

Learning and Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Executive Education Department are grateful to all those who have contributed to the development of this booklet and the Scottish Schools *get* Online project. In addition to members of the project Advisory Group and LT Scotland colleagues, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to the parents' groups and the many schools and education authorities across Scotland who have provided much appreciated advice and views on the subject of school websites.

Special thanks are due to the staff, students and authority personnel of the following schools who participated in the Scottish Schools *get* Online.

Project School	Authority
Cluny Primary School	Aberdeenshire
Kellands Primary School	Aberdeenshire
Rhu Primary School	Argyll and Bute
Lochmaben Primary School	Dumfries and Galloway
Wallace Hall Academy	Dumfries and Galloway
Whitecraig Primary School	East Lothian
Keith Grammar School	Moray
Westend Primary School	Moray
Robert Owen Memorial Primary	South Lanarkshire
Rutherglen High School	South Lanarkshire
St Louise Primary School	South Lanarkshire
East Calder Primary School	West Lothian
Inveralmond Early Years Centre	West Lothian
Sgoil Lionacleit	Western Isles (Eilean Siar)
Lionel School	Western Isles (Eilean Siar)

Full contact details for all the project schools can be found on the project website at www.scottishschoolsgetonline.org.uk

Creating and Managing a School Website

Background

It is widely recognised that when schools and parents work together, children do better. With this in mind, in the summer of 2004, the Education Minister, Peter Peacock, launched a new campaign to involve parents more in their children's education.

In March 2005, as part of this policy drive, a draft Bill and consultation paper, *Making the Difference – improving parents' involvement in schools*, was published. This in turn led to the publication of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill this autumn (2005). The Bill has a broad focus and aims to achieve stronger, more inclusive and effective parental involvement in all aspects of education.

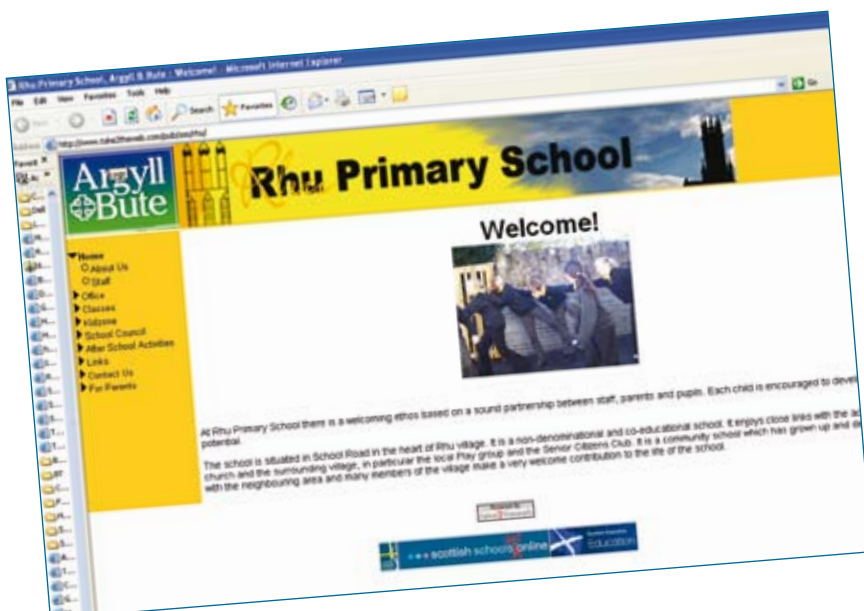
Work has already begun to promote greater parental involvement and ICT is playing an important role. Learning and Teaching Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Executive Education Department, developed and launched the Scottish Schools Online (SSO) website (www.scottishschoolsonline.gov.uk) to address the need to provide parents with easy access to information about schools in Scotland, including exam results, HMIE reports, free school meal entitlement and other aspects of school performance. In addition, Learning and Teaching Scotland supports SEED in the development and delivery of the Parentzone website (www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk) which offers information and advice to parents on all aspects of schooling in Scotland.

The school information for parents, offered on Scottish Schools Online, also includes links to school websites where they are available. A school website is an ideal vehicle for communicating with parents and involving them in their children's education. A small but growing number of schools are beginning to realise their potential but many have yet to subscribe to this approach. SEED, keen to see more schools developing parent-friendly and informative websites, has funded a project led by Learning and Teaching Scotland, called Scottish Schools *get* Online.

This document is a direct result of the experiences and 'lessons learned' of the 15 schools involved in the Scottish Schools *get* Online project. It is designed for schools considering creating a website or revisiting one which has lain dormant due to lack of time or expertise. It aims to add value to the excellent advice and guidance already available from local authorities, Becta, NGfL Scotland and elsewhere. The advice and recommendations it contains come from busy practitioners faced with juggling the demands and challenges of the normal school week as well as those of creating and managing their school websites. We are grateful for all their time, effort and hard work.

Margret MacPhail

Project Manager
Scottish Schools *get* Online
Learning and Teaching Scotland



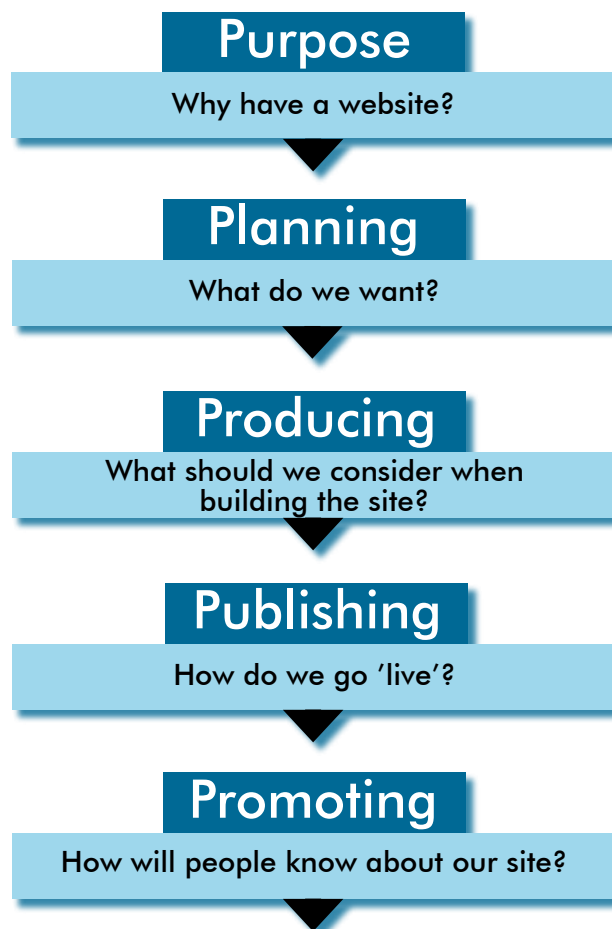
Introduction

Scottish Schools *get* Online Project

The aim of the project is 'to support schools across Scotland in developing high quality websites which offer appropriate information for parents and others'.

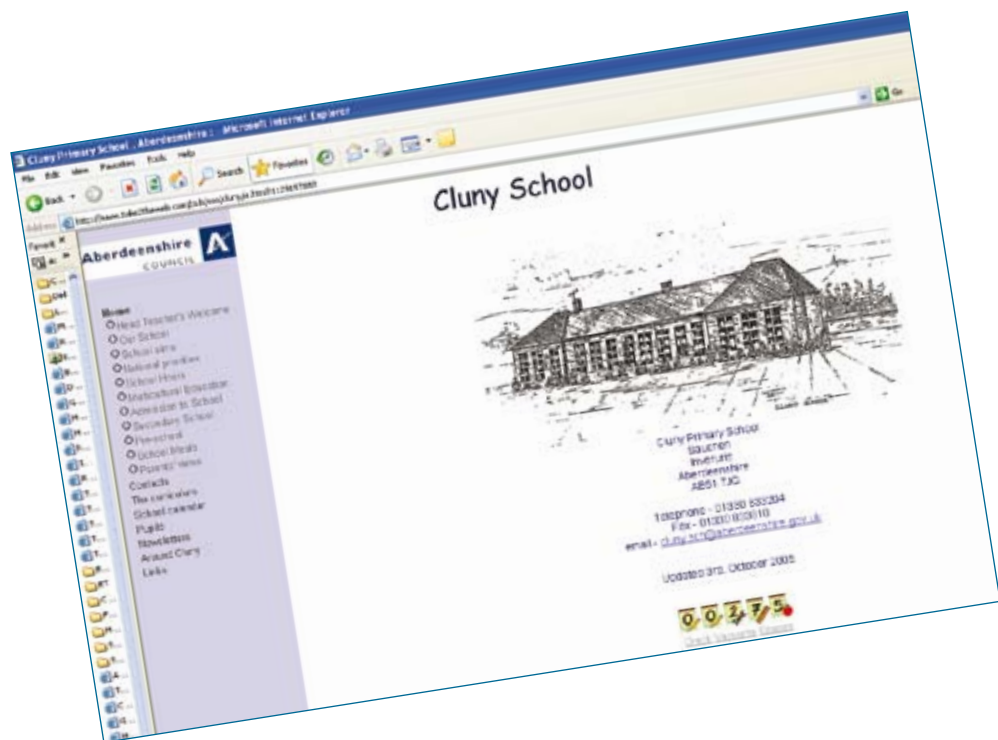
To achieve this, Learning and Teaching Scotland undertook to support schools across a number of authorities in planning, producing and publishing school websites using an online website creation tool which offered the flexibility, scalability, collaboration and content management features required for a whole school approach to the creation and maintenance of a school website.

