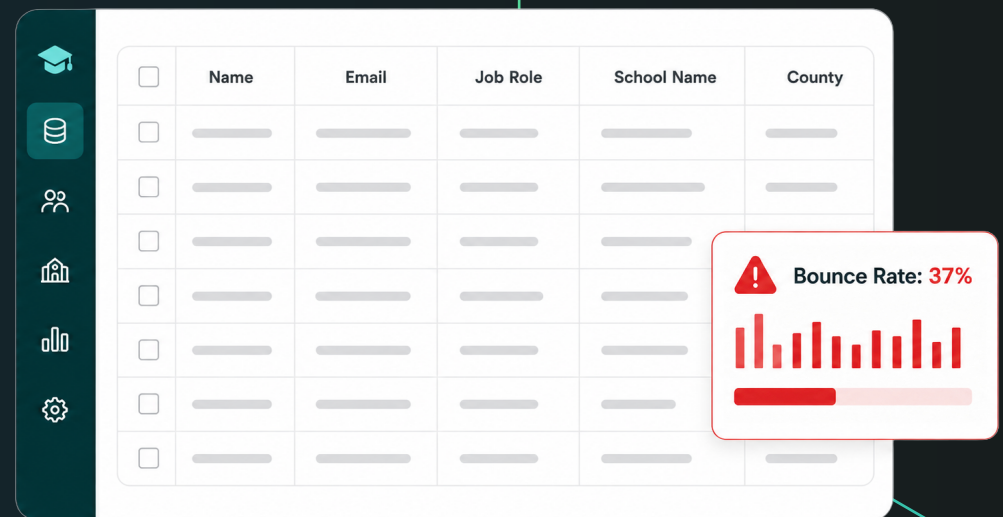


Before You Blame Your Marketing to Schools... Read This First

The 37% bad data rate quietly destroying your campaign performance



One data check uncovered a serious problem...

It started after a client moved away from Sprint Education, having brought in a new "expert" consultant who recommended using one of the world's largest B2B data providers instead.

We already had access to that provider's wider B2B data, so rather than debating which database was stronger, we decided to test it ourselves. This wasn't a test of school contact data, but it gave us a useful way to see what happens when a major B2B database is checked independently, record by record, before being trusted for a campaign.

The results were hard to ignore: 37% of records were flagged as bad data.

That result was particularly surprising because the provider **claims 97% email accuracy**. The average B2B CRM is generally expected to contain around 15–25% invalid or undeliverable email addresses (although it's certainly possible to reduce that number, as Sprint Education has done through daily checks and automated alerts).

No large database can stay 100% accurate, but when almost 40% of this huge provider's email addresses were disabled, linked to dead servers, or had invalid mail exchange records before any marketing activity had even begun - it raises unignorable concerns.

That result should make anyone question whether the biggest, loudest, or most expensive provider is automatically the safest choice. If a major B2B database can contain that level of bad data, what could the implications be for school data, where organisational changes happen even quicker and more often?

☐	Campaign	Bounced	Sender Bounced
☐	100% ██████ Data Emails 1–2 Campaign 1 2 sequences • Created Apr 30, 01:23 PM ● Active	██████ Data 411 25.37% 274 16.91% Sent: 1,620	
☐	100% Sprint Education's Data Emails 1–2 Campaign 1 2 sequences • Created Apr 30, 01:16 PM ● Active	Sprint's Data 5 0.36% 12 0.77% Sent: 1,512	

Another test revealed the provider's bounce rates compared with our own data...

School data has a much shorter shelf life

All B2B databases naturally decay over time as people move jobs and companies change their email infrastructure. Annual data decay rates are estimated at around 15-25% on average.

For school data, that figure could be even higher because education roles change more sharply around the academic calendar than they do in many other industries. The summer holidays alone can bring headteacher retirements, deputy heads stepping into leadership, teachers moving schools, new responsibilities being assigned, and academy trust structures shifting before the autumn term begins.

There are technical changes too. Schools may update domains, change staff email formats, deactivate old inboxes, tighten security settings, or change how external emails are handled. Those updates can turn previously usable contacts into bounced or undelivered emails very quickly.

That's why school data needs proper human attention 24/7 - not just a review once a year. Automated checks can spot some problems, but they can't always understand whether a role has changed, whether a contact is still the right person to target, or whether an academy now sits under a different trust structure.

At Sprint Education, our education database benefits from more than 600,000 updates every month, supported by a dedicated data team continually checking, cleansing, and verifying records.

What happens when school data isn't maintained

Outdated school data creates a chain reaction that can be very difficult and time-consuming to fix.

A member of staff leaves over the summer, their email address is deactivated, and a campaign sent to that address bounces. Enough bounces can start affecting deliverability, which makes future campaigns harder to land in inboxes. Even when the email does get delivered, it may reach somebody whose role has changed, making the message far less relevant.

