

## Preparing a school prospectus

### Introduction

It is no longer a statutory requirement for a school to produce a prospectus. Since September 2012 the requirement has been for key information to be published online, enabling parents to compare schools more easily and Ofsted to gain an initial picture of school performance prior to inspection. However, schools may still choose to produce a printed prospectus as a marketing tool.

### Would a prospectus meet your marketing objectives effectively?

In developing your admissions marketing programme you will have already identified:

1. Your key target audience/s (for example, ambitious and keen parents currently being attracted by a neighbouring Ofsted 'Outstanding' school with a new extension)
2. The unique selling points (USPs) that will attract them to you (including your links to a University providing exciting curriculum support and excellent professional development for teachers)

Your most effective marketing tools will reach this audience with these messages and help you to forge relationships, influencing them (and making it as easy as possible) to apply to your school for their child.

Current elements of your programme may be:

- Admissions open days/evenings
- Local advertising/flyers
- Local signage
- Online presence (website/social media)
- Events with local nurseries or feeder schools
- School-community events that will attract young families

The extra cost of designing and printing a hard copy prospectus may be justified if:

- your school has a strong need to attract more pupil applications or maintain current levels of interest
- the prospective applicants you need to target can be effectively reached this way
- competitor schools are marketing in your area and their prospectus is visible in local libraries and estate agents (defensive)
- the quality and messaging of the prospectus will reflect your school's offer successfully (a poor quality publication will be counter-productive)

### Some suggestions for planning the brief and creating the content:

- Include the title 'Prospectus' on the cover and brief the designer to reinforce your school's branding and identity (and that of the Academy Trust); bear in mind that a printed publication may be seen out of context, for example on a public library shelf
- Aim to achieve a warm and welcoming tone; include a personal message from the Headteacher and picture of friendly staff interacting with children

- Select photography that reflects an inclusive ethos with an appropriate mix of age, gender and ethnicity
- Avoid detail that may date quickly
- Avoid detail that is relevant only when the child is definitely joining the school (this can be provided at transition in a parent handbook with child-friendly pages)

### Sample outline for a 12-page prospectus:

(4-page or 8-page could be cost-effective alternatives)

- P1 Cover: Prospectus, school name, logo, strapline, photo or illustration, school description (e.g. A primary academy for girls and boys aged 3-11), Academy Trust branding including 'Proud to be Part of' marque and logo
- P2 Contents and scene-setter
- P3 Welcome from Headteacher
- P4 How to apply – the admissions process. SEN policy.
- P5 Our vision and ethos (people matter, link to school behaviour)
- P6/7 Teaching and learning (focus on teaching quality)
- P8 Our exciting curriculum (enrichment through University links)
- P9 Our building and facilities (include sport, extra curricular)
- P10 Past and future (school history and University/Trust academy opportunities)
- P11 At the heart of the community (parent and community involvement)
- P12 Back cover. Contact details. Academy Trust legal information. Academy website address.  
 “If you would like to receive this prospectus in an alternative format please contact us as above.”

### A final thought:

Plan distribution – however fantastic the prospectus it won't be effective if it sits in a school office cupboard! As well as giving them pride-of-place in your own school reception and staff room, take them to libraries, estate agents and local events whenever an opportunity arises. Ask feeder schools and nurseries if you can provide copies for their children, with a warm letter to parents inviting them to visit you.