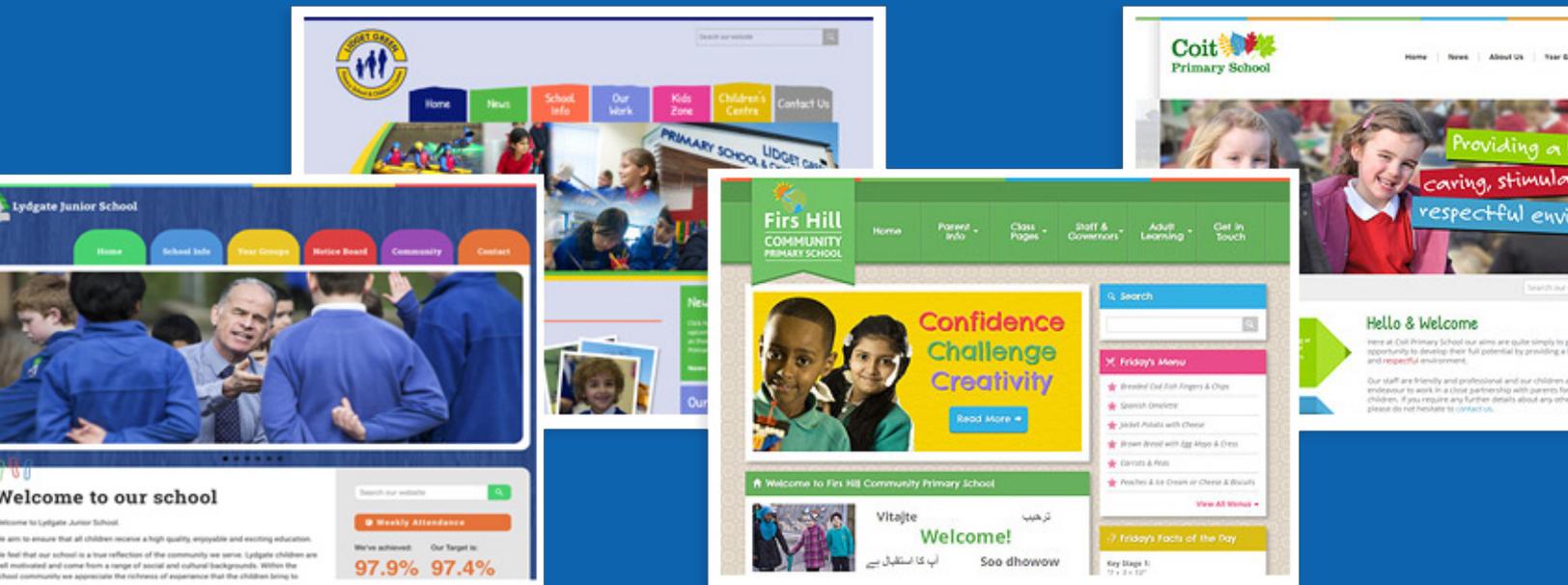


10 top tips for primary school websites

The essential guide to ensuring a great looking, and hard working website for your primary school.



Created for you by



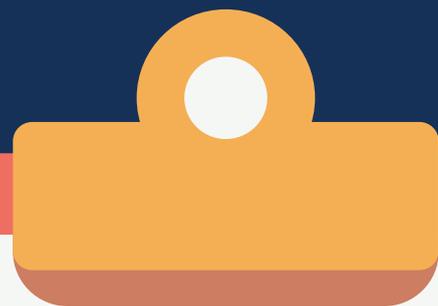
www.edhq.co.uk

1. Think about results.

Don't be worried about how you are going to achieve results, that's a website development agency's job. Instead, think about the challenges you have at present with your primary school website and even the challenges you have communicating to your audience.

Write them down, and if possible place priorities next to them. Even if they are all priority #1's this will help set the scene for your new website and experienced website developers with knowledge of primary school websites should be able to help you from there.

To get you started, we've produced a handy list for you with some of the priorities we'd normally expect for a new primary school website.



Result/challenge

Priority

Strategic

Attracting enough students to fill available places



Differentiating my school from others.



