Email Marketing to Schools

The benefits of emailing schools and teachers

schools
marketing
company

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The education sector is an excellent opportunity for many businesses and organisations, yet it's often overlooked.

Schools purchase so many products and services: from IT supplies and sanitaryware to playground equipment and school trips. In fact, education is the second largest public sector spend after health – with both education spend and pupil numbers growing. And reassuringly, schools are highly credit-worthy too.

But marketing to schools can be a challenge.

The key frustration is the difficulty in identifying and speaking to the right person. Headteachers and subject heads are busy running their schools – and teaching! Whilst most schools have almost full budgetary control and authority today (many with business and financial managers) it's often left to the teaching and operational staff to make purchasing decisions. They certainly influence most purchases, but it can be hard to communicate with them – as they are mostly not sitting in an office with a desk phone beside them!

So, how do you reach the influencers and key decision-makers in the UK's second-highest public spending sector?

Postal campaigns are one option but they can be expensive and some may only get as far as the school office.

Alternatively, email marketing to direct school email addresses gets straight through to the decision-makers' inboxes and offers you a variety of cost, timing and messaging benefits.

Here are some key benefits of directly emailing schools and teachers:

@ Email is quicker and more immediate to execute than many other methods of communication.

@ It can often be cheaper – no print or postage costs.

@ It lets you send your message directly to teachers and school leaders (unlike a website, or social media post, where people have to come and find your message).

@ Teachers can read emails when they have time; it doesn't interrupt their job, they can save them to read again later (which they often do!) or pass them on.

@ The reach for email is huge. Most teachers and school staff have a direct school email address.

@ Teachers love talking to other teachers – far more than any other industry. They share ideas about suppliers and resources with their peers and hold on to useful emails for some time.

@ The response curve from an email campaign can be long-lasting and wide-reaching. Especially when shared between colleagues and schools.

@ Email has demonstrated robust ROI, year after year – and outperforms social media on ROI many times over.
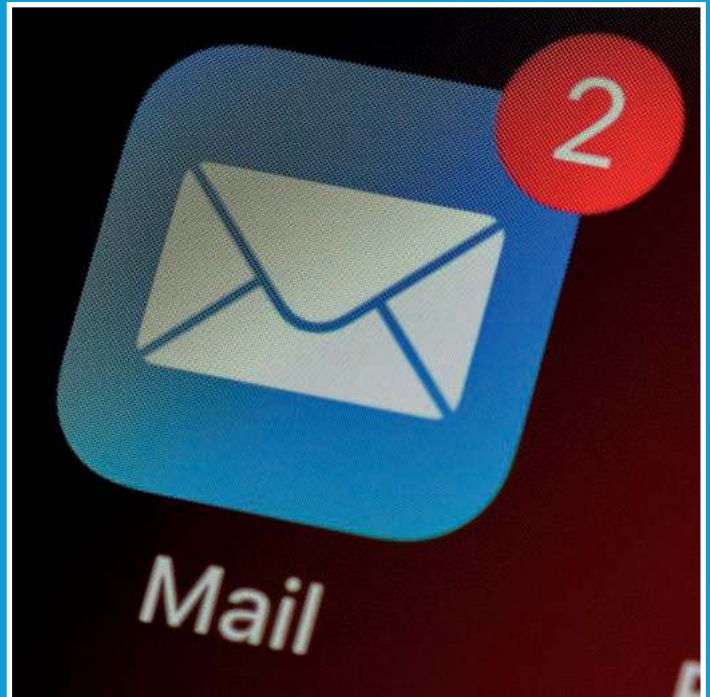
Successful email marketing is not easy

Schools and teachers receive lots of emails every week. Your email campaign must be as effective as possible – and our guide is here to help you do that.

We've been asked A LOT of questions about emailing schools. Our guide is based on these questions, and on our experience of helping businesses email schools, for over 15 years.

Want to know more?

Visit our website: www.schoolsmarketingcompany.co.uk

Teachers' Roles

Job Functions	Postal Volumes	Personal School Email Volumes
Management /Finance Team		
Headteacher/Principal	22397	21437
Executive Head/Head/Deputy Head	5892	4618
Business Manager/Bursar	18802	17159
Chief Executive/COO	16923	14863
Chief Financial Officer/Head of Finance	16246	15587
Chair of Governors	2974	2016
Accounts Office Administrator	7791	6214
Admissions/Registrar	11214	11013
Volumes listed are for Heads of Departments/Coordinators		
Art & Design/Textiles/Craft	6879	5621
Assessment Coordinator	6415	5219
Catering Manager	17391	15016
Chair of PTA	12674	9754
Citizenship	8179	6621
Class teachers (further select by school type)	10854	9716
Classroom Assistant/Learning Support	16393	14998
Communications Manager	21621	18633
Compliance Officer	22641	16213
Data Manager (MIS systems)	3879	2674
Designated Safeguarding Lead/Child Protection Officer	3364	2761
Digital Learning Lead	6418	5014
	18568	18097
	2897	2274

Teachers in schools are like employees in companies. They have a main job role (e.g. Head of Year 7) but many also have additional responsibilities, where your product or service may be of interest to them – or they may influence those decisions.