There's also the quieter problem of missing the new decision-maker completely. If a new contact takes over responsibility for a budget, department, project, or purchasing decision, your campaign needs to reach them quickly. If your database hasn't caught up, your marketing is speaking to last year's contact while somebody else is making this year's decision.

That can distort how businesses read their campaign results. Low engagement may get blamed on the subject line, the offer, or the email design, when the real issue is that the audience was already out of date. A campaign can look weak simply because it never reached enough of the right people. You'll start rewriting your emails in a panic, throwing out content that was potentially your best marketing campaign to date, and not fixing the actual issue before you try your next campaign.

Data quality also affects sales teams. If they're following up with old contacts, chasing people who have moved roles, or missing newly appointed decision-makers, time gets wasted at exactly the point when they should be building relationships.

There's also the technical impact to consider, and this is where poor-quality data can become much harder to recover from. Every bounced, undelivered, or rejected email sends another negative signal to mailbox providers about the quality of your data. If those signals continue building up, your sending reputation can deteriorate, making it more difficult for future campaigns to reach teachers' inboxes, even when the underlying data has been improved. In more serious cases, businesses can find their sending domain or IP address blacklisted, requiring significant time and effort to rebuild trust before deliverability returns to previous levels.

For businesses selling to schools, inaccurate data shrinks the number of schools you can realistically reach. Strong school marketing needs accurate records, current decision-makers, and a database that reflects how schools, academies, and MATs actually operate.

What a good school data provider should be able to show you

A good school data provider should be able to explain how its database is maintained, how often records are updated, and what happens when staff changes, bounced emails, or academy trust changes are identified.

That explanation should feel clear. If a provider genuinely maintains its own database, it should understand the detail behind it: who checks the records, how updates are made, how frequently changes are reviewed, and how GDPR responsibilities are handled.

You should also expect more than basic school names, email addresses, and job titles. A useful education database should help businesses understand the schools they're targeting, including school-trust relationships, school characteristics like Ofsted ratings, and lesser-known job roles (where applicable) such as trip coordinator or wellbeing officer.

A provider's education expertise matters too. Schools don't behave like a generic B2B market; buying decisions may involve individual schools, central trust teams, and multiple decision-makers and influencers working together.

If a provider struggles to answer any questions, they might not be education marketing experts with the knowledge to properly support your campaign - and it could even be a sign they themselves are leasing the data from someone else, with little knowledge of where the data's coming from or how it's being maintained.

A specialist education data provider should be able to:

- Explain how often school and staff records are updated, including how published staff changes are identified during busy periods such as the summer holidays.
- Demonstrate how bounced emails and undelivered messages are monitored, investigated, and used to improve database quality over time.
- Show how academies are connected to their central trusts, helping businesses understand school-level and trust-level decision-making structures.
- Describe how GDPR responsibilities are managed, including lawful basis, legitimate interest, educator preferences, and data subject requests.
- Provide evidence that data quality is actively maintained, with real processes sitting behind any claims about database size, coverage, or accuracy.



Stronger data means stronger school marketing

School marketing works better when the audience is properly built before the campaign goes anywhere near an inbox.

Accurate records give you the right schools, current contacts, relevant decision-makers, linked academy trust structures, and useful school-level information, giving every campaign a far stronger foundation before it reaches an inbox.

Accurate data gives you far more control over relevance. Instead of sending one broad campaign to every school available, you can shape audiences around the details that actually influence buying behaviour: school type, location, size, academy status, Ofsted rating, decision-maker role, or any other characteristic that helps make the campaign more specific.

A small primary school, a large secondary, a specialist provision, and an academy trust central team may all be interested in the same product, but rarely for the same reason. Good school data gives you the flexibility to reflect those differences instead of relying on one broad campaign to do all the work.

Better data also gives sales teams a clearer route into real conversations. When campaigns reach the right people, sales activity can focus on enquiries, demos, and relationship building rather than trying to work out whether the contact was ever relevant in the first place.

If the data is inaccurate, sales teams can spend valuable time speaking to people who no longer influence the decision, missing newly appointed decision-makers, or interpreting weak engagement as a lack of interest when the real issue was the audience.

For businesses selling to schools, good data gives every other part of the strategy more room to work. Your messaging becomes more relevant, your audiences become more focused, and your campaign activity has a better chance of generating meaningful school sales opportunities.



Need the most accurate school data?

If your provider can't clearly explain how records are updated, verified, and managed, it's probably time to ask a few more questions before your next campaign goes live.

At Sprint Education, our education database contains more than 4.1 million educator and school decision-maker records and benefits from more than 600,000 updates every month. Our dedicated in-house data team continually checks, cleanses, and verifies records, helping businesses reach the right schools, academies, MATs, and decision-makers with greater confidence.

Whether you're reviewing your current provider, preparing your next school marketing campaign, or looking for a more accurate education database, better data will help you access the right schools, the right decision-makers, and the right sales opportunities.

Request a free school data health check, a sample of our database, or answers to any of your school data questions by booking a call with one of our experts.

[Book your free strategy call here →](#)



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