



Blue Coat Church of England Academy

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Facial Recognition is coming to Blue Coat CE Academy

We are excited to announce that from September 2025 we will be introducing Facial Recognition as a fast and straightforward payment experience for school meals.

It is important to us that everyone in our school community, including parents/carers and students, are well-informed about this new development and have all the information needed before opting to use this new service.

This document contains detailed information about Facial Recognition, how it works, how we will use the software, and most importantly, the benefits for students.

Why we are introducing Facial Recognition

Facial Recognition offers a quick and secure way for students to purchase school meal items without needing cash. It is also quicker than finger biometrics, which is our current system. With Facial Recognition, students simply select their meal, look at the camera and go, speeding up the break and lunchtime service with a contactless point-of-sale experience.

This technology will be used as an additional authentication method at the checkout counters, providing faster service for students. Our goal is to help students reclaim time to enjoy their meal breaks and nutritious meals and make it easier to attend lunch clubs.

How the technology works

With Facial Recognition technology, students simply choose their meal, look at the checkout camera, and proceed with a quick and secure point-of-sale experience.

Facial Recognition is a biometric recognition method that works in the same way as other recognition technology, such as fingerprint biometrics which we already use. A unique identifier is attributed to each student and matched at the till for quick and secure access to their cashless account.

An image of the face is captured, and the software turns unique features of the face geometry, such as the distance between the eyes and the distance from the top of the forehead to the chin, to create a unique identifier for each student.

When students pay for their meal items at the point of sale, the camera matches their unique identifier to their cashless account to take payment or matches the student against their free school meal entitlement, if applicable.



How the transaction process works:

Consent

Students must opt-in to use Facial Recognition before an image is taken. If students do not consent to using the software, the till operator cannot activate the Facial Recognition process.

1. **Capture:** The biometric system captures an image of the student's face. This image is not retained, stored, or distributed to third parties, and Facial Recognition cameras are only located at the point of sale for school meal transactions.
2. **Collection:** The system reads distinctive features from the image and processes it through an algorithm. This process turns the image into a unique string of characters, which serves as the student's unique identifier. This unique identifier is stored on a secure, encrypted database within the Academy and is used to verify student accounts at the checkout.
3. **Identification:** During checkout, the cashier initiates the system to verify their account and process the transaction. The cashier must activate this process; the system is not live for students. A picture of the student is captured and processed through the algorithm to confirm their unique identifier and access their account. The image is not kept on record; only their unique identifier is stored.

Security of Facial Recognition

Biometrics, in this case, provides a unique identifier for the person present at the checkout. The unique identifier is created by processing the biometric capture through a mathematical algorithm, generating a unique number. Only this number is stored; the captured image is not retained. This data is encrypted using AES 256 (similar to encryption used by your online banking) and cannot be reversed to produce an image of the biometric, ensuring the highest level of security and compliance.

How do I get started?

Like all biometric recognition methods, Facial Recognition requires consent. Please give consent through the Arbor app.

Questions

We have prepared some frequently asked questions on our school website. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact Mrs D Deeming, School Business Manager (st-deeming-d@bluecoatacademy.org).