The Head of Computing and ICT may have responsibility for the internal network infrastructure, but a Business Manager may have the final say on school spend (or potential savings). And it can vary greatly from school to school. Head of Sports or PE may have responsibility for school trips in some schools but it can be someone entirely different elsewhere.

It can become even more challenging in primary schools. With less specialist staff, many teachers and school staff cover multiple subject areas and responsibilities, in addition to their day to day activities.

You might already have a good understanding of the various roles and school types you want to target. On the other hand, you might welcome some help.

With over 1 million school staff on our database and 30,000 different job titles (categorised into over 250 job functions), we're happy to help and advise you on the various contacts to target.

We offer you two methods to email schools and school staff.

You can target specific named staff on their direct school email addresses (i.e. jan.smith@school.sch.uk)

Alternatively you might wish to target the generic school email address – which is often monitored by key administrative staff or the head's PA.

Whatever your decision (and whether you use your own data or that of a third-party) pay attention to GDPR. You must understand where responsibilities lie regarding compliance with the latest legislation; how the data has been collected; and for what purpose. **All our data and email services are GDPR compliant.**

Getting your email to the right person is only part of the challenge, you also need to ensure the content is up to scratch before you press send.

Here are some common areas to focus on:

Overall look and feel

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to the overall structure of marketing emails. Some people prefer a predominantly text email, whilst others choose to mix text and images together. A third option might be to use a single graphic image as an email – but this is not something we'd recommend (we'll explain more later).

Whatever your design preferences, keep your message clear and your content engaging.

Make sure your design displays well for mobile devices too – as they have smaller screens. Many people are using mobiles and tablets to read emails – and this includes teachers!

Personalisation

If it makes sense in the context of your email, you can personalise it with the recipient's title and surname, or perhaps the school name or Local Authority area. This simple action has shown to improve engagement, which in return, will impact on your results.

Long or short content?

How long should your email be?

It's important that you get your message across quickly, as with the increasing demands on people's time, an email that's succinct and to the point is likely to be more successful.

If you want to provide additional information let your website do the heavy lifting; include a link or button to a webpage; or a pdf to view and download.

If your email needs to be longer - make sure the opening paragraph is engaging enough to make them want to read-on and include a CTA (Call to Action) early in the email.

Calls to action

The objective of a marketing email is to get recipients to do something. So, make this clear and obvious – and make it easy for them.

You might want them to click through to your website; ask for more information; sign up for something or even place an order. If so, that's your call to action (CTA). But don't just put it at the end. Use a combination of buttons and text links, potentially placing various response options many times in the email.

And even if they are not ready to buy from you now, they might be interested in your offering in the future. So remember to put a 'bail out' option in your email content. This could be some information they can ask you for now, or check out on your website that doesn't require an immediate purchase or heavy commitment. It may encourage them to get in touch with you anyway, so you have a warm prospect for the future.

And keep your verbs active, for example: "find out here" and "discover more", can be far more effective than a bland "see more". Take care when you use "buy now" though. Studies suggest that "see options and pricing" can be more effective in many instances. A softer, less assumptive approach to generate interest perhaps.

Improve your response with engaging content

Links to survey results, testimonials, videos, competitions and white papers always perform well. It's no surprise that links to free offers are also popular. The biggest risk, however, is that your content lets you down after they've clicked the link.

It might seem common sense to check all your email links work ok. That's just the first thing to check. What about the content of the landing page? Is it up to scratch? Is the message consistent? Do they know what to do next?

If this leaves you stuck, consider creating a bespoke landing page, just for your email. That way, you keep the language and message entirely in tune with your email's main theme. This is especially true if you have many parts to your business, as if you want schools to believe you have products and services that are just right for them, a 'schools' landing page can make all the difference.

Make sure the content matches their expectations too. Linking "download here" to a long form that needs completing first, could quickly lose them. Balance what information they need to give you with what's in it for them.

And if you do need to direct them to a form, keep it short and simple. The more questions or parts to complete there are on a form, the less likely they are to complete it.

Ask us about SMC OneClick – our pre-filled web response form – which improves response rates by making the process of responding quick and easy.

Be market-specific

If your company is based outside the UK and you are emailing UK schools, display your prices in £ sterling. You should also be very clear about your delivery costs and any other dispatch information.

