

**Consumers'**  
Association



The Voice of British Advertisers

# Commercial activities in schools

## Best practice principles

There has been continued growth in recent years in commercial activity targeted at schools. Well thought out commercial activities are of benefit to schools and business. They add value to school life and the taught curriculum – and provide welcome additional resources.

Given the growth of such activity, it is important that there is a framework within which schools and business can work together towards best practice.

These best practice principles provide that framework.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)

# putting principles into practice

## Introduction and purpose

These principles are generic and may be used to assess and develop a wide range of commercial activities, including:

- ▶ sponsored resources, such as teaching packs and materials
- ▶ sponsored activities, such as competitions and projects
- ▶ collector schemes, for example: 'wrappers for books' schemes

The principles do not apply to activities such as:

- ▶ exclusive licensing agreements
- ▶ schools dedicated broadcasting
- ▶ market research

These principles build upon those previously issued by the National Consumer Council in 1996. They have been revised and updated by ISBA and Consumers' Association in consultation with educational representatives and business to reflect current best practice. The objective of the principles is to promote high standards in this complex and sensitive area. The principles will help:

- ▶ teachers, parents and school governors (in Scotland, school board members) to assess the commercial activity offered to the school and will support those who decide to develop a whole school policy;
- ▶ businesses meet the criteria demanded of educational materials and activities aimed at schools.

The principles aim to identify best practice – where the commercial objective is consistent with genuine educational benefit. Not all of them will apply to every commercial activity. In practice, a commercial activity is likely to meet some principles and miss others. What is important is that, taken as a whole,

**the educational benefits of the commercial activity outweigh the potential disbenefits**

The principles come with checklists for use by schools and business.

## A whole school policy

Each school should have a single policy on developing commercial activities to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school. This policy should be for all teachers, rather than individual teachers developing their own policies.

The policy should be shaped in consultation with teachers, governors, pupils and parents. A school may wish to give a senior member of staff responsibility for developing and overseeing this policy.

When a new commercial activity is launched, the school's agreed policy will provide a framework within which swift, measured and collective decisions can be made.

# The Principles

## Educational Value and Content

- 1** Activities should be relevant and add educational value to teaching and learning.
- 2** Materials should not encourage unhealthy, unsafe or unlawful activities. (Visit [www.ohn.gov.uk/](http://www.ohn.gov.uk/) for further guidance)
- 3** The company should give a broad statement covering its purpose in providing the resource/activity.
- 4** The company should ensure that all information supplied is accurate and current – materials should be dated, especially where the information or resource is time-sensitive.
- 5** Expressions of opinion should be distinguished from statements of fact.
- 6** Explicit sales messages should be avoided where possible, but may be unavoidable in the context of collector schemes.
- 7** Any specialist resources required by schools to utilise or demonstrate the activity must be highlighted from the outset.
- 8** Materials should respect diversity of gender, race, disability and cultural issues and reflect contemporary UK society.

## Branding

- 9** The level of branding should be appropriate to the activity.

## Consultation and Testing

- 10** Activities should be developed in partnership with teachers, pupils, parents and educationalists and piloted where possible.
- 11** Research and testing should reflect variations in the education system in all parts of the UK.

### Distribution of Material

- 12** Where possible, the company should seek permission before forwarding materials to the school.
- 13** The resource should be carefully labelled and should specify both source and target audience.
- 14** The company should not impose any restrictions on the school in return for the distribution of the materials/provision of resources e.g. data collection of pupils; restricted use of suppliers.

### Collector Schemes

Collector schemes are schemes in which people can collect points, vouchers or tokens by purchasing a company's products. Schools can then exchange the points, vouchers or tokens for items such as books, computers, or for other benefits.

Unlike other commercial activities, collector schemes may require direct participation by schools, pupils and parents. Financial or other costs will be incurred. Remember, the key question is:

do the educational benefits of the scheme outweigh  
the potential disbenefits?

- 15** Rules governing the scheme must be made available to collectors, including:
  - ▶ Information on the number of vouchers required
  - ▶ The scheme's closing date
  - ▶ A policy covering non-availability of the requested item
  - ▶ Any restrictions for participation in the scheme (e.g. overseas)
  - ▶ A system of redress if the goods received are faulty in any way.

# Checklist for schools

When your school is assessing a commercial activity, ask yourself...

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the activity add educational value to the curriculum?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the level of branding and logo use appropriate to the activity?                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it free of incentives to children to engage in unhealthy, unsafe or unlawful activities?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Has the activity been developed with educators and piloted for school use with teachers and pupils? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Has the business clearly stated its purpose in producing the activity?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the activity relevant to your region and school?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the activity based on accurate and current information?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Has the business sought permission, where possible, before forwarding the materials to the school?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are any expressions of opinion clearly distinguished from statements of fact?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Is it clear who the sponsor and target audience are?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the activity as free as possible of explicit sales messages?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Can your school engage in the activity free from unreasonable restrictions or conditions?           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If the activity requires specialist resources, was this made clear to you from the outset?                               |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the activity respect diversity of gender, race, disability and cultural issues and reflect contemporary UK society? |  |

## Some extra questions for collector schemes...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do the overall benefits of the collector scheme outweigh the costs to your school, pupils and parents? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the terms and conditions of the collector scheme available to you before registration? |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the product involved one which you are content for pupils or parents to use?            |

### How do you decide?

If you answered **YES** to all of these questions, the commercial activity probably meets our best practice principles and could form the basis of a worthwhile partnership between your school and business.

If you answered **NO** to the majority of these questions you should probably reject the proposed commercial activity.

If your answers were a mixture of **YES** and **NO**, you should discuss the proposed activity with your colleagues, weighing it against our checklist and your whole school policy.

Remember: schools and businesses working in partnership share the risks and rewards. The key question is—

do the educational benefits of the partnership outweigh the potential disbenefits?

# Checklist for business

When you are planning or assessing your commercial activity ask yourself...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are the resources relevant to the curriculum and of educational value? Details on the UK curricula are available on:<br><a href="http://www.nc.uk.net">www.nc.uk.net</a><br><a href="http://www.accac.org.uk">www.accac.org.uk</a><br><a href="http://www.sqa.org.uk">www.sqa.org.uk</a> | <input type="checkbox"/> Have the resources been researched, tested and where possible piloted with target groups?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are the resources free of incentives to children to engage in unhealthy, unsafe or unlawful activities?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Has the company sought permission, where possible, before forwarding the materials to the school? Lists of head teachers are available from the relevant Local Education Authority or specialist list brokers. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the company's purpose in developing the activity clear to the school? Is further information available on request?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the materials labelled carefully to ensure that they reach their target audience?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the activity based on accurate and current information rather than opinion?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Can the school engage in the activity free from unreasonable restrictions or conditions?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have explicit sales messages been avoided where possible?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the terms and conditions governing the activity available to stakeholders?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have any specialist resources needed by schools to utilise the activity been highlighted?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Does the resource comply with the British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion and relevant legislation?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the activity respect diversity of gender, race, disability and cultural issues – and reflect contemporary UK society?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a method of updating the resource to ensure continuing compliance with the British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion and legal requirements?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the level of branding appropriate to the activity? Branding is acceptable, but should not be excessive.   |   |

## How do you decide?

If you answered **YES** to all of these questions, the commercial activity probably meets our best practice principles.

If you answered **NO** to some or all of these questions you should revisit the principles and seek further advice from industry professionals if necessary.

Remember: schools and businesses working in partnership share the risks and rewards. The key question is–

**do the educational benefits of the partnership outweigh the potential disbenefits?**

Support and further information is available from the Trade Bodies in the Marketing Industry.

# About us



The Voice of British Advertisers

ISBA is the single body representing the interests of British advertisers in all areas of commercial communications, from advertising to direct marketing, and public relations to sponsorship. ISBA currently has over 300 member companies, whose total marketing communications spend is in excess of £8 billion.

ISBA encourages excellence in its members' marketing communications. It is vital that advertisers continue to develop commercial activities in schools with sensitivity to pupils, parents and teachers. ISBA hopes that these principles will provide business with a clear direction to the quality standard expected of commercial activity in schools.

## Consumers' Association

Consumers' Association is the largest consumer body in Europe and the second largest in the world. Its mission is to 'empower people to make informed consumer decisions', while 'achieving measurable improvements in goods and services'.

Consumers' Association recognises that high quality commercial activity in schools can yield considerable educational rewards. Consumers' Association believes that these principles will safeguard the interests of young consumers by providing a framework within which business and schools can work in partnership to the highest standards.

### Contact us

ISBA  
44 Hertford Street  
London  
W1J 7AE  
Tel 020 7499 7502  
[www.isba.org.uk](http://www.isba.org.uk)

Consumers' Association  
2 Marylebone Road  
London  
NW1 4DF  
Tel 020 7770 7000  
[www.which.net](http://www.which.net)

School Business Links  
DfES  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT  
Tel 020 7925 5448  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)

## National Consumer Council (NCC)

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## A thank you

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## Members of the Steering Group

ISBA and Consumers' Association would like to thank the following organisations for their contributions to these best practice principles, which are the work of the steering group rather than any one contributing organisation. Membership of the steering group does not, of course, necessarily imply approval of all aspects of these principles.

Business in the Community  
Campaign for State Education  
Consumers' Association  
Department for Education and Skills  
European Sponsorship Consultants Association  
ISBA  
Institute of Sales Promotion  
London Business School  
L'Oreal  
Portway Community School  
Procter & Gamble  
Meat and Livestock Commission  
National Consumer Council  
National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations