

Data Protection Ireland

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- Property prices should be published in categories, says Hawkes, p.14
- AIB warns of online scamming, p.15
- Google to address Swiss concerns, p.16

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Twice-a-day fingerprinting spells trouble for school

A secondary school in Co. Limerick is being investigated by the Data Protection Commissioner for potential breach of data protection law after installing a biometric system for monitoring pupils' attendance.

The system involves 420 students at Salesian College in Pallaskenry being fingerprinted when they arrive in the morning and return after lunch. The Commissioner, Billy Hawkes, has contacted the school with questions. The school is expected to respond shortly.

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has produced guidelines

which pertain to the introduction of biometrics in school. The guidelines make it clear that the use of biometrics on minors is not outlawed in principle. However, the requirements for legitimising such a system are such that it seems unlikely that the Commissioner will endorse it.

Diarmuid Hallinan from the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner told *Data Protection Ireland*:

“the critical issues to be considered from a data protection perspective are the proportionality of introducing a biometric system, and the requirement to obtain the signed

consent of the student users (and their parents or guardians in the majority of cases where the students are minors), giving them a clear and unambiguous right to opt out of the system without penalty.

“The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner is not aware of any circumstances in which such a system could be introduced without the explicit consent of users.”

A school that introduced a fingerprinting system two years ago subsequently ceased the practice after being contacted by the Commissioner.

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Government to develop cyber strategy

The Minister for Communication, Éamon Ryan, has announced that he has commissioned a report on Ireland's ability to deal with cyber attacks.

The report will contain a review of current international best practice on cyber security, as well as structures that should be developed to oversee the government's response to cyber attacks.

According to Mr Ryan “a national cyber security strategy will increase our readiness in the event of an attack and work to make our hardware, software, networks and connections safer.”

Consultation with industry experts and across government will begin shortly, and a strategy will be finalised by the end of the year.

Brian Honan, Director of BH Consulting, told *Data Protection Ireland*: “Given the importance of the ICT sector to the Irish economy and our critical infrastructure I welcome this initiative by Minister Ryan.

“My hope is that whoever wins this particular contract develops a strategy that is developed based

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