

## Waste Free Lunch

How much litter is caused by what people have for their lunch? Look on the dining room floor or in the playground after lunch and what do you see?

Drinks cans, cartons and plastic bottles; crisp bags; plastic sandwich wrappers; paper bags, sweet and biscuit wrappers; plastic yoghurt pots and dip containers; and finally lots of left over food. All of this rubbish ends up in the landfill site.

A Waste Free Lunch is a challenge to everyone to make as little rubbish as they can from their lunch. If something does have to be thrown away after lunch choose something that can be reused or recycled. Here are some ideas:

- Only take what you can eat – there should be **NO Food Thrown Away** after lunch. If someone else makes your packed lunch for you tell them what you like and don't like so that they don't waste time and money putting something in that you just put in the bin.
- Put sandwiches etc. in a reusable plastic box that can be washed and used again and again.
- Take juice or water in a reusable plastic bottle or sports bottle so it can be washed and used again.
- Bring some yoghurt/desert in a small plastic container that can be washed and used again.
- Use cutlery that can be washed and used again.
- Eat fruit as the peelings and cores can be composted (a sort of recycling).

If you can't do these things remember cans and plastic bottles can be recycled so shouldn't go in the litter bin. Aluminium foil can be recycled (with cans) so is better than cling-film for wrapping sandwiches etc. If you buy biscuits, cakes, crisps etc in large quantities at the supermarket they can be divided up into small reusable containers. Diluting juice in large containers can be used to fill a bottle rather than a carton or pouch. These ideas save money too.

Small amounts of crumbs and leftovers can be fed to the birds on a bird table but make sure that they can eat all of the food you leave. Don't encouraging rats and mice or gulls and crows by feeding too much and in the wrong place.

### Things to Avoid

Crisps – crisp packets are a mixture of plastic and foil and cannot be recycled or used again.

Sweets – many are the same as crisp packets and difficult to recycle.

Juice Cartons – It looks like cardboard but is lined with plastic and/or foil so cannot be recycled. Also the straws and straw wrappers often end up as litter and are really difficult to pick up.

Juice Pouches – Again these are made of a foil/plastic mixture so cannot be recycled.

Plastic Bags – Can only be recycled at some supermarkets

Yoghurt pots – difficult to use again although some can be used for planting seeds and others have a cardboard cover which can be recycled.

A Waste Free Lunch can start off as a competition or a one off event but it could become a regular activity, perhaps once a week or even every day!

**Here's how to start:**

1. Weigh all of the rubbish left after an ordinary dinner time. Remember to include the litter picked up off the floor and playground as well as the rubbish put into the bins. Record litter and waste in bins separately to make it easy to see what improvements have been made later.
2. Promote your Waste Free Lunch day. Make sure everyone knows when it is and what to do. Use posters, assemblies, notice boards and letters/newsletters home to parents.
3. If recycling and composting facilities are available make sure that they are in place before the Waste Free Lunch takes place. Recycling of paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles should be possible at most Falkirk Council schools.
4. On Waste Free Lunch day weigh the rubbish and litter at the same time after dinner time as you did before. Record how much has been collected as litter, in rubbish bins, recycling bins and compost bins.
5. Present the information gathered in tables and graphs and make sure everyone in the school (and parents) hears how it went.

**Ideas for discussions and follow up action**

Did it make a difference?

Was there less litter on Waste Free Lunch day and was less waste going to the landfill site too?

Calculate how much litter and waste could be prevented in a week, a month and over the school year.

Did most people eat a healthier lunch on Waste Free Lunch Day? Why?

Which cost more - the Waste Free Lunch or an ordinary one?