

“The new solution’s revised workflows dictate that any new information is clearly documented and understood by everyone in a timely manner. Also, new conversations are happening between parents and staff. It’s a big success.”

— Sally Gates, Operations Manager  
Canberra Grammar School



## By streamlining workflows, Canberra Grammar School is nurturing a connected parent-teacher community

With a history bursting with academic, sporting and artistic achievement, it’s no wonder that Canberra Grammar School (CGS) has such a notable reputation within the community.

Founded in 1929, CGS – an independent Anglican school – has grown to cater for more than 1,700 students ranging from Pre-school to Year 12.

CGS prides itself on preparing students for the challenges of society, helping them become intelligent, innovative, international, confident and compassionate leaders.

Not only is CGS an International Baccalaureate World School, it is also the only boarding school for boys in the ACT, as well as the only school in the ACT to offer the NSW Higher School Certificate.

## The Challenges

Meeting best practice standards, CGS updates student details annually, including contact numbers and medical records.

By 2014, the process of updating student details annually – which involved 1,700 students and only a small administrative team – was starting to

feel cumbersome, and staff workloads were steadily getting heavier.

The process involved hard copy forms being sent home with students and completed by parents; once returned, administrative staff would manually enter information into CGS’s Student Management System. According to Sally Gates, CGS’s Operations Manager, “maintaining the entire database was a full-time job for two people, and updating all the details manually could take us up to six months.”

The process was costly and resulted in already-stretched staff members giving other tasks less focus. “Due to increasing compliance requirements, the administrative workload is about 50% higher than three years ago,” said Gates, “but additional staffing was not an option.”

To add to this challenge, less than 60% of forms were being returned to the School: “They’re often left at the bottom of school bags,” explained Gates, “or one parent thinks the other has filled it in, and it gets forgotten.” Consequently, the database contained an amount of out-of-date information.

Additionally, the accuracy of students’ medical details relied on staff’s ability to decipher what was written on a form before entering it into the system. “We were getting inconsistencies,” explained Gates.

## The Solution

Driven by values such as openness, sincerity and support, CGS decided to audit and streamline their work practices in order to allow information to be updated faster and more easily.

In 2014, to help solve their information management challenges, CGS requested assistance from their partner of seven years, Fuji Xerox Australia.

Drawing on a wealth of experience in digitising and transforming information channels for educational institutions, Fuji Xerox designed and delivered a solution that would allow parents and guardians to communicate more directly and securely with the School regarding their children’s personal details, and which would also reduce the School’s administrative workload.

Fuji Xerox placed a digital eForm within the School’s existing Parent Portal. Now, when details need to be updated, the School notifies parents who then log into the Parent Portal – with their existing login credentials – and update the details in the eForm, which already contains pre-populated data. The new data is then automatically exported to the Student Management System where it undergoes digital checks. Once confirmed, the data is uploaded; if not, it moves to an exception queue, where staff manually review the data and contact parents for clarification if needed.

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Mark Sessions, a Fuji Xerox Solution Analyst who worked closely with CGS, describes how the School “was interested in a quality, refined solution that worked smoothly from day one, so we conducted multiple tests beforehand with individuals, then with teachers who were also parents, and then with parents, to ensure a smooth implementation.”

As a result, Fuji Xerox’s implementation of the new system went smoothly; Gates described how “a Fuji Xerox executive [Mark Sessions] helped me create workflows and forms, and worked with the database staff to oversee the eForm’s integration with our Student Management System”.

Sessions details how “the technical solution had some challenging requirements in seamlessly integrating it with the School’s existing systems, but we successfully accomplished it by working collaboratively with Fuji Xerox and CGS technical staff.”

## The Benefits

The implementation of the new workflow solution has delivered extensive benefits for CGS, including more balanced administrative workloads, regulatory compliance, and an increase in conversations between parents and staff.

### Benefit: Simpler for parents

The digital nature of the solution allows it to be pre-populated with existing data, which makes parents’ task of filling it in much simpler and quicker. Additionally, it is now more easily accessible, so parents are responding faster and more consistently.

And as Gates succinctly puts it, “In truth, people just don’t like filling in paper forms anymore; they prefer to do these things by email or online.”

The results certainly speak for themselves. “We’ve had a brilliant response to it — absolutely incredible,” Gates says. “Within the first week, we had at least one-third of student forms back; six weeks later this rose to over 65%. We can chase the rest individually now, because we can easily identify who has returned their forms.”

### Benefit: Accurate medical records

Parents now own the responsibility for accurately entering their children’s medical details, rather than staff needing to interpret what has been written on a form. “Now, parents just tick particular medical alert flags, which automatically alert the Health Clinic,” explains Gates. Any changes made to current medical information is confirmed by the Health Clinic’s team before being uploaded directly to the Student Management System. Gates adds, “The process is much faster.”

### Benefit: Higher return rate

By shifting the responsibility of the form’s whereabouts from student to parent and giving parents direct, online access to the form, the issue of forms being forgotten in the bottom of schoolbags is nullified.

### Benefit: Familiar, easy user experience

The solution uses the school’s existing parent portal, so users don’t have to learn a new system or remember another set of login details. This has been a key factor in the positive reception of the new communication method. Gates describes how “administrative staff showed no reticence to introduce the eForm at all. And from a parent’s perspective, they’re overwhelmingly positive.”



### **Benefit: Improved communication**

Another benefit is parents' ability to quickly – and discreetly – inform staff via the eForm of any significant changes within their family network. This has increased communication, and allows staff to adjust students' schedules or workloads if a crisis occurs at home.

Gates explains: "Court orders, divorces or serious illnesses can have a big impact on students, and those conversations between families and our pastoral care team are happening more readily now. The eForm has allowed a greater willingness to share sensitive information in a more confidential way; our workflow allows any issues to be followed up quickly in person by our senior pastoral leaders."

According to Sessions, the School "should be congratulated on their audacious commitment to their 'digital vision' which has streamlined interaction with parents."

### **Onwards and upwards**

"Now that we know what we can do," Gates says, "we're streaming ahead. It's just a matter of how many forms and processes we can change. We've already started on a number of projects, including an entirely online enrolment process, right from expression of interest to actually arriving at the school on day one, plus we're working on ways of streamlining the collection of disability data."

### **Future Benefit: Reduced staff workload**

According to Gates, the administrative staff will gain valuable time and work satisfaction when the new online-enrolment workflow is installed: "The online application process will save 50% of one person's time. With better workflows and digital processes, it won't take people away, but free them to do more necessary, high value tasks."



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