

## News release

21 April 2011

### **School in Oldham breaches Data Protection Act**

Freehold Community School in Oldham has been found in breach of the Data Protection Act after the theft of an unencrypted laptop from a teacher's car, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said today. The laptop contained personal information relating to 90 pupils at the school.

The school reported the breach to the ICO in January after an unencrypted laptop was stolen from the boot of a teacher's car when parked at their home overnight. The ICO's enquiries found that the school was unaware of the need to encrypt portable and mobile storage devices, although it did have a policy in place informing staff that storage devices should not be kept in cars when away from the school premises.

Acting Head of Enforcement, Sally-Anne Poole said:

"It is vitally important that organisations take the necessary precautions to ensure that people's personal information remains secure. The fact that the school was unaware of the need to encrypt the information stored on their laptop shows that many organisations continue to process personal information without having the most basic of security measures in place.

"We are pleased that Freehold Community School has taken action to ensure that pupils' personal information will be better protected in the future."

Joyce Willetts, Head Teacher, of Freehold Community School, has signed an undertaking to ensure that portable and mobile devices including laptops and other portable media used to store and transmit personal data are encrypted using encryption software which meets the current standard or equivalent. Staff will also be trained on how to follow the schools policy for the storage and use of personal data and the school has agreed that its policies on data protection and IT security issues will be appropriately and regularly monitored.

A full copy of the undertaking can be viewed here:

[http://www.ico.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_cover/promoting\\_data\\_privacy/taking\\_action.aspx#undertakings](http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/promoting_data_privacy/taking_action.aspx#undertakings)

## **ENDS**

If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 0303 123 9070 or visit the website at: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Information Commissioner's Office upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.
2. The ICO has specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
3. The ICO is on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and produces a monthly [e-newsletter](#). Our [For the media](#) page provides more information for journalists.
4. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles of the Data Protection Act, which make sure that personal information is:
  - Fairly and lawfully processed
  - Processed for limited purposes
  - Adequate, relevant and not excessive
  - Accurate and up to date
  - Not kept for longer than is necessary

- Processed in line with your rights
  - Secure
  - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection
5. The ICO has produced guidance for schools, colleges and other educational institutions explaining their obligations under the Data Protection Act which can be found on the ICO website [here](#).
  6. The ICO has also produced guidance on the security measures organisations should take to protect personal data and this can be found on the ICO website [here](#).