



THE 2 MINUTE
FOUNDATION



The 2 minute guide
to reducing waste:

FOR Schools





THE 2 MINUTE GUIDE TO REDUCING WASTE

Picking up plastic litter is fantastic work. It stops it from entering or re-entering the oceans, takes it out of harm's way, stops it from breaking down into microplastics and becoming toxic.

But preventing it in the first place is better.

As an individual you have the power to make changes, to make your voice heard and to influence others. And it all starts with 2 minutes.

My name is Claire, environmentalist, teacher and ocean activist and I'm here to help you and your school operate in a more earth conscious way. What we have below is a little taste of a few of the things you can accomplish with a little bit of creativity, a lot of drive, and some good old fashioned grafting.

A school has many outlets and pressure points when it comes to waste, and its important to realise that we aren't just talking about plastic in many cases. A recent study across the UK showed that the 2 main sources of school waste were food waste, and paper & card, both of which are as unnecessary and easy to address as the single use plastics problem. So lets dive in!

WHOLE SCHOOL CHANGES

UNDERSTANDING WHERE YOUR WASTE IS: How can you make positive changes if you don't know where your problems lie? To help you do this:

1. APPOINT A GREEN TEAM: If you are serious about reducing your waste you may find resistance among employees or with the students. Getting buy in will be vital. A Green Team may help to persuade everybody that changes are for the greater good, even if they aren't 'how things are done' right now. Aim to have a mix of SLT, teachers, support staff, and a range of students from different year groups

2. UNDERTAKE A PLASTIC AND GREEN AUDIT: Look at the areas of the school where you use plastic, receive plastic from suppliers, dispose of plastic, or use and dispose of it internally. Look at packaging, your offices, the classrooms, the canteen and anywhere the business is likely to come into contact with plastic. Get to know your waste – how much do you pay for it to be collected? What happens to it once it's picked up? How many tonnes do you create each year?

HOLD FREQUENT ASSEMBLIES: People protect what they love. It's as simple as that. Give everybody a reason to make changes, teach them about the plastic crisis, show them what their efforts can do to have a positive impact on their environment.

ENCOURAGE REUSABLE BOTTLES: In the UK 7.7 billion plastic water bottles are used each year, with the average person in the UK now using 150 plastic water bottles every year – that's more than 3 a week! Make it a rule that all staff and students need to bring in a reusable bottle every day, as a part of their essential equipment. Pencil case? Check. P.E Kit? Check. Reusable bottle? Check.

INSTALL WATER FOUNTAINS: Does your school have a water fountain where you can fill your water bottle? If not, get some! Place them in the most sensible areas – in the school canteen, the outdoor areas, the reception and so on.

SET UP RECYCLING POINTS: Now, we know there is no way to eliminate all the plastic in a school, so the most important thing is to have a plan for what happens to the stuff still being used. This won't work if there is only one recycling area in the school – they need to be placed everywhere to ensure they are used. Once you've completed your audit, see what areas require what recycling points, and customise them accordingly. The Food Tech rooms are likely to need more plastic pots and tray recycling than the maths area, for example! Make sure each recycling bin is clearly labelled so there is no confusion from staff or students.

SIGN UP FOR SPECIFIC RECYCLING SCHEMES: these really do exist, and most schools are eligible to be a community recycling point. First, speak to your waste contractor and see what options they have for recycling, and then check out Terracycle www.terracycle.co.uk for some other options:

- **OLD SCHOOL PENS:** Start a school bag pen amnesty! Ask all your friends to empty their bags, collect up their old pens and send them to Bic via Terracycle who will recycle them for you. AND you can earn points (and money) for your school the more you collect.
- **CRISP PACKETS:** They are difficult to recycle and only a few places will take them. Kids can collect their crisp packets and set up a crisp packet recycling point. Send them off to be recycled. Get points for your school. Kaboom! No more waste. Find out more at <https://www.walkers.co.uk/recycle>, or check out the Terracycle program.

CONSIDER BEFORE YOU PICK UP A PEN: Ballpoint pens are clean and convenient. However, it is still possible to buy refillable ballpoint pens. Even though they still contain plastic components, by using them you'll still stop plastic single use pens like throwaway biros from going to landfill or the ocean.

Buying a fountain pen will save even more plastic, especially when you refill it from an ink bottle rather than use cartridges. And they are lovely to use. As is the good old fashioned pencil! Perfect for jotting down the odd note here or there. Also think about colouring pens – are they really necessary? Would a colouring pencil be a suitable alternative for the task you are doing?

AVOID UNNECESSARY PRINTING: It's not plastic, but its still wasteful. Think twice! If printing is needed, make it standard that as default the printer is set to black and white, and double sided. And if you haven't signed up for a printer ink refill scheme, then jump on it!

ENCOURAGE LUNCHTIME LITTERPICKS: Traditionally, these were seen as a punishment. A way to spend a detention, or undertake community service. Not anymore! Make them a good thing, a way for students to get some kind of reward – perhaps their name on a wall of Eco Heros? Or make it mandatory; every class is responsible for a cleanup once a month and change the culture around it – it can be fun, meditative, and so good for the planet. And lets face it, its everyone's responsibility.

