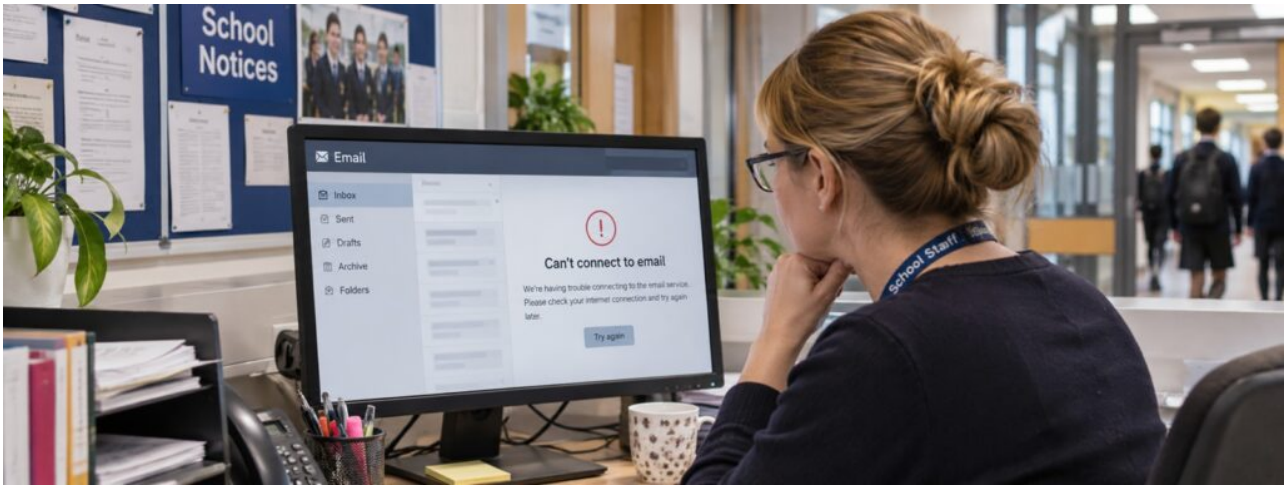
Microsoft Outlook Outage Disrupts UK Schools as Parents Urged to Use Alternative Contact Methods

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Schools, colleges and universities across the UK are experiencing significant communication problems following a worldwide Microsoft 365 outage, leaving staff unable to access emails and prompting warnings to parents about contacting schools electronically.

Schools across the United Kingdom have been caught up in a major global Microsoft outage, disrupting essential communication systems and leaving education providers struggling to send and receive emails.

The technical problems, which began on Thursday evening and continued into Friday morning, have affected Microsoft Outlook, Teams and other Microsoft 365 services used extensively throughout the education sector.

Several schools have issued urgent notices advising parents and carers to avoid relying on email for important communications and instead contact school offices by telephone.

The disruption has affected educational institutions alongside businesses, healthcare organisations and public services around the world.

Schools Warn Parents of Communication Problems

For many schools, Microsoft Outlook provides a primary communication channel between teaching staff, administrators, parents and external organisations.

The widespread outage has therefore created immediate difficulties for schools attempting to manage routine enquiries, respond to parents and coordinate administrative activities.

Fleetwood High School in Lancashire was among the schools reporting problems on Friday morning, warning parents and pupils that email communications were affected and advising anyone requiring an urgent response to telephone the school office.

Other educational establishments, including Galashiels Academy, Hele’s School and Doncaster College, were also reported to have experienced disruption.

Although the problems have affected communications, schools issuing notices have generally indicated that normal educational activities should continue wherever possible.

Parents have been encouraged to follow individual school guidance and use established telephone contact arrangements for urgent matters.

Universities Also Affected by Worldwide Disruption

The outage has extended beyond primary and secondary education, with universities and further education institutions reporting problems accessing Microsoft services.

The University of Manchester confirmed that disruption was affecting Outlook, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint and OneDrive.

Staff were warned that the problems could prevent them from sending or receiving emails, accessing shared documents, joining online meetings or using calendar functions.

The University of Bath also reported that Outlook remained inaccessible to staff on Friday morning, although basic Microsoft Teams functionality appeared to be working.

These problems demonstrate the extent to which educational organisations now depend on integrated cloud-based systems for everyday operations.

Email, shared files, calendars and digital collaboration platforms have become central to both teaching and administration, meaning that disruption to a major technology provider can affect multiple functions simultaneously.

Microsoft Working to Restore Services

Microsoft has acknowledged the widespread problems and confirmed that engineers are working to restore affected systems.

The company has attempted several recovery measures, including adjustments to its infrastructure and rerouting network traffic.

However, some servers brought back into operation reportedly became unresponsive again, complicating efforts to restore normal service.

Microsoft subsequently reported encouraging signs of improved server stability following changes to an authentication and routing component, although recovery was still being monitored.

The company has also stated that there is no indication that the incident was caused by malicious activity or a cyberattack.

According to outage monitoring service Downdetector, reports of Microsoft service problems increased sharply on Thursday evening, with nearly 130,000 reports involving Outlook at the peak of the disruption.

The incident has affected users internationally, demonstrating the scale of the technology failure.

Growing Reliance on Digital Systems Raises Questions for Schools

The outage highlights an increasingly important operational issue facing schools and academy trusts: maintaining effective communication when essential cloud-based services become unavailable.

Many education providers rely on Microsoft 365 for staff communications, document storage, meeting arrangements and administrative processes.

While these platforms offer substantial benefits in terms of efficiency and collaboration, the current disruption illustrates the potential consequences of depending on a limited number of technology systems.

For schools, reliable communication is particularly important when dealing with safeguarding concerns, pupil attendance, urgent parental enquiries and changes to daily arrangements.

The inability to access email, even temporarily, can create additional pressure on school reception teams and administrative staff who must manage enquiries through alternative channels.

The incident may encourage schools and multi-academy trusts to review their business continuity arrangements, including the availability of emergency communication methods that operate independently of their main email provider.

What Should Schools and Parents Do?

While Microsoft continues restoration efforts, education providers are being encouraged to make practical adjustments to minimise disruption.

For parents, this means checking school websites or other established communication channels for updates and contacting school offices by telephone where an urgent response is required.

School administrators should also consider alternative arrangements for time-sensitive communications, while ensuring that personal information and safeguarding records continue to be handled securely.

The University of Manchester has additionally warned staff to remain cautious about unexpected messages claiming to provide Microsoft account fixes or password resets, highlighting the importance of maintaining cybersecurity precautions during a widespread service interruption.

Further Updates Expected

Microsoft continues to work on restoring affected services, with the situation remaining subject to change as recovery measures are implemented.

For schools, the immediate priority is maintaining communication with families and ensuring that essential educational and administrative functions can continue.

Beyond the immediate disruption, the incident serves as a reminder of the importance of resilient IT infrastructure, effective contingency planning and alternative communication arrangements across the education sector.

Schools and parents are advised to monitor official communications from their individual education providers for the latest information about affected services.