HOLBROOK ACADEMY

Headteacher : Dr Simon Letman BA, MA, EdD
Deputy Head : Nicola Shelley

29th November 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

I wrote to you earlier this year to let you know that we were planning to install a new Cashless Catering system with fingertip identification. I am pleased to say that we are now in a position to launch the system after Christmas.

The new system would offer a number of benefits. These include removing the need for students to bring cash into school, avoiding the risk of it being lost or spent on other things. Parents will also have the option of limiting their daughter/son's daily spend. In addition, the system will speed up the through-flow of students in the dining hall at break and lunch and make things more convenient for parents through the ability to 'top-up' students' accounts online.

The system requires students to place their fingertip on a scanner to make a payment for their food. This is their 'digital signature'. In simple terms, this 'signature' is stored and the system's software encrypts it into a set of letters and numbers which is hosted on our own school server. We plan to 'capture' this fingerprint data on 18th January with the system 'going live' on 23rd January. Nobody has access to this information and the stored data can only be viewed as a string of numbers and letters. I must emphasise that the system does not record fingertips. We have also considered catering cards and PIN numbers but believe these systems are less secure and open to abuse. The information collected will be used solely for school purposes and held on the school system only. This technology is very secure and is commonly used within secondary schools across the UK.

Allied to this, we will be using a secure on-line payment system called **'Schoolcomms'** where your child's Cashless Catering account will be available to accept payments. The account can be topped up using a debit card, credit card or direct transfer and the balance, together with information about the items students have purchased, can be viewed at any time. Detailed information about how to get started and then manage your account will be sent to you direct form our Finance Office in due course.

I am including a list of frequently asked questions and I hope this helps to clarify things still further. If you still require further information, please email our Finance Officer, Mrs Sara Rogers: sara.rogers@holbrookacademy.org

Legislation came into effect in September 2013 which requires permission for us to use this technology. Please sign and return the permission slip by Friday 9th December 2016.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Letman

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PERMISSION SLIP

Name of Student ……………………………………………..…		Form…………………

I give authorisation for Holbrook Academy to obtain biometric information from my daughter/son to be stored for no other use than for the Academy's administration systems. Such biometric information will be disposed of when the student leaves the school and images will be stored as data points and not as fingerprint images.

Signed: ………………………………………………… Parent/Carer		Date………………………

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Some Frequently Asked Questions:

Why biometrics and not card or PIN?
Other methods of identification can often lead to problems and misuse – cards and PIN numbers are often passed around amongst students and they can also be regularly left at home or forgotten.

Why not carry on with the existing methods of payment?
By opting for a Cashless Catering system and also opting to allow the ability for parents to make online payments, we feel that we can dramatically improve existing administration processes within the academy. With the option being offered to parents of an online payment portal, you will be able to ensure that all money being given to your son/daughter is reaching the academy and in turn, will be able to offer them a healthy and balanced nutritional meal. We feel that we would also like to improve on our free school meal uptake and these systems considerably raise these numbers.

What are the benefits of a Cashless Catering system?
By opting for a Cashless Catering system we will be able to speed up lunch services which will mean less queuing in the canteen. With less queues, more students are likely to enter the canteen. Free School Meals students will remain anonymous which will encourage these students to come and have a hot meal. By offering parents online payment, this will also ensure that all money reaches the Academy and will not be lost or spent at shops. Parents will also be able to view what their son or daughter has been eating.

What information is actually captured?
The light on the biometric reader is used solely to illuminate the fingertip of the student or staff member and the scanning device then effectively takes a photograph. On a camera the image data would be stored so that the picture can be reproduced again and again. On the fingerprint reader most of the data is discarded and only a limited number (approx. 120) of random points on the fingerprint are retained. These are not stored as images but are converted using a mathematical process to convert the image data to what is essentially a string of random numbers.

Where is this data stored?
The data captured is kept within a secure database which is in turn securely held on the school's server, this is not taken away by anybody else or by the system suppliers.

Is this technology new and un-tested?
Schools/Colleges and Academies within the UK have been using biometric systems for 10 years now. The system is been provided by a reputable company who have been in existence for over 10 years. They are also solely dedicated to the education sector.

What will happen to the biometric data captured when my son/daughter leaves the Academy?
All biometric information captured will be permanently deleted on exit from the Academy.