

# How to reduce plastic waste for schools and colleges.

Single use plastic is everywhere and within a school setting the main areas of concern are, classrooms, dining halls and sports fields/ events. If the pupils and staff are motivated to reduce plastic waste considerable environmental and cost benefits can be achieved. It requires the school to adopt a sustainable ethos from the top down and for everyone, from staff to pupils, to understand they all have a role to play.

## **Awareness:**

The school should set its own sustainability targets and these must be shared with staff, pupils and parents. This can be done through school and class assemblies, newsletters and through a pupil-led eco group.

## **Identify key areas:**

Within each sector of the school, where is the most plastic waste coming from? Consider plastic drinking bottles, lunch service utensils, refreshments served at school functions and sports event. How many single use items can be identified within each sector and what alternatives can be offered to replace them? What are the costs to the school per unit, collection and disposal.



## **Tackle one area at a time:**

Set realistic and achievable goals so that success builds enthusiasm to make even more sustainable changes. Some key areas to consider are listed below:

- **Water bottles:**

Does the school sell disposable water and other bottles and if so how many per day/ per week? Where are the used bottles deposited after use? Is there scope to collect and recycle bottles? Are there water refill stations around the school so pupils can refill their own reusable bottles? Are pupils encouraged to bring in a refill bottle?

- **Events:**

Can reusable plates, mugs, bowls be used to serve hot drinks and food for events.



- **Hot meal service:**

Does the school serve food on reusable crockery or is a disposable plate/ bowl in use? What are the costs of any disposable items used per week and how much would it cost to replace with reusable alternatives. What would the return on investment look like in weeks/years

**General Considerations:**

Storage space for reusable cups, bowls, plates, cutlery

Dishwashing facilities for reusable items.

Easy to stack and air dry after washing.

Staff available to collect, wash and store items on a daily basis.

Easy to handle tableware, good thermal properties so can be safely hand-held by all age groups involved.

Ensure the replacement is suitable for the portion size served.

Dedicated recycling bins for single use bottles only at easy to find locations

Clear bold signage around the school

Educate the whole school to ensure everyone is committed to the change and why it is important

**Key Steps for change are as follows:**

**ASSESS** the current situation and collect data to find the baseline from which to start.

**IDENTIFY** one area to tackle at a time.

**COUNT** the number of units items used per day. week, month and what this costs the school per item and for disposal.

**FIND** alternative items, eg ceramic plates, reusable china bowls, refill bottles etc

**EDUCATE** the school to make everyone aware of the reason for switching to a reusable alternative. Use posters, assembly talks etc

**IMPLEMENT** the change over

**MONITOR** the switch and assess losses and breakages etc.

**MOVE** on to the next challenge.

