



How to reduce at school

REDUCE is the first, and most important, of the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). By buying and using less, we reduce our demands on the world's resources, generate less 'rubbish', and often save money as well.

Paper

Most schools spend thousands of pounds each year on paper (for some example figures see right.) Even if you are confident that all your used paper gets recycled, significant financial savings can be made by reducing the amount of paper your school uses in the first place. As well as the cost of the paper itself, reducing the use of printers and photocopiers will also save money on energy, toner and ink cartridges.

How much do you spend?

Real examples of annual spend on printer and photocopy paper:

- Primary school, 374 pupils, spent £4,200 per year
- Secondary school, 1344 pupils, spent £5,670 per year

How much could you save?

Find out how much your school spends on paper and set a target to reduce it.

Offer the option of **electronic newsletters** for parents instead of printed ones (such as parentmail.)

Use **wipe-clean whiteboards** whenever possible, instead of paper (see image below.)



Use a **siblings list** when printed letters are essential, so that each family receives only one. Create the expectation that adults and pupils will **proof-read their work on-screen**, and only print their final draft. Younger pupils should check with a member of staff before clicking on 'print.' Ask pupils to design signs to stick by computer with a slogan such as 'Think before you print'.

Consider which printers / photocopiers can be set to **double-sided printing**. Make sure that everybody knows when changes have been made, to avoid paper wastage as people print double sided copies when they want single sided!



Use a **print management system**, such as PaperCut MF or Pcounter, to give members of staff (and students in secondary schools) a quota for printing. The system will quickly pay for itself as people adopt a more considered approach to printing. Ensure you display the quota on class IWBs during lessons, to engage pupils with the issue of paper use and motivate them to suggest alternatives to their teachers.



Packaging

Packaging can be useful, but many items that we buy are wrapped in large amounts of plastic and other materials which end up in the bin. To reduce your school's packaging waste you could:

Encourage families to avoid single-use packaging in packed lunches. Emphasise the financial benefits of **reusable boxes and bottles** compared with throw-away packaging like sandwich bags, cling-film and drinks pouches.

Conduct a **packed lunch waste audit** with a class or your Eco Committee - there are great opportunities for linking to maths / ICT topics. Having identified the issues, ask pupils to use their persuasive writing skills to tell parents how they can help to reduce packaging waste. After plenty of whole-school publicity, repeat the audit to assess the success of your campaign. The chart below the shows example data from a primary school in Devon.

Download **audit instructions**, and materials for a **packed lunch waste reduction campaign**, here: zone.recycledevon.org/waste-free-lunch. Or ask Resource Futures to carry out the audit and an action planning session as part of the **Devon Waste Education project**.

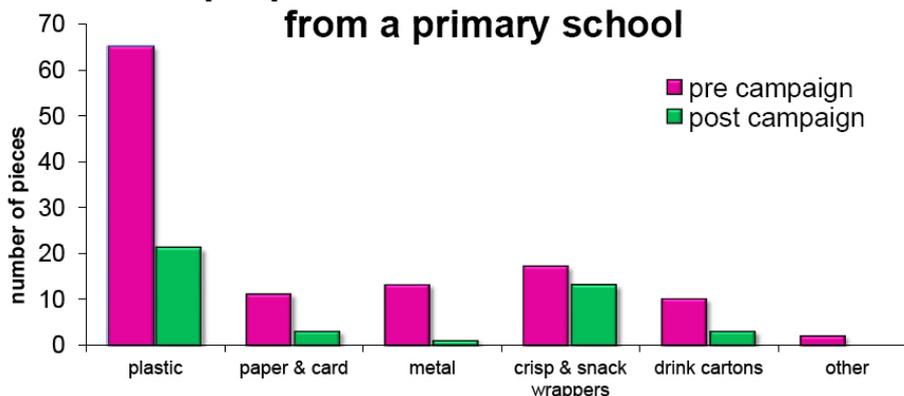
Don't forget **breakfast, after school and holiday clubs**. Encourage the staff running these sessions to consider the packaging of the food and drinks they serve to pupils, and to avoid disposable items as much as possible.



