



LITTER RESOURCE

# Working with schools to prevent litter

## From early years to secondary



# Schools: the key to putting litter in its place

**It's important for children and young people to learn about English, maths, science and a host of other academic subjects and life skills. But do they need educated in litter prevention?**

We think they do. Those who are taught about the negative impacts of litter at an early age are more likely to have a responsible attitude towards this, and other environmental issues, when they're older.

The aim is to raise a generation for whom littering is entirely unacceptable – to create a new social norm. It's about halting littering behaviour once and for all, by setting a good example for the grown-ups of tomorrow.



# Positive pester power

**Persuading people to change their ways can be an uphill struggle.**



Deeply engrained habits, lack of time, resistance to change – whatever the obstacles, overcoming them takes time, resources and patience. But that's not so true for children and young people. Their habits aren't yet fixed and they absorb information at a rate of knots. Targeting children with litter prevention messages makes sense – and not just because it changes their behaviour.

Children are as persuasive as they are impressionable. Get them on-board with litter prevention and, chances are, they'll get the adults around them adopting better habits too.

This effect is already proven in environmental issues. When school pupils in Plymouth were taught about the impacts of marine litter, they used the knowledge to influence their families' behaviour.

# Lessons full of fun



**Few young people are naturally interested in litter. Even fewer are interested in being lectured about its impacts. Just including litter prevention in the curriculum isn't enough, we need to present it in an interesting and compelling way.**

What sets successful litter-prevention lessons apart? The answer is to make the activities truly interactive – from games and songs for little ones, to a project-driven, independent learning approach for older groups.

# Get involved

**Schools across Scotland are finding inventive ways to fit litter into their lesson plans. Integrating litter prevention into the curriculum could be a lot easier than you think.**



# Set the foundations at primary



## Wrigley Litter Less

As part of their Eco Schools efforts, classes can opt into the Litter Less campaign, funded by chewing gum brand, Wrigley. This gives them access to resources and funding for integrating litter-related projects into the curriculum. There's also a competition for the best initiative – giving pupils an extra incentive to engage with the scheme.

## Falkirk's Community Litter Plan

Falkirk's 2016 Community Litter Plan is a prime example of how local authorities can create an engaging programme of litter-prevention education.

When covering environmental topics, primary schools could call in the council's Litter Team for support. Together they would explore games, stories and activities – all designed to be engaging, fun and memorable. Older groups formed junior community safety teams charged with helping to tackle litter in their area.

## Eco Schools

Empowering children to tackle the problem in their local environment is also the approach taken by United Nations scheme, Eco Schools.

For the 2.3 million children in Scotland who take part, it's a chance to get actively involved in environmental issues – one of which is litter. Instead of reading about the impacts, they go out in their local environment and monitor it for themselves – before exploring ways to manage it. Schools that make significant improvements in a particular area earn themselves a Green Flag Award – over 1,000 Scottish schools have already achieved this accolade.



# Continue the story at secondary

**Litter-prevention education shouldn't stop when pupils move up to high school. That's not to say one approach is suitable the whole way through. Programmes like Eco Schools and 'Bin It' recognise this by providing separate resources for secondary-age children.**

As children become young adults, two things happen – statistically, they become more likely to litter and, as a group, become harder to reach with litter prevention messaging. Getting them to think differently involves letting them explore the issue for themselves, drawing their own conclusions.

Litter is a topic that can be integrated into many school subjects, from geography, to science, to drama – the very cross-subject approach that's central to the Curriculum for Excellence.

## SECONDARY SCHOOL

### Highland Council School Litter Project

Zero Waste Scotland and Highland Council joined forces to encourage students from ten schools across the Highland region to dispose of their litter responsibly.

The scheme focused on students' behaviour away from school. Volunteers around the local area handed vouchers to pupils they saw binning their rubbish when out and about at lunchtime. Students could take the vouchers back to school and enter them into a prize draw.

Each school was also given a target number of vouchers – hit the target and they were given money towards an environmental project of their choice.

## CITIZEN SCIENCE

### Citizen Science on Scottish Canals

How to monitor litter along canals? Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Waterways and the University of Glasgow asked budding scientists from schools in Maryhill and Clydebank to help them.

The students were challenged to invent new and innovative ways of analysing litter levels – all from a floating classroom.

This example of citizen science – where the students collected data for professional use – let students put their scientific skills to the test and experience the impacts of litter first-hand. It also deepened experts' understanding of the local situation.

## SECONDARY SCHOOL

### Forfar Academy's Litter Prevention Charter

Thanks to funding from Zero Waste Scotland, Forfar Academy was able to integrate litter prevention into several areas of school life.

This included:

- the school's 'Litter Prevention Charter'.
- a full review of school policies.
- investment in infrastructure.
- lessons focused on litter prevention.
- environmentally-focused extra-curricular activities.

The programme significantly reduced litter in school grounds and on the streets around the site. The local authority estimated that the **time spent cleaning litter from around the school reduced by 50%**.

