

● THE SCHOOL ENROLMENT MARKETING PLAYBOOK

Fill your **next intake** with the right families.

A practical guide for independent schools that want to reach the right families, fill open days and tours, and turn interest into enrolments.



Brandon Delardes
Founder & Director, Base Digital

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● EDUCATION WHITEPAPER

The School Enrolment Marketing Playbook

How families research and choose a school today, and a practical plan to reach them at every stage, from first search to signed enrolment.



Brandon Delardes, Founder, Base Digital · Brisbane · Published October 2026

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1. How families choose a school

Choosing a school is one of the biggest decisions a family makes. It is emotional and practical at the same time, it involves several people, and it often starts years before the first day of term.

That decision now happens largely online. Before a family ever calls your enrolments office, they have usually read your website, compared you with other schools, looked at your social channels, asked friends for opinions and, increasingly, asked an AI assistant such as ChatGPT or Google's AI Overviews which schools to consider.

The short version: by the time a family enquires, most of their shortlist has already been decided. Your marketing has to do its work much earlier, and keep working until the enrolment is signed.

Who is involved in the decision

School marketing rarely speaks to a single customer. Parents usually decide together, students increasingly have a say as they get older, and grandparents or other family members may contribute to fees or opinions. Each brings different questions.

- **Parents** want confidence about academic outcomes, wellbeing, values, fees, logistics and the community their child will join.
- **Students** care about friendships, co-curricular opportunities, facilities and whether they can picture themselves there.
- **Extended family** often look for reputation, tradition and reassurance that the investment is worthwhile.

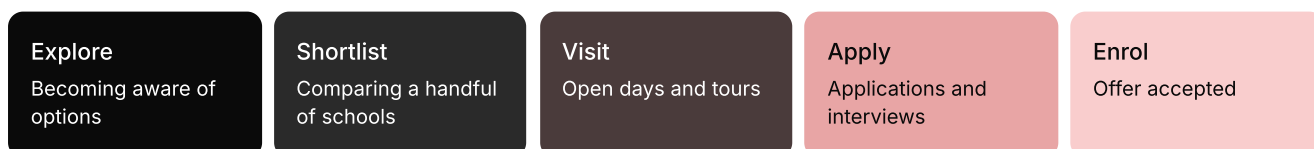
Where families research

Families move between channels constantly, so no single channel wins an enrolment on its own. The schools that grow are visible and consistent everywhere families look.

CHANNEL	WHAT FAMILIES USE IT FOR
Google search	Comparing schools, fees, curriculum, results, open day dates and transport.
AI assistants	Asking for shortlists and summaries, such as "best boys' schools in Brisbane with boarding".
Your website	The deciding resource. Families judge tone, clarity and how easy it is to find answers and enquire.
Social media	Getting a feel for culture and community through photos, video and stories.
Word of mouth	Trusted opinions from friends, current parents and community groups.
Events and tours	Seeing the school in person, the moment most decisions are confirmed.

2. The enrolment journey, stage by stage

Mapping the journey makes it clear what families need from you at each point, which channels matter, and what to measure.



STAGE	WHAT FAMILIES NEED	KEY CHANNELS	MEASURE
Explore	Reassurance that your school fits their values and child, and easy-to-find answers to early questions.	SEO, AI search, social, word of mouth	Organic visits, branded searches, AI mentions
Shortlist	Clear comparisons: curriculum, wellbeing, co-curricular, fees, transport and outcomes.	Website, Google Ads, remarketing	Enquiries, prospectus downloads
Visit	Simple ways to book an open day or private tour, plus reminders so they actually attend.	Meta Ads, Google Ads, email	Registrations, attendance rate
Apply	A clear process, timely follow-up and a personal connection with your enrolments team.	Email, phone, website	Applications started and completed
Enrol	Confidence they've made the right choice, and a warm welcome into the community.	Email, events, social	Offers accepted, enrolments

3. Five foundations of enrolment marketing

Before adding more campaigns or budget, make sure these five foundations are in place. Each one makes every other channel work harder.

01 A website that answers parents' questions

Families should find curriculum, fees, transport, wellbeing, co-curricular and enrolment steps within a couple of clicks. Make enquiry and tour booking obvious on every page, and keep it fast on mobile, where most research happens.

02 Visibility in search and AI

Rank for the searches families use, from "independent schools near me" to specific programs. Structure pages with clear answers and schema so AI assistants describe your school accurately and include it in their recommendations.

03 Event campaigns that fill open days and tours

Promote each event with enough lead time, target the right suburbs and family profiles, and use remarketing and reminders to lift attendance, not just registrations.

