



Community Services: Education

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To: Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

School website guidelines

Argyll and Bute Council's education service provides school based access to the Internet, within an educational context. This access enables pupils to access and explore a wealth of online information as well as exchanging messages with other users across the world.

An extension of this service is a web-hosting facility where schools may place their own websites.

A website is a window into your school, accessible by any Internet user worldwide.

If managed properly, the benefits to a school are numerous. A website can be a living brochure, a display board, a newsletter, a messaging service and an events calendar.

When pupils are involved in web publishing, they not only learn to work creatively with text, graphics and sound, but also have the opportunity to develop their ICT skills in a meaningful, collaborative context. A school website should therefore reflect those aspects and ethos of the school that you would wish to portray to the public.

You also have a responsibility to ensure that your staff and pupils are not exposed to any personal risk as a result of information incorporated into the site. The attached guidelines set out detailed information on establishing and maintaining a school website that will benefit your school community.

Any further advice should be sought in the first instance from the quality improvement officer with responsibility for ICT.

Yours sincerely

Executive Director of Community Services

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Section 1 Guidelines for school websites

The development of information and communications technology (ICT) makes it possible to communicate and collaborate with others across the world. The continued and rapid growth in websites illustrates the benefits of owning and managing an online resource that provides up-to-date information and allows visitors the opportunity to learn more about the school community and its activities.

When considering establishing a website, each establishment should appoint a senior member of staff to oversee the management of a school website. This member of staff will be responsible for ensuring that those involved in the updating of content are aware of the boundaries set out in these guidelines. These guidelines must be read in conjunction with the following documents and website.

- (a) Education management circular 1.18: Using the Internet in Argyll and Bute educational establishments.
- (b) Advice and information for young people about staying safe online - produced by Education Scotland -
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/approaches/ictineducation/internetsafety/youngpeople.asp>
- (c) Key information for practitioners on internet safety and responsible use - produced by Education Scotland -
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/approaches/ictineducation/internetsafety/practitioners.asp>

Schools must ensure that their website is secure and cannot be compromised. To ensure this, schools are advised to choose from 2 options.

- (1) Host the website on the Argyll and Bute Council web server, which is a free service, fully supported throughout the design stage and for the life of the site (see appendix 1).
- (2) Host the website with a reputable website company, which will charge an annual fee for design, hosting, domain name and maintenance services.

If a school wishes to use an external provider, it should place a request with the Service Desk (01546 604060) to check the provider's suitability and levels of security.

1.1 Management and ownership

The ongoing management and ownership of a website should not be underestimated, and needs to be planned carefully. The impression people have of your website influences the impression they have of your school. Therefore the following actions are recommended.

- Nominate a senior member of staff to be responsible for the site overall, checking legal issues, obtaining parents' permission to include references to

pupils and their work and ensuring that it presents the school as it wishes to be seen.

- Establish a school website group (school size appropriate) that will contribute to establishing a structure for the site and ongoing development. A range of staff can contribute, especially in secondary schools where departments will be able to upload a range of information on the work of subjects and faculties.
- Nominate one or more members of staff who will manage updates and check regularly that links work and remove or archive out-of-date material.

1.2 Privacy and internet safety

The promotion of your school needs to be balanced with wider issues of Internet safety and privacy. It is vital that pupils' safety is not compromised by publishing personal information about them that could be misused in any way. Therefore protect the identity of young people in the following ways.

Do not publish:

- personal information;
- personal email addresses;
- close-up (portrait-size) photographs of individual children.

However you can publish:

- individual names without photographs;
- group photographs taken at distance without individual names;
- contact details for the school.

Be aware of the Data Protection Act. This has implications for collecting information about visitors to your site. For advice, please contact the Council Governance & Law Department.

1.3 Plagiarism and copyright

Adherence to copyright and plagiarism guidelines are further issues you should make sure that you are addressing.

- Respect copyright and intellectual property rights in relation to material and photographs taken from other web pages and used in your own.
- Always state the source, web page address or author when using materials from other websites.
- State any constraints you wish to impose on people using your pages, for example, whether you permit people copying for non-commercial educational purposes.

Section 2 For inclusion in the school handbook School websites in Argyll and Bute Education

This school has its own website. The address is: <https://www.<domain-name-here>>

Our school website is a source of information about the school, providing visitors with up-to-date information on learning activities and an insight into the ethos of the school. Creating a wide range of digital information that can be seen by teachers, parents, other pupils and people all over the world develops self-esteem.

Parents, both current and prospective, can view pupils' work and activities, read the school newsletter, find out the date and time of events, send email to the school and learn more about the school community.

Schools can form links with others around the world, and project their strengths and ethos to all who visit the site.

Section 3

Dear Parent

School website

As part of the school's information and communications technology (ICT) programme, the school now has its own website, which can be viewed at: <https://www.<domain-name-here>>

The purpose of the website is to provide an additional method of access to school information and many aspects of its work, including achievements and events.

An integral element of any school website is information on the range of activities that take place within the school or during organised visits. This information will be described in pictures and text, sometimes relating to pupils from the school.

However children's safety on the Internet is paramount and the school will ensure that pupils are not exposed to danger or abuse by publishing personal information about them that could be misused in any way.

To that end Community Services: Education has provided all schools with the following instructions on website information.

Protect the identity of young people.

Do not publish:

- personal information;
- personal email addresses;
- close-up (portrait-size) photographs of individual children.

However you can publish:

- individual names without photographs;
- group photographs taken at distance without individual names;
- contact details for the school.

Working to these instructions, the school will include images and text relating to pupil activities.

If you do **not** wish your child to be referred to in any such articles, please complete the enclosed form and return to me by <date>.

Yours sincerely

School website Parental response form

<Name of school>

Pupil's name _____ [BLOCK CAPITALS]

Class _____

As the parent or carer of this pupil I have read the contents of the accompanying letter. I do not wish my son/daughter to be referred to in the school website.

Parent/carer name _____ [BLOCK CAPITALS]

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 1 Argyll and Bute Education school website service

Argyll and Bute Council Web Team offer a website development service to schools that will allow them to manage a school website themselves, requiring none of the complex web design skills that had made this a specialist area in the past. The Web Team has developed a set of pre-designed website templates, from which a school can select as the basis of a website that will provide a range of information on the life and work of the school to parents, the wider community and prospective families and teachers.

Until recently some schools have relied on help from members of staff, parents or people from the local community who can make a website on the school's behalf. However there can be difficulties when one person has full responsibility for a website.

- Adding information to the site can be undertaken by that person only, making quick updates difficult.
- That person may leave the school or area and the expertise is lost to the school with no-one capable of taking over.
- Access to managing the website may be password protected and that may be lost to the school.
- The website is hosted outwith Education's network and therefore outwith any level of security and safety provided by the education network.
- The site's external hosting service may be discontinued possibly resulting in loss of data.

As a result, a school may end up with a website that has vanished or is still viewable but out-of-date and permanently inaccessible.

In order to ensure that a school website is safe and secure, the Council will host newly developed sites on its own server, providing ongoing technical support and training in maintaining the site.

With support from our web designer, schools will be able to select a layout from a list of pre-built templates, and customise it with school colours and logos. Text, web-links, photos and documents are easily uploaded via online forms, with changes taking effect instantly. Training on how to maintain the site is provided to nominated school staff who will have overall responsibility for updating its pages on a regular basis.



What's involved in establishing a new school website?

Involved staff

- Nominated school staff are required to maintain the website. This will vary greatly depending on whether it is a primary or secondary school or joint campus.
- They will access the maintenance area of the website by logging in using a secure username and password.
- Once logged in, they can upload text and images simply by copying and pasting from prepared text and digital photographs.

Who can be nominated?

- Teaching staff.
- Support staff.
- Admin staff.
- Librarians.
- Pupils¹ (see also Blogs on page 11)

Importantly no-one from outwith the school will have access to the maintenance area of the website (school account required).

What does a school need to do in preparation?

A website group would be an advantage when establishing a structure for the site and overseeing development. A range of staff can contribute, especially in secondary schools where departments will be able to upload a range of information on the work of subjects and faculties.

Web group meeting with central staff

Contact the Education Officer who will arrange a meeting with the Council web team and school representatives. In turn the group should discuss the particular needs of the school community and the purposes of the website. These decisions may require further meetings before a final structure is agreed and passed to the web team for development.

Training sessions

The web designer will provide training to the group of staff that has been nominated to take responsibility for uploading information to the website on a regular basis. In turn it is expected that this group will train other members of staff who subsequently commit to supporting the website's development. The training sessions provided can be of any length and frequency, within reason.

¹ The school website may have a designated pupil area, maintained by nominated pupils.
Education Management Circular 1.19 (Issued 2017)

What's on offer beyond training?

The web team will continue to be available for any consultancy or direct support where problems arise or site changes are proposed.

The web team will provide a series of video tutorials that will assist staff who have forgotten some of the procedures or are demonstrating the facility to colleagues.