Meet and Exceed Ofsted Requirements



Enable my school site to be found online easily, even for a search such as: "schools in (my county)".



Support all the various events in the school



Need to rebrand as a result of change of status

Need help to use social media more effectively

Content

Need to create better community relations

Launching a new product or service (E.G. new age range or a new school meals payment system).

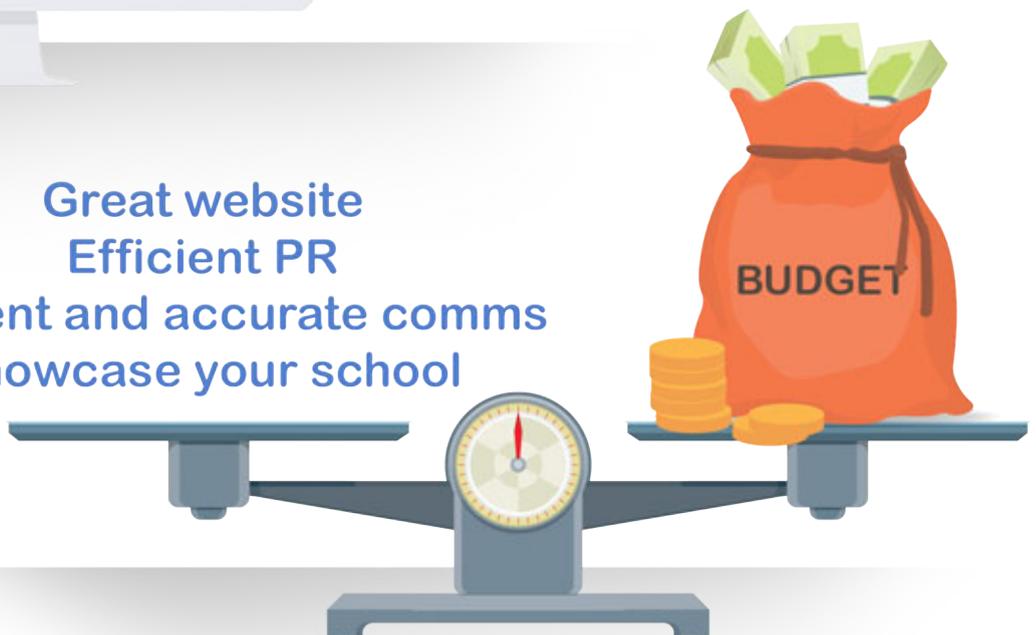
2. Your website should be paying for itself.

Your website can actually pay for itself. To successfully communicate with your audience you don't need a huge or expensive website, but it does have to be of a certain quality.

A simple website with a great content management system will enable you to create an efficient PR and communications tool which will pay for itself with the labour hours saved. Remember, the website plays a huge role in convincing next year's intake that your school is right for them, so get it right and it'll pay for itself.



