wales do not apply to children in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but the rules on consent in terms of data protection, are similar in practice.

TAKE ACTION

- You can object to the collection of biometric data, even after previously giving consent – use this template and ask your school for an alternative method of paying for school lunches.
- Parents and young people can ask for a copy of their own records held by the school or catering company – you can do this by making a subject access request.
- Schools should switch from biometrics to less intrusive alternatives that do not require the collection of biometric data – use this flyer to make sure your school offers alternative methods and makes biometrics clearly opt IN not OUT.
- Schools need to manage parental and pupil objections and uphold their rights.