



MONT ROSE[®]
COLLEGE

Website Audit Report

mrcollege.ac.uk

Prepared: February 2026

Aligned to: MRC Digital Marketing Strategy — Strategy Assumptions for Approval (February 2026)

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This section establishes the strategic context and performance baseline for the website audit. Section 01 sets out the recruitment context that frames every recommendation in the audit. Section 02 assesses how the website performs today against that context, using traffic, search visibility, site health, and reputation data.

All recruitment targets and intake numbers refer to the Digital Marketing Strategy document. This section assesses whether the website can support those targets. It does not set or restate them.

01 Recruitment Context

The Digital Marketing Strategy sets out the college’s shift from agent-dependent recruitment toward a balanced model that grows the direct channel via digital marketing channels. This audit assesses whether the website can support that shift. The table below summarises the strategic context; for full detail, targets, and the agreed glide path, refer to the Digital Marketing Strategy document.

Strategic focus	Relevance to this audit
Growing direct HND recruitment	The website is the primary channel through which direct-recruited students discover, research, and enquire about MRC. If it cannot attract and convert, the direct recruitment targets cannot be met.
Reducing agent dependency over time	Agents do not recruit through the website. Website performance should be measured against the direct channel, not total enrolment.
Feeding the full pipeline (HND → BNU Top-Up)	Every directly recruited HND student is a potential internal progressor. The website feeds the entry point of a pipeline that sustains degree-level enrolment.
Geographic concentration in East London	Over half of all students come from six boroughs within a few miles of campus. The website must be visible to local searchers — it currently is not.
Two student tracks: adult learners (25–45) and UCAS-age (18–24)	The website’s content, messaging, and journey must serve both audiences. Currently it is not optimised for either.
637 students across Sept 2025 and Jan 2026 intakes	This is the baseline. The Student Profile Analysis provides the full demographic, geographic, and referral breakdown behind the strategy’s assumptions.

Reference documents: *MRC Digital Marketing Strategy — Strategy Assumptions for Approval (February 2026)*, *Student Profile Analysis (18 February 2026)*.

Online Reputation and Google Business Profile

The Online Reputation Audit (conducted separately on 12 February 2026, covering 15 platforms) found that MRC holds 609 Google reviews across two campuses: Mont Rose House at 4.9 stars (493 reviews) and Shakespeare House at 4.8 stars (116 reviews), giving a weighted average of 4.87 out of 5. This places MRC in the top 5% of UK alternative providers by review volume and rating. The audit also confirmed TEF Silver for overall rating and student experience, QAA “Commendable Progress” (top 6% nationally), and three business awards in three months (SME Gold, Redbridge Business of the Year, Sustainable Transition Award). A live Google search on 23 February 2026 confirmed both profiles are verified and actively managed, with the owner responding to reviews, posting updates, and maintaining photos, hours, and course categories. (Evidence: [MRC_Online_Reputation_Audit.html](#); [mont-rose-college-illford-Google-Search-02-23-2026_04_02_PM.png](#))

This is an exceptional asset. It is also virtually invisible. The website makes no reference to review ratings or volume. There is no testimonials page, no review widget, no social proof

anywhere in the student journey. A prospective student browsing a course page sees qualification jargon and an application form; they do not see that 609 students rated MRC 4.87 out of 5. TEF Silver and QAA badges do appear in the website footer, but not on course pages, the homepage, or the Why MRC page where they would influence decisions. The three business awards are entirely absent. The audit also identified critical gaps: Whatuni and StudentCrowd — the platforms UCAS-age students actually use to research colleges — have almost no MRC presence, and one prominent negative review on StudentCrowd sits uncontested.

