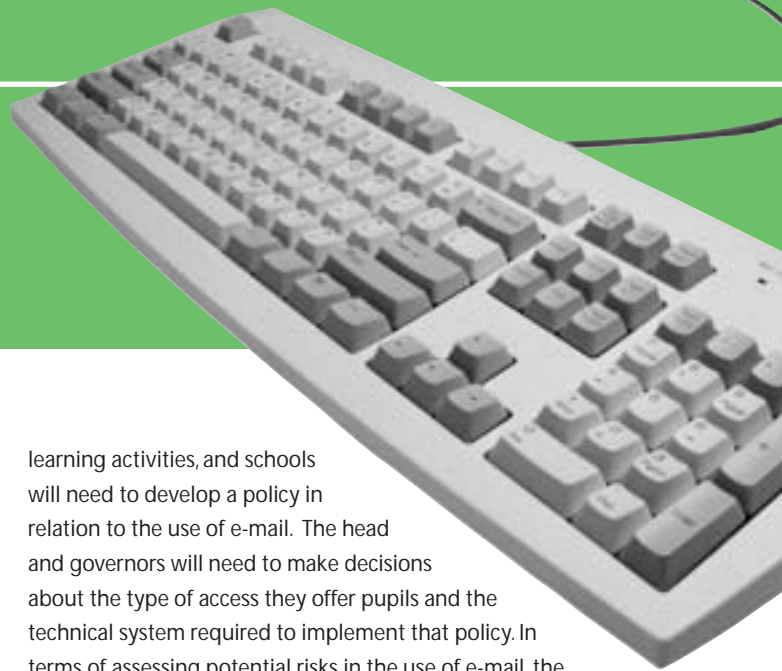




# E-mail addresses at school



## Introduction – e-mail systems

E-mail systems can be set up and administered in a variety of ways with different levels of access and control over what can be sent and to whom. For example, a school e-mail system might be set up so that no pupil is able to send and receive external e-mail.

In this type of 'closed system' pupils are only able to send and receive e-mail from other pupils or staff at the same school. Pupils could still exchange e-mails with partner schools all over the world, but the correspondence would go through the teacher.

This is similar to the way that a fax or a letter from a partner school would normally go through a teacher and not directly to a pupil.

At the other end of the spectrum, pupils could be provided with full e-mail access, and they would be able to send and receive e-mail to and from any current e-mail address anywhere in the world. In this scenario, teachers are unable to keep effective track of the nature and content of the correspondence, or to offer support and feedback.

In reality, schools are most likely to require a system that falls somewhere in between the two examples cited. Schools may want to restrict some pupils to using internal e-mail only, whilst providing others with greater access. Similarly, schools may wish to provide limited external e-mail access to some pupils so that they can only send and receive e-mail to and from a previously specified list of addresses. At the same time, schools may wish to provide full external e-mail access to their staff.

Schools will want to reduce the risk of unsolicited attention put on individual pupils from people outside the school. In an open e-mail system, the individual pupil address `firstname.lastname@schoolname.geographical location.sch.uk` allows for the possibility of people outside of the school to contact pupils direct. A class/teaching group e-mail address system protects anonymity and therefore reduces the risk of unsolicited attention.

As with any classroom activity, teachers will want to assess the potential risks of using e-mail as part of the teaching and

learning activities, and schools will need to develop a policy in relation to the use of e-mail. The head and governors will need to make decisions about the type of access they offer pupils and the technical system required to implement that policy. In terms of assessing potential risks in the use of e-mail, the most important factor is the level of external e-mail access you provide to your pupils.

## Access to e-mail systems

There are a range of ways in which schools can provide e-mail access:

**Access is provided by the local education authority or other intermediaries, such as the Technology College Trust**

- A range of e-mail access solutions are offered with differing standards and levels of control from closed community web based mail to full server based systems.
- The costs of these services are often complex to determine as they link to other services, such as support for administration, professional development and closed user communities.
- Generally advertising is not used, although links to services offered by the organisation and partners may be included.
- Management support is often linked to a service subscription for other services, such as overall technical support, or is funded through NGfL implementation plans and centrally retained Standards Fund.
- Many schools use such services and welcome the role played by the organisation as it ensures e-mail is part of a broader strategy and solution.

**Schools buy in to Education ISP providers, such as RM and Edex.**

- Service providers offer a range of solutions to schools appropriate to their requirements with full and open Internet access to highly managed and supported services.





- Schools can be supported in managing their own e-mail services with their own domain name for e-mail and web addressing, and this can be server or web-based. The higher the level of management support required, the higher the charge.
- Generally an aggressive default filtering service is provided which schools can adapt to meet their requirements. E-mail tends to have similar support, with e-mail addressing controlled to meet the school's requirements, so that pupils and staff can only send and receive e-mail from approved addresses.
- Schools can generally provide different levels of control appropriate to the user.
- Generally advertising is not used although links to major educational sites and schools are included.
- Web-based e-mail can be accessed from any computer connected to the Internet, although this can be adapted to meet the requirements of the school.
- Many schools use such services.