Think about any **snacks** you sell to pupils, choosing ones with as little packaging as possible. For example, small bags of dried fruit are a healthy snack but generate a lot of waste plastic. Consider options with less packaging, such as larger packets divided into portions, or fresh fruit.

Talk to the staff in the **school kitchen** and encourage them to look for ways to reduce packaging waste. For example, can they serve yogurt from a large pot into small washable bowls, instead of individual throw-away plastic pots?

Example packed lunch waste audit results from a primary school



Food waste

Food waste can be a significant issue in schools. WRAP data* shows that 46% of a typical primary school's waste is food; the figure for secondary schools is 31%. As well as the financial and environmental implications of throwing food in the bin, there are also health and educational impacts, since hungry pupils are less likely to concentrate during lessons.



Lunchtime food waste

First find out how much food waste your school produces from school meals and packed lunches. You could:

- conduct a **packed lunch waste audit** (see page 2).
- weigh the waste from pupils' **plate scrapings** each day for a week.
- ask staff to weigh any **un-served food** that is thrown away, ideally for a week.

Then find out what the issues are that contribute to this food waste. Conduct a **pupil survey** and consult with lunchtime supervisors to find out why pupils are throwing away food rather than eating it. For example, are they rushing their lunch in order to attend clubs or play with friends; do they dislike the noisy dining hall; are there some items on the menu that are less popular than others?



Once you know the issues, make a plan to reduce the food waste, working with meal-time assistants and catering staff, as appropriate.

The Food for Life Partnership has a wide range of resources to support schools in engaging pupils with healthy food, including ways to improve the dining environment to encourage pupils to eat more and waste less.

See www.foodforlife.org.uk



Fruit waste

Schools where pupils receive free fruit sometimes find that children throw away **partly eaten fruit**.

Discuss amongst staff when and where pupils eat their fruit, and how much time they are given. Younger pupils may eat more of their fruit inside with adult supervision (e.g., listening to a story) than running around at playtime, so consider whether changes to your routine could reduce fruit waste.

* The nature and scale of waste produced by schools in England, Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) 2008

Furniture and equipment

Have you ever found your school filling a skip with used furniture or equipment that could be used by somebody else?

Save the cost of the skip and have the satisfaction of knowing that your equipment is being reused, by **donating** it to somebody else or other schools, via an online scheme like www.warp-it.co.uk/devoncc



Durable products

Ensure that the resources you buy last as long as possible. Simple examples, like expecting pupils to put lids on felt tip and white board pens, can save the school money and reduce waste.

Disposable items, designed to be used once then thrown away, may be convenient, but they generate a lot of waste. **Avoid disposables by:**

- Investing in **strong plastic plates and cups** for parties and events. They can be used year after year, so you will recoup the initial cost.
- Asking staff and pupils to bring their own **refillable water bottle** instead of relying on the school to provide single use cups / cones near water fountains.

Reduce and Eco-Schools

Engage staff and pupils, and gain a nationally recognised award for your hard work on waste, by participating in the **Eco-Schools** programme. As you progress towards the Green Flag, you should be moving up the **'waste hierarchy'** by focusing more on reduce and reuse, while keeping your recycling and composting systems high profile and working efficiently. For further 3Rs 'how to' guides see: zone.recycledevon.org/3Rs-practical-information

Campaigns to reduce packed lunch waste (page 2) and food waste (page 3) are great ways to integrate your Eco-Schools work into the **curriculum**. They also generate data to show that you are making a measurable **impact**.

Don't forget to include reduce messages in your **Eco Code** to give them a high profile. For more information on Eco-Schools see: www.eco-schools.org.uk



Your 'reduce' ideas

If you have examples of how your school has reduced waste we would love to include them in the next version of this leaflet. Please email recycle@devon.gov.uk

For further guidance, or to subscribe to the **Devon Schools Sustainability Bulletin**, which is emailed every half term with information on free resources, funding opportunities and training, please email recycle@devon.gov.uk

There are many resources to support your school's waste reduction work at:

zone.recycledevon.org/teachers

Don't let Devon go to waste