

for Sustainability: Purchasing and Waste

Introduction

Did you know?

- The average person throws away their own body weight in rubbish every seven weeks.
- Every day the UK produces enough waste to fill Trafalgar Square – or enough to fill the Royal Albert Hall in less than two hours.
- Eleven million tonnes of paper and cardboard are consumed in the UK each year.

(Source: Every Action Counts, www.everyactioncounts.org.uk)

About this guide

This Sustainability: Purchasing and Waste Mini Guide offers advice about setting up and running a 'reduce, reuse and recycle' (RRR) club, where members participate in activities that inspire them and explore practical ways to help reduce their carbon footprints. Ideally, a RRR club would be run by an adult with specialist science or environmental knowledge.

This guide will provide you with lots of ideas for introducing sustainable development to your after-school study support programme.

Although this may initially involve only a few children and young people, it is a good approach to ways of thinking and acting which, in time, will become embedded as part of your whole-school sustainability policy and practice.



The National Sustainability Framework

Waste, and the throw-away culture that encourages it, can be tackled through sustainable consumption. By adopting a 'reduce, reuse and recycle' approach, and by using local goods and services of high environmental standards, schools can reduce costs and support ethical markets in their communities. (*Sustainable schools for pupils, communities and the environment*, DCSF, 2008)

The National Sustainability Framework introduces eight 'doorways' through which schools may choose to initiate or extend their sustainable school activity, and to embed it in whole-school policy and practice.

One of the doorways that enables this to be accessed in an immediately practical and manageable way is 'Purchasing and waste'. If these issues are important to you and to children/young people in your area, then setting up a 'reduce, reuse and recycle' (RRR) club could be just what you're looking for. It could:

- give young people a practical understanding of how the earth's natural resources are threatened
- help increase awareness in your school and local community of the importance of conserving those resources
- contribute to your school's sustainability targets
- provide members with a range of fun challenges, hands-on projects and opportunities to generate their own ideas
- lead to their taking more personal responsibility for reducing their 'carbon footprint' and for playing a part in educating others.

A varied menu of after-school study support activities is a key element in the core offer of extended services. Evidence shows that participation in study support activities can lead to improvements in young people's self-esteem, achievements, attitudes to learning, classroom behaviour, and school attendance.

Schools might set up RRR clubs as part of their programme of activities that ensure a safe place for children, as well as meeting childcare sufficiency requirements. It is essential that all children have equal access to these services. For more information on the benefits of study support/out-of-school-hours learning (oshl), visit www.continyou.org.uk/studysupportetc.

Schools that offer extended services place themselves at the heart of their communities and offer resources to those communities. By developing sound sustainability policies and practices, schools will have a strong influence on local affairs, supporting and enabling local communities to become more sustainable.



Top tip!

For more information about the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) policy on sustainable schools, visit www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools.

Why run a reduce, reuse and recycle club?

Using waste management as the starting point for your club can enable you to provide activities for young people to:

- gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their environment – local, national and global
- consider and experience the benefits and challenges of living in a consumer society
- understand that, as consumers, they have choices that impact on others, and on the environment
- gain first-hand, practical experience of the processes involved in recycling
- gain confidence in putting forward their views to others who may not be similarly committed
- take part in decisions that inform school policy and ethos
- monitor their own and their group's carbon footprint.

Knowing which outcomes you want to achieve will inform the aims and objectives of your club, and will help you decide whether or not to identify a target group. If you decide to target a particular group of students, aim to reserve some places for others, which you can allocate on a 'first-come-first-served' basis.

Top tips!

- It is worth involving your members as much as possible in deciding on, organising and evaluating the activities. Not only will it give them a greater sense of ownership, but they will also have an increased commitment to making the activities or club successful.
- Offer a range of fun activities; this will help members to recognise and develop a variety of transferable skills that will be useful both in and out of school.
- To ensure your club is successful, ensure that you identify shared targets and objectives when engaging with partners and other organisations.

What should your club 'feel' like?

Not everyone will be naturally drawn to a RRR club. However, by using a range of approaches and by recognising how different members prefer to learn, you may be surprised at how many members you attract and retain.