Both Google Business Profiles are verified and actively managed. GBP Search Console data shows 41 clicks from 122 impressions (position 1.9) in the most recent 28-day period, confirming both campuses appear in the local map pack for branded searches. One issue to address: the Shakespeare House profile displayed “Closed” in search results on a Sunday (23 February 2026) because weekend hours are not configured. A prospective student researching courses outside office hours sees “Closed” next to the campus name, which damages credibility. Setting accurate opening hours for both campuses — or adding “See website for term dates” — is a five-minute fix. The broader opportunity remains: despite strong GBP performance and an exceptional review profile, none of this social proof reaches the website itself. The reputation audit recommends featuring the 4.9 Google rating above the fold on the homepage, adding TEF Silver and QAA badges to the website footer, and launching a review generation programme targeting Whatuni and StudentCrowd. Embedding review ratings, testimonials, and a Google Reviews widget into course pages would connect the college’s strongest trust signals to the pages where prospective students make their decisions.

02 Digital Health: How the Website Performs Today

Verdict: The website generates traffic but cannot demonstrate it produces enquiries. Conversion tracking is not configured. The college cannot attribute a single enquiry to any channel, campaign, or page.

KEY FINDINGS

- Zero conversion tracking. No conversion events have been configured in GA4. The college cannot attribute a single enquiry to any channel, campaign, or page. Section 05 details the specific tracking gaps and recommended fixes. (Evidence: GA4 Events List — All 24 Events inc Form Submit and Chat.png)
- Chat widget is actively damaging trust. Of 4,814 users who opened it, only 270 (5.6%) were served by an operator. This is worse than not having a chat function at all. (Evidence: GA4 Events List — All 24 Events inc Form Submit and Chat.png)
- Mobile experience is critically broken. 63% of visitors arrive on mobile and wait over 12 seconds for the homepage to render. Performance score: 12 out of 100. (Evidence: PageSpeed Homepage Mobile — Score 12 out of 100.png)
- 758,000 course-related search impressions produced fewer than 1,200 clicks. Prospective students see MRC in search results and choose competitors — because title tags and meta descriptions are missing or unreadable across every course page.
- Invisible to local searchers. MRC ranks position 29.6 for “colleges in east london”. The word “Ilford” does not appear in any title tag or meta description on the site. Over half of MRC’s students live within a few miles of campus.
- 609 Google reviews at a weighted average of 4.87/5 — completely hidden from the website. An exceptional reputation asset placing MRC in the top 5% of UK alternative providers. TEF Silver and QAA badges appear in the footer but are not surfaced on course pages, the homepage, or anywhere in the student journey. The three business awards, review ratings, and six alumni video testimonials are entirely absent.
- Site health scores 32 out of 100 — but most issues are configuration gaps in tools already installed. Fixing six critical items would lift this to approximately 55–60. The tools exist; they have not been switched on.

This section establishes the baseline. Before the report explains what is broken and why, senior leadership needs to understand the scale: how much traffic the website receives, where it comes from, how much of it is relevant to recruitment, and how the site scores against industry standards. Without this context, the findings in Sections 03 to 06 have no frame of reference.

All data covers the 12-month period 18 February 2025 to 18 February 2026 unless otherwise stated. Sources: Google Analytics 4, Google Search Console, Google PageSpeed Insights, and an automated SEO audit conducted on 18 February 2026.

2.1 Traffic Overview

Metric	Value	Context	What it means
Total sessions	118,044	12-month period	This is how many times the website was visited. Includes all users: prospective students, current students, staff, and bots.
Active users	~55,000	12-month period	Unique individuals (approximately). Many visit multiple times.
Engagement rate	58.6% (organic)	GA4 definition: >10s, or conversion, or 2+ pages	Appears reasonable, but is inflated by current students and staff who already know the site.
Pages per session	~2.0	Average across all channels	Most visitors look at one or two pages and leave.

