

Planning a Plastic Awareness Day at School



“Avoiding waste is the
one thing we can all do
to help save the planet”

Sir David Attenborough



In order to raise awareness about the amount of Single Use Plastic used everyday in schools, as well as identifying the most commonly used items, a 'Plastic-Free' Day or Week can be a useful way to start the ball rolling!



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Choose a time and date in the academic year when you can focus on the issues and celebrate your achievements as a whole school. Dates may include:

World Wildlife Day 3 March
British Science Week 8 March
World Water Day 22 March
World Environment Day 5 June
World Oceans Day 8 June
One World Week 21 October

8 May is Sir David Attenborough's birthday

You may also like to link your 'Plastic-Free' event to an Award you are working on - such as Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools Award, Eco-Schools, or the International School Award.

2

Be inspired and informed

There are many resources and websites which can help support your planning:

Litter Free Coast and Sea have some useful resources for schools for promoting Zero Waste Lunches:

<http://www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/plastic-free-day-schools/>

See also <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/plastics/plastic-free-friday> and <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/schools.html> with some useful ideas from Australia.



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Planning Ahead for a Plastic Free Day/Week in School

(See also Damers First School Top Tips to becoming Plastic Free pdf)

- Before the day invite children and staff to carry out an audit of the SUP* currently used in school. This may include: single serving school milk cartons with straws and wrappers; fruit in plastic bags, juice bottles sold at break time; yogurt pots; individual sauce sachets; disposable pudding bowls and spoons served by the canteen; lunch boxes with crisp and biscuit wrappers; plastic lolly sticks; sweetie wrappers; balloons; clingfilm; glitter; chewing gum; disposable cups and plates used by PTA at events; laminating; cotton buds; plastic toys given as prizes etc. Display the results and decide which items are easiest to reduce, refuse and replace. Then consider which ones have to stay but can be recycled.
- To take part all children and staff need to refuse SUP for the day – SUP free lunches/lunch boxes, drinks and snacks. Avoid things wrapped in disposable plastic and make sure everyone uses reusable cups, bottles and bags!
- Hold an assembly focussing on plastic in the ocean, it's impact on wildlife, our connections to it, and what we can all do about it - Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Refill, and then Recycle (see PPT for images, links and information)



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Ideas for activities

- Run activities with classes across the whole school, such as the SUP Sorting Activity (all ages) and Diamond Ranking the 9Rs.
- Create pledges and promises of at least 1 SUP item that will be swapped for a reusable one. Create posters and artwork to inspire and raise awareness of the issues with friends and family.
- Invite in artists who recycle and upcycle plastic to help create an in-school art installation. See <http://www.artecom.co.uk> and <http://www.heidisteller.co.uk>
- Write persuasive letters requesting that more action is taken by school suppliers, shops, manufacturers, MPs and Government.
- Hold an after school drop in event and invite families and the local community to share what you have learned

- Organise a school/community litter pick - you can borrow high vis jackets, litter pickers and bags from Dorset Waste Partnership: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-litter/street-cleaning/community-litter-picks.aspx> or Litter Free Dorset
- There are some plastic items which we just can't seem to live without! In schools, crisp packets, biscuit wrappers, milk bottle lids, and dried up pens seem to be the hardest to stop using, and the easiest to collect for recycling. Ideas2Action gives information about how to start collecting recyclables at school. See <http://www.ideas2action.org.uk/>

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Further ideas for activities

- There are a growing number of schools registering as 'Plastic Free' with Surfers Against Sewage email education@sas.org.uk or visit <https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-free-schools/>

In the meantime, here are a few simple swaps your school could make:

- Instead of individual milk cartons, ask for large milk cartons (which can be recycled) and use reusable cups to serve milk. See Georgeham Primary School in Devon - "It took just one phone call to our 'Cool Milk' supplier, and a conversation lasting less than five minutes. Now we have milk for our reception class delivered in 4pint (2litre) containers. All of which can be recycled. The reception class use beakers that are washed for re-use. And, any leftover milk is used for cooking in the school kitchen." <https://www.countryliving.com/uk/wildlife/countryside/news/a3458/devon-primary-school-plastic-free/>
- Ensure fresh water is available for all to refill their water bottles during the day, provide stainless steel/metal water bottles for pupils (maybe ask a local 'Plastic Free' Community Champion business to sponsor this)
- Ask fruit suppliers to send loose fresh fruit snacks in cardboard boxes, rather than wrapped in plastic
- Swap individual sauce sachets for large glass or refillable bottles at lunchtime or in the canteen
- Encourage pupils and staff to wrap their sandwiches in reusable beeswax wraps rather than clingfilm or use aluminium foil as this can be more easily recycled.
- Speak to your hot dinner provider or canteen about SUP. Ask them to only provide only washable cutlery and crockery for example.

Celebrate your achievements, no matter how small!

*Single Use Plastic (SUP) is plastic that is used once and then thrown 'away' forever. The 'Big 4' SUP items include straws, bags, cups and bottles.