

**REPORT TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

**REPORT FROM: LYNDA FISHER, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

**DATE: 4<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2007**

**TITLE: FINGER SCANNING TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS**

### **1. Purpose:**

- 1.1 To brief the Executive Member for Education, Children & Young People on the issues associated with the use of finger scanning technology in support of school library systems and to seek approval for the draft guidance presented in Appendix 1.

### **2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 That the Executive Member approves the guidance presented in Appendix 1.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Recent developments in technology have presented a range of opportunities for schools. By taking advantage of improvements in technology it is often possible for schools to develop more effective, efficient and user-friendly management systems that are better able to meet the requirements of the organisation. Finger scanning technology is one of the opportunities.
- 3.2 Nationally finger-scanning technology is reported to have been used to support systems for school libraries and school meals. Locally, the technology is sometimes used as part of the *junior library system*.
- 3.3 Where it is used locally, schools employ finger scanning as a method by which to identify children who borrow books from school libraries. The decision to invest in and implement this technology has been a local management decision taken in schools.

### **4. Commentary**

- 4.1 Schools have reported a number of advantages to using finger-scanning technology in support of school library systems including:
  - Positive feedback in school Ofsted inspections
  - The system reduces the opportunity for a book loan to be linked to the wrong child - a problem in some schools using traditional bar code techniques

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some children enjoy using the technology and that there are informal links to the science curriculum

4.2 Where the system is used, it scans and measures a number of reference points, usually on a thumb. The numerical code is encrypted and that rather than a finger print image is stored on the school library system. The manufacturer's guidance states that

- *All users still have the option of using a bar code instead of the biometric. We have received letters from both the Information Commissioner and the Department for Education and Skills confirming that they have no data protection concerns as a result of using this technology in school libraries. We do however, recommend that schools contact parents to inform them about their intention to use the technology and how it works before beginning the registration process.*
- *The technology uses biometric fingerprint recognition and no image of a fingerprint is ever stored.*
- *The system creates a mathematical template that is your fully secure identification information, just like any other identity number.*
- *This data is encrypted for further security and cannot be used in any other database.*
- *It is not possible to recreate an image of the original scan from the data that is stored.*
- *Once a child leaves school and their record is deleted from the main library database, the biometric data is immediately deleted. Therefore, a number is only stored for people who are actually at the school and no biometric records are retained for leavers.*

4.3 National and local interest in this issue has led to a situation where there has been an increasing interest and concern over the use of finger scanning technology in schools.

4.4 The concerns expressed have in the main focussed on 2 main issues:

- That parental consent might not be obtained in a consistent way

- That the supporting data might in some way enter the criminal justice system to the disadvantage of the children involved.

4.5 In response to the above concerns the draft guidance attached as Appendix 1 has been prepared.

4.6 With Executive Member approval the attached guidance will be distributed to all schools in the Local Authority.

**Signed**..... **Date**.....  
 Lynda Fisher, Strategic Director; Children Families and Learning

**Approval to the recommendation(s)**

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved / approved as amended / deferred / rejected\* by the Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People.  
 (\*delete as appropriate)

Signed: .....

Date.....

Councillor Eleanor Scott, Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People.

**DRAFT**

**PORTSMOUTH FINGER SCANNING TECHNOLOGY GUIDANCE**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This guidance is intended to provide a clear and unambiguous framework for the use of finger scanning technology in Portsmouth schools. It seeks to enable the use of innovative technology that has been tried and tested and is delivering benefits in some schools, whilst protecting the rights of individuals through informed consent.

**2. Applicability**

- 2.1 The guidance is applicable to all maintained schools within the Local Authority boundary,

**3. Objectives**

The objectives of this guidance are:

- 3.1 To ensure that finger scanning technology is used in accordance with all legal requirements
- 3.2 To ensure that the rights of the individual are considered alongside the opportunity for the use of innovative technology.

**4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 The governing body of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that it operates in a way which is compliant with the law.
- 4.2 The head teacher of a school has responsibility from implementing this guidance.

**5. Distribution**

- 5.1 This guidance will be distributed to all Head Teachers and to the Chairs of all school Governing Bodies

**6. Guidelines**

- 6.1 Schools in the Local Authority make local decisions on the appropriateness of utilising finger scanning technology. The Local Authority encourages and supports independent decision making. Where a school chooses to use fingerscanning technology the school Headteacher should inform:

- the governing body that this technology is being used within the school
  - the local authority by letting the school library service (School Library Service, Saxon Shore School, tel: 023 9232 6612, e-mail: [school.library@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:school.library@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)) know if the usage is school library based or the Business Support and Policy Manager (Marc Rostock, tel: 023 9268 8338, e-mail: [marc.rostock@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:marc.rostock@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)) in all other instances
  - the Information Commissioners Office (<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>) that this data is being held and the purpose for which it is being held by amending the School's Data Protection Act Notification to include the use of finger scanning technology.
- 6.2 The headteacher should ensure that all parents are informed at the earliest available opportunity of the intention to collect and use these data.
- 6.3 The school should include in the fair processing notice the collection of finger scanning data and their use.
- 6.4 If this is not possible before collection of any data, any communication with parents should include details of who can process and use the data and how and when deletion of any data will occur. It should also include confirmation of the fact that the data will not be passed to any external agency.
- 6.5 It is not sufficient for schools to include reference to this in their newsletters.
- 6.6 When informing parents/guardians schools should give a clear opportunity for consent to be withheld. Where consent is withheld schools should provide alternative systems that allow full access to their library service, for example through the use of library cards.
- 6.7 The school should hold all data including finger scanning data in accordance with the principles of the data protection act. The data protection act can be accessed via the following web link:

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980029.htm>

## **7. Review of the guidelines**

This guidance will be reviewed before the end of May 2010