

Wellington College's upcoming change to Gmail



Dear Staff,

As of **30th November 2009** Wellington College will officially be a "Google Apps" School. This is a significant change to our email system which will be of benefit to both staff and students.

This change was indicated early in Term Three during staff Friday PD sessions. Throughout the year many staff and students have set up their own Google Accounts to work with a range of Google Apps to support their teaching and learning.

David Lynch (IT Services Manager) and I have done a lot of preparation for this move. We have researched the technical and administrative aspects and talked to other schools and companies that have made the switch. Please be assured that Gmail is a completely safe and stable form of email and that **your current school email address will not change.**

Why change to Gmail?

There are benefits and good reasons for making this change, some of which I will outline here:

More storage

Gmail offers every user (staff and student) 7.388 GB of storage. This amount is continuously growing. To give you an indication of how much this is, I have been using Gmail for all communications for over 14 months and have used just 5% of the available storage. If I was still on the school mail system I would have been told many times that my mailbox was full.



Web application – same interface

Gmail is webmail meaning that we access it over the internet. This means that it is the same whether you access it from within school (over the internet) or at home.

Reliability & Savings

Gmail is far more reliable than our current system. Gmail has gone down twice in the past year for a maximum of about 2 hours on each occasion. No mail was lost. This outage made international news as so many people depend on it.

Our current mail system is hosted internally and is costly. We rely on and pay for the maintenance of a mail server. Everyone in the school would have experienced some form of annoying outage, particularly earlier in the year.

Better functionality

Gmail has better and more intuitive functions than MS Outlook. Some of these are:

- **Search** – Google has the most powerful search engine in the world. You can use this to *easily* search senders or receivers of mail along with key words within all mail.
- **Folder archiving** – You can create coloured tags (folders) and apply more than one to an email. This allows for easy organisation of older emails

- **Conversation grouping** – This is one of the best functions of Gmail. Often you send an email to a group of people and there are replies from some and then you reply back etc. Conversation grouping keeps all of the related emails together as one email – this is very sensible and not possible in MS Outlook
- **Superior Spam Filtering** – There will be far less spam than we receive in our current email system

Ongoing Google Development

Normally we have to wait 3-4 years for Microsoft to upgrade or add new features to Outlook. This is because it is an application stored on your computer.

Gmail, however, is undergoing continuous development and improvement. New features are added seamlessly (without disruption) and can be used when and if you choose.

Improved communication

On the whole our students do not use their College email addresses. They have chosen to use other webmail services instead. This means that we can spend a lot of time collecting these email addresses which they often change.

The intention with Gmail is that the students will have the one Gmail Address for their time at Wellington College and this will integrate into other systems and services that we are introducing in coming months. Students will be able to forward email to or from their school Gmail address if they so wish.

Gmail will also give students and staff other services such as Google Calendar, Google Docs and Google Sites. This will easily allow teachers to enable online collaboration into their lessons. It will also allow those running College activities to set up websites (Google Sites) and add students into these activities. The benefits for communication and collaboration are obvious.

Students and teachers will also be able to have emails forwarded to their mobile phones which within the next 2-3 years will be the norm.



What does the change mean for staff?

We have decided to make this change when it is of **least disruption** to staff and at a time when staff can be assisted through the process.

Teachers email addresses will NOT CHANGE. Only the service which hosts them will. As you can see from the screenshot alongside, my username is a simple sign-in at a Wellington College Gmail site.

It is possible to run Gmail through Microsoft Outlook. However, when outside school you would need to use the Gmail web interface.

We have therefore decided that all teaching staff should use the Gmail web system exclusively from Beginning December to Mid February. This will allow you all to become familiar with what the

students will be using from February next year. It will also allow you to easily integrate with the other Google Apps tools such as Docs, Calendar and Sites.

If you want to run Gmail through Microsoft Outlook during school hours, then come Mid February you can make a request for that to be enabled. But until then please try using the Gmail interface – millions of others are.

How and when this change will occur

8.30am Friday 27th November – Staff PD: Presentation about the Google Apps (including Gmail) and other new systems to be introduced over coming months

4pm Friday 27th November: All staff email will be taken offline and unavailable during the weekend when the changeover occurs.

Saturday 28th – Sunday 29th November: The IT services staff will transfer all of your old emails from Microsoft Outlook over to the Gmail system. Any emails that you have archived and are stored in a file on your laptops will not be added – This can be done a week or two later.

Monday 30th November: There will be 45 minute training sessions run throughout the day in room SR1. **Please ensure that you attend ONE of these sessions when you are free.**

They will be held during periods 1-5 and lunch. You should bring a laptop if you have one.

The sessions will be hands on and take staff through:

- Folders – setting up and organising emails
- Contacts – importing and creating groups
- Settings – signature, email forwarding, adding other accounts, themes
- Labs – Multiple inboxes, Google Docs previews, etc

Additional sessions will be run in the following two days if any staff members miss out.

I will also be available to staff over the remainder of the Term if any assistance is required.

Are we alone in this change?

This change does not mean that Wellington College is taking a plunge into the unknown.

Thousands of schools and Universities around the world have made this change. Many schools around New Zealand have made the decision to switch.

Additionally, Google Apps Education Edition is a free version and almost identical to the Google Apps Business Edition which is a paid service. Businesses and Large companies around the world and in New Zealand have [made this switch](#) including our very own [New Zealand Post](#).

The change will be worth it.

Thanks and regards,



Mark Callagher,
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Wellington College