



# Mission-Driven Websites for Modern Catholic Schools



*What Every Catholic School Website Needs  
to Stay Relevant in 2026.*



**Caitlin Casey | Finalsite | May 2026  
Archdiocese of Kansas Advancement Conference**

# Caitlin Casey

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**Associate Sales Consultant at Finalsite**

## Background:

- B.A. Georgetown University
- Ed.M. Harvard University
- 8 years as a teacher, instructional coach & administrator
- 3 years as a visitor engagement & evaluation specialist at MFA Boston & Harvard Art Museum
- Three things I can't live without: running, reading & traveling



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San Jose, CA

**Dinner Reservation - Rye Plaza @ 5 PM**



# FINALSITE

Better tools. Stronger schools.



# Today's Agenda

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- What families expect from school websites today
- The essentials of a high-performing website
- Most common “mistakes” to avoid
- 60 second website audit & action step

# On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your school's website?

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# The Stakes Have Never Been Higher for Catholic Schools



## CURRENT REALITY

Catholic school enrollment has declined **70%** over 60 years to fewer than 1.7 million students.

Enrollment dipped again **0.6%** in 2024–25.



## COMPETITIVE PRESSURES

Public schools, charter schools, homeschool programs, and online education options **are all growing.**



## ADDITIONAL FORCES



Parents expect instant access to information.



Mobile-first behavior is the norm.



Growing demand for communication and transparency.



















The schools that win enrollment in 2026 will be the ones that **show up — online — with clarity, warmth, and mission.**



# Families Expect Answers in Under 30 Seconds — or They Leave



## FAMILIES IMMEDIATELY SCAN FOR:

-  Tuition 
-  Admissions Process 
-  Academic Calendar 
-  Contact Info 
-  Academics 
-  Catholic Identity 
-  Safety & Belonging 
-  Student Outcomes 



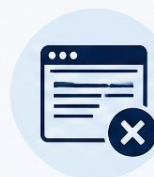
If they can't find answers quickly, they **move on to the next school.**

## KEY STATS



# 94%

of first impressions are **design-related.**



# 40%

of users abandon a website that looks **messy or cluttered.**





# Over 60% of School Website Visits Happen on a Phone



Today's families use school websites like **service platforms, not brochures**. They arrive with specific questions and limited patience.



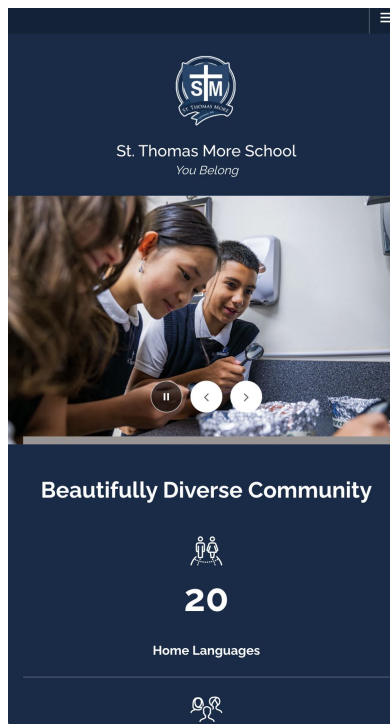
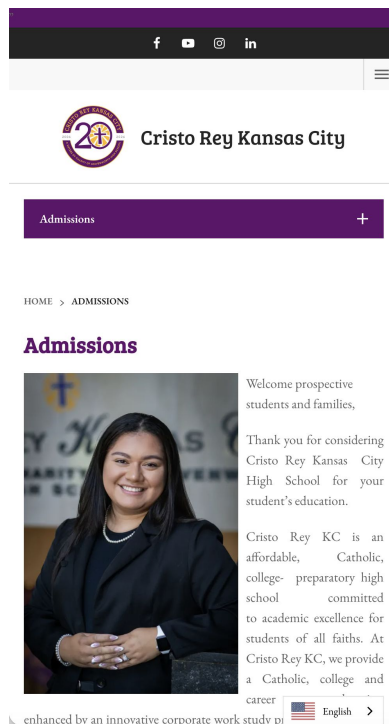
Mobile bounce rates now range from **58–60%**, nearly 10 percentage points higher than desktop.

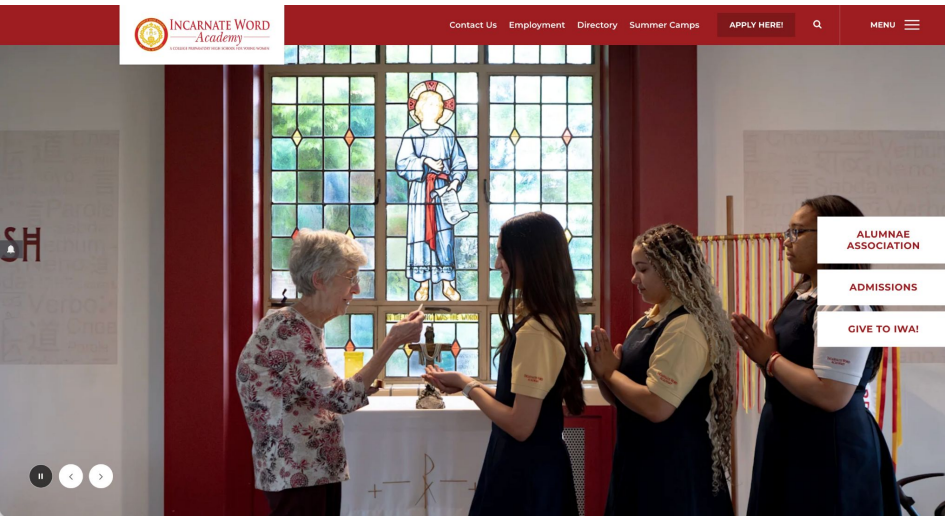


In education, roughly **85%** of website traffic comes from mobile devices.



**Families who can't find answers in seconds are families who move on.**





[Mayfield Senior School](#) - testimonials

[Servite Catholic High School](#) - dynamic video



# Families Want Authenticity, *Not Corporate Polish*

Prospective Catholic school families aren't swayed by stock photos and generic mission statements.

**They respond to:**



real student stories and photography



mission visibly lived out on campus



parent and student testimonials



glimpses of daily community life



evidence of faith in action



**Choosing a Catholic school is an emotional and values-driven decision.**

*Your website should feel warm, human, and true.*

WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY OF  
**SACRED HEART PARISH**

A welcoming community where faith, learning, & friendship come together. Come see what makes our church & school feel like home.



Go to Sacred Heart Church

Go to Sacred Heart School

# What do you notice?



## What makes us **UNIQUE**

Catholic Identity

Small Class Sizes

After School Clubs

Performing Arts Program

Blue Ribbon School of Excellence

At St. Thomas the Apostle, our Catholic identity is at the heart of everything we do.

Rooted in a deep love for Jesus Christ, our mission goes beyond academics to form students in faith, character, and purpose.

[Learn More](#)



**CHRIST**  
Centered Learning



## SECTION 2:

# The 7 Essentials

## OF A HIGH-PERFORMING CATHOLIC SCHOOL WEBSITE

These seven essentials work together to create a website that reflects your mission, serves families, and drives enrollment.

1



Clear Mission  
& Catholic  
Identity

2



Simple &  
Intuitive  
Navigation

3



Strong  
Admissions  
Pathways

4



Consistent &  
Fresh  
Content

5



Storytelling  
Over  
Information  
Dumping

6



Accessibility  
&  
Inclusivity

7



Easy-to-Update  
Infrastructure



*A website that reflects your mission  
welcomes families and builds trust  
before they ever walk through your doors.*



# Essential #1: Make Your Catholic Identity **Unmissable**



## Mission should not be buried on an 'About Us' page.

Families should feel the school's faith identity immediately — through imagery, storytelling, campus ministry highlights, student voices, and service opportunities.



## Strong Catholic school websites make faith visible at every level:

values woven throughout, not just in a paragraph from the bishop.



## The 'why' of Catholic education

should be emotionally clear within seconds.



INSTEAD OF THIS:

“ We are a faith-based school.”

VS.

SHOW THIS INSTEAD:

“ Photos of students at Mass, serving in the community, or participating in retreats.”



NERINX HALL

ABOUT

ADMISSIONS

ACADEMICS

ARTS

ATHLETICS

STUDENT LIFE

ALUMNAE

SUPPORT NERINX

*Discover Nerinx*

See what makes us unique



Nerinx Philosophy

Our Cultural & Conversational Norms

Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Equity and Inclusion at Nerinx

Nerinx History

Board of Directors

Social Media Policies

Work Here

BECAUSE OF NERINX

*I am empowered.*



## Essential #2:

# Don't Make Families Work

Simple, intuitive navigation is one of the highest-impact improvements any school website can make.

### BEST PRACTICES INCLUDE:



**Fewer clicks** to reach key information



**Cleaner and fewer menu items**



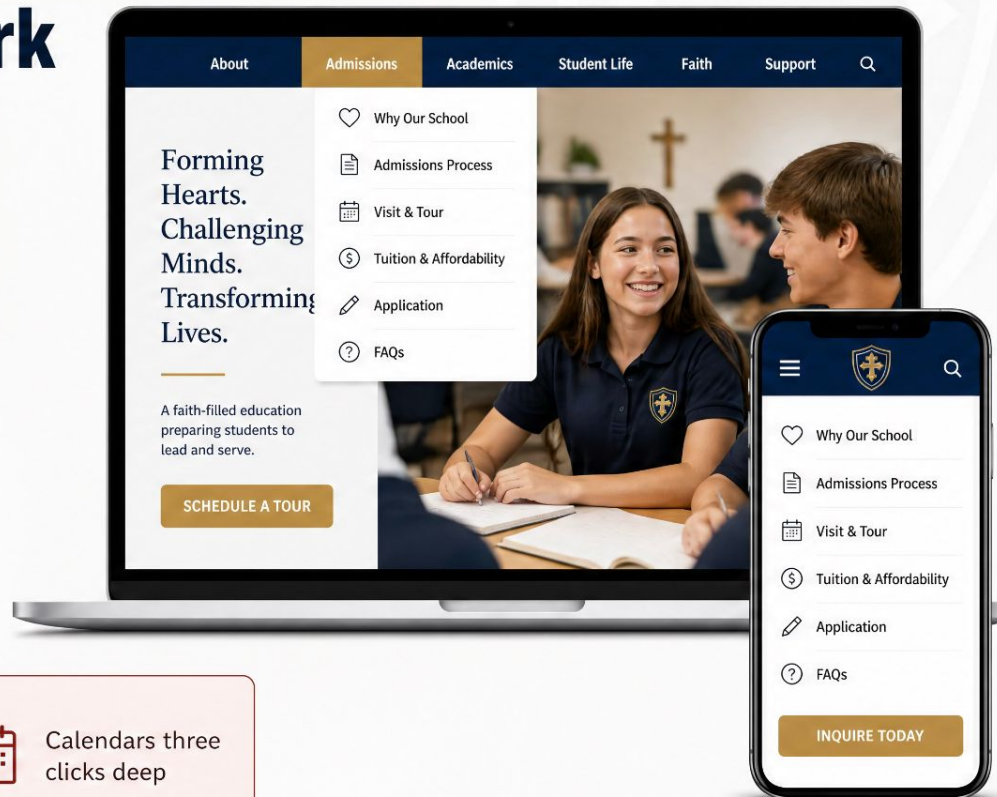
**Audience-based navigation** (prospective families vs. current families vs. alumni)



**Clear calls-to-action** on every page



**Elimination** of outdated or duplicate content



### COMMON MISTAKES:



Too many dropdowns



Buried admissions info



Calendars three clicks deep



Alive with Creativity



Driven to Achieve



Prepared to Succeed

## Affording Newman



Investing in the Future



Affording a Cardinal Newman Education



Committed to Accessibility



## Do You Know SI?

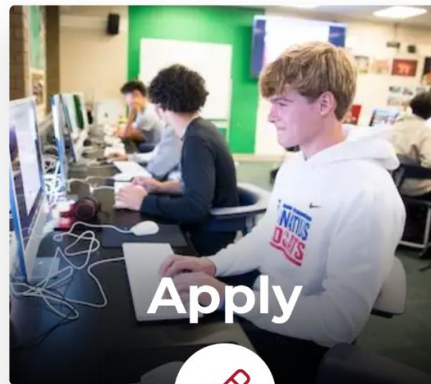
Come for an in-person campus visit. Cheer on SI at one of our many sporting events. Attend an instrumental or choral concert, our fall play, or a dance concert. Visit our Virtual Open House any time to meet members of our SI family. Remember, our house is always open and you are welcome.



Learn



Visit



Apply



## Essential #3:

# Build a Clear Path to Enrollment

A school website should guide families naturally toward action.

Every admissions journey should include:



A prominent inquiry or "Request Info" button



Easy tour scheduling



Visible tuition and affordability information



An admissions checklist and timeline



FAQ section



Low-friction micro-conversions (ask a question, sign up for an event)



Spotlight: [Immaculata Catholic School](#) in Durham, NC

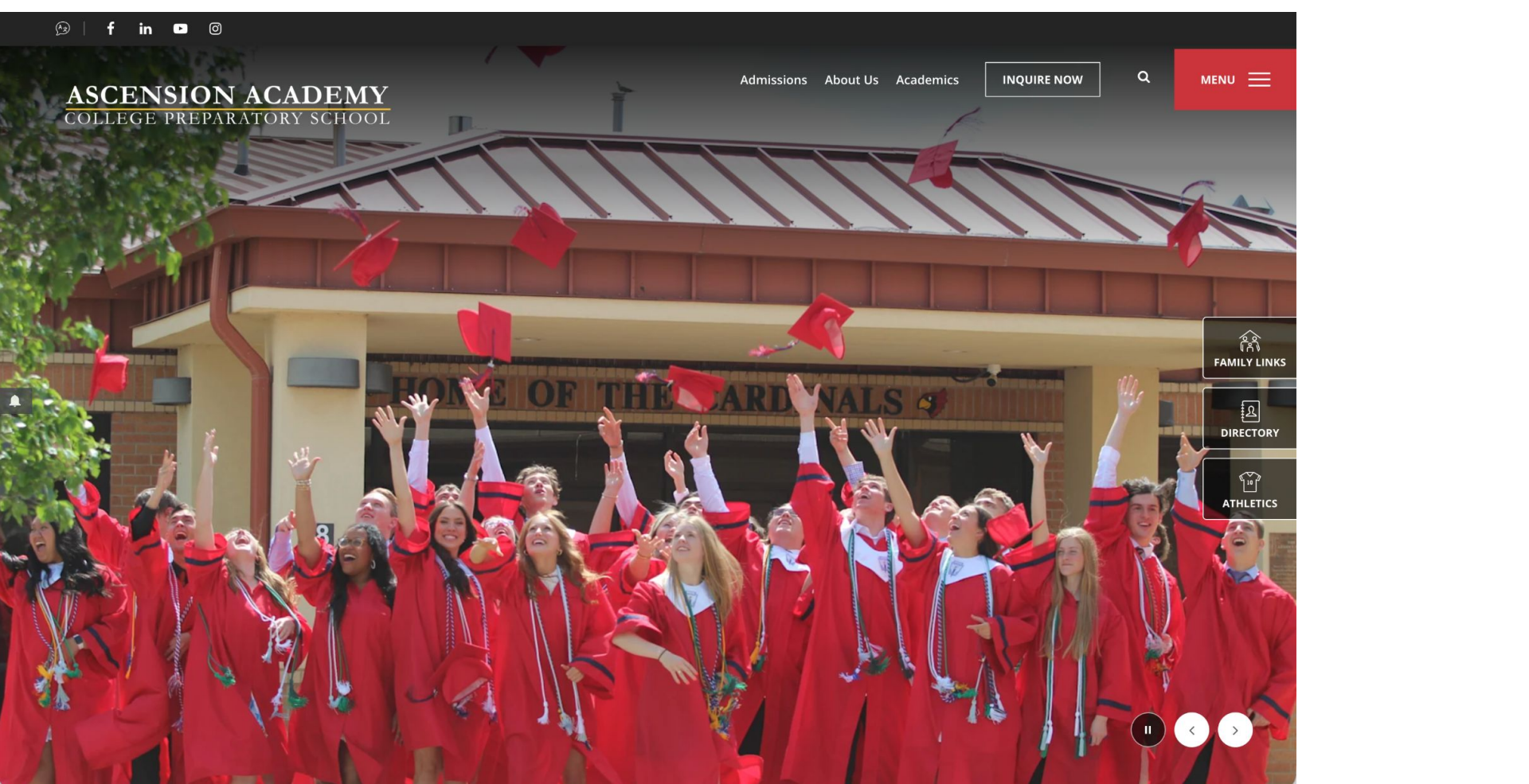


KEY MESSAGE:

Confused families rarely become enrolled families.



Remove **every obstacle** between a curious parent and a completed inquiry.



- FAMILY LINKS
- DIRECTORY
- ATHLETICS



# Essential #4: Fresh Content Signals a Living School

A stale website signals inactivity, disorganization, and low engagement — even when none of those things are true.



**Families notice when the newest news story is from eight months ago.**

## Schools should consistently feature:



Recent news and student achievements



Updated photos from the current year



An active and visible calendar



Messages from the principal or head of school



Integrated social media feeds



### STUDENTS IN ACTION

Our 4th graders lead prayer at morning assembly.

May 2, 2025



### UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 5  
Spring Concert

MAY 9  
All-School Mass

MAY 15  
Field Day

[VIEW FULL CALENDAR](#) →



### FROM OUR PRINCIPAL



A message from  
Mr. Collins

[READ MESSAGE](#) →



### RECENT NEWS



Robotics Team  
Takes First Place  
at State Competition

[READ MORE](#) →



### FOLLOW US



See what's happening  
around campus!



## Recent News

[VIEW ALL NEWS >](#)

### Watch the Recordings of Baccalaureate Mass & Graduation

May 14 2026

It was a beautiful graduation ceremony! Congratulations to the Class of 2026! A big thank you to everyone who helped make these events special.

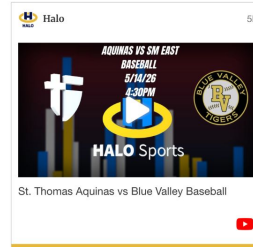
If you missed it, you can still watch the recordings! Click...

[READ MORE](#)

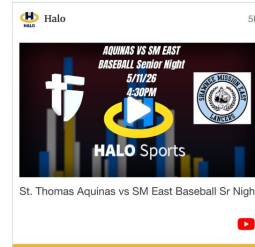


## Connect With Us

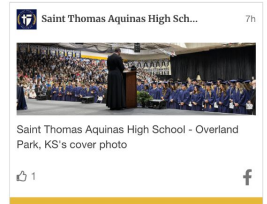
[SOCIAL MEDIA >](#)



St. Thomas Aquinas vs Blue Valley Baseball



St. Thomas Aquinas vs SM East Baseball Sr Night



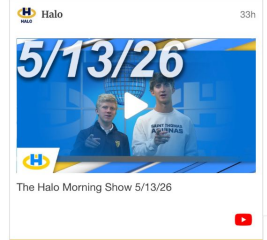
Saint Thomas Aquinas High School - Overland Park, KS's cover photo



stasaints



Saint Thomas Aquinas High Sch...



The Halo Morning Show 5/13/26

 English >

## Essential #5:

# Tell Stories, Don't Dump Information



Schools often overload pages with text when what families really want is **transformation**.



Instead of 'Faith-based college preparatory curriculum,' say: *'Students begin serving their community in elementary school and graduate with 100+ service hours.'*



Lead with **outcomes** and **experiences**.



Use **videos**, **testimonials**, **alumni stories**, and **day-in-the-life** content.



Show the **student journey** — don't just describe the program.

## AT A GLANCE



**762**  
Total 6-12 Enrollment



**100%**  
College Acceptance Rate



**10:1**  
Student Teacher Ratio



**78**  
ZIP codes represented



**55+**  
Athletic Teams



**4MM+**  
Financial Aid Awarded



Spotlight: [De Smet Jesuit](#) in St. Louis, MO



OUR VOICES

# Testimonials

STUDENTS

FACULTY

ALUMNAE

PARENTS



Every time I walk through these doors, I learn something new. The halls are full of joy, laughter, curiosity, and excitement. Each day, I witness students encourage, support, and celebrate one another. I am inspired by what we do within these walls as we implement engaging and exciting teaching methods and techniques; always working to provide the most meaningful and impactful learning experiences. I am grateful to be here.

**Dr. Dawn Yanker Johnson '02** | Science  
Department Chair



inquire



visit



give

## Essential #6:

# A Welcoming Website for Every Visitor

A welcoming website is an extension of a welcoming school community.

### Accessibility and inclusivity on a school website means:



ADA compliance for users with disabilities



Multilingual support for non-English-speaking families



Strong readability for grandparents and all users



Mobile-friendly text size and menus

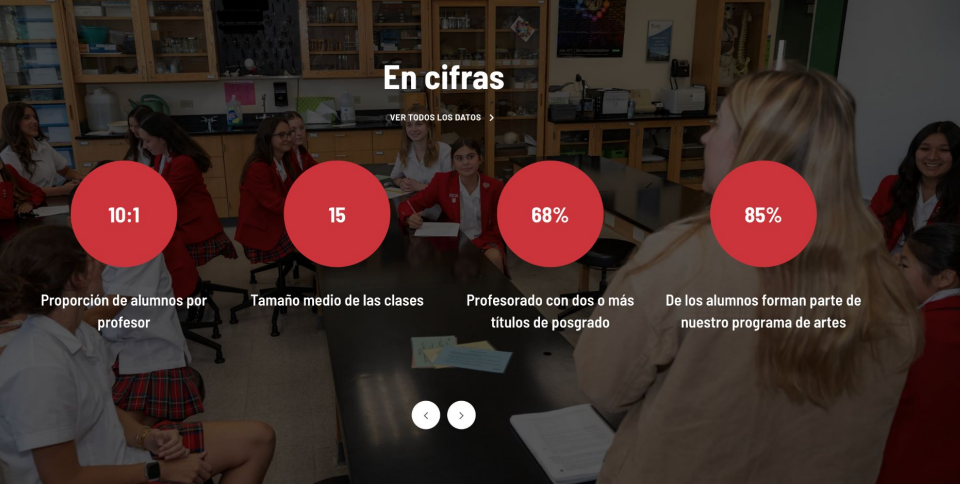


Clear, jargon-free communication



This is especially critical for diocesan schools serving diverse communities.





Spotlight: [Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy](#) in Flintridge, CA

Et

Spotlight: [St. Thomas Aquinas High School](#) in Overland Park, KS

### Khám phá Thánh Tôma Aquinô

Giống như trong bất kỳ mối quan hệ ý nghĩa nào, việc làm quen là bước đầu tiên và cũng quan trọng. Chúng tôi mong muốn quý vị ghé thăm khuôn viên trường để gia đình quý vị có thể khám phá những điều làm nên Saint Thomas Aquinas High School.

#### Thánh trong một ngày

Tháng 8 - Tháng 3



Hãy trải nghiệm một ngày trong cuộc sống của một học sinh Saint! Các em học sinh lớp 8 sẽ có hội gặp gỡ các thầy cô, trò chuyên với các anh chị học sinh hiện tại, cùng dùng bữa trưa và trải nghiệm một ngày như một học sinh Saint!

[ĐĂNG KÝ NGAY](#)

#### Buổi giới thiệu thông tin

Ngày 30 tháng 9, ngày 22 tháng 10 & ngày 19 tháng 11  
19 giờ tại Learning Commons



Hãy tìm hiểu trực tiếp cách chúng tôi giúp học sinh phát triển về mặt tinh thần, đạt thành tích xuất sắc trong học tập và khám phá những tài năng mà Chúa đã ban tặng. Quý vị cũng sẽ được tham quan khuôn viên trường cùng một trong những Đại sứ Cấp cao của chúng tôi.

[ĐĂNG KÝ NGAY](#)

#### Ngày hội mở cửa

Ngày 8 tháng 11 năm  
9 giờ sáng - 12 giờ trưa



Kính mời quý vị đến tham quan, tìm hiểu cách chúng tôi lồng ghép đức tin vào mọi khía cạnh trong cuộc sống hàng ngày để nuôi dưỡng những vị thánh tương lai! Hãy khám phá các chương trình học thuật và hoạt động của chúng tôi, gặp gỡ sinh viên, giảng viên, huấn luyện viên và lắng nghe chia sẻ từ Hiệu trưởng của chúng tôi!

## ESSENTIAL #7:

# Infrastructure That Empowers Your Whole Team to Contribute



### One of the biggest operational pain points:

if only one person can update the website, content goes stale and communication bottlenecks form.



**Best practice:** empower department-level content ownership — admissions, athletics, advancement, campus ministry, principals, and teachers should all be able to contribute responsibly.



### Choose a content management system (CMS)

that is intuitive, role-based, and doesn't require a web developer for routine updates.



**A well-maintained site is a team effort,  
not a one-person job.**



### Role-based permissions

Keep content accurate and secure.



### Easy-to-use interface

Intuitive tools for non-technical users.



### Faster, fresher updates

Timely news, events, and announcements.



### Better engagement & trust

Families see an active, vibrant school community.

# AI & Instant Access: Meeting the Expectation of Immediate Answers



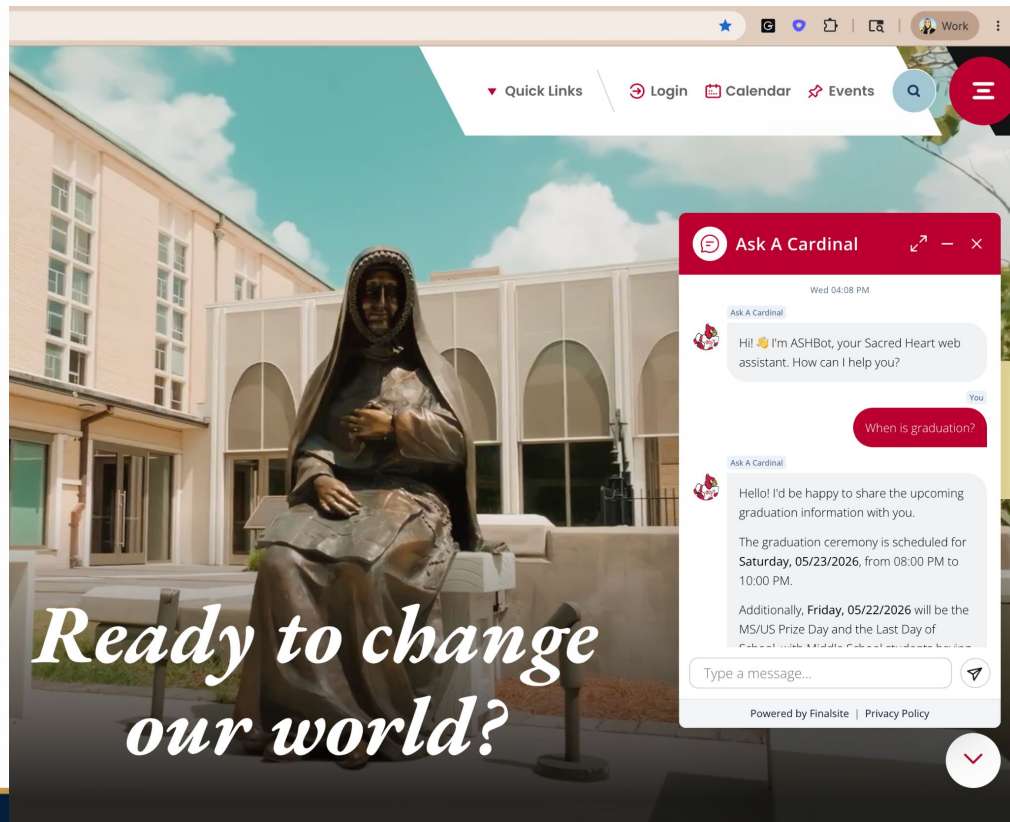
Families increasingly expect instant answers, multilingual support, and 24/7 accessibility from the organizations they trust.



AI-powered tools on school websites — chatbots, smart search, and automated FAQ responses — reduce friction for prospective families at any hour.



The schools that answer questions quickly and remove barriers to information will stand out in an increasingly competitive enrollment market.



*Ready to change  
our world?*

**Ask A Cardinal**

Wed 04:08 PM

Ask A Cardinal: Hi! 🙋 I'm ASHBot, your Sacred Heart web assistant. How can I help you?

You: When is graduation?

Ask A Cardinal: Hello! I'd be happy to share the upcoming graduation information with you.

The graduation ceremony is scheduled for **Saturday, 05/23/2026**, from 08:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

Additionally, **Friday, 05/22/2026** will be the MS/US Prize Day and the Last Day of School with Middle School students.

Type a message...

Powered by Finalsite | Privacy Policy

# Common Website Mistakes

1



**Homepage overload**  
with too many  
messages.

2



**Outdated photography**  
showing empty  
hallways.

3



**Hidden or missing**  
tuition information.

4



**Admissions process**  
buried or unclear.

5



**Over-reliance on PDFs**  
for key information.

6



**No strategic**  
calls-to-action.

7



**Calendars buried**  
three clicks deep.

8



**Inconsistent branding**  
across schools in  
the diocese.

9



**Websites built**  
for insiders, not  
prospective families.



# The 60-Second Website Audit: Try It Right Now

1

Is there a **clear call to action** on your homepage?

2

Is **there up-to-date information** published within the last month?

3

Are there pictures or examples of **day-to-day, authentic student life**?

4

Is your **school's mission** clearly displayed on the homepage?

5

Is your website **mobile-friendly**?



If you answered 'no' to any of these, **your website has an opportunity worth addressing.**

# Action Steps

## Your School Can Take Today



**Five immediate, practical improvements any school can implement:**

- 1** Audit your homepage — update photos, remove outdated content, add a clear CTA.
- 2** Make tuition and admissions info findable in two clicks or fewer.
- 3** Replace one text-heavy page with a student story or video.
- 4** Test your site on a phone and note every point of friction.
- 5** Assign one team member to post a news item or update each week.



*Momentum matters more than perfection.*



# Thank you & let's connect!



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**Dinner Reservation - Rye Plaza @ 5 PM**



Request a free Website  
Report Card



Register for Social  
Media Day for Schools

Free virtual event on June 30