# Extra-curricular activities

From age 15, the UCAS personal statement is the name of the game. Good grades are no longer enough to get into a top university – admissions boards are looking for ‘well-rounded’ applicants with a host of extra-curricular activities to their name.



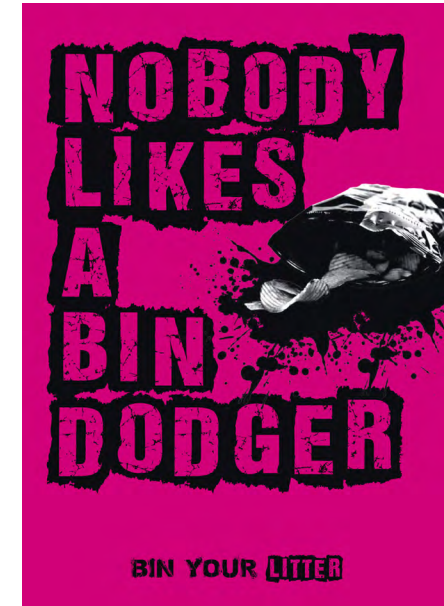
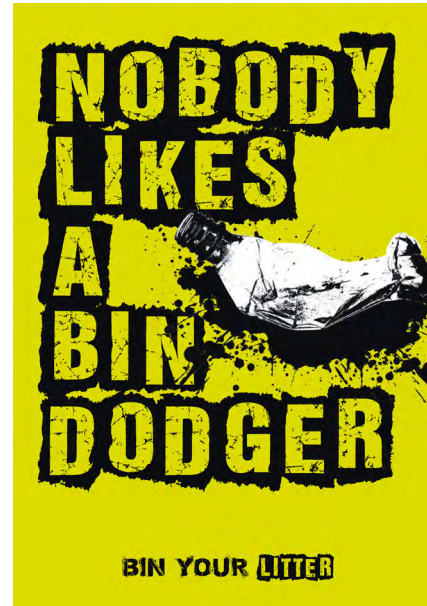
Many schools help by offering programmes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award and John Muir Award – schemes that require pupils to volunteer in their community. This means students are actively looking for a project to get involved in, so campaigns aimed at this age group have a good chance of success. It’s a litter-prevention opportunity that could be too good to miss.





# Communications

Teaching children and young people about the importance and impact of preventing litter is a great start. But getting them to change their behaviours outside of the classroom is the most important part. Communications can help. By placing crafted messages in carefully considered locations, we can remind pupils about litter prevention just when it matters.



## ARTWORK

### The ZWS Litter Prevention Communications Toolkit

You'll find lots of free-to-use, context-specific materials in our litter prevention communications toolkit.

The Zero Waste Scotland litter prevention communications toolkit offers a comprehensive selection of tried and tested messages tailored to specific contexts – one of which is schools.

# Conclusions

**Children and young adults may not be the only culprits of littering, but they're an important audience for litter-prevention messages.**



Litter-prevention education has the potential to be closely linked with Curriculum for Excellence. With a little bit of creativity, litter-prevention can be integrated into lesson plans for all ages.

We've included links to various free online resources which we hope will help to provide inroads into delivering litter and flytipping prevention education. There are also [litter factsheets](#) and [quiz papers](#) for primary and secondary levels.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Future developments



We are in the process of developing new resources which will be skills based, set out clearly in the context of Curriculum for Excellence and underpinned by sound pedagogical approaches. These will be available on this knowledge hub in the future

# Resources

## Early Years and Primary

**Eco-Schools/Keep Scotland Beautiful: Litter** — Early Years  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

**Eco-Schools/Keep Scotland Beautiful: Litter** — Primary  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

**Wastebuster: Litter check and action plan**  
[Click here to view](#)

**Keep Britain Tidy: Let's Talk Rubbish**  
[Click here to view](#)

**CBBC Newsround: Litter and recycling**  
[Click here to view](#)

**Wiltshire Wildlife Trust: How to run a whole school litter campaign**  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

**Scholastic: Litter squad**  
[Click here to view](#)

**The Wrigley Company: Bin It education resources**  
[Click here to view](#)

**Teachit primary: The Litter Queen** — Tidy school project  
[Click here to view](#)

**Teachit: The Litter Gang and Rat's Delight**  
[Click here to view](#)

**The Highland Council: Waste and Recycling** — Education Pack  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

**Leeds City Council: Schools Waste Recycling Advisors Project**  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

## Secondary

**The Wrigley Company: Bin It education resources**  
[Click here to view](#)

**Digimap for Schools: Prevalence of littering on school grounds**  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

**The Big Tidy Up: Lesson Plans for Secondary Schools**  
[Click here to view](#)

**British Council/BBC: Litter poem**  
[Click here to view](#)

**Eco-Schools/Keep Scotland Beautiful: Litter** — Secondary  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

**TES: Solutions to chewing gum littering**  
[Click here to view](#)

## Special Educational Needs

**ecoACTIVE Education: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Teacher Resource Pack**  
[Click here to view PDF](#)

