School Website Perfection

Everything you need to know for the perfect school website

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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**

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Use Photos Effectively

Beautiful, well used photos bring content to life.

The very best websites you will see use photos well throughout the content. If you want to attract and keep users using your website they want to get a rich feel for who are you - photos are one of the best ways of doing that.

But really there are 2 types in a school website …

Big Banner Photos

THE single best way to draw users into your content and give them an instant idea of what life at your school is like by having a selection of beautiful, professional photos on your homepage. Choose photos that show a range of activities, from students hard at work at their desks to photos of students enjoying enrichment activities and your shiny buildings.

Content Enrichment Photos

School websites are *notorious* for being text heavy and difficult to use. On some pages photos just don't work (policy pages for example) but on others they're often missing in action. Every page on your site that has important written content can be completely brought to life by adding a well chosen photo.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: *Carr Hill High School*

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Keep Key Content Up to Date

Term Dates, News & Events are the most visited pages.

Statistics from lots of school websites, courtesy of Google Analytics, tells us that on every school website most users go to 3 key areas of your site.

Term Dates
THE most used page on your school website - why wouldn't it be? We're all keen to know when we might next get a holiday! Format this page very clearly, use text in the page not a link to a file (you're adding a stumbling block if you do) and cover at least 2 years of term dates if possible.

Latest News
Parents and prospective parents are your primary audience and they want to know what is going on in the life of your school. Keep your News up to date at least weekly, include photos with every article and users will keep coming back.

Upcoming Events
Your users are also interested in what is coming up in the life of your school so keep it up to date! There is nothing worse than knowing something is coming up in school and the details not being on the school website. Get on top of it!

*stats don't include the vacancies page for every school website but because your primary audience is not people looking for a job, we have put that to one side for the purposes of this report.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: *Chesterton Primary School*

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Use Social Media brilliantly

Knowing how to get started with Social Media is still a big challenge faced by many schools

If you're already using the likes of Twitter then by following a few simple steps you will be doing better than most schools and who doesn't want to be the best they can be? To take it to the next level have a look at our Social Media for Schools Training Session.

Spread out your Tweets

Does that sound daft? You wouldn't believe how many teachers tweet on a Friday afternoon or a Saturday morning and send a job lot all at once because that's when they find time to do it. Spread them out! Use Hootsuite or similar to do the job for you if you seriously don't have the time.

Link your posts to your website

When you add News, Events, Announcements, Blog Posts etc to your website get into the habit of Tweeting them as well (including a link!). This will mean that your content get's maximum exposure. Use relevant #hashtags every time.

Engage your audience

Sounds like a minefield doesn't it? Well let's be honest, social media is a minefield! But that doesn't mean you shouldn't go anywhere near it. If a parent asks a question, answer it, promptly. Share other people's content and get involved in discussion.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: *Unity Academy, Blackpool*

Meet & Exceed OFSTED requirements

Checklist regularly and go beyond the minimum

There are plenty of resources available online to help you make sure that your website is compliant, with everything OFSTED expects to find when they visit your site. Want to be the best you can be?

✔ Check your website against the latest checklists to make sure everything you should have on your site is there

✔ Review other school websites to see what things they're doing and use the best ideas you find

✔ Use the Schudio OFSTED Ready Website Report to make sure your website is OFSTED compliant and so much more

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Welcome from your Headteacher

Tell your audience what *YOU* are there to do

It doesn't matter whether you're talking about OFSTED visiting your website, a prospective parent or to a student from years gone by.

Every visitor to your site needs to know what YOU believe about your school and what you are doing to make it the very best it can be. There simply is no better way to make an immediate and significant impact upon visitors to your website.

Include a photo of yourself

I've said it before but it makes a big difference to the authority and personal feel to this page if you add a photo of yourself. Users will believe what you're saying more if you back it up with a photo.

Enhance your content with Rich Media

Video | Photo Galleries | Podcasts | Flipbooks

Schools have an enviable opportunity to have a mass of brilliant content available to them with just a little bit of effort.

✓ Every day you have events happening that are worthy of a photo or a clip of video - use them in a News article or a Blog post

✓ Schools generally produce a glossy prospectus - put it on your site as a flip book

✓ Add photo galleries to your pages and News articles every chance you get to bring the content to life

They're simple ideas but by diligently adding rich media to your content you *will* bring it to life!

The BEST way to present Policies

Boring? Vitally important?

You are legally required to display all your school policies on your website and make sure that they are up to date.

It is definitely not the most exciting of tasks but it is an important one nonetheless. Putting a little bit of thought in to how this information is presented will save you time in the long run and will make the content much easier to use.

✓ Group your policies into relevant sections

✓ Include a link to the PDF file to enable download

✓ Add a description and file size if you are able to

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: *Blackpool Aspire Academy*

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The BEST way to display your Curriculum

Clearly displayed curriculum content is not the norm

Having worked closely with lots of schools on presenting their curriculum information we know that it can be a bit of a nightmare, even just to collate the information, never mind put it on your website in a user-friendly way. Follow a few tips and you'll blow away the competition.