In April 2005, 15 schools embarked upon the Scottish Schools *get* Online project. The project involves both headteachers and staff in the planning, building and publishing of a website which will allow parents access to a wide range of information relating to school events, homework schedules, class activities, curriculum, timetabling and, very significantly, pupil achievements. All 15 have made exceptional progress, with some at the stage of publishing and promoting their websites. The feedback from schools and parents has been extremely positive. A further 10 schools are scheduled to embark upon the Schools *get* Online project this year.



If you are considering developing a school website or you have a website which needs to be revitalised we hope you will find the advice useful.

Parents had been requesting a school website be set up and the headteacher saw the advantages for prospective parents too. All felt it would help increase the already strong home/school links. All the school staff were consulted and gave their views and the pupils were very definite about what should and shouldn't be on their website.



The parents' questionnaire given at the Scottish Schools *get* Online planning meeting was adapted to suit the school and was completed and returned by 100% of the parents!

Alison, Cluny Primary

Purpose

Before embarking on your website, make sure you define and secure agreement on the purpose. The key question to answer in setting the purpose is 'How will having a website benefit our school?'

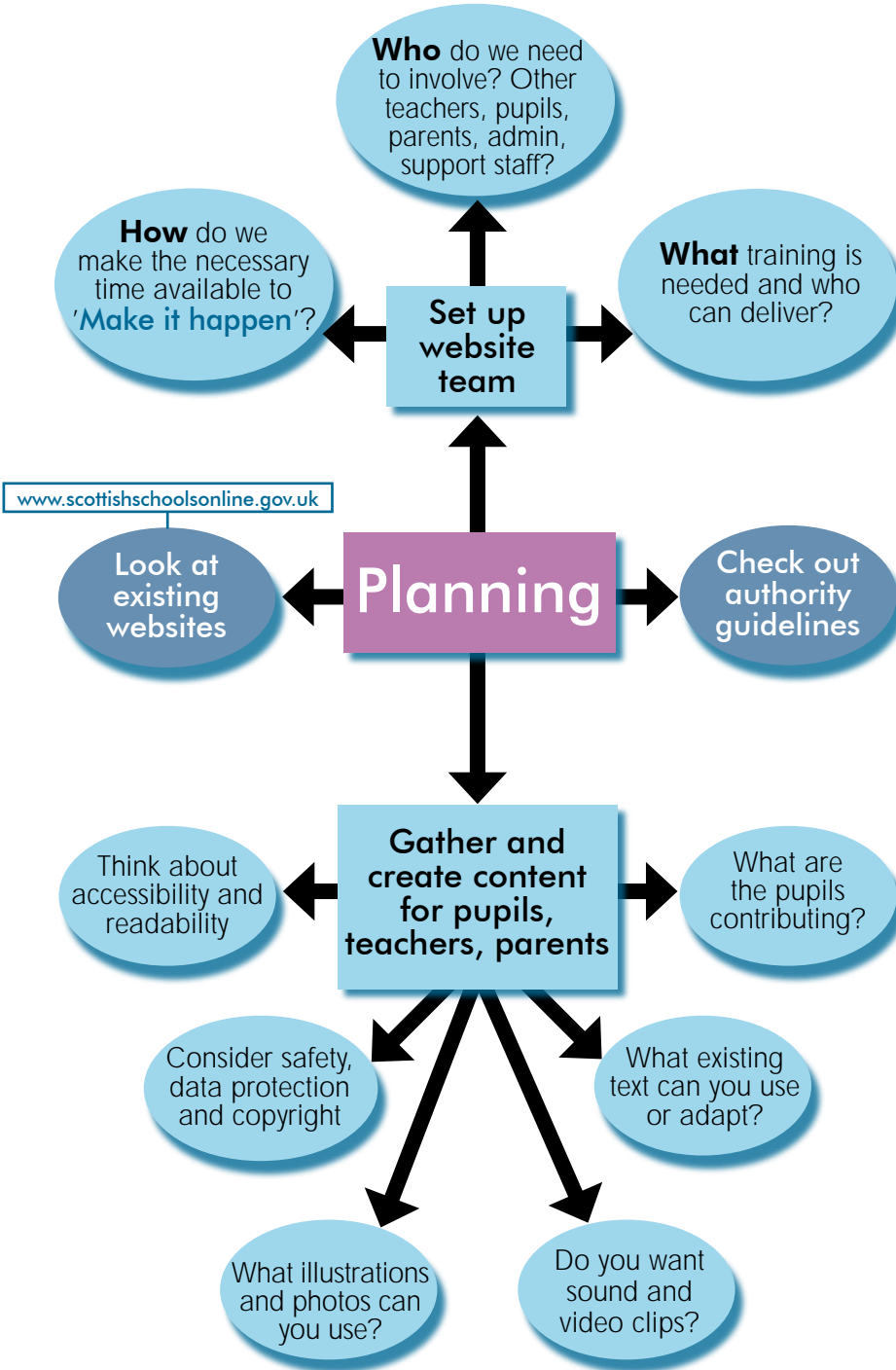
We recommend, to start with, a brainstorming session involving senior management, staff, parents and pupils. It may not, however, be practicable to get the required level of representation in one room at the same time. If not, then you should consider other information-gathering techniques such as questionnaires, examples of which can be found on the project website www.scottishschoolsgetonline.org.uk. The goal is to ensure that you fully understand what each group wants from your school website. If you get this right then you're on track to achieving the desired level of involvement.

Although not necessarily exhaustive, the following list outlines some of the compelling reasons for creating a school website:

- **Marketing**
