



Fairtrade and Health Promoting Schools

- Guidance from NHS Highland and
Highland Council.

Highland Health Promoting Schools
Sgoiltean Fallain na Gàidhealtachd

Many Highland schools are acutely aware of the need to promote good nutrition and good citizenship. With this in mind, some schools have asked specifically about whether they can provide or sell Fairtrade chocolate, as part of their efforts to educate pupils about global trade. This guidance document has been produced to help schools promote Fairtrade principles without undermining their health promoting schools ethos.





'Look for this Mark' or 'The FAIRTRADE Mark (which appears on all products certified to Fairtrade standards. www.fairtrade.org.uk)'.



Moussa Keita, cotton farmer, Mali
Photographer: ©Simon Rawles



Conrad James, banana farmer,
Windwards
Photographer: ©Simon Rawles

Background

Children and young people should be encouraged to think both about:

- The impact that their food choices have on their own health and wellbeing.
- Whether their food choices are sustainable.

Sustainability could include the health of the soil; the use of fossil fuels in food production and transport; or, in the case of Fairtrade, the livelihoods of food producers in the developing world.

The “*Outcomes and Experiences for Food & Health*” include a focus on nutrition and an understanding of where food comes from, under the heading of “*Food and the Consumer*”. Promoting health and wellbeing and good citizenship are both key aspects of the *Curriculum for Excellence*, specifically within “*Food and Health*” and elsewhere. For example, the introductory statements for “*Technologies*” include “*contribute to building a better world by taking responsible, ethical actions to improve my life, the lives of others and the environment.*”

How Fairtrade can contribute to a Health Promoting Schools ethos

Raising awareness about Fairtrade principles can contribute to a Health Promoting Schools ethos in two ways:

1. It gives producers in some of the world's poorest countries a fair and stable income for their products. This income often enables their families to access good housing, diet, healthcare and education. These are all prerequisites for sustainable, healthy living.
2. It promotes good citizenship which can contribute to the emotional wellbeing of young people who make informed decisions to buy Fairtrade accredited products.

Food and Legislation in Schools

Fairtrade products include several nutritious foods and drinks that comply with the current food in schools legislation and contribute positively to a healthy balanced diet. However, Fairtrade products also include high fat or high sugar foods and drinks, some of which do not comply with the current legislation.

Schools are required to comply with the Schools **(Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007**. This provides clear and detailed guidance about what food should be available in schools. Some foods and drinks must be available and promoted; others are allowed but only to a specification; and some, such as **chocolate, confectionery, most crisps and some soft drinks, should not be provided in schools.**

However, there are some **exemptions** to the legislation that allow these “non-compliant” foods to be made available in schools as part of a “..social, cultural or recreational activity....” with those involved being encouraged to “....consider, encourage and promote healthier options, in keeping with the ethos of a health promoting school”. These exemptions mean that it is also **possible** to make Fairtrade accredited versions of such non-compliant foods (such as chocolate) available as part of such an activity.

Learning about Fairtrade is a genuine **educational** activity. However, we can also define this as a social or cultural activity, and in doing so it could be considered a legitimate exemption, as described in the guidance to the 2008 Act.

School communities **may**, therefore, decide that they wish to make a non-compliant Fairtrade product available **as part of a specific activity to raise awareness about Fairtrade principles**. However, before deciding whether to do this, it is important to remember that:

- Most pupils consume too much fat and sugar, and chocolate and some cereal bars can be very high in both, even if they are labelled “Fairtrade”.
- The number of “one off” cultural, social or recreational activities at which high fat / high sugar snacks (Fairtrade or otherwise) are made available, during the course of a school term, can be quite considerable.



Photographer: ©Marcus Lyon



Schools should use the following guidelines:

1. We strongly recommend that, if Fairtrade activities are to include the provision of **non-compliant foods or drinks, they do so no more than twice a term.**
2. We strongly recommend that schools monitor the total number of events at the school where **all** “exemption foods” (Fairtrade or otherwise) are made available, in order to ensure that these are **not so frequent that they begin to undermine the ethos of a health promoting school.**
3. It is reasonable for schools to replace some existing “non-compliant” and non-Fairtrade foods that are currently available as part of school discos, summer fetes or similar events, with equivalent Fairtrade accredited products. However, schools should consider changing some of those non-compliant foods for healthier items (some of which could also be Fairtrade).
4. Schools that are planning to make any food or drink available as part of a social, cultural or recreational activity, should **follow the current local guidance document on “Food for celebrations”***
5. There are many Fairtrade accredited products that are not high in fat or added sugar including, fruit, dried fruit, pure fruit juice, nuts, tea, coffee, and even sports equipment using Fairtrade cotton or latex. We recommend that schools look at these “healthier” Fairtrade products instead of, or at least, alongside the less healthy ones.
6. “Home baking” can also be made using ingredients such as fairly traded dried fruit, nuts and sugar. Note that “*Healthier Home Baking Guidance*”^{*} is also available.

To find out more about Fairtrade principles, visit: www.fairtrade.org.uk

*To download the “Healthier Homebaking Guidance” the “Food for Celebrations guidance”, or any other related school nutrition documents, visit The Highland Council website and go to the ‘Healthy Living’ section www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/childrenservices/healthyliving/

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