

CCTV cameras should not be installed in all classrooms in the UK

Over the past two decades, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras have been widely introduced into shops, streets and public spaces in order to attempt to reduce crime. In the United Kingdom, there are an estimated four million cameras in use – more than any other country in the world. It was hoped that CCTV would help cut crime, but, despite the billions of pounds spent on this technology, crime rates have not fallen since the introduction of cameras. A recent study shows just 3% of street crime in London was solved using evidence from CCTV cameras.

Most secondary schools in the UK have over twenty CCTV cameras, allegedly to help everyone feel safer. However, although cameras may help to identify a person who has committed a crime (although people can hide their faces if they want to) they do not help to *prevent* it from happening. It is a fact that the majority of schools do not have the budget available to employ a team of people to watch what is happening on monitors and therefore stop crimes in progress. One person can only efficiently watch eight CCTV screens at a time, so the average school would need to employ three people just to watch screens, and an additional member of staff to allow those three people to have breaks.

Some people argue that introducing CCTV greatly reduces the incidence of antisocial crimes such as graffiti, therefore saving schools thousands of pounds each year. However, the expense of buying the camera system and employing security staff far outweighs any supposed savings. Surely schools should spend this money on better facilities for their students? Students who attend schools with better facilities and more clubs are much less likely to commit crimes in school.

In addition to the clear cost implications of CCTV, the issue of privacy must be considered. Some schools even have CCTV cameras installed in toilets and changing rooms! It has been argued that CCTV cameras in changing rooms help to prevent bullying, but a teacher is always in charge of a class during a P.E. lesson, and that teacher is also present and in charge of student safety in the changing rooms. Some people argue that cameras should be installed into all classrooms in the UK as this will improve pupil behaviour. Yet it is a fact that schools already have effective systems of managing pupil behaviour, and that CCTV is likely to simply distract pupils from learning and teachers from teaching.

In summary, CCTV cameras have proved totally ineffective in schools; they do not prevent crime and are a huge waste of money which could be better spent. Furthermore, they are an invasion of the privacy of students and staff, who have the right to learn and teach without being watched at every turn. The time has come to insist that cameras are not installed in classrooms, and are actually removed from all schools in the UK.