Aiding Transitions: Creating Virtual Tours of your School

Whether to maintain familiarity and comfort with own school or to aid with transition into a new school or section of a school, a virtual tour resource can have a number of benefits. The term “virtual tour” is often applied to slideshows, video presentations, or sometimes even PDF files, but modern students and parents can expect more. Thinglink has a nice showcase of 10 very high quality examples of how to virtual campus tours of colleges: https://blog.thinglink.com/marketing/virtual-campus-tours, however the tour does not have to be to this level.

Here we will discuss how to make a basic virtual tour even if you don’t actually have a 360° camera! We will explain to you how to make a virtual tour using your iPhone / Android plus a PC / laptop. Having created your tour you can copy the URL link to share it with your students, share your tour on Facebook, Twitter, or Google+, or embed your tour on a website.

Benefits include:

- A virtual tour will help people to become comfortable with your facility.
- Not every school website offers virtual tours, so this allows yours to stand out online.
- A virtual tour can highlight how your educational centre is unique.
- Virtual tours are more engaging than photos.
- Displaying a virtual tour will present your school and website in a professional manner.

New enrolments in special schools in particular have often created Our Story or similar apps to create a digital book to be shared with new students. This virtual tour feature would enhance that experience, ideally a student or future student could navigate their own way around the building or become familiar with their new classroom. In the case of special education additional benefits may also include:

- Student wellbeing, and stress reduction.
- Students can see their classroom and look around the room they have familiarity with.
- The ability to follow some routine could be added: Students could proceed through the school to their classroom.
Options for Virtual Tours:

Video

This more basic option involves creating a video on your iPad, editing it and saving it. The video could include a walk around with a voice over. All incoming students could be set up on google classroom from where they could watch the video.

Create a series of 360 Photos and embed the results in your website

How is this done? You will need:

1. An iPad/iPhone or android device
2. Install the app Google Street View on the device
3. A laptop/PC.

Part One: Step by Step Guide for Google Street View

1. Open the Google Street View App on your device
2. Under the tab “private” click on the camera icon
3. In the pop-up – click the camera icon again
4. Point the camera to the orange dot and what until it has taken the first image
5. Repeat pointing your camera until all the orange dots are gone and a green checkbox appears in the bottom of your screen
6. Click on the green checkmark and wait for the processor to finish
7. Once finished, click on the image
8. Click on the “upload” icon
9. Select “share privately”
10. Click on “save image”
11. Now you can see the image in your camera roll
12. Send your photo to your laptop in preparation for the next steps.
Part Two: Step by Step Guide for Google Tour Creator – Google VR

NB: Tour Creator works with Google Chrome, Firefox®, and Safari®. After you start creating a tour, all your changes are saved in Tour Creator. You can make any changes, close the tour, and go back to it later.

A: Getting Started

1) Open the Google Tour Creator website on your laptop:
   https://arvr.google.com/tourcreator/
2) Sign in to Tour Creator.
3) Click ‘Get Started’
4) Click + New tour.
5) Enter a title.
6) Optional: Enter a description.
   a) Optional: To help other find your tour on Poly, click Category.
7) Add a cover photo. Note: Photos must be at least 576 x 432px. THIS IS NOT YOUR 360° PHOTO – Perhaps you could use a photo of your school crest.
8) Click Create.

B: Adding Tour Scenes

1) Click ‘Add Scene’.
2) To add an image, choose an option:
   (1) Add a Google Street View panorama: Click Street View, search for your school using Eircode, and press Enter.
   (2) Add your own photo: Click Upload and select an image.
3) Click Add scene again to add your panorama or image to your tour.
4) Add a title and description to your scene.
   i) Optional: Add mp3 sound files to the scene. Note: Audio clips must be 10-30 seconds long.
   (1) Add background noise: click Add ambient audio
(2) Add audio commentary: click Add scene narration

5) To add more scenes, repeat the steps above.

C: Publishing your Tour

1) When you finish creating the tour and you’re ready to publish, click Publish.

2) Decide whether you want your tour to be public or unlisted. Public is the default.
   (1) To keep your tour public and available for anyone to view, click Publish.
   (2) To make your tour unlisted, click the Down arrow - Unlisted - Publish.

3) Choose an option:
   (1) (Optional) Click the URL or View tour to see your tour in Poly. You can also click the copy icon to copy the URL for the tour and paste it in another location, e.g. email, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, your website.
   (2) (Optional) To see your published tour in VR, open the link on your phone and tap the VR icon in the upper right corner.

4) Click Done to close the publish dialog.

5) To enable audio, click the gear menu in the tour on the upper right corner. You can then enable audio and narration if it's present. Note: You will have to enable audio for each tour that has audio and/or narration, not each scene.

D: Further Options that you may like to consider at a later stage.

You can choose what viewers see when they enter each scene. That way, you can decide what they should focus on.

Choosing the starting point

1. Click the scene you want to edit.
2. On the bottom left, click Set starting view.
3. Click and drag the photo until it shows the view you want users to see.
4. When you’re done, click Save.
   After you save, your starting point is set. When a viewer opens a scene or clicks the compass, they'll return to the starting position.

Adding or changing a point of interest (POI)

1. Click + Add point of interest.
2. Use your mouse or pad to click and drag the POI.
3. On the right, add a title and description for the point of interest.
Some Great tips and ideas are at the following locations:

https://my360propertyvirtualtours.com/
https://support.google.com/tourcreator/answer/9098104?hl=en&ref_topic=9009659
https://www.concept3d.com/blog/virtual-tours/the-top-5-reasons-to-use-virtual-tours-on-your-schools-website