



Knowing Your School Website Audience

One of the hardest things for schools to get to grips with online, is who their key audience is. Find the answers in this important report.





Achieving Perfection with your School Website

Transform your **school website** into an effective, powerful communication tool.

GET IN TOUCH

- ✓ **Easy to use** School Website CMS
- ✓ **Powerful** Market Leading Features
- ✓ **Outstanding** Help and Support



Websites



App



Learning Wall



Voice



Branding



Training



Development



Design

Your Audience - Some Housekeeping

“You can see the evidence all over the place. Just do a search for the schools in your local area and you'll get a very mixed bag of results. You'll most likely find a handful of good websites that work well on different devices and with content that is kept well up to date. You'll also find a number of sites that are tricky to find your way around, don't work particularly well (if at all) on mobiles and tablets and content that is criminally out of date.

The main reason we see for this is that the system that many schools are still using to keep their school website up to date is difficult to use. Teachers and staff just don't feel they have the time because it's hard work. To really get to grips with your website you need something that makes it very, very easy to do, no matter where you are or what technology you have in place. That is priority number 1 and something that more and more schools are taking control of.”

Ian Richardson, Company Director

Get in touch: ian@schudio.com



HOW DO I KNOW WHO I'M TALKING TO?

5 KEY AUDIENCE GROUPS

Your School Website is the main gateway for anyone and everyone who is interested in your school and it is the first port of call for the vast majority of enquiries, whoever that enquiry is from. But knowing who is using your website isn't enormously complicated and getting a handle on it can make a BIG difference to how you engage them online.

In this report we'll talk through the 5 groups that are your key audiences, their main needs and how to meet them. Then we'll look at how they all tie together so you can realistically meet all their needs.

- ✓ Prospective Parents & Students
- ✓ Current Parents
- ✓ Current Students
- ✓ OFSTED
- ✓ Prospective Employees

Prospective Parents & Students

Many schools now have to market themselves to the school community and beyond. Competition is only increasing.

- ✓ **Grab their attention with beautiful photos**
If you have a professionally shot range of great photos, capturing life at your school, you have taken an enormous stride in engaging every audience group. Use them strategically on every page of your website to bring your content to life instantly.
- ✓ **Don't ever let your content be too static**
The single most important thing you can do to transform your school website into a site that users want to come back to again and again is to keep your content fresh. This isn't a nightmare with a good system. Keep your News and (if you're using them) blogs up to date and then the rest of the content only needs to be updated periodically.
- ✓ **Make sure your website works on every device**
It is vitally important that your school website doesn't exclude any part of the audience available to you. Given that even the most conservative data on mobile usage says that more than 40% of all website traffic is from a mobile device you can't miss this one. Your provider should now be able to offer you a *responsive website* and it shouldn't cost extra, it should be standard.
- ✓ **Create an audience specific section on your website**
See the example given below as a great, simple way of achieving this. Have a section on your site that is created specifically for people who are thinking about coming to your school. That makes them think they're wanted and provided for. A huge first step.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: www.carrhillschool.com

Who does this very well? Have a look at Carr Hill High School who have a section called "Join Our School". It's really easy to spot, really easy to find your way around and the content is clear and concise.

Current Parents

Parental engagement is a big deal for schools and it's hard to get right. Your website can help keep communication healthy.

- ✓ **Direct Parents to your website to access information**
From policies to uniform requirements, by directing parents to your website for key information and making sure it is current and relevant, parents will grow to know and accept that your website is the go to place. Make sure it's mobile friendly content though!
- ✓ **Add all News & Newsletters to your website every week**
Most schools send something out to homes regularly keeping parents up to date with what's happening in school. By making sure this information, which is important and hopefully interesting (!) is kept current and interesting, parents are much more likely to engage with it. This is especially true with online because parents can access the content as and when they want to (how many of your parents don't read the printed newsletters??)
- ✓ **Get your students involved**
Whether you're at a primary school or working with an older bunch of students, by getting them involved in adding News, Blog posts or even helping manage main site content, will see more interest from parents at home. Some schools put lots of effort into putting evidence of students' work on their website regularly so help with parental engagement but also supporting curriculum evidence in a brilliant new way.
- ✓ **Offer opportunities to engage *through* your website**
By having contact forms and comments available on blogs you go some way to engaging your school community. Link your website to social networks and tie all your content together across outlets and you raise your game significantly.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: www.unity.blackpool.org.uk

Unity Academy in Blackpool is a fantastic right-through school that while it is a *big* school, it does a fantastic job of fostering a small school community feel. Effective use of the website to engage the community is a key part in this effort.

Current Students

This is most certainly the hardest group to reach through your website, particularly as they get older, but it is possible.

✓ Get them involved

Many schools that have the best examples of websites that engage their current cohort of students have the students actively involved in the day to day management of their websites. Don't simply discount the idea because it sounds like a minefield!

✓ Celebrate their successes

The first thing to do is shout about what your students do well. Anything from listing your weekly 'Stars' to celebrating an incredible sporting achievement, from examples of work placements to the resounding success of your recent production. Add it to your school website in your News section and do it regularly. Name the students and tell them how proud you are of them.

✓ Spread the word, or get the students to!

The next natural step is to encourage your students to share and comment on the content you're adding to your website. If the content appeals to them (and is largely about them!) they will start to do this more and more. It takes a bit of management but get it right, foster healthy attitudes and the students can do a better job of marketing your school than you ever could!

