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# Working with Schools – Best Practice Principles

There has been continued growth in partnership activity between schools and external organisations. Well thought-out partnerships are of benefit to both parties. They add value to school life and the taught curriculum – and can provide welcome additional resources. For the external partners, involvement can be an important part of their work in the community.

Given the potential benefits, government, business and other potential partners are keen to encourage this activity, but it is important that there is a framework within which schools and partners can work together towards best practice. These best practice principles provide that framework.

# Putting principles into practice

## Introduction and purpose

These principles are generic and may be used to assess and develop a wide range of partnership 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
- school's normal purchasing of products

These principles build upon those previously issued by the National Consumer Council in 1996. They have been revised and updated by ISBA and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, specifically to take account of the Nutritional Standards for Schools Food introduced in 2006. 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 to assess the commercial activity offered to the school and will support those who decide to develop a whole school policy;
- businesses/external partners meet the criteria demanded of educational materials and activities aimed at schools.

The principles aim to identify best practice – where the objective is consistent with genuine educational benefit. Not all of them will apply to every partnership. In practice, a partnership is likely to meet some principles and miss others. What is important is that partnerships are assessed alongside the checklists for schools and partners.

## A whole school policy

Each school should have a single policy on developing partnerships 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 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

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

## Branding

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

## School Food

- Partnerships should be consistent with new nutritional standards for school food which began to take effect from September 2006. Under the standards, schools are not allowed to provide certain types of food and drink at any time during the school day or in vending machines and tuck shops, including:
  - All chocolate and other types of confectionery;

- ❑ Pre-packaged savoury snacks other than nuts and seeds (without added salt or sugar), dried fruit or vegetables;
- ❑ Only drinks such as plain water, milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed), fruit and vegetable juices and some combinations of these, tea, coffee and hot chocolate containing no more than 20 calories per 100 millilitres.
- Full details of what is allowed under the standards are available from this School Food Trust guide:  
<http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/document.asp>

## Consultation and Testing

- Activities should be developed in partnership with teachers, pupils, parents and educationalists and piloted where possible.
- Research and testing should reflect variations in the education system across the country.

## Distribution of Material

- Where possible, the company should seek permission before forwarding materials to the school.
- The resource should be carefully labelled and should specify both source and target audience.
- The partner should not impose any condition or 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 partner's products. Schools can then exchange the points, vouchers or tokens for items such as books, computers, or for other benefits.

- 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.
- Unlike other partnership 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 disadvantages?

# About us



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 400 member companies, whose total marketing communications spend is in excess of £10 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.

## department for children, schools and families

The Department for Children, Schools and Families leads work across Government to ensure that all children and young people:

- stay healthy and safe
- secure an excellent education and the highest possible standards of achievement
- enjoy their childhood
- make a positive contribution to society and the economy
- have lives full of opportunity, free from the effects of poverty

## Contact us

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These guidelines are for England only and are based on those originally produced by the National Consumer Council in 1996. The Scottish Consumer Council has produced guidelines in Scotland. These are available at <http://www.scotconsumer.org.uk/pressinfo/documents/Guidelines.pdf>

# Checklist for schools

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

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

## Some extra questions for school food and collector schemes...

- Will the materials or activities arising from this sponsorship/partnership encourage healthier eating?
- Are the partner or its products allowed in schools under the new nutritional standards?
- If not, would working with this partner send a conflicting message to pupils about healthy eating?
- Are there any products associated with the partner that are allowed under the new standards?
- If so, would the partner be prepared to use these products for branding and publicity purposes? Do the overall benefits of the collector scheme outweigh the costs to your school, pupils and parents?
- Are the terms and conditions of the collector scheme available to you before registration?
- 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 partnership activity probably meets our best practice principles and could form the basis of a worthwhile partnership between your school and the partner.

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

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 external organisations working in partnership share the risks and rewards. The key question is – *do the educational benefits of the partnership outweigh the potential issues?*

# Checklist for external partners

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

- Are the resources relevant to the curriculum and of educational value? Details on the UK curricula are available on: [www.nc.uk.net](http://www.nc.uk.net) [National Curriculum Online]
- Are the resources free of incentives to children to engage in unhealthy, unsafe or unlawful activities?
- Is your purpose in developing the activity clear to the school? Is further information available on request?
- Is the activity based on accurate and current information rather than opinion?
- Have explicit sales messages been avoided where possible?
- Have any specialist resources needed by schools to utilise the activity been highlighted?
- Does the activity respect diversity of gender, race, disability and cultural issues
- and reflect contemporary UK society?
- Is the level of branding appropriate to the activity? Branding is acceptable, but should not be excessive.
- Have the resources been researched, tested and where possible piloted with target groups?
- Have you 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.
- Are the materials labelled carefully to ensure that they reach their target audience?
- Will the materials or activities arising from this sponsorship/partnership encourage healthier eating?

- Are your organisation's products, or any products associated with your organisation, allowed in schools under the new nutritional standards?
- If not, would working with you send a conflicting message to pupils about healthy eating?
- If so, would you be prepared to use these products for branding and publicity purposes?
- Can the school engage in the activity free from unreasonable restrictions or conditions?
- Are the terms and conditions governing the activity available to stakeholders?
- Does the resource comply with the British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion and relevant legislation?
- Is there a method of updating the resource to ensure continuing compliance with the British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion and legal requirements?

[http://www.cap.org.uk/cap/codes/cap\\_code/](http://www.cap.org.uk/cap/codes/cap_code/)

### How do you decide?

If you answered **YES** to all of these questions, the partnership 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 external partners working in partnership share the risks and rewards. The key question is – *do the educational benefits of the partnership outweigh the potential issues?*

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