

Don't let Devon go to waste

at school



# How to recycle at school

Having reduced and reused as much as possible, it's time to think about the last of the 3Rs: RECYCLE. This guide focuses on 'dry' recycling; for information on composting see: [zone.recycledevon.org/composting](http://zone.recycledevon.org/composting).

## Recycling Systems

Devon district councils offer schools a recycling collection for paper and other 'dry' materials, and **all** provide internal collection containers. Many district councils have officers who help schools set up new recycling systems, and some offer schools a food waste collection service. Contact your local district council to find out what is available in your area - for contact details see: [zone.recycledevon.org/contact-us](http://zone.recycledevon.org/contact-us)



## Recycling containers

A bit of thought about recycling containers will help to optimise the amount pupils and staff recycle in your school.

**Points to consider include:**

**1) Location:** if possible, put a recycling container in every classroom and office. Make sure they are clearly visible and easily accessible - if adults and pupils have to hunt to find the recycling container they may resort to using the bin instead. Most schools locate recycling containers next to rubbish bins; however some find that this leads to contamination of the recycling and choose to separate them.

**2) Type:** make sure that recycling containers cannot be confused with rubbish bins. With younger pupils use a box or other container that is very definitely not a bin. Older pupils will benefit from clear colour coding e.g., green bins for recycling, red for rubbish. Don't rely only on written labels to distinguish between recycling and rubbish bins – busy staff and pupils may not stop to read them.

**3) Consistency:** it helps all users of the school building if the same recycling containers are used in all rooms. A blue recycling box in one classroom and a yellow recycling bucket in another can lead to confusion. If possible, adopt a whole-school approach to location as well. This is particularly important for younger children and those with special educational needs.



**4) Size:** some schools have boxes or bins in large rooms that generate a lot of recycling, and recycling trays for smaller rooms. It can be a positive message if recycling bins are larger than the rubbish bins – this creates the expectation that a lot will be recycled and very little binned.

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## Labelling

Clear labelling for recycling containers is essential. Don't rely on people knowing what can be recycled at school, even if your recycling system is similar to that of nearby homes. Ask pupils to design their own labels, perhaps holding a competition for the best design to promote ownership of the collection scheme.

→ **WRAP also have downloadable labels to stick to school bins:** <http://partners.wrap.org.uk/collections/105/>



## Collections

If possible, involve pupils in collecting the recycling from around the school and taking it to a central location, ready to be put out for the collection crew.

Some schools have a recycling monitor in each class / tutor group, while others have a recycling team or give this responsibility to the Eco Committee. Ensure to discuss health and safety with the pupils.

## Bin Checks

Pupil monitors can do regular visual checks of the rubbish bins to ensure they do not contain materials that should be recycled.

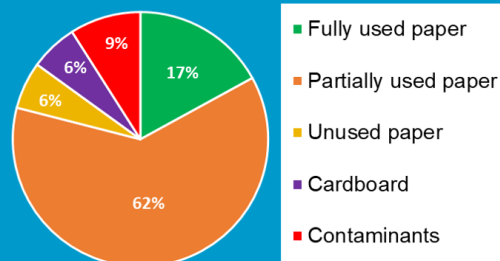
A weekly/monthly check, with feedback of the results to the rest of the school (e.g., in assembly on a noticeboard) will be a useful reminder of the importance of recycling the correct materials.

**To download a 'bin check' recording sheet see:** [zone.recycledevon.org/waste-audit-activities/#3rs-monitoring-activities](http://zone.recycledevon.org/waste-audit-activities/#3rs-monitoring-activities)

## Contamination

However well you set up your recycling system and complete regular bin checks, you still may experience problems with pupils or staff putting the wrong materials into your recycling containers. The pupils collecting the recycling can be asked to keep an eye out for contamination issues, and to leave feedback for teachers and pupils.

Results of recycling audit



## Audits

A **yearly recycling audit** will monitor contamination levels, as well as the amount of recycling in your school. The audit provides excellent opportunities for data handling in a real-life context, and is the perfect activity for a class to address the Eco-Schools

**'Waste'** topic: [zone.recycledevon.org/eco-schools](http://zone.recycledevon.org/eco-schools)

- For resources to **conduct an audit** with your pupils: [zone.recycledevon.org/waste-audit-activities/](http://zone.recycledevon.org/waste-audit-activities/)
- Alternatively, your school can **book a waste audit or workshop** with our experienced Waste Educators: [zone.recycledevon.org/workshops/](http://zone.recycledevon.org/workshops/)



After conducting a waste audit through the WASP programme, Totnes St John's Church of England Primary School have increased their recycling and composting rate from **37% to 81%**.



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## Hands-on Recycling

Pupils of all ages enjoy making their own recycled paper, which helps them understand the circular nature of recycling and motivates them to recycle as much as possible. For instructions and videos explaining how to make hand-made recycled paper at school see: [zone.recycledevon.org/papermaking](https://zone.recycledevon.org/papermaking)



## Hard-to-recycle Items

BiC in collaboration with TerraCycle have organised over 740 collection points to recycle old highlighters, board markers and felt tips of any brand. Walkers ([walkers.co.uk/recycle](https://walkers.co.uk/recycle)) have a similar scheme collecting crisp packets. Take them to a collection point, or schools can apply for their own collections. Visit TerraCycle for more information: [terracycle.com/en-GB](https://terracycle.com/en-GB).



## Assemblies and Competitions

Even in schools where recycling is firmly embedded in daily life, it is still important to use assemblies and whole-school competitions to keep the profile of waste issues high. Younger pupils who start school and readily adopt the good recycling habits expected of them, may not know why recycling is important to preserve our natural resources. As pupils get older they will be able to understand more complex issues, such as resource depletion and how the energy saved by recycling helps to reduce our carbon footprint to combat climate change.

## Include all staff

Although educating the pupils is imperative if you want to improve recycling in your school, often there is premises staff who are instrumental for the success of your school recycling. **Educate them as to why it is important to recycle, that it is part of the school's ethos and an expectation of their job description/contract that staff correctly separate waste for recycling into the proper bins.** Some other examples include:

- Ensure **kitchen staff** have appropriate recycling bins close to the preparation areas.
- Make sure **caretakers** are taking the recycling to the right bins outside and check for any contamination, e.g., cardboard boxes in the general waste when they could be recycled.
- If the **cleaners** replace the bin liners everyday, even when the bin isn't full; suggest if they could just remove the few pieces into a larger bin bag rather than using a new plastic bag liner everyday – which is such a waste!



## Campaigns and the curriculum

Local and national campaigns, such as Recycle Week in September (organised by [WRAP](#)), and Waste Week in March (organised by the [Pod](#)) provide a way to refresh your approach to waste education, as well as the challenge of competing with other schools to reduce a particular type of waste.

The [Pod website](#) also includes a wide range of downloadable teaching resources to help embed sustainability into the curriculum, and is closely linked to the Eco-Schools programme.

## Composting food waste

Composting is great way to recycle your food waste on site and can also save your school money. Traditional composting is popular in schools across the UK; Devon is leading the way with supporting schools to compost their cooked food waste as well as peels and cores. View our composting teaching resources on our website: [zone.recycledevon.org/composting/](https://zone.recycledevon.org/composting/)

## Recycling and Eco-Schools

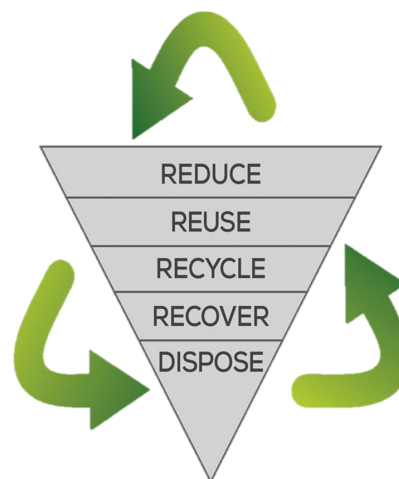
Engage staff and pupils and gain a nationally recognised award for your hard work on waste by participating in the Eco-Schools programme. Start your **'Waste'** topic by reviewing and improving your recycling, then move up the 'waste hierarchy' by focusing on reducing and reusing.

The waste audit, recycling audit and bin checks described on **pages 2 and 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 messages about how and why to recycle in your Eco Code to give them a high profile.

→ For more information on Eco-Schools visit:

[www.eco-schools.org.uk](https://www.eco-schools.org.uk).

→ To find out how we can help you achieve your green flag award: [zone.recycledevon.org/eco-schools](https://zone.recycledevon.org/eco-schools)



- If your school has been **recycling** waste we would love to hear about it!
- **Email** [recycle@devon.gov.uk](mailto:recycle@devon.gov.uk) for guidance or to subscribe to the Devon Schools **Sustainability Bulletin**, with information on free resources, funding and training.
- For further 3Rs 'how to' guides: [zone.recycledevon.org/3rs/](https://zone.recycledevon.org/3rs/)
- Explore our teaching resources: [zone.recycledevon.org/teachers](https://zone.recycledevon.org/teachers)

