

School Spider by IRIS – Service Definition

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School Spider is a comprehensive parental engagement platform purpose-built for primary schools in England. The solution combines a fully managed school website with a feature-rich mobile application, enabling schools to streamline communication, manage payments, and maintain statutory compliance from a single unified system.

Supporting primary schools across England, School Spider addresses the operational challenges of modern school administration by consolidating multiple functions—website management, parent communication, payment processing, and compliance tracking—into one secure, cloud-based platform. This integration eliminates the need for schools to manage multiple vendors and disparate systems, reducing administrative burden while improving the parent experience.

School Spider reduces administrative workload by automating routine communications and payment processes that traditionally consume significant staff time. The platform's mobile-first approach meets parents where they are, with push notifications, in-app messaging, and digital payment options that improve engagement rates and reduce paper-based workflows.

Automatic translation into over 100 languages ensures every family can engage with the school regardless of their home language. This capability operates across all features at no additional cost, removing a critical barrier that affects over 20% of primary school pupils in England who have English as an Additional Language. Schools serving multilingual communities can maximize the value of EAL funding by ensuring effective communication with all families, while meeting equality obligations and supporting the parental engagement that research proves essential for student success.

The system supports evidence-based decision-making through integrated reporting on parent engagement, payment status, and website compliance. School leaders gain visibility across all communication channels and transactions, while staff benefit from streamlined workflows that free time for direct support of teaching and learning.

Solution Functionality

Website Management

School Spider provides a fully managed website solution designed specifically for primary school requirements. The platform includes a drag-and-drop content editor that enables staff to update pages, publish news, and manage content without technical expertise. The intuitive interface allows schools to maintain current, engaging websites that reflect their unique identity and values.

The integrated compliance checker automatically monitors website content against statutory requirements, flagging missing or outdated information to ensure schools meet DfE

obligations. This proactive approach reduces compliance risk and supports schools during Ofsted inspections. Pre-built page templates aligned with common primary school structures accelerate initial setup while allowing customization to match school branding.

Content management operates through role-based permissions, enabling appropriate staff to update specific sections while maintaining overall site integrity. Version control tracks all changes, providing a complete audit trail of website updates. The platform handles technical aspects including hosting, security updates, and performance optimization, removing IT maintenance burden from school staff.

Parent Communication

The communication module enables schools to reach parents through multiple channels from a single interface. Staff can send messages, newsletters, event notifications, and urgent alerts that reach parents via the mobile app, email, or SMS, depending on parent preferences and message priority. This multi-channel approach ensures critical information reaches families promptly while respecting their communication preferences.

Message targeting allows staff to send communications to specific year groups, classes, individual pupils, or custom groups, ensuring relevant information reaches the right families. The system tracks message delivery and read receipts, providing visibility into which families have received and viewed important communications. Automated reminders can prompt parents about upcoming deadlines, outstanding payments, or required actions.

Templates for common communication types—absence notifications, event reminders, payment requests—accelerate message creation while maintaining consistency. Schools can schedule messages for future delivery, enabling staff to prepare communications in advance during quieter periods. The message archive provides a complete record of all school communications, supporting continuity when staff change roles.

Automatic Multilingual Translation

School Spider removes language barriers entirely through automatic translation into over 100 languages. When schools send any communication, the system instantly translates content into each parent's preferred language—requiring no additional effort from staff. This capability extends beyond simple message translation: the entire mobile app interface, forms, surveys, payment descriptions, and all system features operate in the parent's chosen language.

For schools serving multilingual communities, this functionality directly addresses one of the most significant barriers to parental engagement. Research indicates that approximately 20% of England's school population are pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), and schools can receive additional funding through the National Funding Formula for EAL pupils for up to three years. Effective communication with these families strengthens the home-school partnership that research proves essential for student outcomes, while helping schools demonstrate they are meeting equality obligations and maximizing the impact of EAL-related funding.

Translation operates automatically based on parent language preferences set during registration. The system maintains message intent and tone across languages, ensuring that important information about attendance, behaviour, learning, payments, or school events reaches every family with clarity and cultural appropriateness. Parents never receive communications they cannot understand, and schools never need to manually translate content, engage external translation services, or rely on informal family networks to reach multilingual families.

Payments and Bookings

School Spider integrates payment processing directly into the parent experience, enabling families to pay for school meals, after-school clubs, educational visits, and other items through the mobile app or website. The PCI-compliant payment gateway securely processes transactions, with funds settling directly to school accounts. Parents can view payment history, outstanding balances, and upcoming charges from a single dashboard.

The booking system manages capacity for clubs, trips, and events, allowing parents to register their children while staff monitor availability in real-time. For recurring items like school meals, the system supports flexible payment options including daily, weekly, or term-based charges.

Financial reporting provides schools with comprehensive visibility into payment status, outstanding debts, and transaction history. Staff can generate reports by payment type, period, or pupil group, supporting budget monitoring and financial planning. The system tracks free school meal entitlement, automatically applying appropriate charges while protecting sensitive information about family circumstances.

Integration with school Management Information Systems ensures pupil data remains synchronized, reducing duplicate entry and maintaining data accuracy. When pupils join or leave the school, their payment accounts update automatically, preventing billing errors and ensuring families access appropriate services from day one.

Surveys and Consent Forms

Digital forms eliminate paper-based processes for collecting parent responses, permissions, and feedback. Staff create forms using a simple builder interface, with options for multiple choice, text entry, file uploads, and electronic signatures. Forms can be targeted to specific groups and scheduled for distribution at appropriate times.

Response tracking provides real-time visibility into completion rates, with automated reminders prompting families who have not yet responded. This significantly improves response rates compared to paper forms while reducing staff time chasing missing permissions. Graphical reporting summarizes results, identifying patterns and trends that inform school decision-making.

Electronic consent provides a complete audit trail of parent permissions for trips, activities, medical treatment, and photography. The system time-stamps all responses and maintains

secure records accessible during activities and emergencies. When permissions expire or require renewal, automated processes ensure schools maintain current, valid consents.

Parents' Evening Scheduling

The online booking system transforms parents' evening management, eliminating manual scheduling processes. Staff configure available appointment slots, set appointment durations, and define any special arrangements (virtual appointments, different locations, or specific teacher requirements). The system then opens booking to families through the app or website.

Parents view available slots in real-time and book appointments with their child's teachers directly. The system prevents double-booking, manages appointment spacing, and respects any constraints (siblings' appointments grouped, earliest/latest times). Automated reminders notify families of upcoming appointments, reducing non-attendance.

For teachers, the system generates organized schedules showing all appointments, pupil information, and any notes. Integration with student information systems can surface relevant data (recent assessments, attendance patterns, current targets) to support productive conversations. Post-event, the system can prompt teachers to record brief notes from discussions, maintaining continuity for future reference.

Home Learning Platform

School Spider provides a secure environment for teachers to assign home learning tasks, share resources, and monitor pupil engagement. Teachers create assignments with clear instructions, attach relevant materials, and set submission deadlines. The platform supports various content types including documents, videos, links, and instructions for practical activities.

Pupils access their assignments through age-appropriate interfaces, view instructions and resources, and submit completed work directly through the platform. Teachers receive notifications when work is submitted and can provide feedback through comments, marks, or recorded audio. This digital workflow creates a complete record of home learning engagement that supports teaching and learning conversations with pupils and families.

The pupil blogging functionality enables children to share their learning experiences, reflections, and achievements in a moderated environment. Teachers review and approve blog posts before publication, with built-in profanity filters and content moderation tools protecting child safety. Parents can view their child's blog through the app, celebrating achievements and staying connected with their learning journey. Comment moderation ensures all interactions remain appropriate and supportive.

For schools, consolidated reporting shows engagement patterns across classes and year groups, highlighting pupils who may need additional support or encouragement. Historical records of home learning completion inform teaching decisions and provide evidence for pupil progress discussions.

MIS Integration

School Spider connects with leading Management Information Systems used by primary schools, synchronizing pupil data, attendance information, and groupings. This integration eliminates duplicate data entry, ensuring accuracy across systems while reducing administrative workload. When pupil details change in the MIS, updates flow automatically to School Spider, keeping parent contact information, class assignments, and groupings current.

Attendance data synchronization enables accurate reporting and appropriate communication targeting. For example, messages about missed work can automatically reach parents of absent pupils, or attendance patterns can inform which families receive specific support communications.