The headline numbers appear strong for a single-campus alternative provider. However, the headline is misleading. A significant portion of this traffic has no connection to student recruitment. (Evidence: GA4 Traffic Acquisition by Channel — 118044 Sessions.png)

2.2 What the Numbers Actually Mean

Three categories of traffic must be stripped out before any recruitment analysis is meaningful:

Traffic to remove	Estimated sessions	Why
Moodle and login traffic	~37,000	Current students accessing their learning platform and email. These are enrolled students managing their studies, not prospective students researching courses. GA4 cannot distinguish between the two, which distorts every engagement metric.
Irrelevant blog content	~12,000	Blog posts about topics MRC does not teach. The largest single source is a post about LLB law degrees, which generates nearly 4,500 page views per year. MRC offers no law programmes.
International blog traffic	~5,000	Global traffic from countries including Singapore, Ghana, and Nigeria, driven by blog content ranking for UK qualification queries. MRC recruits domestically within a 30-mile catchment; this traffic has no pathway to enrolment.

After removing current student traffic (~37,000), irrelevant blog traffic (~12,000), and international blog traffic (~5,000), the estimated addressable audience for direct recruitment is approximately 64,000 sessions per year — roughly 54% of the headline figure. Even within this reduced pool, branded searches dominate. The website captures people who already know MRC's name, but is

largely invisible to people searching for what MRC offers. (Evidence: GA4 Pages and Screens — Top 25 by Views.png)

2.3 Where Visitors Come From

Channel	Sessions	Share	Recruitment relevance
Organic search	91,468	77.5%	Dominant channel, but includes Moodle searches, blog traffic, and non-course content. Course page clicks are fewer than 5,000 per year.
Direct	21,719	18.4%	Mostly current students with bookmarked pages. Low engagement rate (43%) supports this interpretation.
Referral	1,899	1.6%	57% is internal traffic from MRC's own systems (Quercus, Planable, Student Union). 17% is AI research tools. Only 26% is genuine external referral.
Organic social	1,154	1.0%	Minimal volume. Reflects limited social media activity.
Paid search	37	0.03%	Effectively zero. Clean slate for campaigns when ready.
Email	37	0.03%	Current students and staff only. No prospect email marketing exists. This channel will build from zero.

Organic search accounts for over three-quarters of all traffic, which means the website's recruitment performance is almost entirely dependent on how well it appears in search results. Paid search, email, and social are effectively unused channels. This is both a vulnerability and an opportunity: the website's current traffic comes from a single source, but there are multiple untapped channels available once the infrastructure is in place. (Evidence: GA4 Traffic Acquisition — Larger View Same Data.png)

2.4 Search Visibility

Google Search Console recorded 69,271 total clicks from 5,212,318 impressions across the audit period. The headline click-through rate is 1.33% at an average position of 20.4. These numbers mask very different stories depending on what people are searching for:

Query category	Clicks	% of total	Impressions	What it tells us
Branded (name searches)	25,499	61.2%	~120,000	People who already know MRC. Awareness, not discovery.
Moodle and login	9,891	23.7%	~45,000	Current students. No recruitment value.
LLB law-related	1,807	4.3%	~90,000	MRC has no law courses. Traffic has no pathway to enrolment.
Course interest (HND etc.)	1,188	2.9%	758,000	HIGH VALUE. But 758,000 impressions producing only 1,188 clicks means a CTR of 0.16%. The website appears in

				search results but almost nobody clicks through.
Local queries	306	0.7%	~25,000	People searching for colleges near them. MRC ranks position 5–7 for key local terms but CTR is poor.

The critical number: 758,000 course-related impressions producing fewer than 1,200 clicks. The website appears in search results for the right queries, but prospective students are not clicking through. The reason is straightforward: the title tags and meta descriptions that appear in search results are either missing entirely or read as keyword lists rather than compelling reasons to click. Section 04 explains the specific on-page issues; this is the measurable cost.

2.5 Geographic Footprint

GA4 city-level data and Search Console country data were cross-referenced against the student profile analysis to assess geographic alignment between website traffic and actual enrolment patterns.

The key finding: MRC’s student body is concentrated in six East London boroughs, but the website makes almost no reference to Ilford, East London, or any local geography. It does not appear on the homepage, in course page content, or in title tags or meta descriptions. For someone searching “colleges in Ilford” or “HND courses East London,” the website provides no clear signal that MRC is a local institution.

