How Does the Cashless System Work?

When a pupil purchases items from the canteen, they collect them in the usual way, and then proceed to a till. At this point rather than paying with cash or coins, they will simply place their finger on the reader or type in a pin number. The software will recognise the pupil, and automatically deduct the value of the items from their account.

Accounts are topped using one of two "Revaluation" machines conveniently sited around the school or on-line via our on-line payment system.

Parents can top up their child's dinner account at home by setting up an online account and using a debit /credit card. This account can also be used to pay for school trips, events and make donations to school.

The advantages of the on-line method of payment include:

- Less cash handling by pupils
- Reduced risk of pupils losing cash
- Full audit trail from receipt of money
- Fully automated update of school records
- Parents can view their payment history on-line
- Parents can also view, what your child is purchasing on a daily basis

For further information about setting up an online payment account please contact school.

Spend Limits

To ensure pupils cannot spend all of the money in their account in a single day, there is a spend limit of £7.00 per day.

What if a pupil does not hold sufficient balance to pay for a school dinner?

There is no overdraft facility on our system, so pupils MUST have sufficient money on their account to be able to pay for their school dinner.

Details and access codes for on-line payments will be issued every September.

Pupils entitled to free school meals

Any pupils entitled to free school meals have their account automatically credited each day with the free school meal allowance of £2.36 per day. However, any underspend or missed dinner will be identified by the system and will not be added to the next day's balance.

Pupils can opt to add additional funds to their account using the methods above, which will allow them to purchase additional items at break time or during lunch and cover purchases in excess of the £2.36 allowance.

Does my child have to top up every day?

Ideally no, just like a pay as you go phone, you can choose to top up as much or as little as you want (minimum top-up of £10.00). As the balance decreases, additional money can be added to their account. Each time they top up funds or purchase an item their remaining balance will be shown.

Opting out

You can choose to opt-out of the biometric identification system. If you do this, your child will be issued with a pin number, which they will use to top up with credit. It is the responsibility of the pupil to keep their pin number safe.

Frequently asked questions concerning finger recognition

BioStore is the software used to record and recognise certain points on the pupil's finger. The following FAQs address some common questions and concerns related to finger 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 small scanner.

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

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

Service speeds are increased, queues are reduced, because the identification of students is speeded up. Pupils 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 store 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 for the stored data.

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

No. The BioStore only stores a short string of encrypted numbers – far 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 points where roads cross over rivers and where railway tracks cross roads, and then record the co-ordinates 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 be 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 data base 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.

Could my child's images be used by the police or a court of law 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. Occasionally somebody's finger characteristics will degenerate because of exposure to some chemical products, and sometimes temperature changes can cause reduction in fingerprint quality. However, a cut finger would not cause any problem for BioStore, unless it resulted in major disfigurement.

Is this system tried and tested elsewhere?

The company supplying the system, Cunninghams have installed the system we will be using in over 2,000 schools. The biometric system is the latest development which speeds up service and means the old method of magnetic cards is not required eliminating the possibility of being lost, or even used by the wrong person.