The integration respects data protection requirements, transferring only necessary information and maintaining appropriate security throughout. Schools retain control over what data synchronizes and can review integration status through administrative dashboards.

The screenshot displays the SchoolSpider web application interface. On the left is a dark sidebar with navigation links: Home, Website Area, Parents Area, Pupil Area, Payments (selected), Dashboard, Products (selected), Purchases, Transactions, Reports, Staff Area, Settings, and Trash Can. The main content area shows a form titled 'Untitled' for creating a new product. The form includes fields for Title, Description, Price (£), Product Code, Category, and Purchase Limit (£). Below these are options to limit the product to specific classes or groups and a slider for 'Free School Meals Discount' ranging from 0% to 100%. At the bottom of the form are buttons for Preview, Cancel, Save, and Save & Publish. Below the form is a section for 'Available Variants' with buttons to 'Add a product variation' or 'Bulk add variants'. A search bar at the top of the main area reads 'Search parents, pupils and staff'. A small notification bubble in the bottom right corner says 'Got any questions? We're happy to help!'.

Real-World Service Operation



Implementation and Training

Successful implementation requires the school to appoint an administrative lead who can coordinate the rollout, work with School Spider's implementation team, and support colleagues during adoption. This individual should understand both the school's administrative processes and the parent community's needs. They will participate in training sessions, configure the platform to reflect school structures, and develop rollout plans that ensure smooth adoption.

The implementation journey begins with an initial consultation where School Spider's team works with school leaders to understand current processes, pain points, and priorities. Together, you'll develop a phased rollout plan that addresses the most pressing needs first while building toward comprehensive platform use.

Configuration includes setting up the school's website structure, defining user roles and permissions, establishing communication groups (year groups, classes, clubs, trip participants), configuring payment items and pricing, and integrating with the school's MIS. School Spider's team provides guidance throughout this process, drawing on experience with hundreds of primary schools to suggest effective approaches.

Training delivery adapts to school needs and available time. Core training covers essential functions for administrative staff, with role-specific sessions for teachers, office staff, and leadership. Short, focused training modules respect busy school schedules, with video tutorials and written guides supporting ongoing learning. Parent-facing guides help families get started with the app and understand available features.

Typical implementation timelines range from two to four weeks from purchase to launch, depending on school readiness and chosen rollout approach. Schools with straightforward requirements and strong project coordination can often launch faster, while those implementing multiple modules simultaneously or managing complex parent communication requirements may benefit from a longer implementation period.

Ongoing Support

Once operational, schools access support Monday to Friday, 08:30-16:30 UK time. Support is available through multiple channels:

- **Live chat:** Available through the School Spider platform for immediate assistance during support hours
- **Email:** support@schoolspider.co.uk for non-urgent queries or detailed questions
- **Ticket system:** For tracking complex issues through to resolution
- **Phone support:** Available for urgent matters requiring immediate discussion

Support tickets can be logged at any time, with responses provided during support hours according to priority level. The support team can access school systems remotely (with permission) to diagnose issues, provide guidance, or assist with configuration changes.

Service Levels and Priority Definitions

School Spider operates priority-based support that balances urgency with impact:

Technical Support Priorities:

- **P1 - System Outage/Data Loss/Security Breach:** Response target 2 hours, resolution target 8 hours. These critical issues affect the entire school community's ability to use the platform or represent security/data concerns requiring immediate attention.
- **P2 - Major Feature Failure/Degraded Performance:** Response target 4 hours, resolution target 16 hours. Significant functionality issues that substantially impair but don't completely prevent platform use.
- **P3 - Minor Bugs/Non-Urgent Issues:** Response target 8 hours, resolution target 40 hours (5 working days). Problems that have workarounds or limited impact on daily operations.
- **P4 - General Inquiries/Cosmetic Issues:** Response target 24 hours, resolution time determined by issue nature. Questions about functionality, minor visual issues, or enhancement requests.

Non-Technical Support Priorities:

- **P1 - Business Critical Issue:** Response target 2 hours. Matters affecting school operations, regulatory compliance, or urgent communications.
- **P2 - High-Impact Issues/Account or Billing Issues:** Response target 4 hours. Important matters requiring prompt attention but not immediately threatening operations.
- **P3 - Important but Non-Urgent Issue/Minor Disruptions:** Response target 8 hours. Issues that should be addressed but can be managed through normal workflow.
- **P4 - Non-Urgent Inquiries/General Product Questions:** Response target 24 hours. Information requests, feature questions, or minor concerns.

Response times reference business days and support hours. When awaiting information from the school to progress issue resolution, timers pause until the school provides requested details.

Data Security and Information Assurance

School Spider adheres to UK Data Protection Act and GDPR regulations, maintaining PCI DSS compliance for payment processing. The platform employs multiple security layers to protect school and family data:

- **Encryption:** TLS 1.2+ encryption for all data in transit; AES-256 encryption for data at rest

- **Authentication:** Secure authentication with password complexity requirements and optional multi-factor authentication
- **Access Controls:** Role-based permissions ensure staff access only appropriate data and functions
- **Payment Security:** PCI-compliant payment processing with tokenization preventing storage of sensitive card data
- **Security Testing:** Regular penetration testing by qualified security professionals, with immediate remediation of identified issues
- **Monitoring:** Continuous monitoring for suspicious activity, with alerts for potential security incidents

All data is stored and processed in UK-based, ISO 27001-certified data centres. Geographic redundancy ensures service continuity, while maintaining data sovereignty within UK jurisdiction.

School Spider staff complete mandatory data protection and information security training. The company maintains comprehensive information security policies covering incident handling, access management, encryption standards, and security awareness. Regular security awareness training helps staff identify and respond to potential threats.

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

School Spider maintains robust continuity arrangements to ensure service availability:

Backup and Recovery: Daily encrypted backups protect against data loss, with backups retained in geographically separate locations. Recovery procedures are tested regularly to validate restoration processes and maintain confidence in recovery capabilities.

High Availability: The platform operates across multiple servers with load balancing, eliminating single points of failure. If one component experiences issues, traffic automatically routes to healthy systems, maintaining service availability.

Disaster Recovery: Should the primary data centre become unavailable, failover processes redirect traffic to the secondary site. Recovery Time Objective is less than 4 hours; Recovery Point Objective is 24 hours based on daily backup cycles.

The Business Continuity Plan addresses various scenarios including technical failures, facility issues, and staffing challenges. Annual testing validates procedures and identifies improvements, with findings incorporated to strengthen resilience.

Data Retention and Exit Strategy

While schools maintain active subscriptions, data remains within School Spider systems according to school requirements. Schools control data retention through platform settings, deleting information when no longer needed.

Upon contract termination, schools have a 30-day window to extract data. During this period, schools can:

- **Export website content:** Download pages, media files, and site structure
- **Extract communication records:** Export sent messages, newsletters, and communication history
- **Retrieve payment data:** Download transaction records, payment history, and financial reports
- **Save form responses:** Export survey results, consent records, and parent submissions
- **Download home learning content:** Retrieve assignments, pupil submissions, and blog content

Export formats include CSV files for structured data and common file formats for documents and media. School Spider provides assistance with export processes, ensuring schools receive complete, usable data during the notice period.

After the 30-day window, School Spider securely deletes school data in accordance with GDPR requirements and platform terms and conditions. The deletion process removes data from production systems and backups, with confirmation provided upon completion.

Service Constraints and Limitations

School Spider is designed specifically for primary schools in England, with functionality aligned to typical primary school requirements. The platform configuration options allow schools to adapt the system to their specific needs within defined parameters, but source code modification is not supported.

