



Images of pupils on school web sites

Images of pupils on school web sites - Ambleside Primary School, Cumbria

A primary school in the Lake District has collected several awards for its innovative web site while following strict rules to ensure the privacy and safety of pupils when using the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Ambleside School describes itself as small but incredibly busy and this is reflected in its home on the Internet, Ambleweb (<http://www.ambleside.schoolzone.co.uk/ambleweb/index.htm>).

With more than 80Mb of data and no less than 2,200 pages, the site contains comprehensive information about the school, features on classroom activities, interactive areas, a section for parents, lesson ideas, Internet tutorials, games, links and even a birdbox cam.

The vast majority of pages are created by the children themselves during lessons, at breaktimes, at home or at the Computer Club.

Safety, however, is always paramount and all content is checked by teaching staff before being uploaded to ensure that no individual child could be identified or contacted by visitors to the school's web site.

To this end, no close-up pictures of individual children are ever used. General shots of classroom or group activities are used but these are never captioned with the children's names.

After assessing the risks, children featured on the school's web site are only referred to by their first names.

Personal details of children such as e-mail addresses, home addresses and telephone numbers are never revealed on the web site.

In the interests of security, Ambleside also says it reserves the right to make a detailed log of visitors to its site, including their Internet service provider (ISP) and details of their computer system. Visitors are also asked not to distribute any examples of children's work or cut and paste code and content without permission.

For more information on Ambleside's 'Rules' for using the Internet refer to: <http://www.ambleside.schoolzone.co.uk/ambleweb/ourrules.htm>



Images of pupils on school web sites - Grove Road Primary School, Tring

A visitor to Grove Road primary school (<http://www.groveroad.herts.sch.uk>) need not make the journey out to Tring in Hertfordshire because the schools web site, with its innovative use of graphics, will tell them just about everything they need to know.

The site, which was designed by two parents, has won awards and reflects the full range of the schools activities, from photos of the nativity play to children's artwork of one another and, perhaps less flatteringly, of their teachers. "It's anything that goes on in school," says headteacher John Grubb, "because its nice to have a chance to show work to a wider audience."

Grubb says the web site is accessed by parents but is also of interest to the wider local community. However, he is acutely aware of the downside of such openness and realises that it could encourage inappropriate interest in pupils.

After assessing the dangers Grove Road Primary School have a policy of not identifying individuals, although first names are considered safe, and it is careful how it represents them visually. Drawings of children by other children do appear on the web site but photographs tend to be of groups. With photos showing a small number of children, Grubb asks parents for permission before the pictures are put up on the Web.

Grove Road Primary School has a 15-workstation network with computers located around the building and pupils access the Web via the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/>), which filters out inappropriate material for all schools in the county. "We do bear in mind, though," says Grubb, "that no filtering system is perfect, and I make sure staff and children let me know if they do see something which shouldn't be there." He then informs NTL (<http://www.ntl.com/education/default.asp>), which is the Internet service provider that operates the system.

Hertfordshire has also instituted a system of e-mail addresses for pupils which includes their first and second names and three random numbers. This makes it almost impossible to track down which school they go to and effectively makes each child anonymous.

Careful thought has been given to protecting the identities of pupils but teachers are not given the same immunity, although Grubb, who joined Grove Road last autumn, has yet to make an appearance on the school's web site. Despite the fact that most adults tend to be somewhat self-conscious about snaps of themselves, he seems to have no inhibitions about a photograph of himself being uploaded, and says, with surprising keenness, "That sounds like a good idea!"