



Mystery Shopping your School

The five step process to evaluating your prospective parent experience

1. The exploratory call

This call takes place between the school and one of our team who will oversee your mystery shop. All our team have experience as SLT members of Independent Schools. They will work with you to understand your reasoning for the mystery shop, whether it is to evidence certain elements, or as best practice.

Together we will build a parent profile of the mystery shopper best suited for your needs as a school and ensure we have all the information to source a suitable authentic mystery shopper.

2. The pre-visit research

Research will be carried out in the same way a prospective parent would do so. We will look at all social media channels, how easy it is to find your school from Google and also your website. We can also search on specific terms if you wish. This will form part of the report, giving you an understanding of how your social media channels are positioning themselves to parents. It will also throw up any spurious links or accounts that appear to be associated with the school.

3. Booking the visit

The visit will be booked as agreed with you, either by phone, email or internet and within an agreed timescale. Detailed notes will be given along with copies of all correspondence about how the query was handled, what pre information was given and what information the school requested from us. We will look at key areas such as friendliness, flexibility of visit times, ease of reaching the correct person.

4. The school site visit

The visit will look at areas as agreed with yourself, and can include specific questions should you wish. We will feedback on key areas such as first impressions, length of tour, who we met, overall impression of the school, views on the facilities shown, perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school. We will also monitor any follow up correspondence for a month after the visit and provide details and copies of it.

5. Reporting back

We will provide you with a written report, outlining all of the above so that you can discuss with your team. You will also benefit from a phone call or zoom meeting with one of our team to talk through the findings, answer any queries, and give informal suggestions as to how you might make improvements based on our findings, almost always these include some very small changes which can have a strong positive impact.

See overleaf for further details



About the ISP

The ISP was founded in 2017 to offer high quality CPD to all independent schools, in particular we wanted to make CPD affordable and accessible to those in small schools with budget restraints. We have held hundreds of successful sessions and are in the process of gaining accreditation from the College of Chartered teaching. Recently our team has expanded and now offers consultancy services and in-house training.

Who are your mystery shoppers?

Our mystery shoppers are all individuals who have either attended an Independent School themselves or have children currently in an Independent School. They are individually briefed for each assignment and are there to give a genuine view as a prospective parent, rather than that of a marketing consultant.

How do I book a mystery shop?

You can either sign up on our website www.independentschools.org or send an email to david@independentschoolsportal.org or call **07971101088** We aim to book all shops within a month, however we pride ourselves on matching you with the most suitable shopper so it can sometimes take longer.

How much does it cost?

Our mystery shop costs **£595** for one phase of the school, if we are looking at two phases (eg. Prep and Senior or Nursery and Prep) it is an extra **£200** assuming the shops can be done on the same day. If you have a group of schools we will work with you to look at the most cost-effective solution.

Why mystery shop?

All areas of a school are constantly under review, from teaching, to catering to estate management. Gathering genuine feedback on the tour process is very difficult - those non joiners rarely give candid reasons as to why they didn't choose your school. By mystery shopping your tour process you are able to ensure that what you are doing is best-practice, evidence any additional resources or support you might need, and have confidence that your parents are receiving the best possible experience. Currently, post pandemic there are also huge opportunities to alter the traditional tour to fit the specific needs of individuals, thus offering further personalisation.

www.independentschoolsportal.org



Top Ten discoveries from "mystery shopping" your school tour

The ISP has visited schools across the country, from tiny prep schools, to large through schools. Our aim is to help schools evaluate the prospective parent experience, something which is very difficult for schools to do themselves. Each and every visit always results in some "easy wins" for schools, as the process has often not been reviewed for years. Below are our most popular discoveries.

- 1 The wrong postcode - often we end up at sports fields!
- 2 Google throwing up a specific page for the school rather than the main home page - often it might take you to a Prep or Senior site instead of the overall school.
- 3 The discovery of old obsolete twitter accounts that are showing up in searches ahead of the real accounts which staff are spending a lot of time on. These accounts can give an incorrect impression of the school.
- 4 No instructions on where to go on arrival - whilst glossy brochures maybe a thing of a past there is now often a complete lack of information.
- 5 Social media posts that don't reflect the school - for example often they may be very sports biased.
- 6 No direct line for admissions - often the main school number goes to voicemail or isn't answered which can be frustrating.
- 7 No itinerary ahead of the visit in terms of how long the visit or who parents may meet.
- 8 Overly unnecessary long tours, due to campus size, tour guides and meetings.
- 9 Indiscreet comments in the waiting room area from staff who don't realise they can be heard by visitors.
- 10 Surprising lack of follow up after the visit.

Call 07971 101088 or email david@independentschoolsportal.org if you would like to learn more about how "mystery shopping" could help your school, increase recruitment and receive our full free guide to "mystery shopping".