However attractive and informative your email, the decision on whether or not to open it is based on who it's from and the subject line. That's often all they see in their inbox. So, make it matter.

Who is the email from?

Many businesses will opt for their company name here, or perhaps a brand name if that's stronger. Alternatively, you might decide to send the email from a personal name. That may seem more approachable, or perhaps because your brand is not well-known.

Create a high-performing subject line

It has one job and one job only – to get them to open the email. So, be prepared to agonise over your subject line. And make sure it displays well on all screen sizes.

Here's some inspiration to draw from:

• Make it relevant, interesting or compelling

• Solve their problem: e.g. "Your local IT supplier with FREE next day delivery"

• Don't make it too long: or it may be truncated on mobile devices

• Use a deadline: e.g. "25% off this month"

• Consider including an emoticon/emoji: studies show this can make your email stand out in their inbox

• As a rule, use sentence case: capitals (sparingly) are for emphasis

• Consider AB testing: if your sample size is large enough for meaningful results

• Use questions: especially ones that make them curious

• Include a relevant keyword: e.g. "school trips"

Call to Action

• Add urgency: e.g. "10% off this month only"

• Use FOMO (fear of missing out): e.g. "only 10 dates left this term"

• Use "evidence" statements: e.g. 50 "Outstanding" schools are already using our software"

Using the pre-header

You'll often see emails displaying some additional text within the list view of an inbox. This is either the first few lines of the email, or more often, the pre-header.

The pre-header (or preview text) is a line of text you can generally add-in to your email content. It won't show on your email when open, but can be displayed in the inbox list view.

A pre-header can be stand-alone, or it can expand on your subject line or complement it in a certain way. Here's an example:

Subject line: Key trends for the new school year

Pre-header: See the full results from our most recent survey

As well as improving open rates, making use of the pre-header controls can prevent your email header showing HTML code, or parts of links – which is never that motivating – and we want them to open your email!

Why not have a look at your inbox and see how the email subject lines and pre-headers look in the emails you've received recently?

Text or HTML?

There are two main types of email: **Pure text & HTML**

Most marketing emails are sent as HTML, so let's explore the reasons for that.

A pure text email is exactly that. Just text. No images, no coloured fonts, and links as they're written (e.g. https://www.schoolsmarketingcompany.co.uk) All emails used to be like this. It suited low connection speeds and compatibility with many different devices.

Some people believe that text format emails are less likely to be classed as spam. However, in our experience, deliverability is the same.

HTML emails quickly developed as connection speeds did. And they give you far more options in terms of design – more like a page on your website, in fact.

In an HTML email you can embed videos, clickable buttons and images. You can include different fonts, graphics and background colours. But be warned – not all features are supported by every email client. In some instances, your delivered email might not match what you sent in terms of design.

Yet, created correctly, HTML emails are always our recommendation. And if you want more of a text feel, you can still do this within an HTML format.

There are many excellent online email editors that help you through the tricky issue of creating email code that works. Even if you don't know how to code (and most of us don't), you can still create a good quality email.

Incidentally, most modern email clients use HTML by default. The emails are sent as 'multi-part' emails. That is, they contain both an HTML and a text version. The latter is almost always generated and delivered where the server handshake deems it appropriate.
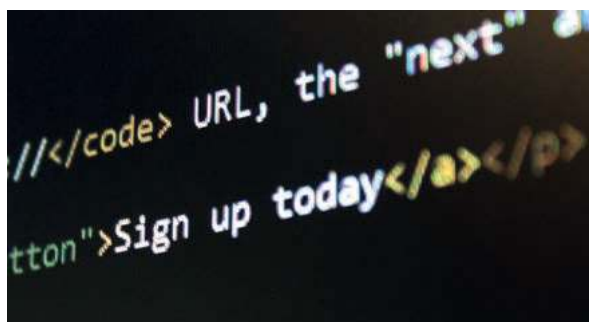
Make the email mobile responsive

The typical width for an email is 600 pixels. This size suits traditional monitors and avoids horizontal scrolling. But, it's unsuitable for most mobile devices and tablets.

It's important that your email is designed to be mobile responsive, otherwise your message may be too small to read. This forces the recipient to zoom the screen, scrolling left and right to view the content. Not a great way to read your marketing email.

When email content is created 'responsively' you specify (in the HTML code) how your email should be displayed on different screen sizes, and email clients.

For example, content may 'stack' on a smartphone. Two blocks of content may be next to each other when displayed on a full-size monitor, but a smartphone will display them one above the other. This avoids needing a horizontal scrollbar.

Mobile responsive email formats provide a much better user experience.

BUT… consider your content carefully.

For example, avoid directional references, such as text that states a link is on the right. This doesn't make sense when the link is then stacked and displayed below!

