

How to...

Open a School Shop



A team of students from Handsworth Grange Community Sports College run a successful shop called The Business Box. The shop was originally set up as a base to sell Fairtrade products and has since developed from a tabletop sale to a successful stationery shop. With references to the Handsworth Grange experience, this guide explains the ins and outs of starting up a school shop.



Why a school shop?

Establishing an official space for students to trade from can bring a new level to their understanding of business and enterprise. A student-led management team will gain valuable experience in money handling, customer service, buying new stock, market research and team work.

Plan beforehand...

Take time to carefully consider the following before setting up your shop:

Staff- For the shop to be a success you will need a team of committed and supportive students who are capable of taking on responsibility. As profits made go back into the school, students should be rewarded by increasing levels of responsibility which will help them to develop a healthy set of employability skills.

Stock- This decision should be made with your new team of students. Researching the needs of your market is fundamental to the shop's success but you will also have to consider issues such as legality (i.e. healthy eating schools cannot sell sweets, chocolates or cakes) and competition (i.e. if you decide to sell food products you may have to reach a compromise with the school canteen). In this case, the students referred to Healthy Products, Healthy Profits: A guide for young co-operatives.

Location- Again, you should encourage the team of students to play an active role in making this decision. The school shop should have a prime position so that students can access it easily during break times. In busy corridors, there could be congestion if several students stop at the shop, so try not to set it up in narrow spaces or near stairs.



The Business Box began life as a table set up next to the stairs but this caused congestion issues. The school decided to build The Business Box, giving the students an official and convenient space of their own.



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Avoid risks...

- Don't leave large sums of money on the shop premises or with the students. If you see notes in the cash box, remove these yourself so that the students won't have to walk around school with them when cashing up.
- Store stock in a safe and secure place.
- Your BiG School Enterprise Champion or the Entrepreneur Exchange will be able to put you in contact with a professional window dresser who knows how a shop should look.

Keep the responsibility with the students...

- Give students ownership of the business but identify yourself as a supportive figure.
- As with any job, the students should earn responsibility and it is a sensible idea to establish a hierarchy in relation to age as this gives younger students momentum to stay at the job and to work their way up.
- Recruitment should be trusted to the students so they can develop their own work force.
- A uniform (t-shirts or caps) helps to establish the identity of the shop and ensures a professional appearance.

The really important bit...

- Make sure it is a viable business and take time to research what can and can't be sold in your school. For example, another BiG Challenge business, \$uch a Deal, from Longley Park, identified that there was a lack of revision guides in their college and so began selling guides to students.
- Make sure you market your business.

Handsworth Grange invested in a lockable cabinet to keep in the shop.



Denise Powell of Handsworth Grange says, "I maintain an overview of the business and I'll always offer my support and advice. For example, if the students are low on stock I will help them choose new items from the catalogue. I am there to support them on an ad hoc basis, as and when they need it."

Reflecting on her own experience of setting up the school shop, Denise advises, "A stationery shop can be a success in any school but you must do your research into the logistics and allow time for planning."

Denise on marketing: "We marketed the business by using flyers and posters around school and a large launch event, which appeared in the local press. We will also feature the shop in the school newsletter, so that parents can also find out about the business."

For more information contact your BiG School/college
Enterprise Champion

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