Because participation in study support is voluntary, whether or not your club is a success will depend on the culture you and your members create. Try to develop a space where:

- the atmosphere is informal, fun and relaxed
- members are treated as individuals and feel their views are encouraged and listened to
- activities are different from lessons, and members have greater control over their own learning
- members have a range of opportunities to work both individually and as part of a team.

If these elements are right, you will have a sound basis for a successful club.

Top tip!

Spend the first session inviting members to interview each other about their ideas and areas of interest. Use the findings to shape future sessions.

Waste management is about looking at the cause and effects of the waste that is produced by our society, and about finding solutions to the problems it creates. Among other outcomes, a term of well-planned activities will provide members with the opportunity to:

- consider the cause of a problem, and to use their findings to identify solutions
- understand the benefits of working individually on small tasks, and contribute to a larger project
- develop and enhance their ability to work effectively within a team
- gain a valuable insight into how to set, work towards, monitor and achieve personal and team goals.

Top tip!

Try varying the approach your club takes, the activities it offers, and the ways in which sessions are led; this will help you to attract a greater number of members and keep them coming back for more.

Including the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle in your club

There are several key principles that your club could follow to help reduce the waste sent to landfill sites. Consider these when you are setting RRR challenges and targets.

- 1 **Promote waste reduction:** Raise awareness among your members about the amount of rubbish sent to landfill and the need to reduce waste and to recycle materials. Schools, clubs and community groups have a role to play in reducing our collective and unsustainable level of waste. Use scrap paper for notes. Try not to waste paper. Buy items that come in minimal or no packaging.

- 2 **Reuse where possible and avoid throwaway items:** Encourage your club to commit to using as many reusable goods or items as possible. If you provide refreshments, use china mugs or glasses and metal cutlery, rather than disposable polystyrene cups and plastic cutlery. Use refillable ink cartridges in your printers. Doing these things could reduce the expenses of your club, as well as helping to reduce the amount of rubbish sent to landfill sites.
- 3 **Recycle:** If you need to throw away an item, check to see if it can be recycled first. Use recycled paper and other products made from recycled materials. Aim to reduce the size of your rubbish bags. Organise collections of any paper and cardboard, plastic, glass, books, clothes, toner cartridges, even mobile phones that are no longer needed. Better still, set up a collection point in your school so other members of the school and community can bring items for collection. See the next section: 'What activities could you provide, and how?'
- 4 **Monitor and evaluate:** Ensure that all members are aware of the impact of their own practice, and are eager to commit to reducing it. Encourage them to set realistic personal targets. Using one of the online tools (referred to in the 'Useful resources' section on page 10), create a picture of the 'group carbon footprint'. Revisit this regularly, and reward and celebrate positive change.

Case study – Expert binners

Pupils at **West Moors Middle School** in Dorset asked a local recycling company to help them with their recycling practice. The company donated large skips and enough bins for each classroom and office to have two: one for paper and one for cardboard. All children in Year 8 have a specific responsibility around the school, so a designated group empties daily the contents of all these bins into the skips, which are collected every two weeks by the recycling company. Paper and cardboard packaging is also collected from the kitchen.

The school approached East Dorset District Council (EDDC), which has an excellent record of raising community awareness about waste and recycling, and of working with schools. The Council has supplied West Moors with brown bins and biodegradable bags to collect food waste from the kitchen and canteen. Every child is responsible for putting their own food waste into these bins after lunch. The Brown Bin Scheme, launched by EDDC in 2004, reduces biodegradable waste which, in land-fill, produces harmful methane and leachate. Instead, the waste is taken to a composting plant for treatment and converted into a soil improver for use on farms and in gardens.

All ink cartridges used by the school are sold for recycling. This provides valuable income for the school and the IT technician is always looking out for which companies provide the best deals. The IT department is aware that even better practice – both in terms of making savings to the school budget and lessening the impact on the environment – would be to refill cartridges and reuse them, rather than recycle. They are currently researching the best way to go about this.

