

Ashley School's 'Wider perspectives' Fairtrade project

As a special school for pupils on the autistic spectrum, many of our pupils struggle with seeing things from any point of view other than their own. As part of the school's involvement with the Global Learning Programme, all Year 7 pupils at Ashley School, Cheshire took part in a week-long 'Wider Perspectives' Fairtrade project with students from Liverpool Hope University.

The aim of the whole-school project was to raise awareness of the issue of Fairtrade, not only for pupils and staff but for the whole school community.



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'Planning for and taking part in our "coffee morning with a conscience" helped students begin to make the leap from a "charity" coffee morning to one of social justice.'

Fiona Lawrenson,
Geography Subject Leader

School activities

- A learner audit with our pupils identified that the majority knew very little about this issue – some staff also had very little knowledge of what Fairtrade really signified.
- Through a range of teaching and learning activities, trips, and events (such as a Fairtrade coffee morning, a visit to the Fair4All stall on Warrington market, a meeting with a Fairtrade banana producer from Ghana, and themed lessons across the curriculum), the awareness of pupils and staff was raised tremendously. This coffee morning was different from a normal coffee morning as it linked with our work on human rights (the school is working towards the Rights Respecting Schools Award), and it helped our students to plan and take part in a 'coffee morning with a conscience'.
- Planning and organisation of the Fairtrade coffee morning involved preparing posters, dropping leaflets locally, planning the layout of stalls, contacting organisations such as Traidcraft and Starbucks, baking cakes to sell on the stalls, dealing with visitors and

members of the public by serving on the stalls, engaging with visitors as ‘greeters’, showing parents around, and explaining to parents why buying Fairtrade products helps people in other parts of the world.

- A meeting with a Fairtrade banana producer, Juliet Arku-Mensah, was preceded by a shared read of her biography, provided by Liverpool World Centre. Pupils were further prepared by geography-focused lessons, which looked at Ghana’s location on a world map and drew some comparisons with the UK (e.g. climate, type of housing, language, etc.). The meeting itself involved a number of Liverpool schools, and students were able to ask questions in response to the banana producer’s presentation.
- An activity was carried out with a group of four Year 9 pupils – all of whom have a statement of SEN/Autism – investigating distribution of profit. Pupils were given the question: ‘For every £1 made from producing and selling chocolate in the UK, how much does each one of the following earn: farmers, cocoa buyers, importers, chocolate companies, shops and the government?’ The pupils read the information cards, which then generated discussion about each role. Pupils used multi-link blocks to represent pennies, they worked together to decide what percentage each would receive, and placed that number of blocks onto each photograph. Each person had to justify their thinking, and as a team they voted democratically to arrive at final decisions about the percentages. This activity was part of the RE unit ‘Visions of Life’ but had cross-curricular links with maths, geography and citizenship.

‘The “distribution of profit” activity linked with objectives from the School Development Plan to facilitate development of flexibility of thought for our ASC pupils. It involved discussion, thinking skills and opportunities for pupils to develop empathy.’

Clare Ogburn, Deputy Head and GLP Lead

There were many opportunities for ‘fun while learning’ – for example in maths lessons, pupils faced the challenge of estimating, then timing with a stopwatch how long it takes to nibble all the chocolate off a Fairtrade KitKat. They completed a ‘banana doodle’ art activity and entered the ‘design a Fairtrade poster’ competition. Literacy opportunities included writing letters to the local MP, Mayoress and the local council to lobby for Halton to become a Fairtrade borough like the neighbouring town of Warrington.

The impact of global learning

- The project has helped to facilitate opportunities for our pupils to develop their thinking skills, flexibility of thought and empathy, and to begin to see things from a more global perspective.
- The themed lessons and activities helped with life-skills opportunities and social communication – for example, enabling pupils to interview and ask questions in person to someone from a completely different continent and culture from their own.

- The Fairtrade coffee morning enabled students to develop their social communication skills and also use and apply numeracy skills when handling money (serving on stalls), and when baking the cakes to sell (weighing and measuring).
- Through the meeting with Juliet, the Fairtrade banana producer, pupils were able to see and hear at first hand what her life was like in Ghana and what impact becoming a Fairtrade producer has had on her life, her family and her community. It enabled our students to make the connections visually between buying a banana in the local supermarket and how much work goes on to produce the item, as well as the time it takes to transport it to the UK.
- Pupils learnt the story of a banana's journey from Ghana to the UK and understood that buying Fairtrade products has a direct and positive impact on the lives of people in other countries and continents. They were able to see themselves more explicitly as members of a global community. Pupils also learnt practical applications of maths skills and used mind maps to organise the information they had learnt.
- The 'distribution of profit' activity provided an opportunity for pupils to be reflective about consumer choices, to learn a great deal about how unfairly some people are treated, and to become aware of how their choices when buying can make a real difference to people's lives.
- At the end of the project we completed learner evaluations with all the pupils through the school council. The difference was marked, with pupils showing vastly improved awareness of why buying Fairtrade products is beneficial and how this enables them to be more active global citizens. Our project work was submitted to the Fairtrade Foundation who awarded the school the FairAware and FairActive awards. These are now proudly displayed on the school website and the school continues to work towards achieving the final FairAchiever award. The school has since achieved UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award Recognition of commitment and is currently working towards the Level 1 of the award.