



# HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

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March 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

## Cashless Catering System

We operate a cashless catering system in school which will be available for your child to use when they join us in September.

The system uses the latest biometric technology. This scans the student's finger, generating a unique number that is used in the system to identify your child and allow them to spend money from their cashless account. The fingerprint image is not stored and cannot be used by any other system. The system is in use in many schools around Hertfordshire and the rest of the country.

The information from your child that we wish to use is referred to as 'biometric information'. Under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (sections 26 to 28), we are required to notify each parent of a child and obtain the written consent of at least one parent before being able to use a child's biometric information for an automated system. The attached sheet explains what this information is and how it is used at Hitchin Girls' School. There are also details of our legal obligations.

The process for students to register and use the system will be as follows:

1. Registration of student biometric data into the system. The student's cashless account is set up and their finger scanned to associate the student with their account.
2. Payments. Parents and carers can pay online via the school's ParentPay system and this is credited to the student's account.
3. Paying for items. The student chooses items from the dining room and scans their finger at the till. This displays their name, photo and account balance to the till operator who then enters the cost of their food items. The total is deducted from the account and the transaction is then complete.

We require written consent from parents to register your child on the biometric system and set them up with a cashless account for the start of term. We recommend that consent is given to the system even if your child thinks they will not use the catering facilities, to allow for changes in circumstances or occasional future use.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the system, please contact the school.

## Biometric Information – the facts (and reassurances)

*Biometric information* is information about a person's physical or behavioural characteristics that can be used to identify them, such as information from their fingerprint.

This information is used in an automated biometric recognition system. This system takes measurements of the person's fingerprint and converts these measurements into a template to be stored on the system. An image of the fingerprint is not stored - only an encoded extract. The template (i.e. measurements taken from the fingerprint) is what will be used to activate the account.



Specific to our system: a partial image of each person's thumb is uploaded and then stored in an encrypted form, only on the PC running the till screens and the connected image recognition units. It does not send any information back to the school database. This partial image cannot be used for any other purpose. Usually, only the right thumb has a partial image taken, which is then converted into a number to be used for identification.

The use of a biometric system for payment purposes is sometimes confused with the use of biological material and biometric data in the law enforcement context. The biometric systems used in education do not precisely identify individuals in the general population in the way that police fingerprinting may do. The system merely distinguishes between different students well enough to charge the correct ones for their purchases. The data is not made available anywhere else, it is a closed system and the data is only used in this setting. An individual's biometric data is almost impossible to replicate making it a secure means of identification.

The law places specific requirements on schools when using biometric information for the purposes of an automated biometric recognition system.

For example:

- a. the school cannot use the information for any purpose other than those for which it was originally obtained and made known to the parents;
- a. the school must ensure that the information is stored securely;
- b. the school must tell you what it intends to do with the information;
- c. unless the law allows it, the school cannot disclose personal information to another person/body – you should note that the only persons/bodies that the school wishes to share the information with is Live Register, the system supplier. This is necessary in order to run the system.

### **Providing your consent/objecting**

As stated above, in order for the school to use your child's biometric information, the written consent of at least one parent is required. However, consent given by one parent will be overridden if the other parent objects in writing. Similarly, if your child objects to the use of their biometric information, the school cannot collect or use it.

If you give consent but later change your mind, you can withdraw this consent at any time. Please note that any withdrawal of consent must be in writing.

Even if you have consented, your child can object or refuse at any time to their biometric information being taken/used. Their objection does not need to be in writing. We would appreciate it if you could discuss this with your child and explain to them that they can object if they wish.

The school is also happy to answer any questions you or your child may have.

If you or your child do not consent to biometric information being processed by the school, the law says that we must provide reasonable alternative arrangements for children to pay for food in the dining room.

Please note that when your child leaves the school, or if for some other reason they cease to use the biometric system, their biometric data will be securely deleted.

### **Further information and guidance**

- [Hitchin Girls' School Protection of Biometric Information Policy](#)
- [Department for Education: 'Protection of biometric information of children in schools'](#)