Correctly coded HTML mobile responsive email content will enable images to re-size automatically for different screen sizes and resolutions. And text will automatically adjust to remain readable. You can even hide certain content (such as large tables) if it wouldn't display well on a small screen.

An image pitfall to avoid

Whilst the inclusion of images will enhance the look and feel of your email, be warned of a significant risk.

Not all email clients display images by default.

Outlook is a leading example of this. If your message is within, or part of, a solid image, it is possible that NOTHING will display when it reaches their inbox (unless they choose to "enable" images, or have changed their default to download images automatically).

The answer is generally to use a mix of text and images. Plus, you might want to keep some of your calls to action in text, rather than an image.

Make sure you use Alt Tags too. These show when images don't. So, if your image highlights a 10% discount, point this out in your alt tag.

Image files can also be quite 'large' in terms of their MB weight. You must use a suitable resolution and image size to avoid creating a 'physically' huge, weighty email. Email weight, overall file size and balance of text to images are factors often used as spam indicators.

Test your email on different email clients

Well-written HTML email code should display well across most, if not all, email clients. But there will be differences. If this might be an issue for you, there are several online services that allow you to test your design across different email clients. We would be happy to recommend one.

Careful choice of font

If your design relies on the use of a particular font ('freestyle script' for example), it might be worth reconsidering your design – or finding out what the alternative default font will be, to make sure you are happy with it.

Just because you choose a specific font doesn't mean it will be used by the recipient's email client. Most common fonts are supported, but not all fonts are supported by all email clients.

Displaying the text in an image can be a work-around. But ensure there's also an alternative version available, for reasons mentioned earlier.

The temptation of interactive content

Image carousels, in-app surveys, embedded video, counters and more. We all love new things. But be warned: support for interactive content is currently limited. And this will impact on how your email looks to users.

Support is constantly improving though, especially for mobile devices. Google released AMP for email. This should be supported by most major email clients soon. And it will provide many interactive elements, where it's supported.

Your web browser version

It's always worth including a link to a browser version of your email. Support for new features and content is better on most web browsers. Where email images may sometimes be blocked by a server policy, a browser view will generally display them.

Avoiding SPAM traps

Your email can be classed as SPAM for numerous reasons:

- Certain words in the content can increase risk. 'Test' for example

- Overall file size (weight of email) can be a factor

- The use of links to images and files on different servers

- Lack of Alt Tags – imbalance between text and images

- The domain or IP address of the mail server or gateway

- Your email may also be blocked before it reaches the recipient. This could be by their service provider, mail server, or security program.

There are online tools where you can check the spam score of your email (such as www.mail-tester.com) prior to sending the campaign; which can be a useful precaution.

At Schools Marketing Company we've been managing client campaigns for over 15 years. We use our own dedicated servers, email gateway and IP addresses. We use DKIM (Domain Key Identified Mail) DMARC and SPF to secure the emails we send on your behalf. This allows other email servers to validate the emails that come from us, helping to avoid the dreaded SPAM trap.

Sticking to the Regulations

Email marketing is governed by the GDPR and the PECR (Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations).

Schools fall into the category of business-to-business communication. As such, the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) states they must be regulated as follows:

Emails to employees of limited companies, public limited companies, limited liability partnerships and government departments (including schools) can be emailed without consent. Individuals must be given a clear and easy means of opting-out from future communications.

Emails to sole traders and traditional partnerships are treated in the same way as consumer data. That means opt-in consent must be gained for these contacts.

Schools Marketing Company is part of Family Marketing Ltd, which is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office, registration number: Z9153578. We hold email data for corporate bodies and corporate staff. Our data is managed in accordance with both GDPR and PECR.

So, what does this mean for you?

Our school email data is compliant and safe to use for sending out your email campaigns.

Further information can be found on the ICO website:
ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr

SMC can help

Since 2005, we've been helping businesses and organisations like yours to get postal campaigns and email marketing messages in front of key school contacts by name.

Our direct school email database covers over 80% of the teaching, management and support staff in all UK schools. That's more than1 million named teachers, managers and school support staff.

And we're cleaning, managing and developing our data daily. It's our business to hold the best breadth and depth of UK schools and teachers data possible, which can add huge value to your business.

We are a tight-knit team of knowledgeable people, both directors have worked in marketing to schools (direct mail and email) since 1990. They know their stuff. The excellent reputation of SMC goes before us, and we work to keep it that way.

So, to sum up, SMC can offer you:

- **The largest schools data and direct school email coverage in the UK education market**
  - **Named contacts for teachers – and many more roles**
    - **High-quality, GDPR-compliant data**
    - **A flexible and friendly service**
    - **Meaningful results to build your business**

We hope our guide has been worth the read; if you have any questions, or need any further information, please get in touch.

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Want to chat? We'd love to hear from you:

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