THE CANTEEN AND LUNCHTIMES

LOOK AT WHAT YOU ARE SELLING:

- **DRINKS:** as we discussed above, plastic bottles are a huge problem. Consider switching all the bottled drinks to cans (far easier to recycle), or even better provide cups and jugs of juice/squash. Cartons are no better, and often come with unnecessary straws so try to avoid those too.
- **SANDWICHES:** are these in plastic sandwich boxes? Wrapped in clingfilm? Consider other options, perhaps wrap in foil, or in paper bags instead.
- **CRISPS AND SWEETS:** Packets are, in general, unrecyclable. If your school wants to provide a selection of sweet treats, look for chocolate and sweets that are wrapped in foil and paper or put together a traditional sweet shop style pick 'n' mix in paper bags.
- **CAKES/DESSERTS:** even freshly made ones often get portioned and packaged into plastic wrappers. Is that necessary?

If your school has vending machines, all of the above points apply to that too!

SWAP OUT SOME OF THE WORST OFFENDERS:

- Plastic cutlery is so last decade. How hard is it really to provide real' cutlery and wash it up?
- Paper straws are easy to source, affordable and way better for the planet. Winner
- Sauce sachets may be convenient but they are pretty terrible when it comes to

disposal. They are used for, what, 3 seconds and then thrown away? What a waste! Consider what other options would work in your canteen – perhaps a big 5 liter pump action sauce station near the tills?

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT and REWARD: this is such a winner, and you can go as big or small as you think appropriate. It could be as simple as praising a student for a sustainable lunch (do you give out reward points in your school? Perfect), or implementing a plastic tax on the school lunches – charge an extra 10p for any item that contains a disposable item. Make this work for you, but keep it easy to manage for both the staff and students.

PACKED LUNCH: encourage plastic free lunches, or go as far ‘banning’ certain items.

LOOK AT WHAT YOU ARE BUYING: we know that cooking up a storm for hundreds of hungry kids isn’t easy. But these days, its becoming more and more easy to swap out the plastics lurking in your kitchen supplies!

- Buying things in the biggest quantities (for example pasta, rice, oats etc) will end up with less plastic overall
- Does your oil get taken away in old metal drums? If not, why not? Look into it!
- Can any of your suppliers help with your aim to be plastic-clever? Perhaps they can take away spare packaging and reuse it – you don’t know if you don’t ask.
- Do you use clingfilm? Could you use foil, or better yet reusable tupperwares or pots instead?

SET UP A RECYCLING POINT: Do you have a recycling point in the kitchens for everything that needs it?

CONSIDER COMPOSTING: What happens to the leftover food? Most schools have their food waste collected by their waste contractor, but have you considered creating a compost area? It’s a great learning tool, as well being a super earth-friendly way of using uneaten food. While we are on this note, it’s a great opportunity to look at the quantities that you are ordering and creating – if you’ve got lots of leftovers and waste, every week, then dial back a little and work with your suppliers to find quantities that work for you.

LESSONS, HOMEWORK AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

USE THE WASTE!: Can you bring waste into your lessons? Make beeswax wraps (which can then be used in lunchboxes), cook using leftover canteen food, grow a herb garden using the compost heap.

AVOID LAMINATING: Everybody loves a beautifully laminated notice. They are clean, effective and long lasting. But they are plastic! Think it through, and avoid it if you can.

SELLOTAPE: its plastic, and completely un-recyclable. Could you use glue, staples, or paperclips instead?

PENS/PENCILS: Consider the activity. Does it need to be a pen? Or would crayons or pencils do the same job?

THINK ABOUT THE RESOURCES: Think about what handouts or resources you need

for your lessons or afterschool activities. And then really think about it. Does every student need a worksheet? Could they have 1 between two? Or could it even be projected onto a screen instead? This might not avoid much plastic, but it definitely helps with paper use and changing peoples mindsets from disposable to sustainable. Do you need any equipment or materials that could be sourced from the students home waste?

WHAT'S THE HOMEWORK?: Are the students being asked to print out work? Consider whether they could email it to you instead. Perhaps instead of creating a hand-drawn poster, they could give a verbal presentation instead, or make up a poem.

STAFF BEHAVIOUS

IN THE STAFF ROOM: START WITH THE EASY WINS: If you set targets that are hard to achieve you may come up against resistance, especially if it costs money or puts people out. So choose the easy wins to start with. If they save money, all the better.

- Make a big statement to your staff: buy them all a coffee mug and ask them not to bring takeaway cups into the school.
- Replace plastic throwaway cups with glasses and mugs
- Are you using plastic-free tea bags? Double check
- Sugar sachets contain plastic lining and cant be recycled. Go for bowls of sugar with spoons in, or even better grab some retro sugar shakers!
- Replace washing up utensils with non-plastic alternatives
- Filter tap water and remove the water cooler
- Consider buying milk in bulk rather than in small cartons
- Start a recycling policy for as many items as you can recycle: paper, CDs, batteries, plastics, business cards, pens. Check out the Terracycle website for some ideas
- Rethink the stationery cupboards and use cardboard, recycled paper, non-plastic card and business cards.
- Go bin free... you can do it!
- In the bathroom, use dryers instead of towels

LIMIT YOUR PHOTOCOPYING: much like printing, just consider whether it's really necessary. And if it is, aim for double sided.

USING MASS EMAILS: did you know that 'reply to all' uses way more energy than a simply 'reply'? Mind blown!

KEEP COMMUNICATING: We know that most staff notices are disseminated through email these days, but there's always one or two that get printed out on mass and handed out to teachers to read out in the mornings. What a waste! Stick to emails or better yet – communicate all your notices verbally during the morning briefings. Similarly, if you need to communicate with parents try to use email or the good old phone call instead of sending letter homes with the kids. There's always one or two that go missing that way anyway!

IN-SCHOOL EVENTS

BYOE: If you've got a parents evening, prospective students day, student performance or anything else, take a stand against disposables. Make it clear to any visitors that the school will happily be providing the drinks and snacks, but they are responsible for the rest – Bring Your Own Everything.

If this is a step too far, just make sure your aren't serving up coffee and cakes on paper plates, with non-reusable cups.

ENCOURAGE DOGGY BAGS: there's always bits leftover, and the staff can only have so much cake the next day. Encourage the students to take parcels of food home (wrapped in tinfoil of course), and extend this offer to the visitors if there really is a lot!

MANAGEMENT

SEEK OUT THE ALTERNATIVE: Look at the plastic that's used and seek out an alternative. Do they exist? How much do they cost? Are they practical? It may not be viable to change everything at once, but knowing the possibilities and their costs will inform you going forward.

GET BUY IN FROM THE GOVENORS: The govenors will need to support your work to remove plastics. Once you have successfully introduced easy wins, offer them projects that will save money or time. Consider offsetting one project against another if there is a cost involved. Think holistically across the whole school, based on your audit.

- Can you, for example, bail up or process your incoming cardboard and reuse it as packaging filler, instead of paying to have it taken away as trade waste?
- Will solar panels save money?
- Will changing energy suppliers to green companies save money?

INCOMING PLASTIC: Can you talk to suppliers about reducing their plastic in your deliveries? Can you persuade them to reduce their use by implementing a delivery policy that specifically aims to avoid plastic? The less that comes into your business, the less you have to pay for disposal.

Also check that plastic used can be recycled (SEE ABOVE). If it cannot because it's of no value or is a new plastic, ask your suppliers to seek alternatives that can be put into current streams. Don't produce new waste streams out of apparently 'green' plastic alternatives.

- Talk to suppliers
- Implement a delivery policy among suppliers
- If suppliers can't or won't change, change suppliers
- Accept recyclable packaging materials only

CHOOSE YOUR UNIFORM CAREFULLY: Some fabrics are sustainable. Others contain 100% plastic and shed this into the water systems after every wash. Speak to your suppliers about your needs and see what they can offer you.

UNIFORM SWAPS: Kids grow, a lot, and uniform can be costly – especially if you've made the bold choice to go for a better quality, longer lasting garment. Hold twice-a-year uniform swaps and encourage parents to come along!

BOOK RECYCLING: text books, reading books, and everything in between are in high demand in certain parts of the world. If your school doesn't already, create a book recycling scheme and sign up to one of the many charities working hard to repurpose old, damaged or out-dated books. Ask students to return books after their exams and create a culture of reusing and rehoming.

STATIONARY: Think about what you are providing, and make some switches. Only use recycled card and paper (ensuring they aren't plastic lined). Ditch the jiffy bags and bubble wrap in favour for cardboard packaging, and look for envelopes that don't use plastic self-adhesive, or come wrapped in cellophane packets.

CONTACT LOCAL GROUPS: Reach out to your community! Chances are, there's a local environmental group who would be happy to help advise, or perhaps even come into the school to talk things through. There will be local schemes they can advise you on, and will have loads of ideas for helping you out. Perhaps they could even get involved with some of your assemblies?

FINALLY:

AVOIDING NEW PLASTICS: Look out for misleading claims on new packaging products when it comes to 'green' packaging. Plastic is still plastic, even if it is 'degradable'. Some 'eco-friendly' packaging can still only be composted in industrial composters and will spoil recycling streams if it gets into them. While sustainable plastics are better than oil based, it's still important to think about what will happen to it after you've used it.

- **Degradable, oxo-degradable and photo degradable** plastics are still plastic. They just break down into smaller and smaller pieces.
- **Biodegradable** means something can be broken down into organic materials without causing harm or leaving toxins behind, in a reasonable timescale. Some biodegradable products can only be degraded under controlled conditions, in a commercial composter.
- **Compostable** products break down into nutrients that enhance the soil, although they may have to be disposed of in a commercial composter, rather than at home.
- **Home compostable** is exactly that. You can put it in your home compost.