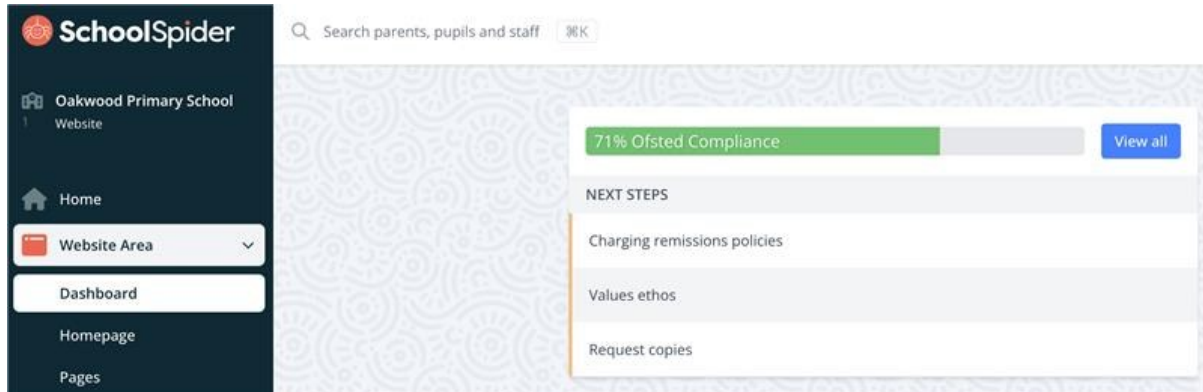
The website builder provides extensive styling and layout control through templates and configuration options, but complete design freedom is not available. This constraint ensures sites remain accessible, mobile-friendly, and compliant with web standards while still allowing schools to express their unique identity.

Payment processing integrates a specific PCI-compliant gateway. While this provider offers competitive rates and good reliability, schools cannot substitute alternative payment processors. For schools with existing payment provider relationships, this may represent a change from current arrangements.

MIS integration depends on the school's Management Information System. School Spider maintains connections with leading primary school MIS platforms, but integration capabilities vary by provider. Schools using less common systems should verify integration availability during procurement.

The mobile application requires parents to download and install from iOS and Android app stores. While most families have smartphones and find app-based communication convenient,

a small minority may prefer alternative channels. School Spider provides web-based alternatives for core functions, though the full parent experience is optimised for mobile use.



EDUCATION

Platform Design Principles

School Spider distinguishes itself through integrated simplicity. Unlike approaches that require schools to manage separate vendors for websites, communication, and payments, School Spider consolidates these functions into a single platform. This integration reduces procurement complexity, simplifies training, and creates a unified experience for staff and parents.

The platform's comprehensive multilingual capability sets it apart from competitors. Automatic translation into over 100 languages operates across every feature—not just messages, but forms, surveys, payment interfaces, and the entire parent app. This eliminates language as a barrier to engagement while requiring zero additional effort from school staff. For schools with EAL pupils (now over 20% of England's primary school population), this functionality helps maximize the value of EAL funding by ensuring effective communication with all families, strengthens compliance with equality obligations, and directly supports the parental engagement that research links to improved student outcomes.

The primary school specialization ensures functionality aligns with how primary schools actually operate. From year group structures and class communications to school meal payments and home learning appropriate for young children, every feature reflects deep understanding of primary school needs. This specialization contrasts with generic communication platforms or secondary-focused solutions adapted for primary use.

School Spider's fully managed approach removes technical burden from schools. Website hosting, security updates, performance optimization, and infrastructure management happen behind the scenes, allowing schools to focus on content and communication rather than technical maintenance. For schools without dedicated IT staff, this represents significant value.

The mobile-first design philosophy recognizes how busy parents engage with school communications. Push notifications reach parents immediately, in-app messaging provides convenient two-way communication, and mobile-optimized payment and booking processes respect parents' time. This approach drives higher engagement rates than email-based communication alone.

Product Development and Roadmap



Development Approach

School Spider's product evolution is driven by direct feedback from primary schools using the platform. The development team works closely with users to understand pain points, identify opportunities for improvement, and validate proposed solutions. This user-centred approach ensures development efforts address real operational challenges rather than theoretical enhancements.

Regulatory changes in education also inform development priorities. As DfE requirements evolve or new statutory obligations emerge, School Spider adapts platform functionality to support compliance. This responsive approach protects schools from regulatory risk while minimizing additional burden.

Current Roadmap Items

- **Enhanced Home Learning Features** will expand functionality supporting remote and blended learning. Plans include improved assignment creation tools, richer media support, and enhanced feedback mechanisms. These improvements build on lessons learned from increased home learning during recent years while supporting ongoing pedagogical evolution.
- **Expanded MIS Integrations** will connect School Spider with additional Management Information Systems, reducing integration barriers for schools using less common platforms. Priority focuses on systems with meaningful primary school adoption, ensuring development efforts serve the broadest possible school community.
- **Advanced Reporting and Analytics Dashboards** will provide deeper insights into communication effectiveness, payment patterns, and parent engagement. Enhanced visualization tools will help schools quickly identify trends and patterns, while predictive analytics may highlight potential issues before they escalate.

