

Bring on the World

Day 4 Afternoon session: Fair working hours

Activity 1: Write to clothing companies

Time required: 45 mins

You will need

- Paper, pens and envelopes
- Names and addresses of Chief Executive Officers of clothing companies based in the UK. (These can usually be found on the internet.)

Aims

- To give pupils the opportunity to do something about the unfair situation in which sportswear and clothing workers find themselves.
- To enable pupils to do a piece of persuasive writing.
- To help pupils to obtain, and perhaps evaluate, the opinion of sportswear and clothing companies.

What to do

Give the pupils the names and addresses of Chief Executive Officers of clothing companies. Tell them that they will be writing letters to these companies asking about how the workers who make their clothing are treated.

Discuss with the class what to put into the letter. Draw out the following points:

- There are different ways to bring about changes in the world. Sometimes, writing letters helps. Sometimes, it's necessary to do other things.
- We should not assume that particular companies treat their workers badly unless we have proof (e.g. a well-documented press report).
- Writing a letter asking how companies make sure that workers are well treated should be the first step if we don't know the facts.

Help the pupils with the content of the letter by suggesting a structure, such as the following:

- They have learnt about the global sportswear or clothing industry at school, and have heard that many workers are badly treated. (They work for long hours in poor conditions.)
- They are very concerned to hear this. They do not want to buy clothes which were made in this way.
- They would like to know how the clothing company makes sure that its clothes are not made by badly treated workers.
- They hope to hear from the company soon.

Tell the pupils to put the school's address on the letters, then send them off. When replies come in, log them and discuss with the class:

- How can they tell whether the company is telling the truth?
- Will the replies they have an influence on where their families do their shopping?
- What else can they do?