✓ Break your curriculum content down into sections

✓ Standardise the format - use the same headings and sub headings and make the content similar across all parts of your curriculum

✓ Bring the content to life with photos relevant to each subject

✓ Use the purpose built Courses Module in the Schudio School Website CMS (if you're using it!)

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: *Blackpool Aspire Academy*

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Structure your Content intuitively

Make all content easy to find and use, no matter where or how it is being accessed

✓ All your content is important to someone so it all needs to be easy to find. Nothing should ever be more than *2 clicks away*

✓ Use menu link names that make sense to end users, not long convoluted URLs. Make sure your top level menu stays on 1 row

✓ Keep all related items in the same section of your menu structure, not across unrelated sections

✓ Review your menu structure periodically to keep on top of your content, which will grow!

If you make your content is easy to find, easy to use and easy to read people will stay on your site for longer and will come back more often.

Get staff and students involved in Blogging

So much better than class pages …

Blogging has become the thing of the moment for school websites and with good reason. For students, blogging helps with literacy and engagement. For teachers it is a brilliant way to keep parents up to date. For school leaders it is an instant way to give inspectors an idea of what goes on in school day to day.

Create a blog for every class
Replace your class pages with a blog for each class or year group. Make it possible for students to blog regularly and update the blog as a teacher regularly with what you've been up to in class.

Share posts socially
Because you're now up and running with Twitter (at the least!) make the most of your work by posting the content on any networks you're using.

Use the 'Class of …' Method
By using the Class of Method you will save LOTS of work maintaining you blog - read our article 'Clean up your Blog for a New School Year'.

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Share Content by Email - DITCH THE PAPER

Easy to create, easy to read and fully trackable

More and more schools are ditching paper newsletters and are sending out regular email newsletters to keep the school community up to date. Just a few tips below to get started quickly …

✓ Sign up with MailChimp.com, a brilliant, free (up to 2000 subscribers) and very easy to use. Create newsletters quickly and easily

✓ Add your latest News and Events to your website regularly and use that content to create your newsletters. Link to the content on your website to drive users there

✓ Send emails regularly and track their use - MailChimp lets you monitor who opened your emails and clicked on links within them
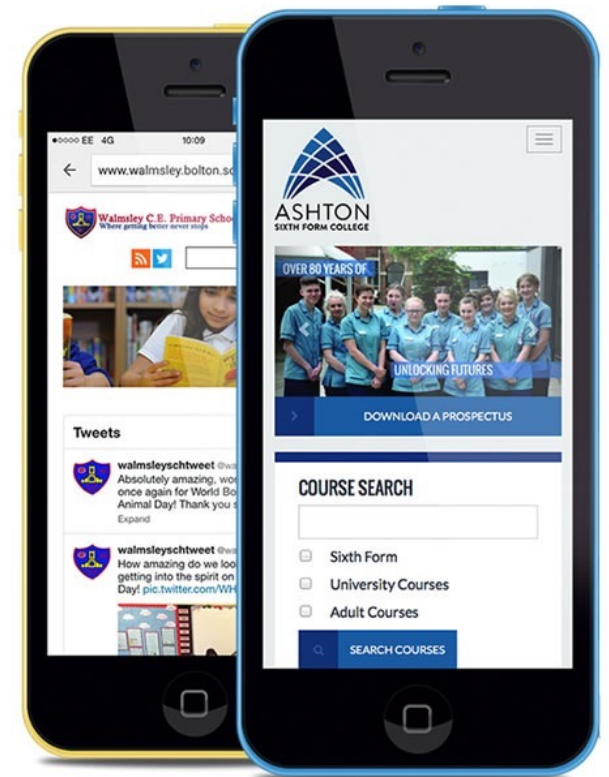
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Get Responsive

40% of your website visits on a mobile device
60% of school websites aren't responsive

Google tells us that most websites are viewed by at least 40% on a smartphone or tablet. We also know that at least 60% of school websites aren't responsive which means they're difficult to use on mobile devices.

OFSTED state that all content should be 'readily accessible' and if your site isn't responsive then your content isn't readily accessible.

Speak to your website provider to make sure your website is using the latest technology and can be used by all your site visitors

Make your site Easy to Update

Choose a fantastic Content Management System

Of course we want you to choose the Schudio School Website CMS because we know it is the best! However, whoever you are currently working with or whoever you ultimately choose, be sure you get the following at the very least!

✓ Easy to use, responsive CMS so you can manage your content from anywhere

✓ Sections to manage News, Events and Blogs quickly and easily

✓ Full control over all your menus and pages so you can effectively control the content

✓ Options to quickly add Rich Media (photo galleries, video, flip books)

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What Next?

You can start implementing all these recommendations and content additions straight away on your existing website to make it something special.

If you get stuck with any aspect then do drop me a line, me or my team would be more than happy to help.

And don't forget to keep on top of your website by regularly checking back for updates on best practice on our website.

Good luck!

Ian Richardson
Director & Co-Founder

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