ETHICAL PURCHASING GUIDANCE
FOR
SCHOOLS and COLLEGES

Centre for Global Education York
and
Wilberforce Institute for the study of
Slavery and Emancipation
(W.I.S.E.)
Why should a school consider ethical purchasing?

The purpose of this leaflet is to support and encourage a school to adopt a consistent and ethical approach to its purchasing and consumerism practices. The Government has produced documents and standards available from the Department of Education and a series of procurement standards from DEFRA that seek to assist schools in budgeting and addressing environmental sustainability issues. The draft National Curriculum indicates that the Government will require a school curriculum to promote the spiritual, cultural, mental and physical development of its pupil; to make provision for personal, social, health and education that draws on good practice and at specific key stages teach Citizenship and Geography. Teaching about trade links, personal financial capability and international development will be part of the National Curriculum that will give pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society. There is however negligible advice on ‘Ethical Trading and Consumerism’. Absence of this reduces a school’s ability to be able to reflect in practice core moral principles that affirm a school’s ethos and their pupils’ values. This document addresses this shortfall within a compromising climate of a national ethical food controversy, global manufacturing tragedies, limited Government standards monitoring and financial restraints. It is important that schools and their pupils know that ‘Trade and Consumerism’ is a complex chain that can so easily be exploited but remains everybody’s responsibility both corporate and individual.

What is Ethical Purchasing?

Ethical purchasing can be defined as the practice of buying products and services produced in a way that minimises social and/or environmental damage, whilst avoiding products and services that have a negative impact. It is based on the principle that the consumer buys products that have been produced in an ‘ethical’ or ‘morally right’ way. This means ensuring that each purchase made is a positive vote towards actively benefitting other humans, animals or the environment. Recognising that the cheapness of a purchase has a cost implication down the producer line is an important aspect to ethical purchasing. Unethical purchasing therefore condones worker exploitation/slavery, deforestation or reduced quality of life for an animal. A school may approach ethical purchasing using 4 buying practices:

- **Positive buying** of an ethical product such as an energy saving light bulb
- **Negative buying** involves avoiding products such as battery farmed eggs or cheap clothing
- **Company based purchasing** avoids unethical company products in the bid to get them to change their unethical trading practices.
- **Fully Screened approach** involves looking both at the product and the company.

A school should know that an ethical trading organisation sets its own criteria for what it considers to be ethical. These criteria are an important and effective way in bringing numerous benefits to producers, suppliers and consumers. Ethical companies work towards ethical policies associated with all their supply chain and trading activities. An ethical product or company is one that therefore actively benefits:

- **Universal Human Rights**
- **Animal Welfare**
- **Environmental Sustainability**.
How do you know if a product is ethical?

There is no universal ethical logo but numerous standards and logos that a company can use to help you. Check for the ETI logo and others that include:

- **Organic** - superior for the environment due to lack of pesticide use.
- **Fairtrade** - this seeks to change unfair world trade structures to create fairer societies in developing countries.
- **Rain Forest Alliance** – support sustainability of the rainforest
- **Forest Stewardship Council** - ensures wood and paper comes from sustainable sources.
- **The Humane Cosmetics Standard** - products that are not tested on animals
- **Red Tractor Assurance** - sets farm standards both pre and post delivery
- **Food Standard Agency** - sets, approves and monitors Governmental food standards

How do you know if a company has ethical trading practices?

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) consists of companies, NGO’s and Unions that actively work to improve working conditions in the supply chain. Their standards include no forced or child labour, and safe and hygienic working conditions. Companies are also ethically rated according to their policy and practice within 4 critical headings:

- **Environment** - this looks at their energy use, consumption, pollution, and destruction of habitat.
- **Animals** - how they farm or test animals and what rights they give them.
- **People** - Human and workers rights, armaments and irresponsible marketing are looked at within this category.
- **Politics** - a company’s political activity, anti-social finance and policy on genetic engineering is reviewed here.
# TEACHING ABOUT ETHICAL PURCHASING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Global Dimension</strong></th>
<th><strong>Interdependence</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Concepts/ Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Human Rights</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Stage 1</strong></td>
<td>I can tell the difference between needs and wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCE- UNICEF’s NEEDS and WANTS CARDS and book ‘First Steps to Rights’ by P. Hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Stage 2</strong></td>
<td>I understand that basic needs are also rights that every human being should have, and that these rights have been agreed by nearly all the countries of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCES- UNCRC Poster <a href="http://www.savethechildren.org.uk">www.savethechildren.org.uk</a> and ‘Time for Rights’ UNICEF Our world Our Rights - Amnesty International</td>
<td>I can understand that the world is a global community and that, as global citizens, all its people have rights and responsibilities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I understand that consumers, employers and employees, locally and globally, have rights and responsibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Stage 3</strong></td>
<td>I know that other people have a responsibility to make sure that I have my rights and that I have a responsibility to help make sure that other people have their rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCE- ‘Contemporary Slavery Teacher’s Resource’ <a href="http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/">www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/</a> and W.I.S.E.</td>
<td>I understand that rules, laws or standards can help protect people’s rights and protect the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Stage 4/5</strong></td>
<td>I know that as a global citizen I have a responsibility to call for, agree and follow a set of rules that are fair for everyone in my group, my classroom, my community and my world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCE- The Trading Game <a href="http://www.christianaid.org.uk">www.christianaid.org.uk</a></td>
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</tr>
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Table from Trade Guidance document from DECSY www.decsy.co.uk
Key concepts to help pupils understand trade:

- The rules of international trade favour the rich countries of the ‘North’ over the poorer countries of the ‘South’
- Human exploitation including slavery is a product of unethical trading practices, e.g. The death of 21 illegal Chinese immigrant, used as cheap cockle picker workers in Morecombe Bay (February 2004), showed how people can be exploited within the UK food market.
- Legal trading standards will be exploited as a result of poor or negligible monitoring, e.g. the 2013 Horsemeat scandal demonstrated how many producers and consumers were victims to this unethical charade.
- The supply chain, from producer to consumer, is often a complex one, with products changing hands many times before they reach our shops e.g. from cotton to finished shirts.
- Working conditions for producers in the South are often poor, with low wages, a lack of safety standards, and no job security, e.g. a recent example of this was the Bangladesh Factory (April 2013) where over 1000 workers died when their unsafe factory collapsed.
- Environmental damage is often a consequence of production, e.g. reduced numbers in Bee populations due to the use of neonicotinoids pesticides has resulted in serious implications for plant/crop pollination
- Fair Trade offers an alternative to traditional trade – it works to overcome the injustices of ‘free’ trade, and promotes more sustainable development.
- As consumers, our choices have an impact on people in other parts of the world.

ADAPTED FROM A RISC GUIDANCE DOCUMENT: www.risc.org.uk/files/guidance_teaching_about_fair_trade.pdf

Key ethical recommendations for schools:

- **Review your curriculum** - a school’s ethos and pupil’s values are supported through its curriculum and active practices that reflect its core beliefs
- **Reduce your Consumption** – as well as shopping ethically a school could review how it might buy, use and throw less away. This could involve food and school products as well as energy consumption. Recycled and second hand products such as ink cartridges will also reduce pressure on landfill sites.
- **Get Campaigning** - ethical issues discussed within a school curriculum may result in a decision by pupils and the whole school to petition or write to MP’s. A school may also choose actively to support campaigns like ‘Fairtrade Fortnight’.
- **Shop locally and buy Fairtrade** - both of these ethical decisions complement one another. Local goods should be bought to support local traders and farmers and reduce carbon footprints. Fairtrade products support fairer prices and conditions for developing farmers can be purchased for specific products or when local goods are out of season.
- **Ethical Financing** - it is not only where you spend your money but also where you bank it that can make a difference.

Downloadable ethical finance guidance documents are available from www.centreforglobaleducation.org
School Awards that support Ethical Trading and Purchasing Practice

Awards can be used by a school for auditing purposes, to provide a framework for curriculum development or to enable a school to work towards and be recognised for gaining specific achievements. These awards can support global citizenship, sustainability, trade and school partnership links.

UNICEF Right Respecting School Award [www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa]
Fairtrade School Status [www.fairtrade.org.uk]
Eco School Awards [www.eco-schools.org.uk]
Food for Life Award [www.foodforlife.org.uk]
Global School Award [www.yhgsa.org.uk]
International Schools Award [www.britishcouncil.org/learning-international-school-award.htm]
Global Teacher Award [www.centreforglobaleducation.org]
Citizenship Foundation – Giving Nation [www.g-nation.org.uk]

Campaigning organizations supporting Citizenship

Fairtrade [www.fairtrade.org.uk/schools]
Christian Aid [www.christian-aid.org.uk]
People & Planet [http://peopleandplanet.org.uk]
Oxfam Education [www.oxfam.org.uk/education]
Unicef [www.unicef.org.uk]
Global Dimension [www.globaldimension.org.uk]
Amnesty International [www.amnesty.org.uk]
Ethical Consumer [www.ethicalconsumer.org]
Sustainability and Environmental education (SEED) [www.se-ed.co.uk]
Council for Learning Outside the Classroom [www.lotc.org.uk]

Government Procurement Guidance for Schools

Sustainable and procurement guidance (Department of Education) [www.education.gov.uk/search/results?q=procurement]
UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework (June 2011) - The UN Guiding Principles, provide an authoritative global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity. (Available from the Oxfam website)

This Guidance has been produced by

Centre for Global Education York [www.centreforglobaleducation.org]
and
W.I.S.E. (Research body) [www2.hull.ac.uk/fass/wise.aspx]