04 Fast, personal follow-up

An enquiry is the start of a relationship. Respond quickly, send useful information over time, and make it easy to move from enquiry to tour to application.

05 Measurement from click to enrolment

Track every enquiry, registration and application back to its source, so you know which channels actually produce enrolments and can invest with confidence.

4. A 12-month enrolment calendar

Enrolment marketing works best as an always-on presence with planned peaks. Adapt this outline to your own open day, tour, scholarship and application dates.

ALWAYS ON · ALL YEAR

SEO and content updates, AI search visibility, brand search ads, remarketing to recent website visitors and regular social storytelling about everyday school life.

6-8 WEEKS BEFORE EACH OPEN DAY OR TOUR

Launch event campaigns on Meta and Google, update event pages, and brief your enrolments team. Start broad, then focus spend on the suburbs and audiences that respond.

FINAL 2 WEEKS BEFORE EACH EVENT

Increase reminders and remarketing, send confirmation and "what to expect" emails, and push last-chance messaging to families who visited but didn't register.

AFTER EACH EVENT

Follow up within days with a thank-you, next steps and an invitation to apply or book a private tour. Retarget attendees and review results before the next event.

APPLICATION AND SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINES

Countdown campaigns to families who have engaged, clear deadline messaging on the website and personal follow-up from the enrolments team.

END OF EACH INTAKE

Review enquiries, tours, applications and enrolments by channel. Keep what worked, cut what didn't, and set the plan and budget for the next intake.

5. Reaching boarding families

Boarding families are often deciding from a distance, sometimes interstate or overseas, and the stakes feel even higher. They need more reassurance and more practical detail.

- **Target by location.** Run campaigns in the regional, rural and interstate areas your boarders come from, with separate budgets so they aren't crowded out by local audiences.
- **Answer boarding-specific questions.** Pastoral care, weekends, travel home, health support and how families stay connected deserve their own pages and ads.
- **Make visiting easy.** Boarding tours, travelling information sessions and virtual tours remove the distance barrier.
- **Use real voices.** Stories from boarders and boarding parents carry more weight than any headline.

6. Measuring what matters

Long decision cycles make school marketing harder to measure, but not impossible. Focus on a small set of metrics that connect marketing activity to enrolments.

METRIC	WHY IT MATTERS
Enquiries by source	Shows which channels bring families into your pipeline.
Open day and tour registrations	Your clearest signal of serious interest.
Attendance rate	Registrations only count if families turn up. Reminders and timing make a big difference.
Cost per enquiry and per tour	Compares channels fairly and guides where to spend.
Applications and enrolments by source	The true measure of value. Connect marketing data with your enrolment system where possible.
Branded search and AI mentions	Early signs that awareness and reputation are growing.

Tip: ask every enquiring family "How did you first hear about us?" and record the answer. Combined with digital tracking, it fills in the gaps that long journeys leave.

7. The 20-point enrolment checklist

Work through this list. Anything you can't tick is an opportunity.

CHECK	AREA
1 Enquiry and tour booking are easy to find on every page	Website
2 Fees, curriculum and enrolment steps are within two clicks	Website
3 The website is fast and easy to use on mobile	Website
4 Each year level, program and campus has its own clear page	Website
5 You rank for the main searches families use in your area	Search
6 Your Google Business Profile is complete and up to date	Search

	CHECK	AREA
7	Key pages answer common questions in the first few sentences	Search & AI
8	FAQ and organisation schema are on your key pages	Search & AI
9	You've checked how ChatGPT and Google's AI describe your school	AI
10	Your school's details match across directories and rankings sites	AI
11	Every open day and tour has its own campaign and landing page	Campaigns
12	Event campaigns start at least six weeks out	Campaigns
13	Remarketing reaches recent website visitors	Campaigns
14	Boarding and interstate audiences have separate campaigns	Campaigns
15	Every enquiry is acknowledged within one business day	Follow-up
16	Families who register receive reminders before each event	Follow-up
17	Attendees receive a follow-up with clear next steps	Follow-up
18	Enquiries, registrations and applications are tracked by source	Measurement
19	You ask "How did you first hear about us?" on every enquiry	Measurement
20	Results are reviewed after every intake to set the next plan	Measurement

WORK WITH BASE DIGITAL

Want to know where your school stands?

Base Digital is an independent, owner-led Brisbane digital marketing agency. We've helped leading independent schools reach the right families, fill open days and tours and grow enrolments. We'll review your school against this checklist and show you the biggest opportunities for your next intake, with no lock-in contracts and no hard sell.

calendly.com/base-digital
hello@basedigital.com.au

0401 048 471

36 Warry Street, Fortitude Valley QLD