



# Westfield Community School



"...a beacon of hope..." Ofsted 2007  
"...outstanding school..." Ofsted 2010  
"...outstanding Children's Centre..." Ofsted 2011

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Head Teacher Mr T. W. Sherriff B.Ed. D.A.S.E. M. Ed.

19<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am pleased to confirm that in the next few weeks this school will be installing a new computer system that will streamline the administration of school meals and soon result in more flexible ways of paying. We will provide more information of the options as and when they are available.

One of the options available is a biometric recognition system which we intend to offer to pupils. This is a new system which works by recognising an image of the pupil's finger, which is then used by the pupil to access elements of the system and speed up service. This system has already been installed successfully in 12 Primary Schools and 15 High Schools in the Wigan Borough.

The scan of the finger is not a fingerprint, it is a scan of a series of points on the finger that are then converted to a code unique to that pupil, and cannot be used to for any other use. It is also used by many Schools in their Libraries etc. Further details are on the reverse of this page.

However we are obliged to let parents have the choice of opting out of the biometric registration. If so please complete the slip below and return to school by Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November. **We only require a response if you DO NOT wish your child to be registered.**

Please contact Mrs Rayner, School Business Director, if you have any further questions regarding this system.

With kind regards

Mr T. W. Sherriff  
**Headteacher**

Response slip:

I confirm that **I DO NOT** wish for my Child to be registered using the biometric system.

Full name of pupil(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Frequently Asked Questions concerning finger recognition**

BioStore is the software used to record and recognise images of pupil's fingers. This FAQ addresses some common questions and concerns related to this recognition technology.

### **What is BioStore – how does it work?**

BioStore is a database which stores the information which identifies pupils uniquely to each of the applications used within the school. It requires each pupil to register only once, usually by placing a finger on a scanner, although other identification methods are available.

### **Why use BioStore's biometric system instead of other existing identification methods?**

BioStore's centralised system speeds up the registration process – each student need only register once, no matter how many applications requiring identification are in place in the school. With a biometric system, students cannot borrow or steal credentials from each other, reducing the opportunities for bullying.

Queues are reduced, because the identification of students is speeded up. Students need no longer carry cards, remember PIN numbers, or use cash to buy a meal. Biometric systems save time and money for both school and pupils because the need to replace lost cards and forgotten passwords is eliminated.

### **Does BioStore record images of individual fingerprints?**

BioStore never stores images of fingerprints on its system, and will never do so. Only mathematical representations of certain points of a finger image are recorded, typically between ten and sixty depending on the characteristics of the finger. The mathematical information is encrypted and is called a template. This data is extremely secure in its encrypted form, but even if it were not encrypted it would be impossible to recreate the original fingerprint image from the stored data.

### **Is it possible to recreate a fingerprint from the data stored by BioStore?**

No. The BioStore system only stores a short string of encrypted numbers – too few numbers to provide enough detail for the original print to be reconstructed.

A simple way to think about how the system works is to consider an ordnance survey map of a given area. Imagine marking all the points where roads cross over rivers and where railway tracks cross roads, and then record the coordinates of these crossing points. Use this information to examine a set of, say, 100 maps, and compare each map with the recorded information. The original ordnance map will be identifiable with some degree of certainty. However, using only the recorded coordinates it would be impossible to recreate the original map with any accuracy - more than 99.99% of the information on the original map will have been discarded, leaving only the few recorded points. Even these points cannot be recreated because only a simple description of each has been kept.

### **How secure is the stored data? What would happen if somebody stole the data in some form?**

The database is protected by a licence key, which means that the database and any backup of its contents can only be accessed on licensed hardware. The licensed hardware is stored in the school's own secure facility, so that the encrypted data is only available to the registered licensee. Even if a school's security were to be compromised and a backup of the database stolen, the encrypted data would still be unreadable, even by another school.

### **If I lose my bank card then it can be replaced, but I can't replace my finger. If a template is stolen, have I lost my identity forever? / If my child's finger is scanned could the police or a court of law use it as a fingerprint?**

No! BioStore does not store a fingerprint image. The recorded templates are comprised of a set of numbers which represent each person. This set of numbers will be unique within populations of hundreds, or a few thousand, people. However, in the wider population the system is not accurate enough for the templates to be usable for forensic matching with any degree of certainty. A court of law would never be able to use this information as evidence.

### **What happens about twins, or people with a disability which prevents them from providing biometric data, or somebody who has hurt their finger?**

Even identical twins have different fingerprints, and will not be mistaken for each other by BioStore. However, a cut finger would not cause any problem for BioStore, unless it resulted in major disfigurement.

