



**Information Commissioner's Office**  
Promoting public access to official information  
and protecting your personal information

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

Date: 23 July 2007

### **Fingerprinting in schools**

Schools that take pupils' fingerprints are being urged to properly consult parents and pupils and follow advice issued today by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Where fingerprints are taken, the data must be processed in line with the Principles of the Data Protection Act and the information can only be used for the specific purpose for which it was collected. Information should be processed on a suitably designed IT system, in which templates cannot readily be used by computers running other fingerprint recognition applications. High standards of security are required to safeguard the information and it should be destroyed when no longer needed.

Where a school intends to take fingerprints it should inform and consult pupils about the use of their personal information. A school should explain the reasons for introducing the system, how personal information is used and how it is kept safe. Some pupils – because of their age or maturity – may not understand the sensitivities involved in providing a fingerprint. Where a school cannot be certain that a child understands the implications of giving their fingerprint, the school must fully involve parents to ensure the information is obtained fairly. In circumstances where children are not in a position to understand, failure to inform parents and seek their approval is likely to breach the Data Protection Act.

David Smith, Deputy Commissioner for the ICO, said: 'Schools should adopt a common sense approach when seeking to take pupils' fingerprints. Our advice is that

both pupils and parents should be properly informed and consulted before a school introduces this biometric technology. Pupils and parents should have the opportunity to understand why a fingerprint is being collected and to express any objections they may have.'

In view of the sensitivity of taking children's fingerprints, schools should respect the wishes of parents and pupils who object to their (or their children's) fingerprints being taken in school.

## **ENDS**

If you need more information, please contact the Information Commissioner's press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Information Commissioner promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)
3. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:
  - Fairly and lawfully processed
  - Processed for limited purposes
  - Adequate, relevant and not excessive
  - Accurate and up to date
  - Not kept for longer than is necessary
  - Processed in line with your rights
  - Secure
  - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection