

Why do schools need to use social media?

Social media is now the number one activity on the web and a hugely valuable resource that can bring you new students and supporters. You might not think you need to use social media but, if your school has a website, did you think you needed that ten years ago?

The biggest benefit that social media brings to schools is a new channel to communicate with your audiences and reinforce the school's relationships. Your stakeholders – parents, students, governors, the media, local businesses - are already online out there and using social media enables you to meet them on their ground, to get to know them, chat with them and establish a mutual relationship of trust.

In a school environment, one of the most important relationships is between parents and the Head teacher, which can be formal and sporadic. Parents want to know what's going on in the school, but they also really value knowing more about what the Head and the SLT think and do at school. When you tweet about a school trip or post pictures from the school play rehearsals for example, it is giving parents and the community a real opportunity to engage with you on a more one to one level. It also allows people to see the Head as an approachable figure, but crucially does not allow the random and unpoliced comments of Facebook for example.

A brochure or a website alone just aren't enough these days. But even if you're a school who knows how to use social media, chances are you don't have the time to dedicate to doing it properly. That's where we come in. We can act as your social media department, to create opinion, news and conversations that will drive people to want to engage and find out more about you.

Choosing just two key communication methods, blogs and Twitter, integrated into a school's website home page, is a fantastic method for engaging with, listening and responding to your school community.

A Twitter account – which we can set up and manage for you - is a great way of disseminating information to parents, many of whom will be using social media on their phones or computers. Even if they don't use Twitter, you can feature your updates on the school website, which will keep visitors coming back to the site for fresh news.

The benefits to a school of this kind of interaction include:

- Raising awareness with all your key stakeholders – from feeder primary schools and current parents to businesses and the media
- Creating a personality behind the school
- Delivering key messages within a blog or tweets
- Immediate response to good or bad news – celebrating exam results or an outstanding Ofsted
- Promoting events such as school plays
- Promoting new products or services
- Driving traffic to your website
- Improved SEO
- Networking on a local or global level with other schools and education experts
- Tapping into new trends
- Gaining new audiences who may be interested to send their children to your school
- Providing service and feedback
- Reputation management with real time response to a crisis or news
- Building a database for email marketing
- Demonstrates that you are embracing 21st century technology for communication aswell as teaching

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS WE RECOMMEND FOR SCHOOLS

BLOGS

A blog is an opinion piece written by you about anything at all that is posted into your existing website. A blog gives people a window into your world and allows you to communicate with your audiences about what you are doing – success stories, interesting milestones, behind the scenes, comment on issues, interviews with key people, personal information etc

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Using the news or opinions you give us – anything from great exam results and a school production to thoughts about the world at large – we will write your blog, in whatever tone of voice you prefer and coming either from the Head or from the school generally. We recommend at least two blogs per month, which can then be tweeted to followers, uploaded to your website, adapted into press releases and used in internal communications. We can also work with you to identify 'guest bloggers' – governors, students, partners of the school, VIP visitors, former pupils etc – who can host the blog for key occasions.

TWITTER

Twitter is a social networking and microblogging website where users send and read other users' messages called tweets. Unlike Facebook you have more control over Twitter and can block followers if necessary. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. Tweets are publicly visible but you can also send private direct messages eg if a parent had a curriculum enquiry. Users may subscribe to other people's tweets—this is known as *following* and subscribers are known as *followers*.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Create your profile (logo, web link and summary of the school) and then get started!

1. Start by tweeting something interesting for you – to set your tone and give people a reason to follow you.
2. We will look for an immediate set of people that you find interesting – primary schools, locally based businesses, businesses owned by parents, media, local estate agents etc – and follow them so they reciprocate in following you
3. We follow education leaders who post links to important resources and influence conversations
4. We post questions for quick answers and answer others' questions to establish your credibility and expertise
5. We create links to your website or blog
6. We can use PR to announce you are now on Twitter to encourage people to follow you
7. We will find interesting people to tweet for you within the school and outside it

If you would like an informal meeting to discuss how social media can help to enhance your school communications we'd like to offer you a free consultation which you can book by emailing emma@lollipop-pr.com or calling Emma Beck on 07932 763 015.

We hope to hear from you very soon!