



BACK TO SCHOOL

WITH LYNX PURCHASING

An insight guide to help the education sector
improve purchasing and control costs.



Saving your business time and money every day

Every day's a school day

Foreword by Rachel Dobson, managing director, Lynx Purchasing

The number one challenge for senior leaders in schools today is: how do you get more out of budgets that are shrinking in real terms? If you are a standalone private, academy or free school - or even a small group - there is little you can do to materially change the external factors pushing your operational costs upwards. Global conflicts, climate change, international demand affecting supply chains and prices are beyond your control. But that does not mean you are helpless.

Opportunities for controlling your business costs through better management of your purchasing still exist - and this can release more funds to spend elsewhere or mean a return to profitability. The only way to start is by going back to school, reviewing all of your costs and adjusting mindsets to regard seeking better value as an operational imperative, not just an academic exercise.

Learn new ways of organising your purchasing and have a strategy - that way you'll rid your operation of costly bad purchasing habits and create a better buying culture - one that will increase all-round efficiency and ensure you get maximum value from budgets whatever the economic cycle.

This white paper combines the Lynx Purchasing team's many years of buying experience and expertise with the knowledge of our trusted suppliers - gained from working with all kinds of educational establishments from nurseries to universities.

It contains valuable insights plus tips and tools to help you successfully steer your school through inflationary cycles like now - and more settled times. I guarantee that the knowledge here will help you get more out of your budget if applied - as well as discover some surprising benefits.

If you'd like to find out more or talk about this with one of the team at Lynx, give me or any of our business managers a call.

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Executive Summary

Getting better results in cost control

It's estimated that over £2 billion* a year is spent by the independent education sector on purchasing products and services from food to cleaning products and pest control. If just 5% of that figure could be clawed back through better purchasing - such as buying from the right supplier, re-negotiating contracts or choosing products that cut waste - that's £100 million saved.

In fact, there can be savings of up to 20%** hidden in some purchasing categories. A share of those savings could have a transformative effect on your school or organisation.

But how to achieve those savings is the challenge. If this was put to educators as an exam question, the majority would struggle to get above average marks because over the past few decades markets have become incredibly complex and dynamic - and your staff are not purchasing experts. It can take many years of purchasing experience to confidently navigate the current market and ensure that you are getting the best value for your money. And the less purchasing expertise a buyer has, the more they end up paying.

In the independent school sector, there are many, many privately-owned schools that are unprofitable. Increased costs from the rise in National Insurance and the Minimum Wage, and the new tax on school fees plus ongoing inflation is forcing independent schools to rethink how they operate - and seek better value and smart savings.. Some independent schools and academies are pulling catering services back in-house, because they want better value and dependable support.

Most are struggling to achieve their goals as we've discovered from our research. We know there are savings to be found in all purchasing areas and that many schools are desperate for support to save time and money. We believe schools need expert partners to get the best out of their budgets and navigate through today's complex buying environment.

The new tax on school fees plus ongoing inflation is forcing independent schools to rethink how they operate.

*Lynx Purchasing research

**Based on average savings for customers

Most Common Mistakes

- **No co-ordinated purchasing strategy**

Purchasing is often done by admin for that department. This leads to too many buyers, multiple suppliers and no co-ordinated strategy.

- **One-size fits all approach**

Nurseries, prep, secondary and boarding schools have different needs and require different strategies, services and products. Attempting total consolidation will waste money and time.

- **Less speed, more detail**

Staff workloads leave little time to study product details - or explore the market. Instead they buy what they need quickly from the most convenient source - missing out on better prices and better products and services.

- **Rolling over bad deals**

Many schools roll over suppliers and old contracts without reviewing. Historic inefficiencies are then amplified when independent schools are bought or join together as groups.

- **Losing consolidation benefits**

Growing groups need someone to consolidate suppliers and prices where it makes sense - this also reduces the numbers of deliveries, paperwork and invoicing for individual schools and head office.

- **Menu expertise lacking**

Years of using external caterers means schools have lost internal catering expertise. Support is needed to take catering safely and cost-effectively back in house - and get on top of new nutrition guides, allergens, special diets.

- **Inadequate staff training**

Health and safety, new regulations on allergens and cross-contamination, food fraud and safety scares mean staff need to be regularly trained in best practices. Training cuts wastage and costs too.

- **Under-using specialist suppliers**

Buying from specialist suppliers brings added value like free advice and training that save schools money over time. Specialists have expertise in education too.

- **Going it alone**

Using a trusted independent expert purchasing company will save you time and money - and often get you better value than you could achieve alone. Without compromise, with integrity - and without costing you a penny.



The Lynx Purchasing Curriculum

Want to save your organisation time and money and get better value from your budgets? Work your way through our curriculum and discover where you could be missing potential savings and opportunities.



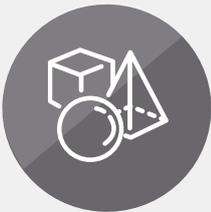
ECONOMICS

INFLATION AND GLOBAL MARKETPLACES

The new reality is inflation - especially food inflation - could be here to stay, putting pressure on the purchasing power of your budgets. Multiple factors such as climate change, conflict, supply chains, competition for resources due to population increases and wider wealth distribution are affecting both supply and demand. Many products are now traded on global commodity markets so UK buyers are competing with international buyers. To get the best from your budgets, schools need to be able to recognise good value - or have someone do that for you. Be flexible wherever you can - and where you can't, fix contracts and prices with suppliers you trust to plan ahead.

REVISION NOTES

- Market knowledge and expertise are vital for success
- Ongoing evaluation of suppliers/contracts



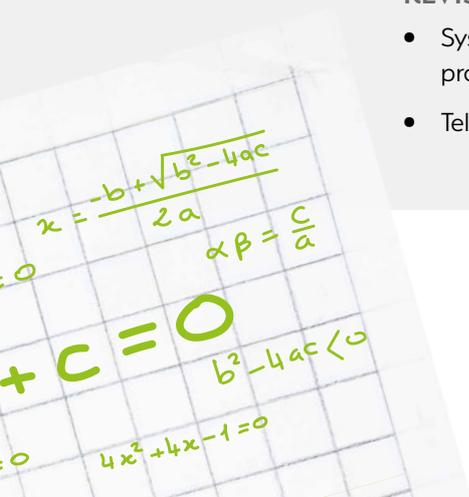
MATHS

COUNTING REAL OPERATIONAL COSTS

Staff workloads and inexperience mean there's not the time or focus to pay attention to purchasing details. Staff often buy what's needed quickly when required and from familiar sources as they simply don't have time to explore the market. But the devil's in the detail and controlling cost is all about detail - prices, volumes, weights, numbers of invoices, delivery schedules, timing. These factors all need to be assessed to get an accurate picture of real value. And there needs to be people and processes in place to ensure that you get what you are paying for - consistently. Complacency breeds contempt and even the most trusted suppliers can get creative - from short orders to sloppy weights.

REVISION NOTES

- Systems improve visibility and cost controls. For example, who counts and weighs products on delivery?
- Tell suppliers you check - everything





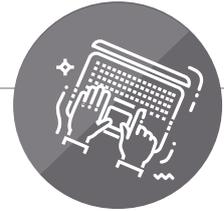
TRIPLE SCIENCE

STAYING ON TOP HEALTH AND SAFETY

From Natasha’s Law on allergens to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Guidelines, staying compliant and keeping your students and staff safe and healthy is a time-consuming and complex job. And one that’s constantly challenging and changing as new regulations come into force - or new food safety and health alerts are issued. Working with suppliers you trust who are always ahead of the curve in their specialism is a game-changer. A good supplier will provide everything you need to be on top of ingredients and allergen controls, provide full traceability on product origins including organics. They’ll offer training, information packs, and the correct PPE equipment and advice on safely managing hazardous substances.

REVISION NOTES

- Expert suppliers give expert advice to keep everyone safe
- Save staff time without compromising health and safety



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DON’T REPLACE PEOPLE WITH PROGRAMMES

Purchasing software programmes might look like the business, but as all IT teachers know, what comes out is only as good as what goes in. Online purchasing platforms might help you get the cheapest deal in the market but not the best one for your school. People and partnerships are more important than software - understanding what product and supplier is the right fit. Where IT really can make a difference is planning, admin and annual contracts. It’s easy to forget annual contracts and let them roll-over or be automatically renewed. Don’t. Instead set up a process to automatically call for competitive quotes on an annual basis for everything from utilities to waste management.

REVISION NOTES

- Beware computer software claiming to make purchasing easy
- Schedule annual review dates and processes for contract renewals

GEOGRAPHY

QUALITY IS KING - NOT PROVENANCE

Provenance - knowing where and how food and other products are grown or made, and supply chain ethics - is growing in importance. Good suppliers provide this information with proof - and in the age of food fraud, trust and reputation matters. Full traceability is available for many products - and it’s a guarantee of health, safety and quality as well as value for money. But remember provenance isn’t always king. There is no automatic guarantee of quality, value or good environmental credentials if you buy from an area famous for a certain product - or locally. So ask suppliers for product details, visit them to see for yourself and conduct blind taste tests. Be informed and objective.



REVISION NOTES

- Use trusted suppliers who can prove where products come from
- Buying local is no guarantee of quality, value or sustainability

ENGLISH

BE OPEN AND COMMUNICATIVE

How well do you communicate your school's needs to your suppliers? And how good is their comprehension? It takes knowledge to ask the right questions and know that you are getting the right answers. This isn't easy in the current marketplace and it helps to have experts on your side to translate complex purchasing options and solutions into plain English for your team. Work with suppliers that have expertise in education who can understand your unique challenges - high standards required for food and product safety, sustainability, departmental needs estates, housekeeping and catering. And your constraints such as tight budgets, term-time order schedules, short delivery windows.

REVISION NOTES

- Communication is key
- Don't be talked into buying a product or service that isn't the best fit



HISTORY

LETTING GO OF BAD TRADITIONS

There are good traditions and there are bad ones. The lessons of history teach us that nothing stays the same, yet in many schools there are accepted practices that have continued unchanged for decades, rolling from one employee to the next unchallenged. These outdated traditions could be costing a fortune - and often are. Observe staff and listen to conversations and you'll be amazed how many accepted practices you find - a certain brand of stationery or daily deliveries - that you overpay for. Times have changed and some strategies/practices need to change too so challenge staff to think about doing things differently.

REVISION NOTES

- Inherited suppliers - you don't have to retain them
- Challenge traditions - do kids want roast dinners?



RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RESPECTING RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

Our long history of multiculturalism - and increasing diversity at all social levels - adds another layer of complexity to purchasing. Catering for pupils of different religious and philosophical beliefs requires suppliers with integrity and expertise whom you can trust when it comes to no cross-contamination, Halal supply chains, vegan and vegetarian food sourcing. Young people are more global in their food tastes too - and demand more choice. Awareness of health, animal welfare, environmental and ethical issues has also grown so lifestyle choices are also being made to reduce meat, fish and dairy intake - or opt for gluten-free and less processed foods. Sourcing often specialist products requires expertise and trusted network partners.

REVISION NOTES

- Buy from trusted suppliers with rated accreditations
- Good suppliers have documented supply chains



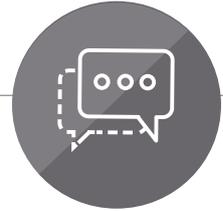
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HANDS-ON KNOWLEDGE

Good suppliers and producers are proud of their products and happy to host your team for a visit to see their operations first-hand, test and try their products. If you can't verify, find a purchasing company who does supplier visits. Good suppliers should have A-plus BRCGS Food Safety and Storage & Distribution certifications, own-label options, product and price comparisons, product workshops and training, advice and knowledge - If they don't, find another that does. Parents trust your organisation to put their children's physical safety first so delivery drivers should, as a matter of course, wear uniforms and be DBS-checked. Vet suppliers and ensure they are sensitive to site security and short delivery windows: experienced suppliers will be fully aware and compliant.

REVISION NOTES

- Ensure suppliers take security as seriously as you do
- Vet suppliers credentials at source - go see them



DRAMA

BEHIND THE SCENES FOR EASIER SAVINGS

Every purchasing budget has its 'stars' - high profile products that hog the spotlight - from your cook's preferred meat cuts to particular brands of linens by housekeeping. Fighting for change in these areas can create unwanted drama and upset. But move back-stage and you'll find plenty of product categories where savings can almost always be found. These are usually products and services that often escape scrutiny because they are not big-ticket items or front of house - unglamorous necessities such as cleaning products, pest control or lighting. As a result, you could be being overcharged by not using specialist suppliers, opting to buy brands over non-brands or simply failing to shop around.

REVISION NOTES

- Review back-stage spending for drama-free savings
- Get your team to regard all budgets as equal



ART

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

Picking the right supplier and products to get the best value from a budget is an art as well as a science. For a truly bespoke service that adds real value to your organisation - saving money, time and meeting all of your criteria for health and safety - you need great communication, trust, and professional relationships. Ask yourself - do your suppliers offer you bespoke products or portion control, menu help and advice, expertise on risk mitigation or how to take advantage of natural supply cycles to get best value - quality and price? Do they understand your organisation and goals and help you achieve them? Good organisations need strong supplier relationships - but building trust and keeping it friendly yet professional takes skill and an artist's eye for detail.

REVISION NOTES

- Look for long-term value from suppliers
- Combine objectivity with creativity

CASE STUDY

CONSOLIDATION AND EXPERTISE FOR FAST GROWING GROUP

CUSTOMER

A group of independent private day and boarding schools catering for children from nursery to age 18 that has more than doubled in size in three years.

CHALLENGE

Fast growth through the acquisition of independent schools in multiple categories led to a huge inherited list of suppliers and contracts. This meant schools were paying different prices for the same products - missing out on better deals for group buys and often better quality products. It also meant an overload of paperwork from orders and delivery manifests to invoices, credits and payments. Managers were short of both time and expertise to manage the complexities of purchasing on this scale - never mind trying to stretch budgets that were shrinking in real terms in an inflationary market. With a wide range of types of schools all with very different purchasing needs, the group needed hands-on experts who could give bespoke advice.

SOLUTION & RESULT

The team at Lynx Purchasing reviewed the purchasing across all nurseries and schools. Where possible, purchasing was consolidated with specific suppliers - with a fixed group price for the same products. This cut both deliveries and paperwork - all suppliers send one statement per month covering all schools to make less work for the Head Office. Fixed prices and fewer suppliers made budgeting and ordering simpler, and provided more consistent quality. Lynx also introduced the group to specialist suppliers that provide training, information and advice on their products and services for free.

Through its face-to-face approach, advice and best practice, Lynx is saving this complex and busy group substantial sums of money and management time, as well as delivering better quality products and services.





CASE STUDY

TAKING BACK CONTROL OF CATERING

CUSTOMER

An established group of 19 independent schools ranging from nursery to sixth form, including a handful of boarding schools.

CHALLENGE

After many years of outsourcing to contract caterers, this mixed school group decided to bring catering back in house at every school. A new head of catering was appointed to review all schools and standardise purchasing procedures. Outsourcing had left the schools with little or no catering expertise or staff, and kitchens that required investment. The group needed the help and support of experts who understood the procurement needs of the education sector and could solve a wide range of problems quickly.

SOLUTION & RESULT

The team at Lynx Purchasing was brought in to help with a broad range of issues. Lynx worked with individual schools and used its expertise and supplier network to build bespoke supply chains. To train up staff, supply partners were brought on site to offer free workshops, enhance performance and practices, and inspire a new culture. Processes, such as implementing a secure and nut free ABL and ensuring no prohibited products enter sites, were standardised. A captive hygiene system and systems ensuring health and safety meet COSHH standards, were introduced to build compliance and consistency across all schools. Lynx manages the purchasing of food, essential catering equipment and cleaning chemicals, streamlining procurement with reliable supply partners for efficiency and cost effectiveness. With sustainability high on the agenda, Lynx also works with the group to meet its eco goals by sourcing eco-friendly and ethically produced products with full traceability.

About Lynx Purchasing

Lynx Purchasing is one of the UK's leading independent purchasing companies, specialising in the hospitality, leisure, education and care home sectors. We manage almost 2,500 accounts, helping operators and organisations buy better, get better prices and save time and money every day. We deliver a bespoke purchasing service that focuses on value, as well as quality and price. Our suppliers are industry leaders across all categories with whom we have strong relationships built over many years.

Lynx Purchasing Ltd

1 Dere Street House, Manfield, Darlington, DL2 2RJ

T. 01325 710143. **E.** hello@lynxpurchasing.co.uk

www.lynxpurchasing.co.uk