In summary

- (1) This service is totally free to schools, including training, ongoing support and site development. However schools must take responsibility for the uploading of all forms of information.
- (2) This full service depends on a school selecting from the range of pre-designed templates. However customisation with site navigation, colour schemes and logos is considered part of the developmental process.
- (3) It is strongly advised that a website committee be established to discuss and agree on the purpose, main structure and content of the proposed site.

Other options available to schools

- (1) If you already have a school website, you can transfer all the content over to a new Council service. However, if the person who manages your current site is not a member of the education service, they will be unable to have access to the new version, which will be hosted within the schools network. This will depend on security and compatibility and should be discussed with our web team in the first instance.
- (2) If you wish to have a website designed, maintained and hosted by an outside agency, it is strongly advised that this be through a reputable company that offers this service. The IT department will be able to provide a basic assessment of a company's service related to the charges quoted. In addition you must provide a company of choice with the excerpt regarding pupil safety on school websites, from Education management circular 1.19: School website guidelines - see appendix 2.

Blogs

Another part of the website service is a 'blogging' facility. This is an additional element of the website service and can be used independently of, or as a part of your school website.

What is a blog?

A web log, commonly known as a 'blog', is a form of online diary or journal. The process of creating and maintaining a blog is known as 'blogging' and authors are known as 'bloggers'. Much like a website, it provides the author(s) with a place where information on any subject or theme can be placed. Normally blogs contain short, frequently updated

posts, arranged chronologically with the most recently posted item appearing at the top of the page. In addition to text, blogs can contain photos, images, sound, archives and related links, and can incorporate comments from visitors to the blog.²

Blogs are made available via web-based publishing tools, meaning that blogs can be quickly and easily created and maintained without the need for technical knowledge or web design expertise. The blogging tools for Argyll and Bute: Education are hosted centrally and securely and are free to use.

A blog provides an alternative approach to website design that places fewer demands on existing skills and commitment and most importantly provides the opportunity for pupils to be directly involved in its creation and maintenance. In addition blogs provide an online environment that provides learning opportunities that fit with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence.

² Comments are emailed to the class teacher who will decide if they can be uploaded to the blog.
Education Management Circular 1.19 (Issued 2017)

Appendix 2 Establishing a school website

2.1 Why have a website?

Questions to ask and strategies to consider.

- (1) Why do you want a website?
- (2) What do you want it to achieve?

School websites are a source of information about the school providing visitors with up-to-date information on school activities and an insight into the ethos of the school. Creating a wide range of digital information that can be seen by teachers, parents, other pupils and people all over the world develops self-esteem.

Parents, both current and prospective, can view pupils' achievements, read the school newsletter, find out the date and time of events, send email to the school and participate in the school community.

Schools can form links with others around the world and project their strengths and ethos to all who visit the site.

2.2 Audience

The target audience will include current and prospective pupils, parents selecting a school, teachers considering applying for a post at your establishment and members of the local community, to name but a few. Questions to ask and strategies to consider.

- (1) Who is your audience? How do you keep your audience interested in visiting your website?
- (2) Who visits a school website?
- (3) Do you intend to cater for a wide variety of visitors?

Consider why visitors might want to spend their time at your site. It has been said that you have 8 seconds to persuade people to stay on your website once they reach it.

Think from their point of view, not yours: what might they want to find out?

- (4) What information and resources will visitors find useful?

Put important information on the home page to engage and hold people's attention and interest.

Keep it up-to-date and fresh; make your visitors want to stay there and keep coming back.

Provide topical items and either delete or archive out-of-date material.

Make communication a two-way process by offering visitors the opportunity to get in touch with your school via the school's enquiries email address.

(5) Can everyone access your website?

Be aware of the need to make your site as inclusive as possible³.

Ensure that the language used is appropriate to the target audience.

Avoid jargon and acronyms where possible; your readers may be anywhere in the world.

2.5 Content

However well a website is designed the content will be a major factor upon which it will be judged by visitors.

Questions to ask and strategies to consider.

(1) Is the content accurate, up-to-date and complete?

Keep the site up-to-date and fresh and either delete or archive out-of-date material.

(2) Is the use of language, style and tone appropriate to the subject matter and intended audience?

Ensure that the language used is appropriate to the target audience.

Avoid jargon and acronyms where possible.

Keep it simple; your readers may be anywhere in the world.

(3) Where pages are primarily intended for public consumption, is sufficient contextual information provided?

Assume that people visiting your site know nothing about your school.

Always provide information in context.

Add content which has a purpose, is relevant and informative. Avoid adding content to your site just for the sake of it.

If pages showcase pupil activities, provide background details on how the work came about and the class involved, so that people can judge the quality of the work in context.

³ The web designer will provide you with further information on this issue.
Education Management Circular 1.19 (Issued 2017)