

Organising a Litter Pick

A litter pick can be carried out in conjunction with a survey or independently. Even if a simple litter pick is carried out it should still be possible to generate some discussions with pupils about particular problem areas or types and sources of litter. They might also be able to come up with some potential solutions to try.

One-off, larger scale litter picks involving the whole school are a great way of raising awareness across the school and can be widened to involve members of the community and cover areas outside the school if appropriate.

Before the Litter Pick

Choose the area to be litter picked. This could be part or all of the school grounds or a local litter hotspot like a play park or sports field.

A risk assessment should be completed for the activity - this is the responsibility of the teacher/school undertaking the litter pick. A generic risk assessment is available which provides a useful starting point and more assistance can be provided by the Litter Education Support Officer.

Permission slips and/or advice to wear suitable clothing should be issued to pupils before the litter pick.

If there is a chance that there might be dangerous items like broken glass, dog mess or needles in the litter pick area contact the Litter Education Officer beforehand to arrange a check of the area by street cleansing staff. They will remove dangerous items but leave the litter.

Decide if you are going to recycle any of the rubbish that you collect. It should be possible to recycle whole glass bottles (not broken glass), drinks cans and plastic bottles (must be empty). Anything that is to be recycled must be collected separately (blue bags are available). All waste for recycling should be segregated during or after the litter pick so that cans, plastic bottles and glass bottles are all in separate bags ready for recycling.

Recycling is to be encouraged to support other work being undertaken by the school in terms of waste prevention/minimisation, however, depending on the area being cleaned the recyclate may not be of a suitable quality to enable recycling, e.g. if bottles are full of mud and nobody is prepared to clean them out first.

The Litter Pick

Divide the class into small groups of about 4-6 pupils -each group can cover a different area. Each group will need the following equipment:

- Gloves to be worn by everyone
- Tabards to be worn by everyone if available
- Litter pickers to be issued to everyone
- Handihoops and bin bags to be issued. Either 1 per person if your area is heavily littered or can be one between 2-3 pupils for cleaner areas. (Handihoops make it easier for the bags to be held open, particularly in the wind.)
- Blue bags to be issued to 1-2 people for collection of recyclates if necessary

It is important to check that adequate supervision is available.

Before starting the litter pick agree a time and location for the groups to return.

Pupils should be instructed to stay on pavements and to respect other people's property. It may be Ok to pick litter from someone's hedge but pupils should not be allowed into private gardens

Take photos during the litter pick for your eco schools folder and any other displays or newsletters.

Once all of the litter and recyclates have been collected make sure you keep a record of how much litter was found and if possible weigh it. The results can be presented to others in the school or community using notice boards, assemblies and newsletters. If regular litter picks are done you might be able to record an improvement over time.

Health and Safety

The following health and safety advice should be followed:

- Everyone must wear gloves. The gloves are not protective gloves and are only designed to keep hands clean.
- Wear strong, sensible shoes, boots or wellies
- Litter must only be picked up using the litter pickers to avoid being injured by dangerous litter.
- Do not attempt to pick up any dangerous items such as dog mess, broken glass or needles. Information about dangerous litter should be passed on to the appropriate person (janitor for litter in school grounds, street cleansing for litter outside school grounds or 24 hr control centre for needles)
- Do not pick up heavy or sharp items of rubbish.
- Groups must stay together.
- Bags should only be half filled to avoid them getting too heavy and should be held away from the body to avoid injury from sharp items.
- After the litter pick everyone should wash their hands before eating or drinking.