

Big Brother is watching...

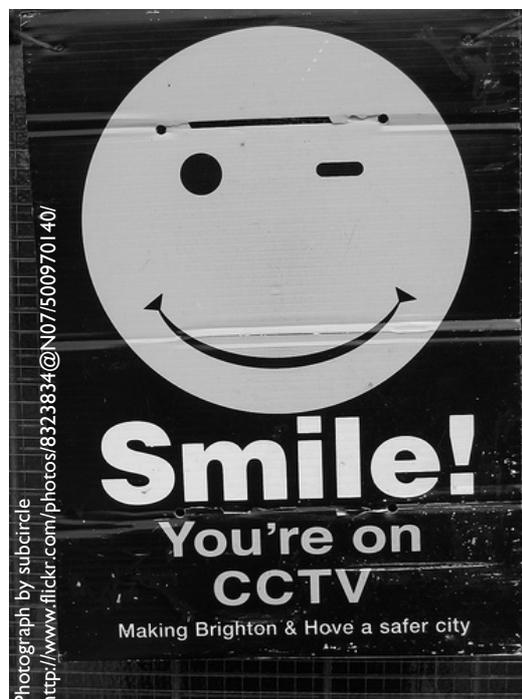
Big Brother is watching...

In shock proposals revealed today, the Department of Learning and Education is considering installing CCTV cameras in all primary and secondary schools under their control.

In the wake of recent criticism concerning exam results and falling standards in education, this scheme, expected to cost in the region of £20 million, would allow the Government to pinpoint the causes of underachievement in the classroom. In a move reminiscent of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, each school will have a linked network of cameras that will be continuously monitored by security staff. The Government claim that monitoring and tracking classroom activity across the country is a vital first step in raising standards.

Although it is not clear where the necessary funding would come from, teachers' unions have expressed an interest in the new plans. This means that the cameras may be installed and operational as early as next year. A spokesperson from the National Teachers' Union said the cameras would 'prove useful in tackling issues such as bullying where the victim is often reluctant to come forward'.

The plans have received a mixed response from parents. Some fear this move would violate their child's right to privacy and that taped evidence might be used against them. Others have welcomed it as they feel 'something needs to be done... kids' behaviour is out of control'.



CCTV poster in Brighton

The main Head Teachers' Union (HTU) reacted positively, stating that this move would be a welcome measure in classrooms and provide a 'deterrent to poor behaviour and protect both pupils and staff from the seemingly ever-growing threat of violent behaviour within schools'. Security staff monitoring the cameras would react to events as they happened, providing much needed support to teachers. Legal experts have said that, had it been available, taped evidence would have brought a swift conclusion to the August court case in which a Head Teacher was accused of assaulting a student; an allegation that was later found to be false.

A consultation panel headed by the Minister for Education will meet later this week to discuss the proposals before making a final decision about the future of the plans.

Big Brother is watching...

The Department of Learning and Education, headteachers, teachers' unions and parents have all had a chance to express their views. But what about the students?

Consider the following questions which may help organise your response to the article. You don't have to write out 'full' answers; bullet points, mindmaps key words or sketches are fine – the purpose of the questions is to get you thinking, not to test you!

1. What are your first thoughts and your main reaction to this proposal?

Quickly jot down your ideas.

2. What are the key facts about the proposal?

Look carefully for factual information. What is relevant?

3. What are the positives and negatives that might come from this proposal?

Consider both sides of the argument and try to imagine what each group of people affected by the scheme would say about it.

4. Why does the government feel they need to propose this scheme?

What creative or alternative ideas can you come up with? What would you prefer to happen? Can you suggest a different new idea or solution to the problem?

5. Finally, organise your ideas before sharing your views with others.

Look over the notes that you have made. Re-read the article and check that the points you have made fully explain your point of view.

The notes you have made should give you something to say as we talk through the following points during the class/group discussion.

Big Brother is watching...

Using your notes on the article, take part in a class/group discussion about the ideas presented. Pointers to help structure the discussion are provided below.

- How would you feel if in every classroom there was a camera recording everything that you, your classmates and teacher were doing at every moment?
- Would this be a positive or negative thing in schools?
- What impact would it have? Would it make a difference or be ignored?
- How do you imagine students, teachers and parents would react to the use of CCTV within schools?
- Are there better ways to meet the aims of the proposal?

Extension/follow up tasks...

Choose one of the following tasks to help explore the issue further. Remember to tailor your writing to suit your purpose, audience and form.

- 1) Write to either the Prime Minister, Director for Education, your MP, or Head Teacher to let them know what you think and feel and how you would react to this proposal.
- 2) Create an information leaflet on the scheme that will be sent to all students. Be factual and informative. You should make sure you convey the benefits of the scheme very clearly.
- 3) Write the website page for your school that outlines the proposals for parents. You should make the information clear and write informatively about the scheme and the expected impact on students.
- 4) You are the Director of Education and will be visiting a local school. Write a speech promoting the proposals. You should try to persuade your audience that the plans are vital and that it will be a successful scheme. You know that there will be people in the audience who are against the idea and you will need to be ready for them.
- 5) As a journalist, you covered the Director of Education's visit to the local school. Write an article about the visit and about the speech that was made. You should try to include some details of the speech and the reaction from the audience to the proposals.
- 6) There is to be public debate to discuss the proposals. Write a short statement expressing your views and plan out five questions you will ask during the debate. How will you vote?