Great website
Efficient PR
Efficient and accurate comms
Showcase your school

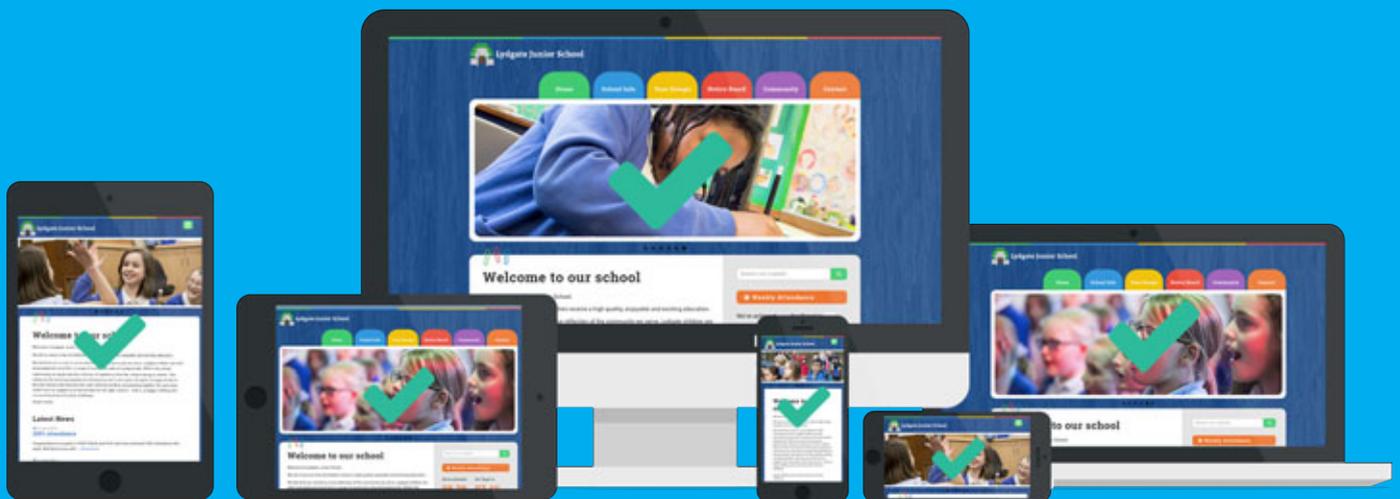


3. Think ‘mobile friendly’

If your primary school website has not been designed to work on mobile devices, i.e. tablets and smartphones it needs redeveloping.

A ‘responsive’ website is the best option - a technology which enables all the content to ‘respond’ to the type of web browser the visitor is using. If you have one visitor checking your site on an iPhone for example, the content on your website will automatically show in a format that works for the device. Having a responsive website means that whatever device your visitor is using (a PC, a tablet, a phablet, etc.) they will have an easy experience. It’s great for all involved if a busy parent can access a quick bit of information as they’re getting their kids ready for school.

A responsive website also has other benefits which include being found more easily in mobile searches (Google has recently decided to de-rank websites that are not mobile friendly) and there are other benefits as well which a good development agency can lead you through.



4. Think about intake & creatively showcase your school

“What makes your primary school different?” is just one of the questions a good website development agency will ask.

You need to stand out from other local schools and to do this you need to communicate the things that are special about your school. This isn't just about facilities or Ofsted (although they are obviously very important) it's about cleverly wrapping everything together in a distinctive visual style that sets you apart.

A great website design, tied in with the right content will help you get your message across clearly and consistently and help build your reputation as a great primary school.

You may need a little bit of help freshening up your logo, or understanding how you can use it better to create a great school identity and brand. Make sure you choose a website provider that can actually deliver these services - and has experience of doing so for primary schools like yours.

