

A step by step guide to commissioning and facilitating good **School Prospectus** photography



By **Martyn Poyner**
SchoolProspectus.com

Music

Because of the broad diversity of this subject, more than one shot is often taken. Stronger shots tend to be close-ups of individuals playing instruments, perhaps within a group. Orchestra shots also look good, particularly if on a stage with stage lighting. Music rooms are often small, particularly the individual tuition classrooms. Consider taking students to other interesting areas of the school with good natural light. It is not imperative that music be shot in the music room. Photographs can also look good outside in spring or summer.

Drama

If possible, shoot in full costume with full stage lighting. This is frequently not practical, so an alternative is to shoot a rehearsal where perhaps actors are holding scripts. Even in rehearsal shots, a token hat or costume helps to visually say 'drama'. Some stage 'backlighting' is useful when available. It is helpful to have the person who normally sets up the lighting available. Otherwise, the photographer can set up lights. The key to a good drama shot is full-on intensity in pupils' faces. Some sections in the script lend themselves to this. Concentrating on and re-reading these sections, while the photographer is shooting, is a good idea.

Art

Art classrooms ideally need an abundance of artwork on the walls and on the desks. Students working on bold colourful projects look better than working on small intricate work. It's worth preparing good examples of pupils work for the photographer to copy. These may be used as standalone shots in the prospectus.

Sports

These tend to be a mixture of facilities i.e. sports halls, gym, grounds etc. close-ups of participants, action shots and general shots with a sporting context. For most action team games, a competitive season/ game (with one ball) is normally preferable to a training session. It gives a certain focus (the ball) for all players. There is clearly an issue with representing winter and summer sports. It's fine if the shoot is scheduled over both seasons, but otherwise, previously taken shots may need to be used. It rarely works setting up sports shots out of season.

ICT

The most important consideration here is to only shoot the school's latest up-to-date computer equipment. Where there is limited one equipment available, it is better to shoot closer on an individual with the newest equipment, rather than shooting a whole room with old and new equipment mixed together. It's a useful time-saver to tidy any unsightly wiring around the computers prior to shooting, position the screens at similar angles and in straight lines.

DT

DT is quite a photogenic subject. More unusual projects look better. Where facilities exist, it is good to shoot both conventional DT equipment and modern computer based equipment being used.

Mathematics/English/Languages/Geography

Wall posters and book images/writing on a whiteboard or blackboard is quite important for these subjects. For languages, it is useful to have a large flag somewhere and/or foreign language posters. For maths, three-dimensional props are helpful.

Library

If the library looks good, it's worth shooting a wide architectural-type shot. Close-in shots of children reading or studying are also effective.

Pastoral Care

This can be interpreted in many ways. One-to-one released, informal shots with a pupil and tutor works well.

Catering/Lunchtime

This is a good opportunity to show pupils eating high quality, wholesome food in a communal, happy environment.

Boarding Houses

It's important to get a sense of the relaxed, communal side of boarding with shots of pupils socialising together in the communal areas and rooms. Where study/hairdressing rooms are to be photographed, select tidy rooms with personality. Take particular notice of messages on posters. Some may inadvertently be inappropriate. Also, very importantly, select rooms with the most natural light.

Morning Service

This can be a good opportunity for close-in shots of pupils, perhaps singing with hymn books. If the school has a large chapel, it may also require a more architectural-type shot, taken during a service.

The Headteacher

The head will decide on the tone of this photograph. It can either be a formal portrait shot to camera, or a less formal shot, perhaps talking to pupils. Some Heads prefer to be photographed while teaching. If taken with pupils, it's important to select confident students who will look comfortable and relaxed with the Head.

Extra Curricular

Many of the extra curricular photographs will previously have been taken on trips and outings. However, after school clubs and activities, can be taken by the photographer.

What if the weather forecast is not good?

The photographer will check the weather forecast a couple of days before the shoot. If heavy rain is forecast for the whole day, the photographer may suggest postponing to a later date.

There are obviously situations where rescheduling is not an option, either because of deadline issues, other logistical issues, or where the shoot is planned to coincide with a specific event. However, if possible, postponement is worth considering. Rain obviously affects the outside shots, but – and this is often not always real said – it also significantly affects the inside shots as well, through reduced levels of natural light entering the buildings – and damp children!



St Mary's School, Calne



St Mary's School, Calne