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ABSTRACT

These guidelines are designed to help sponsors and producers meet the standards expected of educational materials and activities aimed at schools in the United Kingdom. The guidelines are also designed to help teachers, parents, and school board members assess the sponsored materials and activities offered to the school. The guidelines aim to identify good practice--where the marketing message is balanced by genuine educational benefit. They offer criteria related to the following: (1) educational value and curriculum relevance; (2) balance and objectivity; (3) consultation and testing; (4) sales and promotional messages; (5) sponsored gifts, awards, voucher schemes, and other promotional/marketing activities; (6) unsolicited marketing activity; (7) avoiding stereotypes; and (8) description and labeling. Eight sources of additional information are listed. (YLB)

National Consumer Council

Sponsorship in Schools

Good practice guidelines

There has been a steep rise in recent years in sponsorship, advertising and marketing projects targeted at UK schools. High quality sponsored material and activities can provide schools with a wide range of information and supplement other classroom resources. They can strengthen the links between business, community and education.

At the same time, it is essential that all materials or activities used in a school setting do in fact reach the high standards of quality, balance and integrity expected of educational resources.

These guidelines aim to promote those high standards. They are for:

- **sponsors and producers**, to help you meet the standards expected of educational materials and activities aimed at schools;
- **teachers, parents and school governors (in Scotland, school board members)**, to help you assess the sponsored materials and activities offered to the school. They will help, too, if you decide to develop a whole-school policy on sponsorship.

A word about using the guidelines.

They aim to identify good practice - where the marketing message is balanced by genuine educational benefit. Not all of them will apply to every sponsored activity. And the breach of one guideline on its own will not necessarily mean that a sponsored activity or resource falls below standard. In practice, a sponsored project is likely to meet some guidelines and miss others. What is important is that, taken as a whole, the sponsorship offer has integrity and educational value.

guidelines were drawn up by the Sponsorship in Schools working party, convened by the National Consumer Council. They come with a checklist for use in schools - presented as a tear-off poster on the last page.

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Sponsored materials and activities in schools

Good practice guidelines

1. Educational value and curriculum relevancy

Materials and activities should:

- be relevant to the ages and abilities they are marked for;
- be relevant to the curriculum (in Scotland. to curriculum guidelines), not forgetting cross-curricular themes;
- enhance the teaching and learning of pupils;
- contribute to the development of core skills - for example, communication, numeracy, IT, personal and social, and problem-solving;
- not encourage unsafe or unhealthy activities.

2. Balance and objectivity

Materials and activities should:

- give a balanced view of an issue and acknowledge the existence of alternative views;
- use up-to-date and accurate information;
- distinguish between factual statements and expressions of opinion;
- acknowledge the sponsor's market interests.

3. Consultation and testing

Materials and activities should be developed:

- in accordance with regional variations in the education system, where appropriate (including the bi-lingual policy for Welsh schools);
- with advice from teachers and, where appropriate, parents, educationalists and others;
- after testing for educational value with a range of pupils in the target group.

4. Sales and promotional messages

Materials and activities should not include:

- explicit encouragement to buy branded or own-brand products or services;
- messages that play on children's fears, loyalty or lack of experience;
- merchandising slogans or logos, other than the logo used solely for sponsor identification (see section 8, Description and labelling);
- purely promotional material;
- claims that particular products or services are superior or inferior to others, unless they are based on documentary evidence and presented fairly and clearly;
- illustrations or text that imply that particular products or suppliers are the only ones available in their class or group.

5. Sponsored gifts, awards, voucher schemes and other promotional/marketing activities

These kinds of activities should:

- not actively encourage children to pester parents about buying a specific company's products or services;
- not offer the sponsor's products as prizes or rewards for pupils' everyday academic performance or behaviour;
- include clear information on:
  - how the scheme works, for instance the voucher exchange rate, any necessary extra financial outlay, the minimum offer and the time limit for claiming any offer;
  - the retail value and a full description of any items on offer and, if they involve electrical or computer equipment, their range of compatibility;
  - the nutritional value of any food or drinks products involved in the scheme;
- be constructed so that as many schools as possible - whatever their size or location - can

6. Unsolicited marketing activity

Sponsors and their agents should:

- only send publicity leaflets/flyers to schools inviting them to apply for materials or to participate in promotional activities;
- not leave or send samples of their products for pupils without the school's permission;
- not distribute or send unsolicited material of any kind directly to pupils.

7. Avoiding stereotypes

Material and activities should:

- reflect and represent a multi-cultural society;
- present a balanced view of the opportunities open to both sexes;
- take account of diverse family types and relationships;
- promote positive images of people with disabilities;
- avoid express or implied prejudice in relation to gender, class, disability, age, politics and religion.

8. Description and labelling

Materials and activities should be marked clearly with:

- the age groups and - excepting Scotland - the curriculum key stages for which they are intended;
- an indication of the subject curriculum areas for which they are intended;
- the sponsor's identity (name, logo, department, address and phone number);
- the date of publication/release, a reference number and where to get further information or copies (if different from above);
- a brief description of the pre-launch consultation and testing carried out for the materials/activities;
- where appropriate, their suitability for use in Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland schools and schools where there is a high proportion of non-English speakers.

Sponsorship in Schools

A checklist for teachers, governors, school boards and parents

When your school is offered a sponsored resource or activity...

- Is it clear who the sponsor/producer is?
- Does its educational value outweigh its marketing messages?
- Is its approach to the subject balanced and up-to-date?
- Is it relevant to the curriculum and the children's age group?
- Has it been tested for use in schools?
- Is it free of stereotypes - of relationships, religions, age, disability, gender, race?
- Can children and teachers participate without buying the sponsor's products?
- Is it free of messages that encourage children to pester adults about buying a specific firm's products or services?
- Is it free of incentives to children to eat an unhealthy diet or take part in unsafe/unhealthy activities?
- Are the benefits of the sponsored offer worthwhile and achievable for your school?

...does it measure up?

All **Yes** answers - and the resource or activity probably meets our good practice guidelines. All **No** answers - reject the sponsored offer. If your answers are a mixture of **Yes** and **No**, discuss the offer with colleagues and measure it against our guidelines, before deciding whether it is suitable.

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Tel: 0171 730 3469.

National **Consumer** Council

About the good practice guidelines

The National Consumer Council first drew up guidelines to encourage high standards in sponsored educational materials in 1988.

Since then the market has grown - and changed - very rapidly. Partly this is due to financial pressures on schools, making sponsored resources extremely attractive. Partly it is because countless businesses, trade associations, voluntary and not-for-profit bodies, pressure groups and others are keen to expand their marketing within the educational field, to reach children and - ultimately - a new generation of consumers and employees.

Those first guidelines no longer match today's situation. They needed updating. It is crucial for the current generation of schoolchildren that standards are set and maintained to ensure the integrity of the material they use and the activities they take part in at school.

While many sponsored projects are of very high quality, we feel it is important:

- **to help sponsors meet the standards expected of educational material and events;**
- **to maintain the confidence of teachers, parents and pupils in high quality sponsored projects; and**
- **to help staff, parents, governors and Scotland's school board members identify sponsored projects that fall below standard.**

We drew up the guidelines with the help of a working party representing key education, business and consumer interests (listed at the end of this leaflet). We also consulted widely with businesses, retailers and voluntary organisations, the specialist agencies that handle sponsored projects for them, the Department for Education and Employment, General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, Scottish Consumer Council, Welsh Consumer Council and others.

Towards a whole-school policy

Some schools are working towards establishing a whole-school policy for dealing with all forms of sponsorship - whether from local businesses or major corporations. A whole-school policy can help make everyone aware of the pros and cons. It can be especially helpful when you need to cope with a new sponsored initiative. When a brand-new marketing scheme is launched at schools, for instance, you'll have a ready-made framework for judging its acceptability to your own school. If a consignment of free samples arrives unannounced from its sponsor, the decision about whether or not to distribute them to children becomes a collective, considered decision - rather than a hasty one by a hard-pressed teacher.

We hope these guidelines and the checklist will help more schools develop their own policy - to give the benefits of consistent decision-making and the confidence that you are using only high-quality sponsored materials and activities with schoolchildren.

Getting more information

Important as these Sponsorship in Schools guidelines are, they do not stand alone. They are additional to other important criteria laid down by, for instance, the British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion, the Independent Television Commission's Code of Advertising Standards and Practice and other relevant business codes of practice. We would expect sponsors to comply with these, too, where appropriate.

For information about other guidelines, please contact the relevant organisation:

Food and nutrition:
Department of Health Nutrition Unit
Room 632B
Skipton House
80 London Road
London SE1 6LW
Tel: 0171 972 5298

The environment:
Council for Environmental Education
University of Reading
London Road
Reading RG1 5AQ
Tel: 01734 756061

The developing world:
Information and resources officer
Development Education Association
29-31 Cowper Street
London EC2A 4AP
Tel: 0171 490 8108

Science:
Chemical Industry Education Centre
University of York
Heslington
York YO1 5DD
Tel: 01904 432523

Sport:
Institute of Sports Sponsorship
Warwick House
25-27 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 0PP
Tel: 0171 233 7747

The British Code of Advertising and The British Code of Sales Promotion:
Advertising Standards Authority
Brook House
2-16 Torrington Place
London WC1E 7HW
Tel: 0171 580 5555

The ITC Code of Advertising Standards and Practice:
Independent Television Commission
33 Foley Street
London W1P 7LB
Tel: 0171 255 3000

About the National Consumer Council

The National Consumer Council is the independent voice of consumers in the United Kingdom.

It is our job to represent the interests of the consumers of goods and services of all kinds. We speak up for the consumers of public services like schools, health and social services just as much as for shoppers in high streets and supermarkets.

To get a better deal for UK consumers, we carry out research, we campaign for change, and we support other consumer representatives. We make sure that policy-makers and decision-takers in government, parliament, industry, business and the professions have a balanced and authoritative view of their users' interests before them. And we make sure those views are taken into account.

The Council was set up by government in 1975 and is largely funded by the Department of Trade and Industry.

For more information about the National Consumer Council's publications, policies and campaigns, please send for the latest issue of the *NCC Bulletin* (our address and phone number are on the next page).

The organisations on the Sponsorship in Schools working party

Action for Governors' Information and Training (AGIT)

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

British Petroleum plc

British Retail Consortium - Financial Services Forum

Consumer Education Group

Consumers' Association

Mid-Glamorgan Trading Standards Department

National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA)

National Consumer Council

National Federation of Consumer Groups

National Union of Teachers (NUT)

One copy of these guidelines has gone to every school and education authority in the UK. We are sorry we are unable to offer extra copies - but you are very welcome to photocopy any or all of the pages.

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