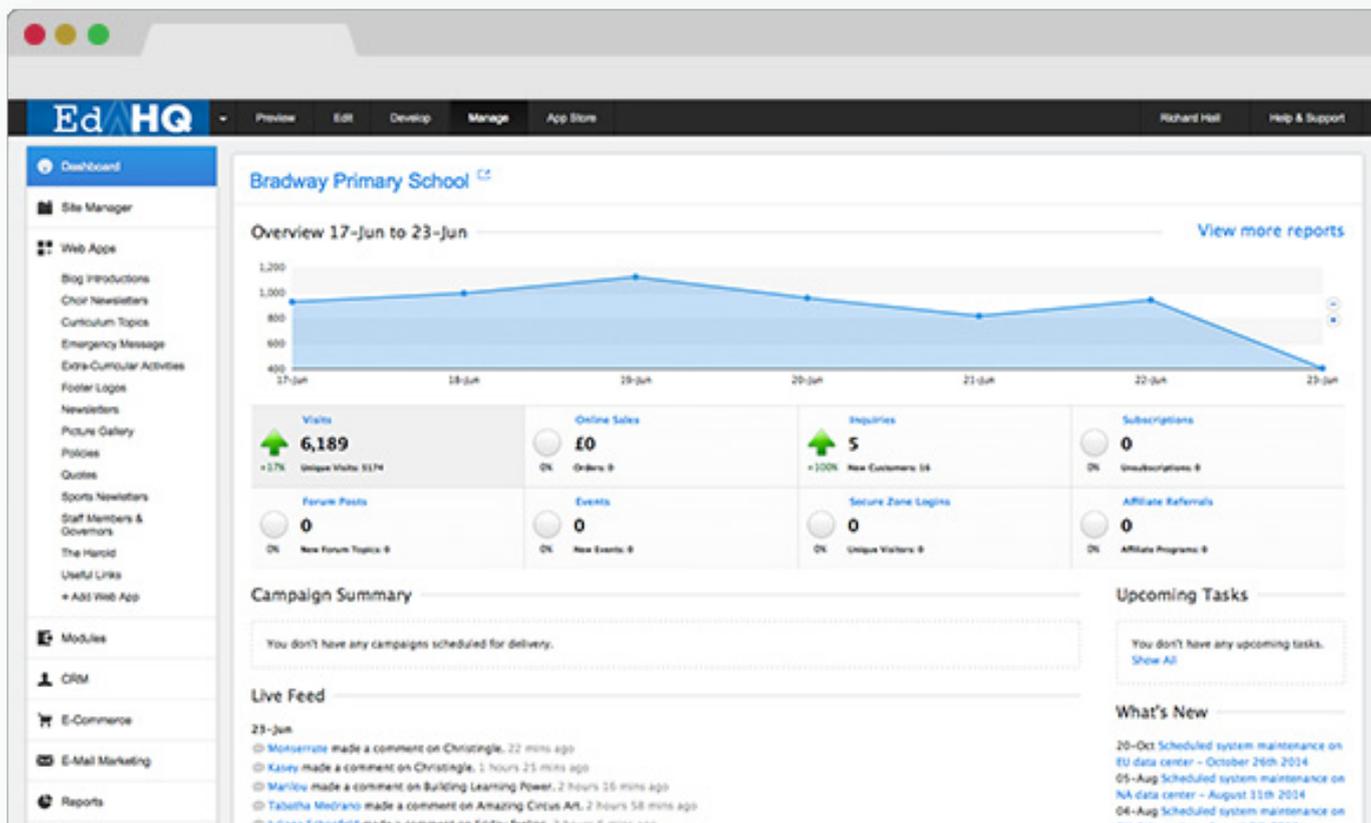


5. Take control

There are numerous Content Management Systems (CMS) out there and you may feel like the process of choosing a 'software system' on top of everything else is a big job but it doesn't have to be if you have the right supplier.

The CMS obviously needs to be easy to use and take minimal time to train staff in editing content, but ideally there's a few more things you should require.

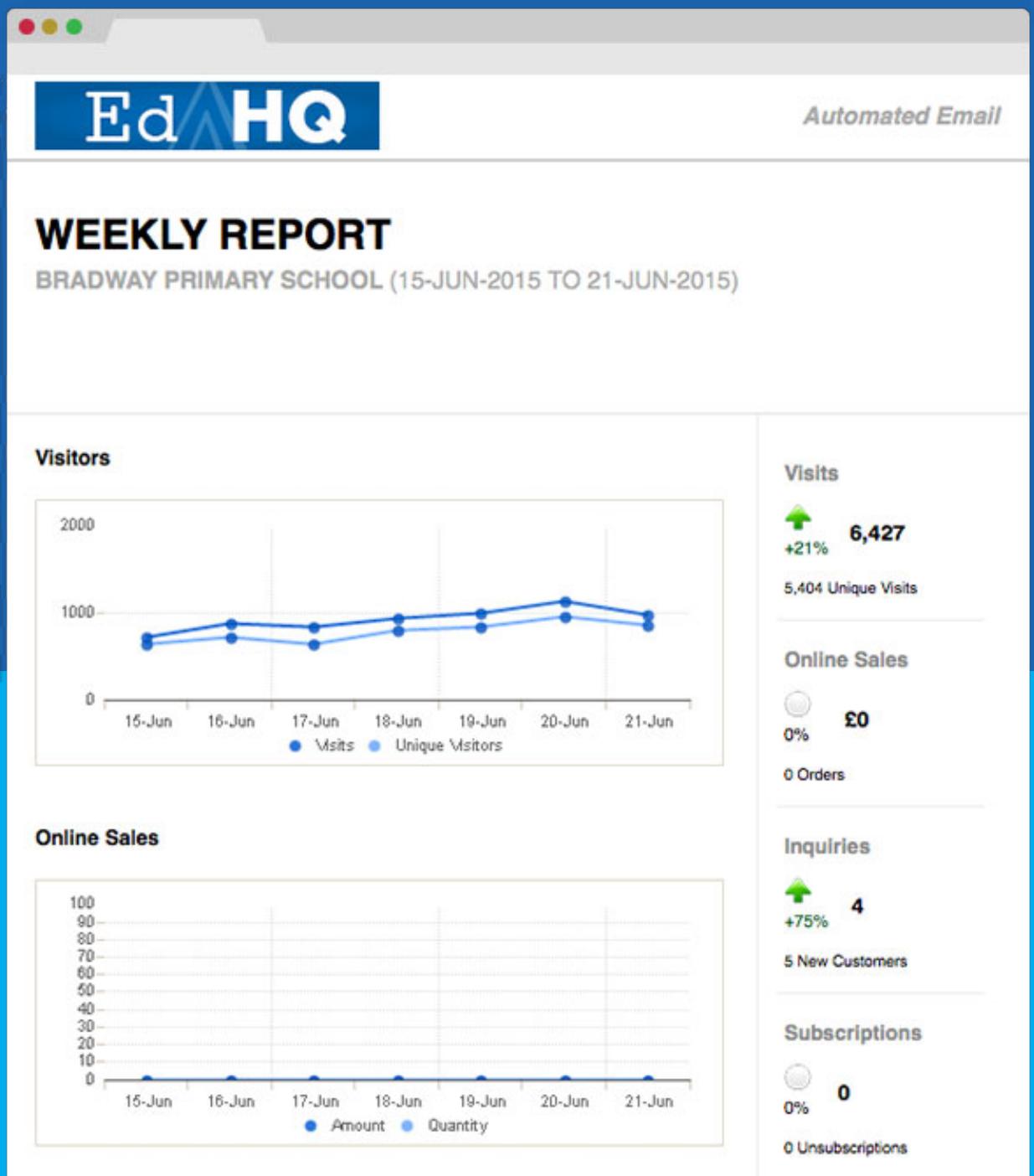
Your school CMS needs to be tailored to your school's needs, and it's better for you if there's a range of education specific features within the CMS already (we've provided a few pointers in Tip #10) it'll be cheaper for you, and quicker as some elements of the site will already be considered. Your primary school website needs features like these and you also need a clever website development agency that can tailor the site to your individual needs and style.



6. Understand your visitors

Understanding the visitors to a primary school website is vital. You can ask parents about it and receive feedback from them, but access to statistics from your school website needs to be integrated into the website.

Tools like Google Analytics are free (and fascinating), but can be daunting and provide little intelligence if not used correctly. What you need is an easy to use snapshot of important statistics and metrics about your school website that actually mean something to you, and an agency that can help you use the statistics to improve the website ongoing.