Service Information Summary

- **Support Hours:** Monday to Friday, 08:30-16:30 UK time
- **Implementation Timeline:** Typically 2-4 weeks from purchase to launch
- **Data Location:** UK-based ISO 27001-certified data centres
- **Service Availability Target:** 99.5% during support hours
- **Backup Frequency:** Daily encrypted backups
- **Data Export Window:** 30 days following contract termination
- **Security Standards:** ISO 27001, PCI DSS, GDPR-compliant
- **Recovery Time Objective:** Less than 4 hours
- **Recovery Point Objective:** 24 hours

Value-Added Services

Multilingual Communication Support

The platform's automatic translation into 100+ languages represents transformative capability for schools serving diverse communities. This functionality removes language barriers that traditionally required schools to manually translate communications, engage professional translation services, or rely on informal family networks—approaches that are time-consuming, expensive, and often incomplete.

With School Spider, every communication reaches every family in their preferred language automatically, at no additional cost. This enables schools to:

- Fulfill equality obligations by ensuring all families can access important information
- Maximize the impact of EAL funding by supporting effective home-school partnerships
- Reduce administrative burden by eliminating manual translation tasks
- Improve engagement rates among multilingual families who may previously have struggled with English-only communications
- Support pupils' learning through better-informed parents, regardless of home language

For schools in areas with high EAL pupil populations, this capability directly supports Ofsted expectations around inclusion and supporting learners at early stages of English language acquisition. The feature operates seamlessly across all school communications—from routine newsletters to urgent safety alerts—ensuring language never prevents a family from staying informed and engaged.

Compliance Monitoring

The integrated compliance checker provides ongoing value beyond basic website hosting. As statutory requirements evolve, School Spider updates checking rules, ensuring schools receive timely notification of new obligations. This proactive approach helps schools stay ahead of regulatory changes rather than discovering gaps during inspections.

Enhanced Reporting

Standard platform functionality includes comprehensive reporting on communication delivery, payment status, and parent engagement. Schools can identify patterns—which families aren't receiving messages, payment trends over time, or engagement differences between year groups—that inform targeted interventions and support.

Regular Platform Updates

School Spider continuously evolves based on user feedback and educational sector developments. Updates deploy automatically, ensuring schools always use the latest functionality without manual intervention or version management. New features and

improvements become available to all schools as they're released, with appropriate guidance provided.

The screenshot shows the SchoolSpider interface for Oakwood Primary School. A modal titled "Website progress overview" is displayed, listing various website tasks and their completion status. The tasks include:

- Complaints procedure: Complete
- School Opening Hours: Complete
- Pay Gap Reporting: Complete
- School contact details: Edit, Delete
- Admission arrangements: Edit, Delete
- Ofsted reports: Edit, Delete
- Test, Exam and Assessment Results: Edit, Delete
- Curriculum: Edit, Delete

The background shows the "Website Area" menu on the left and a "News Items" table on the right. A "71% Ofsted Compliance" progress bar is also visible at the top of the modal.

The screenshot shows the SchoolSpider interface for Oakwood Primary School, specifically the "Parent Communications" section. A modal titled "Message Your Parents" is displayed, allowing users to create and send messages. The modal includes fields for "To", "Title", and "Type your message...". It also has options to "Send this message via" (Smartphone, Email, Text Message) and "Schedule Message". The background shows the "Parents Area" menu on the left and a table of parent communications on the right. A "811 results" message is visible at the bottom of the table.

Additional Information



School Spider is dedicated exclusively to serving primary schools in England, with all platform development, support, and guidance informed by this focused mission. The company understands the unique pressures facing primary school leaders and administrative staff, designing solutions that deliver meaningful impact within the constraints of primary school resources and schedules.

Further information is available at www.schoolspider.co.uk.

General enquiries can be directed through the website contact form, while prospective customers can request demonstrations through the sales team.

Technical support for existing customers is available at support@schoolspider.co.uk or through the platform's integrated support channels.



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