


THE CHALLENGE



CCTV has become common in UK schools and pupils pass through these systems countless times each school day throughout the year – the use of CCTV and other types of surveillance camera is not only at entrances and exits but can include patrol crossings, corridors, classrooms, libraries, toilets and cloakrooms. Body cameras are also becoming normalised in and outside the classroom. As pupils grow they are becoming part of a watched generation.

There are a number of concerns when it comes to the use of CCTV and body cameras, including who can view children where and why, how it is stored and how it acts as a widening of securitisation in education. There is no evidence that the introduction of surveillance improves behaviour or increases security. Simply installing more cameras does not mean more security. Where they are not necessary they cannot be justified in privacy or data protection law, and may require legal work. There are also costs to consider both upfront and any maintenance or contractual costs.

YOUR RIGHTS AND ACTIONS

TAKE ACTION: WHO'S WATCHING YOUR CHILD?

Ask what your school does.

"Some schools have one camera for every five pupils; we're talking about a saturation of visual surveillance."

*Professor of criminology Emmeline Taylor,
City, University of London*

Any intrusion into the privacy of pupils must be necessary and proportionate. Pupils and staff can object and ask your school to end the use of surveillance that goes beyond this, and any associated data processing.

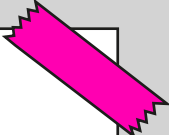
— If a school plans to introduce cameras they should carry out a risk assessment, known as a data protection impact assessment (DPIA). Families can request a copy of that document.

Families should be told before any new introduction begins.

— There must be signs to let people know that they are being filmed or recorded.

You have the right to request information that is held about you, including to see or obtain captured footage from cameras, but not that includes other people if there is no lawful basis for the school to disclose it. Note that recordings are often kept on a rolling basis and might not be kept for very long, depending on local policy.

— Increasingly cameras can also record sound which may not be lawful where it cannot be justified as necessary and proportionate. You can ask for this spoken data as well as images.



"A school wishes to install CCTV cameras in the toilets in order to prevent vandalism. The school would have to make a rigorous assessment . . . in order to justify the processing. This is because the cameras would be recording children, particularly in an environment where there would be a natural and heightened expectation of privacy by both students and parents. Given the potential level of intrusion, this use is unlikely to be proportionate in most circumstances. The school should seek less privacy intrusive measures in order to solve a particular problem."

The Information Commissioner's Office (2022)

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/key-dp-themes/guidance-on-video-surveillance/how-can-we-comply-with-the-data-protection-principles-when-using-surveillance-systems/>

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