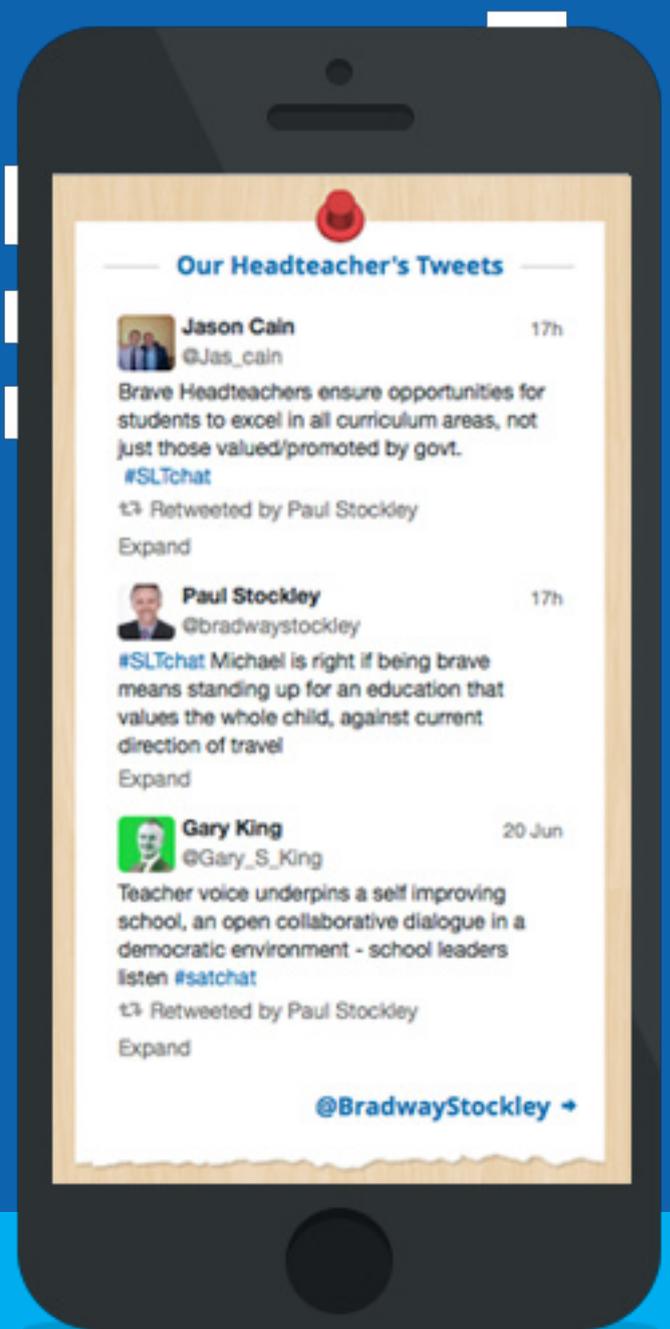


8. Be social

Obviously, the social aspects of your school are critical. A school constantly works hard to engage face to face with parents, children and other stakeholders daily, managing relationships as they arrive in class, through to out of school events, etc.

The older children in primary schools often have some experience of 'social media', and to many of the parents Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest are an ever increasing part of their social lives.

Therefore you need to consider a strategy for this, but it doesn't have to be complicated, expensive or particularly time-consuming. Modern website technology can automate elements of social media and if you have the right strategic help from a website development company it can easily be integrated into both the website and therefore a regular administration routine.



9. Think about the stakeholders...

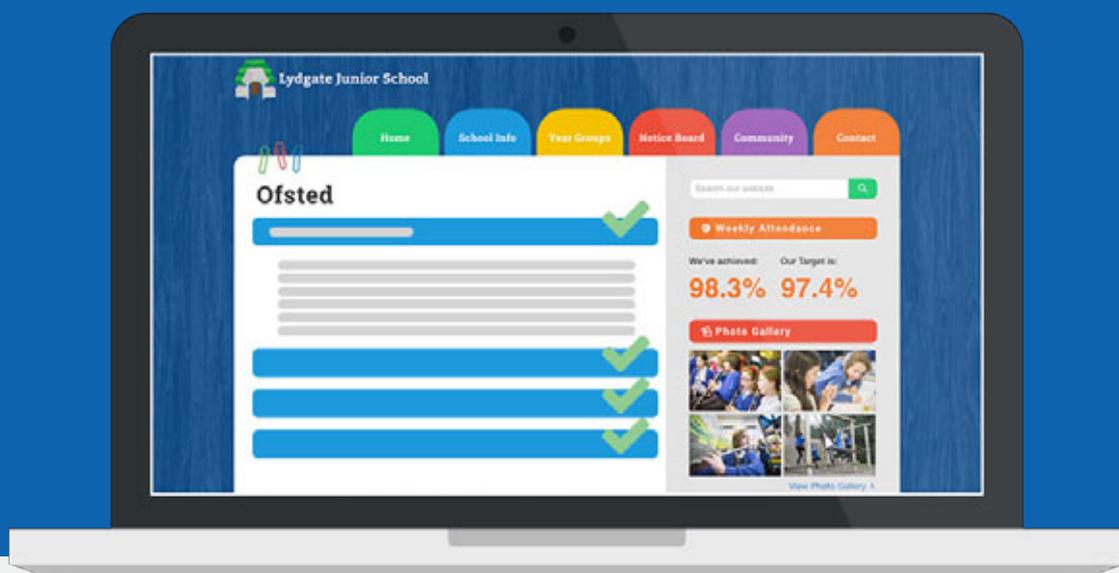
Really, this is where a specialist education website developer should help you, but here's a guide for each of your 'stakeholders' and what you could be considering.

