

CCTV considerations

The use of CCTV systems involves the processing of personal data, and so any system must operate in compliance with the Data Protection Acts. In a school context, this involves having regard to the rights of staff and pupils in relation to the processing of their personal data. The use of CCTV should be justifiable, necessary, proportionate and reasonable.

1. A data protection impact assessment should be carried out by the board of management to assess the potential risks of personal data breaches and state how such risks will be addressed.
2. A consultation process should be undertaken by the board of management with staff, pupils and parents and following a privacy impact assessment being carried out. This process should address a number of areas relating to its installation including the underpinning principles, its purpose (primarily for security purposes), justification, location, access, signage and notification, potential covert security, retention and storage procedures, use of third party companies and responsibilities attached to its installation and use.
3. If the school is engaging the services of a third party company to operate or control the CCTV system (such as a commercial security company), the school must put a written data processing agreement in place with that security company.
4. A CCTV policy should then be drawn up based on the areas outlined in the consultation process. It should be discussed before ratification by the board of management. The policy should be circulated to the school community and be reviewed at regular intervals.
5. The location of the CCTV cameras should be chosen with great care and should not be erected in places where individuals would have a reasonable expectation of privacy.
6. A notice informing people that CCTV is in operation should be displayed in a prominent position in areas where CCTV recordings are being made and also at the entrance to the school property. The sign should be clear and legible.
7. The CCTV system should only be accessible by the principal or other school employees who need to have access to the data (such as the deputy principal in the principal's absence). An access log should be maintained by the school, stating who accessed the recordings/images, on what dates and times and for what purposes.
8. The school will have to ensure that it can provide data subjects with copies of that subject's images captured by the CCTV system, pursuant to a data access request. We would advise that, in such a scenario, the school contacts the school insurer for advice.
9. Schools should be aware that the images captured on CCTV may have to be handed over to An Gardaí Síochana as part of inquiries into criminal activity.