

Schools Guide To Litter Picking



CLIMATE
EDUCATION



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Is litter an issue in your school or local community?

Taking part in or organising a litter pick is a great way to enhance your local natural environment by removing waste which might have been blown in from other areas.

To support you in a successful litter pick both on your school grounds and in your community, we have compiled this simple step-by-step guide.



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Importance Of Waste Management

Litter is one of the main causes of pollution, which can make its way into our soil and freshwater sources, negatively impacting humans and animals.

In fact, 60% of water pollution is attributed to litter. If more of our waste was disposed of responsibly the impacts would be wide reaching and long lasting

Environmental Dangers

- **Wildlife** – The RSPCA receives 7,000 calls a year about litter-related incidents, from badger cubs with plastic can holders embedded in their necks to hedgehogs with their heads wedged in empty tins.
- **Contamination** – Fly-tipping of garden waste can allow invasives such as Japanese knotweed to spread.
- **Land Use** – An area plagued by litter can become less visited, footpaths become neglected and this can lead to green spaces being brought for development.
- **Flooding** – Litter is known to clog drainage systems and waterways, which can lead to flooding.
- **Soil Contamination** – As litter decays, it can release hazardous chemicals into the soil, which affects plant growth and food systems.

Educational Benefits

- **Environmental Responsibility** – engaging hands-on activities like litter picking enables young people to understand the impacts of actions on the environment.
- **Environmental Stewardship** – they learn that small actions can make a big difference in preserving nature and keeping areas clean.
- **Volunteering** – as part of wider community projects and other learning opportunities, fostering a sense of pride in their achievements.
- **Outdoor Learning** – providing clean natural spaces for learning experiences, and connecting students with nature.

Health Impacts

- **Improves Scenery** – enhancing the aesthetic appeal of school grounds, creating a more inviting and pleasant environment for students, staff, and visitors.
- **Physical Activities** – provides an opportunity to spend time improving fitness levels through, walking, bending and reaching.
- **Clean Food & Water** – long term benefits of sustainable food and clean water.

Litter Picking Planning

Stage 1 - Preparation

Before starting there are a few things to consider. This handy checklist will assist you having everything planned before your litter pick takes place.

- Consider the date and time
- Choose your location
- Contact your local council
- Spread the word
- Check you have all the equipment needed
- Undertake a risk assessment

Consider the date, time and location

Is there a specific location you would like to tidy? You could choose one large area such as your school grounds or you might like to go to your local park, or area surrounding your school.

Once you decide on your location, you need to set a date and time. Think about what the weather will be like e.g. high winds and rain can make litter picking difficult.

Consider how long you want participants to take part. You might be planning a whole day event with multiple groups

taking part and switching every 1-2 hours. Or you might like to concentrate on a particular time of the day such as just after break or lunch time.

Litter picking can be used to:

- Build links in your community
- Engage parents/families/school governors
- Connect participants to the natural environment

It should never be used as a punishment .

Contact your local council

Your local council should be able to assist you with some of the planning of your litter pick. You can request to borrow equipment and you can also book a waste collection of everything you have collected. For more detailed information about what support is available from your council, check your local website.

They might also have local contacts for other organisations that you can get involved with.

Spread the word

Make sure that everyone knows what is happening. You could advertise your event in the school newsletter, put posters up on noticeboards or distribute leaflets to parents/governors. It really depends on who you would like to be involved.

Even if you are only doing a small litter pick on your school grounds with your Eco Team, it is still worth telling people what you are doing in advance. You might have site staff who collect litter at certain times of the day, so working with them will ensure that your event is successful.

What do you need?

When undertaking a litter pick it is important that you have the right equipment available for all eventualities and that everyone is suitably dressed to take part.

Gloves – to prevent any cuts and for hygiene

High-Vis Vest – to ensure you are seen if completing a litter pick in a public place

Grabbers – to reduce bending over and picking up anything with hands

Waste Bags – to collect the waste in

Sharps Bin – this won't be needed for all litter picks, but

should be considered depending on your location

Sturdy Closed Toed Footwear – personal safety

Dress Code – appropriate for the weather

Undertake a risk assessment

Health and safety is very important when undertaking a litter pick. As part of your planning you will be required to complete a risk assessment.