Your stakeholders are potential students and their parents, staff, governors, trust board members, potential staff, etc. It seems like a lot to consider, but part of a website development agency's role is to help you understand how much of this you can deliver and to make it easy for you.

Ofsted

The Department of Education released a set of new guidelines for school websites in September 2014. It's a list of information you have to publish on your school website and... it's quite a list.

EdHQ have a unique module that allows you to meet all the Ofsted website requirements for a primary school, and makes it easy for the inspector to tick off all your requirements. The EdHQ Ofsted module can also increase your chance of an 'Outstanding' rating for your website.



Parents / Pupils

Busy parents appreciate as much help as possible and for many of them, a lot has changed within the education system since they finished school.

Providing them information to help with reading, phonics etc. and having a repository of useful information such as events, kit lists etc. means they are both informed and can actively help the school achieve its goals.

Prospective Parents and Pupils

Communicating what's great about your school is actually very simple if you have the right website developer.

A great school website design that communicates your values with imagery and the right words will become a valuable part of your school's brand. For primary schools, photography of the young people enjoying activities works wonders.

And of course, having the right technology enables the site to work correctly and prospective parents and very young children even to have a good look around the site without being hampered by technical or 'usability' issues.

All of these are searching for different content so you will want to guide them in the right direction with your design and content structure.

10. ...and help your audience with relevant content

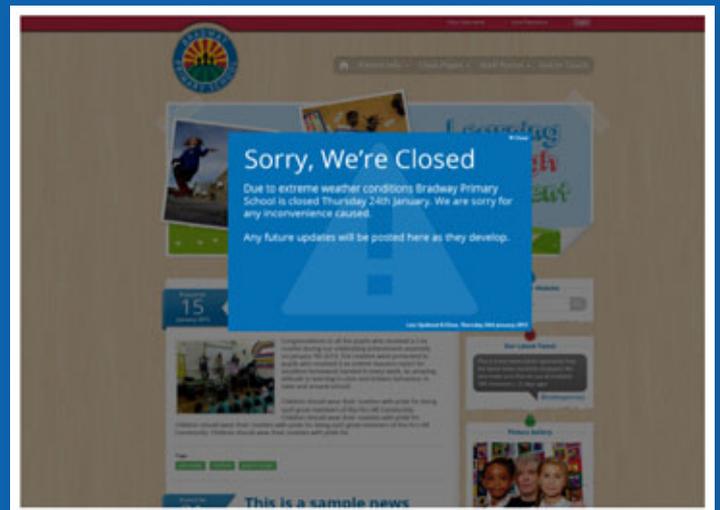
Pictures



Nothing conveys the experience of your school like good photography images of staff and pupils enjoying themselves within your school environment speak much more than words. Updating them fairly regularly will also encourage them to return to your school website.

Emergency Home Page

Sometimes you need to move quickly to make an emergency announcement. Situations such as severe weather can mean school closures or important safety announcements need to be communicated. An emergency home page feature is a useful little module that can help.



Meal Planner

Why not have a handy module on your website that shows the meal plans for the week? It'll reduce the 'crush' around the noticeboards and enable parents to take a look outside of school hours.



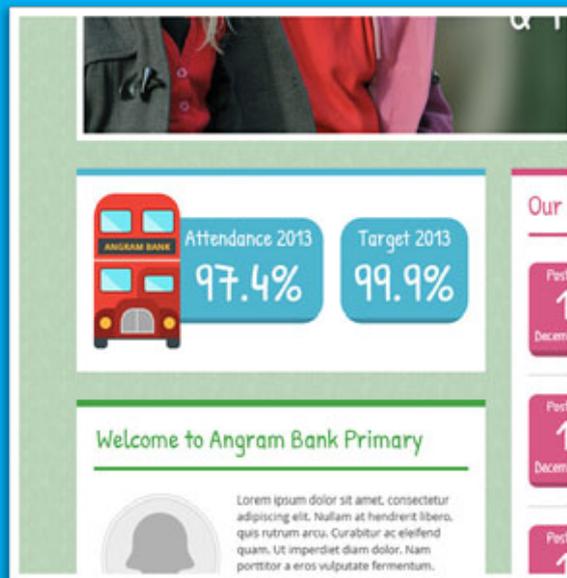
Curriculum Topics Module

One of our Ed HQ innovations has cut several hours from the workload of school administrators. The Curriculum topics template allows each head of year teacher to create next term's curriculum within the website admin area. This is then published on the school website year group pages for all to see. The school can even email a link to it to all of the parents via the websites newsletter function.