Search Console confirms MRC sits at position 29.6 for “colleges in east london” — effectively page three of Google. For “colleges in ilford,” the picture is similar. Given that over half of MRC’s students live within a few miles of campus, this represents a significant missed opportunity. The Local SEO recommendations in Section 04 and the Prioritised Action Plan address this directly. (Evidence: GA4 City Demographics — Top 25 Cities by Users.png)

2.6 AI Search Referrals

An emerging finding: ChatGPT is now MRC’s largest genuine external referral source, accounting for 243 sessions with 73% engagement and an average session time of 1 minute 43 seconds. Combined with Perplexity (47 sessions), Google Gemini (25), Microsoft Copilot (5), and other AI tools, AI research platforms generated approximately 320 referral sessions during the audit period.

This volume is small in absolute terms but significant in context. These are prospective students using AI tools to research education options and being directed to MRC. Their engagement metrics are strong: they stay longer, view more pages, and engage more deeply than most other traffic sources. The implication is that AI search is an emerging discovery channel for higher education, and MRC has an early presence in it.

However, the website’s content is not optimised for AI extraction. Course information is not presented in structured, scannable formats. There is no FAQ schema on any page. Key facts (fees, duration, entry requirements) are not in the extractable format that AI tools rely on. Section 04 covers the specific content and schema gaps; the Prioritised Action Plan includes actions to improve AI discoverability.

2.7 Site Health Score

An automated SEO audit conducted on 18 February 2026 scored the website at 32 out of 100. This assessment covered on-page SEO, technical infrastructure, schema markup, content quality, image optimisation, site speed, AI readiness, and international targeting. The findings are consolidated in the SEO Findings Summary, a companion document to this audit report.

Category	Score	Key issue
On-page SEO (H1 tags, titles, meta descriptions)	1/10	H1 tags present but not optimised. Meta descriptions missing on multiple pages. Homepage title tag omits brand name entirely.
Technical SEO	5/10	Massive inline CSS bloating the HTML. Robots.txt blocking 300+ individual posts.
Schema and structured data	1/10	No Course schema. No EducationalOrganization schema. Empty logo field.
Content quality and E-E-A-T	3/10	No author attribution on blog posts. Thin course pages. Blog active but not strategically connected to course pages or the recruitment journey.
Image optimisation	1/10	0% WebP usage. 85% of newest uploads missing alt text. No lazy loading.
Sitemap and indexation	5/10	89% of sitemap URLs show outdated lastmod timestamps — a CMS configuration issue rather than an absence of content.
Page speed and performance	4/10	Homepage scores 12/100 on mobile. Course page scores 27/100.
AI and GEO readiness	2/10	No FAQ content. No structured data for AI extraction.
Strategic positioning	3/10	No programmatic pages. No local landing pages. Blog not optimised for search or recruitment.

A score of 32/100 reflects deep structural issues. However, a significant proportion of these are configuration problems within tools that are already installed. The Yoast SEO plugin is active but its key features (meta descriptions, schema, social tags, breadcrumbs) are not configured. WP Rocket caching is installed but its CSS and JavaScript optimisation features are not fully utilised. The gap is not missing tools; it is unused tools. (Evidence: PageSpeed Homepage Mobile — Score 12 out of 100.png)

The audit estimates that fixing the six critical items alone (H1 tags, meta descriptions, schema, image format, the broken /about/ page, and brand name consistency) would shift the score to

approximately 55–60 out of 100. These fixes are detailed in Section 04 and the Prioritised Action Plan.

Summary: The website receives meaningful traffic and appears in search results for relevant queries. The raw material is there. But the majority of sessions are not recruitment-relevant, the site is invisible for local searches, course pages get hundreds of thousands of impressions but almost no clicks, and an exceptional review profile is completely absent from the student experience. The sections that follow explain why, and what to do about it.