



Frequently asked questions about cashless catering and biometrics.

How will cashless catering work?

In the canteen, students will select the items to purchase as normal. When they take the items to the till, the operator will key them in and the total will appear on the till display. The student's finger then needs to be placed on the scanner to identify the customer. A photograph of the student shows on the till allowing the till operator to confirm the account holder (especially important for those students with cards). The transaction is then complete and the account balance will be adjusted.

What is biometrics?

Biometrics is a method of capturing unique data or characteristics for an individual. This data is linked to the individual and used as a means of recognition. Biometric data is used for things like passport identification and access control. At Oathall biometric information will be used for identifying students catering accounts. This is known as cashless catering. We do not use the catering biometrics for any other purpose and it is not linked to any other computer systems other than the system we use for catering purchases. For security purposes only two people in the college have access to this data.

How will Biometric technology work at Oathall?

The cashless catering system at Oathall will be controlled by the latest biometric finger recognition technology. This makes use of biometric scanning, which means that the person places their thumb/finger onto a scanning device at the till which will identify them and their account will be debited for the items that they have purchased. This is a very secure and efficient system. When looking at data about account holders the only information that the college can see is the student admission number that the scan is linked to – this number is the unique admission number used by the college to identify the student. We do not see any of the fingerprint scanning data.

How will Oathall get the Biometric data about my child?

Each user will be registered by scanning and storing a unique biometric template. This template uses a subset of unique features of the fingerprint that is obtained from a scanned image of your child's fingerprint. This is stored as a binary number (not as an image of the fingerprint).

How is the students' data entered into the system?

The student's name is confirmed from our existing schools information management system (known as SIMS) and then s/he places their thumb/finger onto a small electronic pad – two successful scans are required to register.

What happens when my child gets to the till to pay?

Every time the user places their finger on the scanner to pay for items the till system checks their scan against the stored template. Their account will then be debited for the items they have purchased. A photograph of the student shows on the till allowing the till operator to confirm the account holder (especially important for those students with cards).

Do you store the fingerprints of individuals?

Full fingerprint images are not stored and it is extremely unlikely that a usable fingerprint image could be generated (reverse engineered) from the template. The biometric data will only be used for catering purchases and not for any other systems (such as registration or library services).

Are there any health risks?

No, it is not a laser.

Can my child still buy food or drink using cash?

No, your child will only be able to buy food or drink if they have money in their school meals account or if they qualify for free school meals. When they get to the till to pay they scan their finger or show their card and the cost of their purchases will be deducted from their account.

What happens if my child doesn't have enough money in their account?

If the account balance is low the till operator will inform the student that the account needs to be topped up. If the daily spend limit is exceeded, the till operator will inform your child and they will be required to put some of the purchases back.

What happens if I forget to add money to their account?

We do not allow students credit. Parents are responsible for making sure their child has either a packed lunch or funds in their account. If a child clearly needs a meal and does not have any money or forgets a packed lunch we do have a system to allow them to eat a basic meal. This is not routinely offered and parents will be expected to reimburse the cost.

What if I don't have time to top-up my child's account online?

You can top-up your child's account at any time day or night on ParentPay but if you do not get a chance to do this then you can top-up by cash at a dedicated till point in the canteen. This can be done between 8.15 – 8.30am and at morning break.

How long does it take for a top-up on ParentPay to reach a child's account?

The cashless system regularly communicates with ParentPay to check account balances. In theory it should take only minutes but as we cannot control the internet speeds and links between your computer, your bank and the links between the college and ParentPay we recommend that you allow at least 3 hours for your account to be updated.

What happens when the student leaves the College?

All the information about the individual is deleted. Data may also be deleted at the individual's request.

Are we able to have a refund?

Money in the account is automatically rolled over even at the end of term. However, should you require a refund e.g. when your child leaves school then one can be arranged.

Can I see my child's balance?

By logging into ParentPay, you can check your child's balance online.

Can I check what my child has purchased?

We do not yet have a facility for parents to check what their child has actually purchased. We are working on a way to introduce this. You can ask for a report to be printed or emailed to you if you have any concerns but we do not have the resources to do this on a regular basis.

I am still concerned; I do not want my child's biometric reading taken.

We can offer a card for students with parents who do not wish the biometric reading to be taken. The initial card will be free of charge after which there will be a cost to replace lost cards.

If you have any concerns about biometric fingerprint recognition and data protection the Information Commissioners Office provides advice and guidance at the following web address. www.ico.gov.uk.