Attendance Module

It's not an Ofsted requirement, but showing your attendance is one of the little features that could place your website into the 'outstanding' category in their eyes. Good school website systems have this kind of module pre-built into them.



Class Pages

Enabling teachers to publish any handy guides, important information for the class, students impressive work and any updates on school or class activities provides a number of benefits. Parents and the community have easy access to the information and they come to know one place on the website where they can see relevant and engaging content and offers students an added incentive of public recognition.

School Supply List

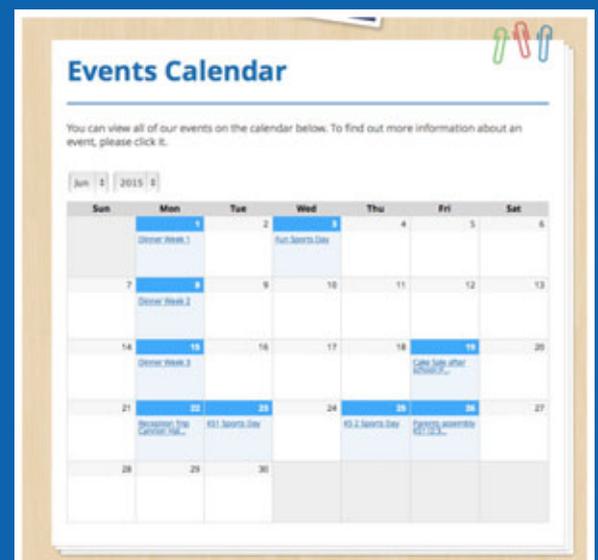
This is a great way to reduce wasted time and 'stress' for staff and parents. If you have simple lists of items that pupils should have access to; in their kit bag or book bag, on their peg, or at home, everyone can be more prepared. The lists can be posted all year long and can be easily updated when needed.

Parent Resources

Help parents with any information you can. This could be recommended reading, class syllabus information, handbooks etc. This will help your staff by allowing them to easily signpost parents to the resources and overall helps bring school and class information into the home.

Events Calendar

Schools are a vibrant hub for events and an important social part of many people's lives. It is simple to include a calendar for school events such as day trips, parents evenings, sports days, etc. Updating the calendar regularly drives parents and pupils back to your website for the latest news and information and helps with your search engine rankings.



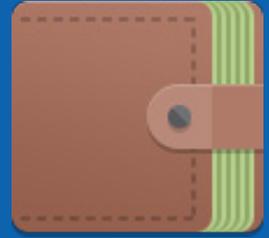
Contact Information

A nicely presented list of teacher and administration email addresses is essential to help with parent communication. If these can be quickly accessed by visitors to your school website, the parents will be more engaged and connected and goes some way to ensuring that the correct member of staff is contacted, assisting with unnecessary burdens on reception staff.

There are also a number of other ways you can develop your website:

Online Store:

Provide students and parents the ability to purchase things online such as school uniform, PE kit, event tickets and recommended books for sale.



Fundraising Tools:

Integrate an online facility for making donations, allowing parents and the community to quickly and easily help you fund events. It's easier for them and stops staff having to be concerned about taking cash from many different people.

Online Registration:

For some primary schools it's also a good idea to offer parents and students online access to register for school plays, dances, events and other programs. School registration software enables you to increase participation and it's easily added to your site with secure registration and payment processing.

Thanks for reading!

You should now have a head start for considering your new primary school website. We know how busy you are, so if you need some help feel free to contact us.



We have a neat process to help with pulling together everything you need, and we're always on hand for some free advice. If you're interested in a new primary school website and want to find out more about EdHQ then please feel free to call or drop me a line.

richard.hall@edhq.co.uk | 0114 3990212 | www.edhq.co.uk