

## Black Market Playgrounds

Has the healthy schools programme created a monster in the playground? Black market trading in sweets, chocolates and fizzy drinks are making enterprising pupils some extra pocket money. Headliners reporters investigate.



In London's school playgrounds where teenagers smoke whilst discussing the latest gossip, a few pupils wander around saying just loud enough to hear, "Kit Kat, Mars bars, chocolates," like fruit and veg traders of the Holloway Market. The black market has officially entered the playgrounds of our secondary schools.

Most schools are starting to try and be part of the healthy schools initiative by taking out tuck shops, vending machines and getting rid of unhealthy food. It seems that the entrepreneur school kid is seeing a gap.

The customers already know the price, 50p for a traditional mainstream chocolate bar and crisps, 20 to 30p for little chocolate bar. The pupils have become accustomed to it, bypassing shops saying "Nah, I'll buy it at school", as school 'shotters' – a term usually used for drug dealers but in this respect the black market sellers - sell most of their stock cheaper than shops because they buy multi-packs. £100 profit after a week is not unheard of.



However, this trade is ultimately against the law. Islington school Mount Carmel RC Technology College's Vice Principle Miss Haynes said: "If you are a business then you have to register yourself as a business and you have to be paying tax to the Inland Revenue, and I know that people are buying goods, selling them and pocketing the profits and they are doing that on school grounds and basically that is not fair."

If only these pupils sold so that they could afford to buy school books or contribute to utility bill at home. Mt Carmel's Vice Principle Miss Haynes said: "The other side of why young people are selling products is because some of them are living in what you could say is poverty and financial hardship, and those people are using that money to support themselves so they can have a social life, pay for a mobile phone or whatever."

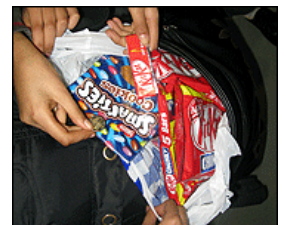
"There are some pupils that don't have well off parents and so are supporting their pocket money through selling within the school. Now being a Business Studies teacher, I do support enterprise in the school however, I see that any money raised should be going onto a charity or going somehow to activities in the school and not going towards personal gain."

In the playgrounds around London pupils see the easy pound signs are start at an early age, and all the information and tips about selling in the playground can be easily found on websites. A Year 11 pupil said: "I started selling in Year 8 because it was easy money, and I continued selling because it helped to pay for my social life."

A Year 7 student at Mount Carmel said: "I find it very helpful when my fellow students sell in school because it saves me energy and time from going to the shop and it also helps get to school on time more often because I don't have to go to the shop."

Neisha, 17, believes it's harmless: "I don't have a problem with selling in schools. It's an easy way of making money, but you don't see it when you get to sixth form college maybe it's the extra freedom you get?"

But there are victims from the fall out of the black market. Mt Carmel's Vice Principle Miss Haynes said: "Bullying is going on where younger students in year 7 and 8 are being forced to purchase goods by older students and sometimes they are being made to pay more than if they went to a shop."



One way to stop all of this would be to reintroduce tuck shops in schools, perhaps form part of the GCSE Business Studies course around it, however schools also have a commitment to young people's health and future.

Mt Carmel's Vice Principle Miss Haynes said: "Now as a school we are not going to change because we have a responsibility not only to educate our students but to help you become healthy and confident in the future and part of that is by educating you to eat healthier. If you eat healthier you are going to live longer and that is the responsibility of the school."

"We need to have some consultations and see if we can come to a compromises of what we could provide for young people which would prevent them wanting to eat chocolate and sweets and selling those things."

Sweets, fizzy drinks and chocolates affects concentration, focus and also impacts on long term health such as tooth decay, obesity, diabetes and even skin conditions. Ms Haynes latest strategy in the war against playground black market was to posted a paragraph in the school newsletter warning students about the consequences should they be caught selling. As of today they still carry on regardless, as they itch to feel the jingle of shiny coins in their pockets.

This article was produced by Milen Rosum, 12 and Rahel Akilu, 13.

4 comments

Teachers response

The teacher quoted is being a bit disingenuous. The "black market" traders won't have to pay income tax on the first £7475 of their income each year. And won't have to register for VAT until they've turned over £73000!

So from a tax perspective, she's dead wrong...unless of course they're making a VERY lucrative profit from their dealings...

Jon from Leeds, 22 November 2011 14:51

Whoa, whoa, get out the way with that good information.

Whoa, whoa, get out the way with that good information.

Helene (age Whoa, whoa, get out the way with that good information.) from Whoa, whoa, get out the way with that good information., 09 August 2011 16:51  
wow

WOW i would not do this!!!!

LOLLOLA (age 11) from school, 20 July 2011 16:07

- [Add a comment to this page](#)
- [Show all Comments on this page](#)

## Related Links

### More from Headliners

[A Healthier Alternative](#) With so many young people eating chicken and chips or going to chain restaurants and takeaways, Headliners reporters decided to check out the local, unique and culturally diverse takeaways in Hackney.

[The School "Pinchable"](#) Are the corridors of London's schools a thieves delight? Headliners reports from Islington Arts and Media School investigate whether stealing in schools really is a problem.

[Do we need Jamie Oliver to Make the Nation Fitter?](#) Jamie Oliver has taken on school dinners but now we need a national fitness campaign

---

Built on [Cubik](#)

©2012 Headliners

Registered Charity Number 1043300. Supported by the [Department for Children, Schools and Families](#)