We have included an example one to get you started.

Example Risk Assessment

Hazard/Risk	Who?	Control Measures	Additional Measures/Comments
<i>Hazard – something that may cause harm or damage</i> <i>Risk – the chance of it happening</i>	Staff, Students, Volunteers, Visitors etc	Controls – ways of making the activity safer by removing or reducing risk	Comments for ongoing measures which might need to take place or change
Uneven Ground – Slips, trips, falls injury	All	Correct footwear (sturdy & closed toe) to be worn, made aware of uneven ground and any areas out of bounds	Check the location on day to ensure clear access
Tools & Equipment – Cuts, scrapes injury	All	Ensure everyone is briefed and shown safe use of tools. PPE equipment such as gloves and high-vis vests are provided. Equipment is in good working order and counted out and in. Keep tools in a central area while not in use.	Continue to monitor usage, behaviour and equipment
Waste Handling – Disease illness	All	Gloves are worn at all times and grabbers used. Ensure that hands are kept away from face and mouth during activity. Hand washing is in place and planned for following the activity.	Monitor hand washing to ensure all takes part
Adverse Weather – Hypothermia, Heat Exhaustion illness	All	Prepare for weather, appropriate clothing, sun cream, sun hat, coat, waterproofs etc. Water or hot drinks available as needed. Limit time spent in conditions	Monitor weather – postpone or reduce session
Insects & Wildlife – Bites, Stings, Thorns illness	All	Identify any plants that could cause harm and make participants aware. First aider identified during activity, report any incidents immediately. First aid kit is available during the activity	Check site on day – avoid any areas necessary

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Lifting & Carrying Equipment – Injury	Adults	Ensure only adults carry and lift large / heavy equipment. Correct lifting techniques should be used at all times. Use additional equipment such as trolleys to carry equipment across long distances. Do not move heavy waste items.	Identify unsafe practices and correct where necessary Report heavy waste items to local council for removal
Dangerous Waste – Sharps, Broken Glass Chemicals – Injury	All	Where relevant – Do not touch and alert lead adult. Cease working in the area. Dispose of needles/syringes using a sharps box. Leave any suspicious or chemical waste and report to your local council or Environment Agency for removal. Do not try to remove any dog foul waste	Any accidental piercing or contact should be treated in A&E immediately
Location – Roads, Rivers – Injury	All	All adults aware of the locations being used. Close supervision of students during the activity. Students not asked or permitted to litter pick close to the edges of roads or rivers where there would be a higher risk of injury. High-Vis Vests to be worn at all times.	Consideration of location being used, age of students and ratios

Stage 2 – On The Day

Carry out any last-minute checks, including

- Weather
- Equipment
- Meeting & First Aid Points
- Group Details
- Waste Collection Point

Holding whole school events like assemblies reminds everyone of what is happening and how important this is.

If you have organised a large group to litter pick you may need to split everyone down into smaller working groups with a designated area.

Ensure that all of the adults are aware of your risk assessment and that any safety talks take place with all participants prior to starting.

You may decide that you would like to do an audit of the types of litter being collected. This will help students understand where this litter might be coming from e.g. local take-away, school lunchboxes etc. They can also get involved in ways to prevent this following the event.

Remember to celebrate the success of the event and the benefits this will have. It might also be worth having conversation with regards to what actions could be taken to

reduce litter in the future and even remove the need to organise further litter picks.

Make sure you store your bags of waste safely, whilst waiting from your waste to be collected, if needed.

Stage 3 – Post Litter Pick

Once you have completed your litter pick share what you have achieved with others either within school or in your local community, through social media, local newsletters and the press.

Take pictures of your success and the impact you have had.

Collectively have a de-brief of what you found and what other actions you could take to have further and bigger impacts.

This could include thoughts and conversations from the day as well as new ideas such as adding more bins to your playground, writing to your local council, contacting the local take-away.

Organising and taking part in a litter pick is great to raise awareness of an issue but it shouldn't be something that is needed on a long term basis. Other solutions should be sort to try and reduce or eliminate the issue for the benefit of all.