### Schools purchase education portal service providers, with secure and controlled communities, such as DigitalBrain and Schoolmaster

- Services of this type often provide some free services alongside charged services. A higher degree of service and control is often a part of the charged service.
- Products are developed for the school's market, generally in the UK, with a clear understanding of the sensitivities over use of e-mail and the potential harm, perceived and real, from open access to the Internet.
- The services offer web-based e-mail, closed chat rooms and personal workspaces, controlled by user name and password, with the opportunity to localise the school's own e-mail name and standards for pupil and staff e-mails.
- The provision of access internally and externally from school is a key selling point of these services.
- It is possible to restrict e-mail and access communities.
- The administrative set-up tools are generally provided to teachers and local administrators with some central support.
- Costs may vary.

- Sites tend to contain structured web links and specific learning materials, including those published by the school and other schools within a local community.
- Any advertising tends to concern education services.

### Schools buy public ISP services with secure service options, accessible over the Internet, such as AOL

- This is a full client and web-based e-mail service that can be purchased by schools as well as members of the public.
- The settings allow materials to be filtered, access to 'chat' is prevented or managed, and e-mail addresses can be prescribed. The network manager can control e-mail address creation and password setting.
- The service allows pupils to access their e-mail in school as well as outside of school - at home or elsewhere - providing an Internet connection is available.
- The service includes some advertising.
- There is a wide range of access across the service within the prescribed settings. However, many of the settings are defined by the ISP and personalised control is limited. There is an increasing emphasis on providing a personal desktop area and web space for storing work and general publishing.
- It is straightforward to manage and administer an e-mail system such as this. However, naming conventions are driven by the service provider and generally include numbers in order to manage a large subscriber base.

### Schools allow pupils to access free, web-based e-mail, such as Yahoo or Hotmail accounts

- This web-based e-mail system provides schools with a free e-mail system, with unlimited e-mail addresses, but no real tools to control the use and access of e-mail by pupils.
- E-mail can be accessed from any computer with access to the Internet anywhere in the world. Increasingly e-mail can be accessed via WAP and digital TV.
- Access from home as well as school provides a ready means of communications and transfer of work.
- Security is dependent on a single password and user name which the user can change if required.

- No audit trail is provided to track how e-mail has been used, who has been communicated with, nor what has been said.
- It is easy to add a new pupil to the e-mail system, although naming conventions are generally not within the control of the school and there is no facility to use sch.uk domain names.
- The web space contains adverts and links to many products and services which may be deemed undesirable.

### Schools develop their own individual solutions

- Some schools have developed a range of solutions that are particular to their staffing and resources and often develop a partnership with an ISP who could be a university, a commercial company, or other organisation.
- This can be cause for concern as they are at times in the charge of an 'enthusiast' who may not see the difficulties or the issues fully addressed through the school's policy and decision making processes.
- This category of school and service provider mix is not sustainable and is therefore not recommended.

### Guidelines

- A class/teaching group e-mail address system for use outside a closed system reduces the risk of inappropriate use. Consider using addresses such as: class4@ambleside.cumbria.sch.uk for primary classes and Y10MJscience@ for secondary teaching groups.
- In a closed system people from outside the school do not have access to individual e-mail addresses and pupils do not have access outside of school so there is a reduced risk of inappropriate use. In this system, individual pupil name e-mail addresses can be used.
- Regular checks by teachers of incoming and outgoing mail will reveal cases of inappropriate use.
- Asking pupils, parents and staff to sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) or code of conduct for e-mail use ensures that everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities. An example of an AUP is contained within this pack.
- Teaching pupils about writing and social conventions in the use of e-mail equips them with the necessary skills to communicate effectively.
- Producing a recognised policy of treating all incoming and outgoing e-mail as public reduces the risk of inappropriate content or use.

- Producing a recognised procedure for reporting the misuse of e-mail and the subsequent sanctions reduces the risk of inappropriate use.
- It is recognised that some schools have already set up individual e-mail accounts rather than class based or closed systems and they will want to review their security arrangements to ensure an effective and safe system.

Examples of good practice are available on the Superhighway Safety web site.

### First steps and things to think about...

- Establish your requirements for your school e-mail system prior to selecting a solution.
- Examine how your requirements can be accommodated into your local network administration and infrastructure.
- Ensure that you understand the mechanisms for making changes to staff or pupil e-mail privileges. Some systems allow you to make these changes yourself, whilst others may require the service provider to carry out all changes on your behalf. Most network and e-mail systems will support a range of different options; some may require additional hardware or software in order to implement your particular system.

