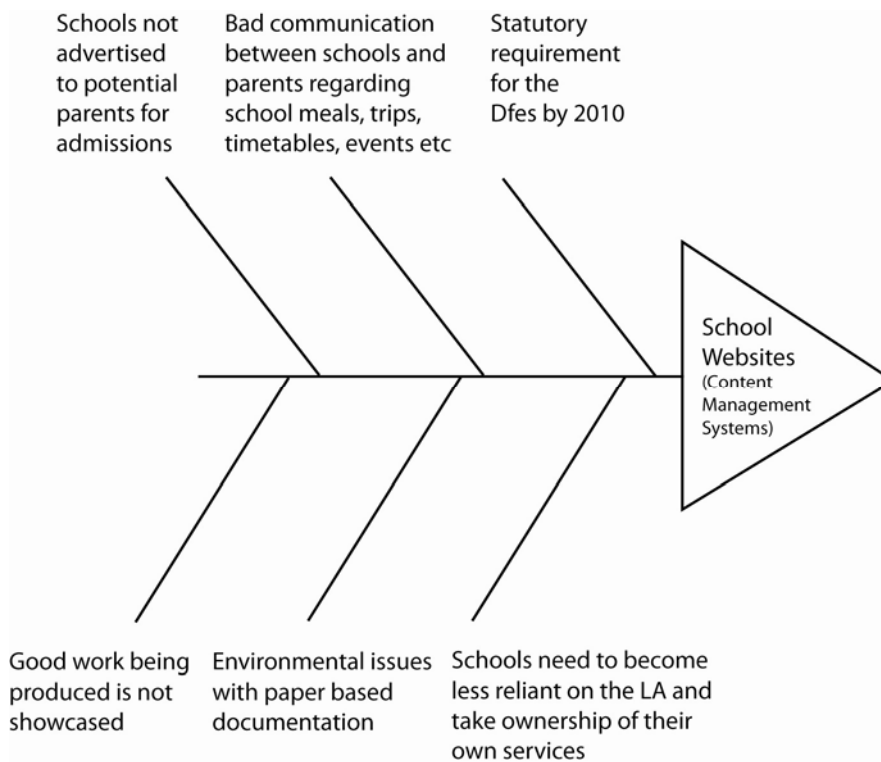


# Knowsley School Websites Project

## Background

It has been identified that the majority of Knowsley Primary and Secondary Schools have yet to establish an online web presence for their school. With the emergent of new web technologies, content management systems now allow people with little or no knowledge of website development to easily update and even create their own website.

### Problems identified



Knowsley City Learning Centres have a set of local and national targets to meet which includes the application of emergent technologies and support in personalised learning. Creating school websites and training in the use of the content management system used to create them covers these priorities. Using a content management system not only frees up time for web developers but it also hands the ownership of the website over to the school and empowers the websites admin staff to take full control of the site.

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### What is a Content Management System?

A content management system is software that keeps track of every piece of content on your Web site, much like your local public library keeps track of books and stores them. Content can be simple text, photos, music, video, documents, or just about anything you can think of. A major advantage of using a CMS is that it requires almost no technical skill or knowledge to manage. Since the CMS manages all your content, you don't have to.

## Requirements

The most important thing that is required from this project is that schools need to be able to set up, manage and maintain their school websites themselves with little or no help from the Emedia Communications Team at the City Learning Centres. This is a requirement by the Local Authority to be complete and set up by 2010.

The website needs to have a nice design to attract the visitors and easy to navigate around. The website also needs to be configured with the most popular search engines so its easy for prospective parents to find it on the internet.

To summarise, the main things required are listed below:

- Easy to set up
- Easy to manage
- Easy to maintain
- Nice design
- Good navigation
- Configured with search engines

There are a wide range of third party companies who provide the tools to implement school website solutions. This ranges from open source technologies which are freely available under the GNU General Public License through to third party companies who have developed their own software specifically for this purpose.

Taking this into account and after researching the market, the following 3 potential solutions have been considered and analysed:

# Analysis

## Solution 1

[www.schools.ik.org](http://www.schools.ik.org)

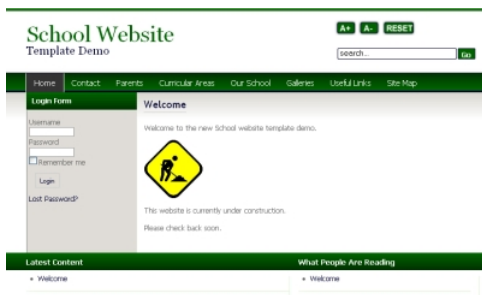


schools.ik.org is a unique service owned and operated by [Recipero Limited](http://www.recipero.com), it offers every UK school a free, self-editable website.

The powerful software, which is usually sold to businesses, has been developed by Recipero (formerly ik Software). Through the schools.ik.org service it has been made available to education users, allowing complete novices to build and edit websites directly through their internet browser. The free website which can be created is very basic but has enough flexibility to showcase the school on the World Wide Web. There is also the option for schools to upgrade to a Premium package with more pages and features.

## Solution 2

<http://www.joomla.org>



Joomla is an award winning content management system with advanced features to completely customise the school website to an individual schools needs. The software can be downloaded and installed on a local web server or can automatically be installed on a remote hosting server with Cpanel.

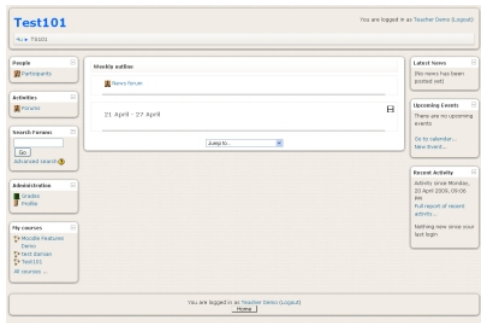
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The set up would need to be done by a webmaster and basic training delivered to school admin staff. All updates can then be applied using any common internet web browser.

### Solution 3

[www.moodle.org](http://www.moodle.org)



Moodle is a Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It is a Free web application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites.

Moodle was specifically developed for online delivery of courses for teachers to access in the classroom. The system can be tailored for school websites although this is not the main intention which it was developed for.

## Questions (Advantages / Disadvantages)

Scoring 1-3 with 3 being the highest score

	Schools.ik		Joomla		Moodle	
<b>Installation</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> All configurations are automated by the remote server so set up for each school is as simple as filling in an online form with personal and admin log-in details.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> No direct ftp access is available to the server to fine tune any installations. All hosting</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Can be set up very easily through Cpanel which is provided by most external hosting companies. Can be fully managed by a webmaster.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> The Joomla solution does not come with free hosting so this would need to be purchased by schools</p>	<b>1</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Can be set up very easily through Cpanel which is provided by most external hosting companies. Can be fully managed by a webmaster.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> The Joomla solution does not come with free hosting so this would need to be purchased by schools and training</p>	<b>2</b>

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	issues would need to be directed to the schools.ik team which schools may not be happy with.		and training provided by the LA.		provided by the LA.	
<b>Implementation (set up of design / pages / layouts)</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Very simple to configure through an internet browser using an admin login specified at time of sign up. Uses wysiwyg editors and document upload buttons.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Customisation options are not very advanced and limited to basic style sheets and layouts.</p>	<b>2</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Very customisable with a massive community of developers creating open source modules and components. Style sheets and layouts can also be created.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Customisation requires web developer skills so this would need to be done initially by one of the developers at the LA.</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Free themes available with automated set up available. Requires training to add courses and apply permissions etc.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Customisation requires web developer skills so this would need to be done initially by one of the developers at the LA.</p>	<b>1</b>
<b>Hosting</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Provided with free hosting on the schools.ik servers.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> As the web application can not be downloaded, you are limited to using the schools.ik servers only with no ftp access.</p>	<b>2</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Stand alone package allows the web application to be downloaded and set up on any server which supports Apache, MySQL and PHP</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Hosting needs to be purchased separately or identified within the LA. Staff with appropriate web master skills or training to appropriate staff would be required for purchase and set up of hosting.</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Stand alone package allows the web application to be downloaded and set up on any server which supports Apache, MySQL and PHP</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Hosting needs to be purchased separately or identified within the LA. Staff with appropriate web master skills or training to appropriate staff would be required for purchase and set up of hosting.</p>	<b>1</b>

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<b>Domain names</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Free .ik.org domain with each site. Eg. www.knowsleyschool.ik.org</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Schools can not specifically choose their own domain name. The only way this could be done is by purchasing a domain name separately and redirected to the schools.ik servers. This would require technical support or training.</p>	3	<p><b>Advantages</b> Domain purchased separately. Allows for more flexibility with name but requires initial technical set up by web master or training to most appropriate school staff.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Domain name needs to be purchased separately and configured with the hosting server which would require training or support.</p>	2	<p><b>Advantages</b> Allows for more flexibility with name but requires initial technical set up by web master or training to most appropriate school staff.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Domain name needs to be purchased separately and configured with the hosting server which would require training or support.</p>	1
<b>Designing</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Designs are already created in the form of templates so no additional work required</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Limited to templates and generic colour style sheets</p>	1	<p><b>Advantages</b> Design can be fully customised if required or default templates can be used</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Customising style sheets or templates would require support from web master or training to appropriate school staff</p>	3	<p><b>Advantages</b> Design can be fully customised if required or default templates can be used</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Customising style sheets or templates would require support from web master or training to appropriate school staff</p>	2
<b>Ease of Use</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Very simple to use wysiwyg editors with image upload and automatic image resizing options</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Very basic templates so any specific requirements would not be possible (unless Premium package is purchased – see Cost)</p>	3	<p><b>Advantages</b> Very flexible with a large web community of developers producing third party modules and components which can easily be installed to tailor the website to very specific requirements. Help files are available</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> May require training and guidance demonstrating how to set up and use</p>	1	<p><b>Advantages</b> Easy to add courses to the system and apply permissions</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Specifically developed for creating courses so adding any other content would be a bit more difficult and would require training</p>	2

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<b>Training</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Requires little or no training</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> As this is a third party product, any technical issues would need to be directed towards the schools.ik team which may put schools off</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> With appropriate training, schools have the flexibility to update and maintain their website to any specific requirements they may have</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Training would need to be organised to show the more advanced features like setting up new pages and installing new modules</p>	<b>1</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Very good online help, tutorials and forums available</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Schools would need to spend some time reading the tutorials and may require initial guidance from LA</p>	<b>2</b>
<b>Technical Support</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Technical support would be provided directly by schools.ik as the website would be hosted directly on their servers</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Any policies or terms and conditions set by schools.ik would need to be adhered to</p>	<b>2</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Support could be provided by the LA or technician within the school. Online support forums are available.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> If no school technician is available then the support would need to be provided by the LA staff</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Support could be provided by the LA or technician within the school. Online support forums are available.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> If no school technician is available then the support would need to be provided by the LA staff</p>	<b>1</b>
<b>Interoperability</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Currently none</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> No access to the server or database is available so Interoperability with other systems would not be possible</p>	<b>1</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> System uses Apache, MySQL and PHP so interoperability with other similar database systems would be possible by setting up bridge components</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Requires technical support to set this up</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> System uses Apache, MySQL and PHP so interoperability with other similar database systems would be possible</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Requires technical support to set this up</p>	<b>2</b>
<b>Future Proofing</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> All updates to technologies configured remotely by schools.ik</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> No control over what is updated</p>	<b>1</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Updates can be managed manually by an administrator</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Requires technical expertise including security updates.</p>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>Advantages</b> Updates can be managed manually by an administrator</p> <p><b>Disadvantages</b> Requires technical expertise including security updates.</p>	<b>2</b>

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<b>Cost</b>	<b>Advantages</b> Free  <b>Disadvantages</b> If school requirements are more specific then the Premium package would need to be purchased at the cost of £50+vat (none down-gradable)	<b>3</b>	<b>Advantages</b> Free to download  <b>Disadvantages</b> There may be a cost incurred with regards to training and refresher sessions and purchasing of server / hosting / domain name.	<b>2</b>	<b>Advantages</b> Free to download  <b>Disadvantages</b> There may be a cost incurred with regards to training and refresher sessions and purchasing of server / hosting / domain name.	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Schools.ik</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Joomla</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Moodle</b>	<b>19</b>

## Analysis (Conclusion)

Scoring 1-5 with 1 being No and 5 being Yes

	Schools.ik	Joomla	Moodle
<b>Advantages &amp; Disadvantages</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Feasible</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Effective</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Affordable</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>

After analysing the 3 possible solutions for Knowsley School Websites, the schools.ik solution has come out on top with Joomla CMS second and Moodle CMS third. Although the websites offered by schools.ik are very basic, it is ideal for Primary schools and can easily be set up and updated by staff with little or no technical knowledge. Some secondary schools may want to use Joomla for their website as the requirements for a Secondary are more specific and Joomla is ideal for this – I will keep this option open as a back up plan dependant on the Secondary school requirements.



For the purpose of this rationale report I will concentrate on schools.ik The Gantt Chart below shows a realistic timescale and different phases of rolling out the project to schools. Updates will be ongoing and completed by the schools, the Gantt Chart below is for the purpose of raising awareness, initial guidance to schools and setting up the website ready for them to take ownership.

The Chart is based on one particular school setting up their website at the beginning of May 2009. The refresher sessions, review and evaluation of change would be ongoing dependant on when the schools set up their website.

## Gantt chart

Task	Jan 09	Feb 09	March 09	April 2009	May 2009	June 09
Define objective						
Consult with LA staff						
Analyse results						
Plan action						
Create guidance						
Create flyer						
Contact and liaise with school staff						
Design graphics (if required)						
Refresher sessions (if required)						
Review Change						
Evaluate change						

Rationale and Report produced by Steven Collins 22/04/09

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