

FREASTOGAIL MUIRE MXD.

Commercial Products in Primary Schools

Developed in 2007

Relationships between schools and commercial enterprises, if based on sound principles, can contribute to the education of children in primary schools. However, it is essential to ensure that pupils are not exploited for commercial ends in schools.

The educational mission of schools, teachers and pupils should be protected from commercial exploitation.

Commercially driven schemes which seek to promote brands, increase sales and direct purchasing decisions of children and their families should be discouraged while at the same time truly philanthropic giving on the part of the business community should be encouraged.

Schools in general are receptive to genuine corporate philanthropy and willing to recognise such in an appropriate manner, but should not trade commercial access to pupils in return for resources or rewards.

Schools should consider two criteria in respect of primary schools:

- a) Advertising content of commercial schemes.
- b) Educational quality of commercial schemes.

[a\) Advertising content of commercial schemes](#)

No commercial schemes should be directed at pupils in primary schools. Young children typically lack the capability to recognise and defend effectively against commercial persuasion.

Despite the fact that advertising is widespread in society, it is unfair to direct commercial content at children too young to recognise its persuasive intent and to filter messages accordingly.

Schools should be free from commercial presentations aimed at children and their families

Selling or providing access to a captive audience in the classroom for commercial purposes should not be permitted.

Schools should be free from proof of purchase incentive schemes

The presence of voucher collection boxes, 'target charts', promotional posters and letters of appeal for vouchers is unacceptable advertising in schools. This should extend to all groups associated with schools such as Parents' Associations.

Schools should be free from sponsored material carrying an overt or prominent advertising message. Commercial logos, slogans, brand names or product-orientated activities should not be presented to children in class either through posters, worksheets or certificates. Sponsor recognition and corporate logos should be for identification rather than commercial purposes and should appear on the teacher materials only.

Unsolicited commercial schemes should not be entertained

Companies should be required to seek permission before forwarding commercially produced materials to schools. Schools should refuse, return or recycle unsolicited schemes/material.

b) Educational quality of commercial schemes

Activities should be relevant and add educational value to teaching and learning.

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.

Materials should respect diversity of gender, race, disability and cultural issues and reflect contemporary society.

Any specialist resources required by schools to utilise or demonstrate the activity must be highlighted from the outset.

Materials should be free from any commercial bias and not seek to create positive impressions around a sponsor's brand, industry or product.

Materials should not encourage unhealthy activities or contravene any other curricular objectives or school policies.

Examples

The following provide examples of the practical application of these principles.

A representative of a commercial company contacts a school and enquires if the school would like a visit from a representative. The company typically requests that all pupils be assembled in the school hall for a performance, demonstration or sales pitch. Under these guidelines the school would decline the offer as a company representative is not entitled to school time or commercial access to the children. The school may decide to place a leaflet relating to the activity at reception where information on all local activities is kept.

A commercial company is offering to supply school related equipment in return for proof of purchase vouchers. Under these guidelines, schools would not collect any proof of purchase vouchers/tokens. Collection boxes and target charts for a particular brand would not be displayed in school and teachers would not accept vouchers, reminding pupils that where they shop or how much they spend is of no concern to the school. Companies who wish to donate curricular equipment are encouraged to give to schools in a philanthropic manner. Appropriate adult recognition is possible through the staff, parent association or board of management but there is no in-school promotion involving pupils.

A commercial company wishes to produce classroom material on a topic related to the curriculum. These guidelines would make clear the conditions under which schools would accept sponsored materials for use in class. The materials should not contain brand names, logos, slogans or products visible to the children. The resources should not contain commercial bias, be of high quality and consistent with the school ethos and curricular objectives. The name of the sponsor and a logo may be featured on the teacher's materials/handbook for purposes of recognition.