To promote the school and share pupils' achievements, especially within its catchment area.
- **Publishing children's work**
Publishing high-quality materials that can be seen by teachers, parents, other pupils and people all over the world motivates and develops pupils' self-esteem.
- **As a learning experience**
When pupils are involved in web publishing they learn to work creatively with text, graphics and sound, and develop their ICT skills in a meaningful, collaborative context.
- **Sharing resources**
Documents which are produced electronically can be made available on the website for pupils, teachers and parents at any time in any location.
- **Communication**
The website can be a way of involving parents, carers and the community in children's learning. Communication can be a two-way process if visitors are offered the opportunity to get in touch with the school via the school's enquiries e-mail address or to submit their views on school activities/policies.

Planning

To ensure that your website becomes a valuable, vibrant and sustainable communication tool which serves both the school and the wider learning community, we suggest that you think about the questions in the diagram below.



Content

As part of the Scottish Schools *get* Online project, several parents' groups were consulted regarding their choice of content for a school website. Some suggestions are listed here, but our advice is to start small, keep it simple and have a long-term plan to expand your website.

- School contact details
- The school calendar
- Easy-to-understand summaries of school policy statements
- School uniform
- Pupil achievements
- Newsletters
- The range of out-of-school activities offered
- Minutes of School Board/PTA meetings
- School meal menus, prices, etc.
- Breakfast clubs and after-school care, costs, kit, etc.
- Support provided for pupils with additional support needs
- Web link suggestions to assist with topic work and homework
- Direct links to the authority website/local community/HMIE reports
- School development plan and school progress report

Organising content

Some of the project schools found organising the content challenging. Using Inspiration® or a similar concept-mapping software tool to create a site storyboard or using a series of post-it notes could help to see how the links and menus work together (see Appendix 1).

Safety and copyright

The same principles should be applied to the virtual presence of the school as those which apply to the school's physical buildings to ensure that every child in the school's care is safe. Schools must make sure that no individual child can be identified or contacted either via the school website or as a result of a visitor using it. Websites should not include personal details or names of any child or adult in photographs, personal e-mail/postal addresses or telephone/fax numbers. Parents' permission to include children's work/photographs/input to the site should be obtained. Exemplar parental permission forms, advice on safety and copyright issues can be obtained at:

www.safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools

Data Protection Act 1998

Schools should be aware of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the main issues that need to be considered when developing a website. Further information regarding data protection can be found on the website of the Information Commissioner:

www.dataprotection.gov.uk



Producing

Before considering which website creation tool to use, contact your own education authority's ICT advisory service as it may well be able to provide you with a solution and/or support for your school website.

Individuals and education authorities have two options when deciding how to build a website:

- **online** – connecting to a specialised website via a web browser, which enables you to build your site online any time and anywhere (see Appendix 2 for more information about this option)
- **offline** – using software that allows you to build your site offline and then uploading the site to the internet (see Appendix 2 for more information about this option).

Whether using an online or offline tool, do consider the following aspects, which are very important to a website user.

Navigation

It should be possible to get anywhere on your site with three mouse clicks. This means that you need to consider the main navigational menus.

Good web design generally uses a key menu on the home page (the page that users see first) which links to a series of sub-menus on other pages. However, never have links to pages which are not yet created or completed – plan your website in self-contained units so that it can be developed over time. Also, make sure that users can easily get back to your home page if they get lost.

Design

Pages must be well designed and structured so that information is easy to locate. You need to remember that text prepared for a printed publication, such as a school handbook, will not work well on your website unless you adapt it. When adapting text, or indeed writing from scratch, you could make it easier to read by using the following techniques.

- Keep the home page simple and short enough to avoid scrolling. A small amount of vertical scrolling is acceptable on other pages but sideways scrolling is not.
- Always use a general page heading that quickly identifies the content of the page.
- Fonts
 - Limit the fonts you use as the more unusual ones may not be displayed on the audience's computer.
 - Sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial and Verdana) are easier to read on screen than serif fonts (e.g. Times).
 - Use different font sizes to help readers understand the importance of different headings. Make sure that all pages use the same set of font sizes.
 - Use bold to emphasise headings and sub-headings to make them stand out.
 - Never underline a heading as underlining is used to indicate a link to another page.

- Use colour to emphasise important words or points or create a coloured background for the headings. However, choose the combinations carefully for the sake of readability.
- Keep things simple. Avoid flashing or moving effects with text – many people find this annoying.

Accessibility

'Web accessibility' means making sure that a website can be accessed using any browser, that it can be easily navigated and that the content can be easily understood. Some things you should consider are:

- keeping language simple and sentences short
- using high contrast colours for text wherever possible
- avoiding the use of text on a patterned background
- giving graphics a title to help visually impaired people who use text-to-speech tools.

Detailed accessibility guidelines can be found at:

www.LTScotland.org.uk/about/guidelines/accessibility/guidelines/index.asp

Download times

You need to design your pages so that users arrive as quickly as possible, thus preventing them losing interest and going elsewhere. Multimedia such as pictures, moving images and sounds adds interest to a website but also slows page-loading times. Some of your visitors will not have a broadband connection. Therefore:

- keep graphics small, reusing graphics if possible within the site
- use thumbnails as appropriate
- set your scanner resolution for web images or 72 dpi (dots per inch)
- select 'web' or 'least quality' option when using your digital camera.



Publishing

Before 'going live' you are advised to test your site, making sure all graphics load correctly, all the links work (see Appendix 3), the navigation buttons take you to where they say they will and your site looks as it should on both PCs and Macs. Test your website with at least the most common browsers, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer and Firefox. Be brave and invite a cross-section of your intended audience to review your site.

Every school in Scotland, through the *Domain Names Rationalisation Project Scotland*, has been allocated a unique domain name. This gives you the nationally recognised school address of 'www.yourschoolname.eaname.sch.uk'. Contact your education authority to find out which name has been allocated to your school and the arrangements for using this. (The education authority will need to establish appropriate name server entries to make a domain name operational.)

If you have built your site with *online* tools such as take2theweb, publishing is the easiest part of the process because you just tick the page or pages when you are ready to go live. If you have created your website using an *offline* solution provided by your authority, contact them and they will help you publish the site.

If you decide to use your own offline solution and your own Internet Service Provider, independent of your education authority, the next step is to upload your site to the internet. Most web creation tools will have a method for doing this which you can access from within the program. If not, you can transfer your work using FTP (File Transfer Protocol) and to do this you will need a program such as WS_FTP. The light (LE) version is available as freeware for teachers and schools and can be downloaded from:

www.ftplanet.com/download.asp



I'm pretty proud of myself, and believe it or not, it was nowhere near as hard as I thought it was going to be, and way more fun. I admit, I have become a bit obsessed, and have found myself waking up in the middle of the night thinking: "It might work better if I do ..." and logging on at my next free moment to give a brainwave a shot.

Fiona, Wallace Hall Academy



Promoting

Once everything is working, it is time to show off your hard work and let your audience know of the website's existence. There are many ways of doing this including the usual item in the school newsletter about your brand new website, the community newsletter or newspaper, an official launch, etc. Perth High School has found a novel way of promoting its website. At the beginning of the new session, first year pupils are introduced to the school website in the English department. The pupils are then given a signed homework task requiring them to demonstrate the website to their parents. This activity has proved to be very successful and rewarding.

Inform your education authority of your web presence. Also by e-mailing Scottish Schools Online (SSO) enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk you will ensure your website is included in its searchable directory of all schools in Scotland. SSO provides contact details, links to school websites where available, and statistical and other information for every school.

Submit your website URL to popular search tools such as www.google.com/addurl. To ensure your entry is as complete as possible this should only be done once your website has been sensibly populated with content.

Next steps

After you have built your site the challenge is to keep the momentum going. Make sure the website is regularly discussed at staff meetings and, if possible, time negotiated for its maintenance. Another idea might be to rotate responsibility so that different classes and teachers are involved at different times. Perhaps an award could be given for the best set of class pages.



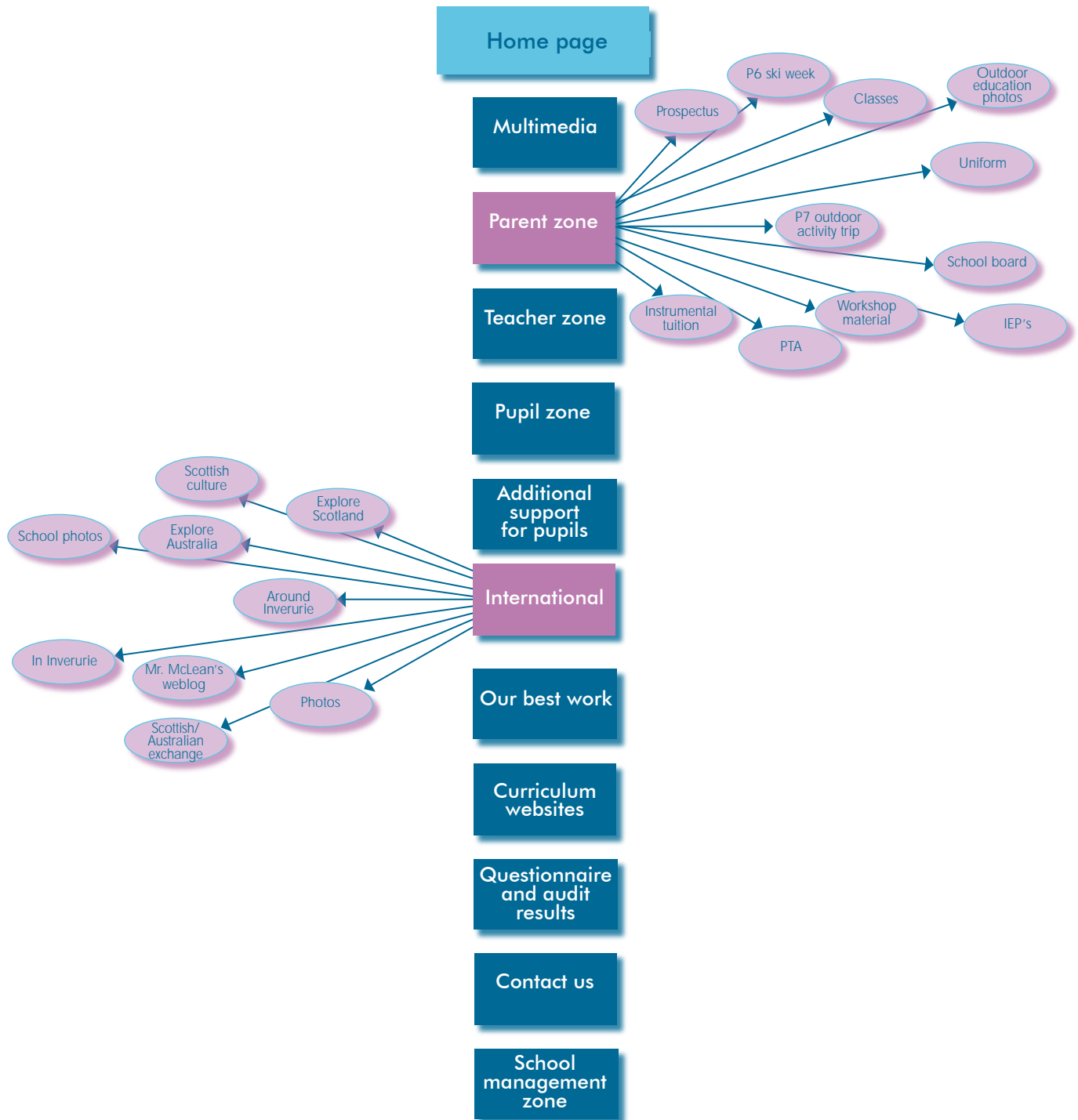
These are West End Primary School's next steps:

- *Go ahead and publish what is done and then add to it as we go along. (Had thought of waiting until the site was fully built)*
- *Invite PTA and School Board to contribute to a page.*
- *Train the school's secretaries so that they can put Newsletters etc. straight on to the website and therefore make the site more informative and relevant.*
- *Train pupils to provide information about class activities.*

Appendix 1

Kelland School's home page

This Inspiration[®] map illustrates Kelland School's approach to planning and organising its website content. As examples, 'Parent zone' and 'International' have been highlighted to show the detailed information contained within these sections. Their website can be found at www.take2thweb.com/SSO/Kellands



Appendix 2

Building a website using online tools

For busy or inexperienced educationalists, online building is the simpler option. Online web authoring provides you with an empty website into which you put your content using tools and templates provided. If you can type, cut and paste, load and save files and you have some basic graphic-handling skills then you can create a website very quickly.

It is also easy to keep an online site up to date as once the structure and design of the site has been established, each class teacher, as well as pupils and parents, will be able to add to the site. This greatly reduces your burden as ICT developer or maintainer of the site. You do, of course, need to monitor what is being published and should be consulted before each page goes live.

If you are an education authority school and decide to build your website online, make sure you contact your ICT advisory service first as it may have negotiated special deals with an online site and possibly added the authority's branding.

Three popular online tools which are worth having a look at are:

take2theweb (www.take2theweb.com)

Schools Internet Kit (www.schools.ik.com)

Scottish Schools.info (www.scottishschools.info)

Building a website using offline tools

There are numerous programs currently available which allow you to design and save your site on your local computer or network before uploading to the internet. If you can, it is definitely worthwhile trying out different programs before you decide which to buy.

Programs which have been designed purely for website creation, such as Microsoft FrontPage or Macromedia Dreamweaver, are likely to work the best and have fewer glitches. However, they are expensive and they are also more complex to use than word-processing or desktop publishing programs that include the creation of web pages as an additional feature (such as Microsoft Publisher or Textease 2000).

Appendix 3

Tools to check for broken links

Removing broken links is a key aspect of maintaining a website. Broken links frustrate visitors, who may give up looking for content. Search engines will also stop searching for content if they meet with broken links. Checking for broken links is a tedious task, but fortunately there is software to assist you.

For example:

W3C Link Checker (<http://validator.w3.org/checklink>)

Xenu's Link Sleuth (<http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html>)