



Virtual Open Days

This briefing note gives ten key areas for consideration when considering a Virtual Open Day. You can also watch our webinar, kindly hosted by Chris Knight from InnerMedia on the IndependentSchoolsPortal Youtube channel. If you would like any support with virtual open days please contact david@independentschoolsportal.org to learn how our team can help you.

1. Time

Obviously open days usually take place during the school day or on a Saturday– this involves families giving up their Saturday or indeed taking time out of their usual day job. With online open days you have the flexibility to perhaps look at holding them one evening – when parents have children in bed, are relaxed and ready to absorb what you’ve got to show them.

2. Hosts

At a usual open day its “all hands on deck” from the Head, staff, pupils, catering team. Think carefully about who you want involved. Everyone will want to hear from the Head, and we will look at that in due course. Who else are the key people your school will want to hear from? How are you going to involve all those you want to showcase? Who will be the main introducer? Think about who in your school community could take on this role – you may have a natural wannabee TV host in your common room!

3. Format

Your virtual open day can be as complicated as you want it to be or as simple as possible. Your aim is to forge a stronger link with the prospective parents and there are many ways to do this. You may choose to use a live address from the Head with live Q &As, you may decide on a pre-recorded message (if so PLEASE keep this much shorter than a live one!). Or it may be that you choose to book in individual meetings with the Heads for different families (very easy to do on zoom). See the open day as a “taster” leave them wanting more rather than boring them with an hour long video.

4. Information

Decide on your key messages and what you want everyone to take away from the session. This sounds simple, yet with limited time due to attention spans there can be a temptation to overload information. Keep your messages clear and simple. Do consider mentioning your online learning provision. In the past few months the provision of online learning from Independent Schools has been outstanding. Ensure parents are made aware of what their child could have been having. With

This note is provided by www.independentschoolsportal.org. For further briefing notes please visit our website.



uncertainty around returning, to know that the school can provide excellent education in a closure situation is powerful.

5. Showcasing your facilities

Being candid parents do not choose a school based on the facilities alone, however a reminder of the sporting facilities, specialist classrooms and lovely spacious grounds is always useful. If you have the budget you can of course put together a 360 degree tour – alternatively a powerpoint to music with excellent shots and details can be equally as powerful. Animoto is easy, free software for this if budget is tight.

6. Community

Many schools site their “community” as what makes their school special. So if possible involve parents and alumni. Parental testimonials give authenticity. A pre recorded message from some parents or a Q&A with current parents could be useful. Or indeed a message from alumni about what made the school special for them.

7. Personalisation

The virtual tour gives you a real opportunity to personalise the experience for your prospective parents. You can give families a choice of appointments based on what they are most interested in, eg Director of Sport, Head of Learning Support, Director of Music. This enables your parents to have a real connection with the person who matters to them and is much easier to organise than at a traditional open day.

8. Registration

Registration can be set up very easily using free software such as SurveyMonkey or JotForm. Parents can be given the choice as to who they wish to speak to and the “generic” element of the day need only take 15-30 minutes.

9. Promotion

In addition to your registered enquirers a short social media campaign could have a strong take up. (Reports claim that since lockdown Facebook usage is up by 60%.) Promote your open day in the new glut of community groups that have sprung up on social media following coronavirus.

10. Follow Up

It is crucial that each enquiry is followed up after the event – you are now in a dialogue with these parents and with teachers no longer running lunchtime clubs/afterschool societies putting a family in touch with a specialist teacher should they wish to learn more should be less logistically difficult than usual.