✓ Create a Team

Put a member of staff in place to oversee a team of enthusiastic students who are actively involved on a regular basis in contributing to the content on your school website. They carry more clout with their peers in many instances and it is brilliant experience for them. We'd say this is an appropriate responsibility for students from Year 5 upwards, with oversight, naturally.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: www.rooseprimary.co.uk

Roose Primary have a 'Blog Squad' that is actively involved in the management of certain parts of their school website. They can only access the bits they're responsible for and any content is approved before it goes live, but the team has had a big impact on overall engagement with the school website.

OFSTED

OFSTED put demands on schools to meet certain requirements through their website and a little housekeeping makes this easy.

- ✓ **Meet all statutory requirements as a minimum**
Go through our free **FULL OFSTED READY WEBSITE REPORT** report that has been proven to contribute to outstanding OFSTED ratings. Everything you need to know to go beyond the minimum requirements is contained in this document and we keep it up to date so you don't need to worry about it at all.
- ✓ **Make content easy to locate and navigate**
OFSTED are NOT the most important visitors to your website, but to effectively cover yourself for a very short period of time leading up to and during an inspection your site at least needs to make HM Inspectors feel that they're important. Make what they need to see VERY easy to find from your homepage and tell them a bit about yourselves on a nice welcome page (inc photo of the head, whether you want to or not!)
- ✓ **Make sure you give them a true *feel* for your school community**
By adding news and events to your site regularly, by effectively using a mixture of both professional photos and day to day photos to bring your content to life, and by warmly welcoming all users to your site, Inspectors will naturally get a feel for what you're about. This is vital and covers so many things before they even knock on your door.
- ✓ **Be equipped to update any content *during* an inspection**
A good School Website Content Management System will empower you to keep your content up to date, day by day. If you have missed a little something on your website and you're able to say, "hang on a tick" and upload that specific policy to your site in a jiffy, in-house, a potential problem is instantly resolved. Don't underestimate the power and importance of the control being in your hands.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: www.gillibrand.lancs.sch.uk

Gillibrand Primary have a lovely, warm welcome from the Head and have clear, easy to find and engaging content that covers every single requirement. Guess what? They've just been rated OUTSTANDING!

Prospective Employees

The first place prospective employees look will be definitely be your website because it can give them the best first impression.

- ✓ **The first port of call**
Whenever someone spots an advertisement for a vacancy at your school, the first thing they'll do if they're remotely interested is visit your website. So it is incredibly important that the best applicants think that yours is a school at which they'd like to work.
- ✓ **Give them a real feel for what you are about as a school**
Follow some of the tips above when giving your prospective parents and OFSTED Inspectors a true feel for what you're about and you're on to a winner. The same content is enormously relevant but go a step further. Have a single page, easy to find, that contains information and quotes from current staff on what it is like to be part of your school community.
- ✓ **Provide an opportunity to engage**
Give your prospective employees the opportunity to get in touch really easily and actively encourage it. The very best sites offer an opportunity to apply to your school from within your website, not via a third party website or through the Local Authority.
- ✓ **Follow all the above ...**
All the tips and tricks for all 4 previous audience groups are relevant to future employees. The best applicants want a real feel for your community; opportunities to excel, to shine; opportunities to get involved with the exciting things that you do day to day at your school. They can't feel they want to get involved if they don't know what's going on!



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: jobs.blackpoolsixth.ac.uk

This is a specific microsite for Job Vacancies for Blackpool Sixth Form College and so it's not the normal example but it gives you a super example to follow, even if you just take the key elements.



Teachers Who ...

are experts in their subject and active learners themselves, demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject and the business of learning, positively relate their teaching to the world beyond schooling and have the highest expectations of themselves and their pupils regardless of background



Pupils Who ...

are active learners who seek out knowledge and skills through their experiences in the classroom and beyond, are polite and motivated and who understand where they are in their learning and how to improve it and understand that the core business of schooling is learning and who have high expectations of themselves and their teachers



Leaders Who ...

understand that their core business is teaching and learning, are relentless in their pursuit of excellence, actively seek creativity and innovation, drive standards through high expectations, accurate performance data and clear actions for improvement and inspire teachers and pupils alike

Combine all these for MAGIC!

Take all these best practices and stay on top of them!

A great school website meets the needs of all these audience groups and a great school website company empowers you take full control of your and showcase your school in the very best possible light. To achieve all this you need a website that is ...

- ✓ Bright and colourful and representative of your brand and ethos
- ✓ Easy to use, Easy to navigate, Easy to update
- ✓ Inclusive of all your audience naturally by creating real, rich content
- ✓ Beautiful & Powerful on any device
- ✓ Fully engaging of your entire school community

What Next?

I really hope this report has been useful and that you're in a position to start implementing these recommendations straight away on your existing website.

There are lots of overlaps in the suggestions for the different audience groups, and if you're keeping on top of these you're doing a brilliant job!

If you can't get cracking because you're frustrated with your current system and a clunky, non-responsive school website, and if you would like to discuss a fresh start do get in touch - we would love to show you what's really possible.

Hope to meet you soon!

Ian Richardson
Director & Co-Founder



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T: 0333 577 0753 | E: hi@schudio.com | W: www.schudio.com



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