The Safety, Health, Environment and Fire (SHEF) sub-committee of the governing body regularly reviews the school's sustainability practice, and believes in the importance of embedding reducing, reusing and recycling into the thinking of every child.

What activities could you provide, and how?

The kind of activities run in your RRR club will depend on the facilities/equipment at your disposal, the skills or interests of the staff running the club, and the interests of the members.

Because waste management issues are all around us and concern us all, there is no limit to how you involve other people and widen resources in your club. Local people, businesses and services can all offer rewarding opportunities to enrich your club activities.

Here are ways of doing this:

- Link with environmental groups and organisations and ask members to come and speak to, or work with, your club.
- Contact local businesses and services for information on their waste management policy and practice.
- Approach local businesses to 'sponsor' the club – they may be able to offer materials such as recycled paper, or they may even volunteer time.
- Approach your local council's recycling officer before you start work on a recycling scheme to see if your club is eligible for recycling credits; this is money which, if the council agrees, would be paid to your group for every tonne of recyclable materials your members collect.
- Ask your local council's recycling officer to put you in touch with local companies that collect materials for recycling.
- Ask local recycling companies if you can arrange a tour of their facilities, or invite representatives to explain the science behind recycling.
- Register for the Eco Schools programme. As well as encouraging all children and young people in your school to take responsibility for the future of their own environment, the scheme encourages pupil involvement and ownership and leads to an increased sense of responsibility. They can work towards the Bronze and Silver Awards and the Green Flag. They may also be able to apply for grant funding for a variety of projects.

It's a good idea to encourage members to take responsibility for approaching guest speakers, organising visits, and researching these and other club activities. This will help develop key skills and encourage independent learning. By working with your members, you can develop an inclusive and imaginative range of activities that can include subjects such as citizenship, science, art and drama in their learning about sustainability.

Case study – Collection scheme

At **Banbridge High School** in County Down, Northern Ireland, geography teacher Jennifer McClelland used a move into new premises to start the school's environmental journey, involving pupils all the way and doing great things for their confidence.

Jennifer was appalled by the lack of recycling facilities at the school, so she and a colleague organised recycling bins in each classroom, in the offices and in the corridors.

Then pupils started a community collection scheme for old mobile phones, ink cartridges, and so on, with profits going to charities. The school now recycles sixteen different types of waste.

Pupils sometimes arrive at Banbridge High School with their confidence a little dented by the selection process. However, the school's environmental activities boost their esteem and pride because the community and other groups now look to Banbridge High School as a centre of sustainable excellence.

(Source: *Schools ETC*, ContinYou, December 2007, Issue 7)

Tried and tested ideas

Listed below are some activities to get you started. Each activity could be the focus of a one-off project, or a term's worth of activities. Information about organisations that might be useful in providing information, advice or resources can be found on page 10.

1 Analysing

There are many ways that members could analyse the waste that is generated by a weekly shopping expedition. They could ask their parents to save all the packaging from a trip to the supermarket, for example, and this could form the basis for a discussion on (i) which products are the worst 'offenders'? (ii) what alternatives might there be? (iii) how can we each personally reduce the packaging for which we are responsible?

2 Composting

Start a school compost bin. If your school has a kitchen, ask the kitchen staff to save any compostable waste. Use the compost for planting and growing a variety of bulbs and seeds. Compare the progress of seeds planted in compost-enriched soil to those planted in compost-free soil. If you make surplus compost to your needs, bag it and sell it!

3 Creating

Run arts and crafts sessions using nothing but reused and recycled materials to make pictures, collages, musical instruments, tools, calendars, greeting cards – and many more. Award prizes for the most imaginative/attractive/useful creations. Involve members in judging and awarding.

4 Debating

Choose a 'hot' topic, such as plastic bags in supermarkets, or media pressure to upgrade electronic items such as mobile phones. Set members the task of researching the subject and participating in a debate.

5 Drama

As an extension or alternative to the debate activity, members could write, produce and perform their own short piece of drama to represent their findings and ideas. Investigate the possibility of performing to an audience: the rest of the school, parents, and the community. An alternative activity for older pupils might be to produce a TV programme, in the style of Horizon, for example, or Panorama.

6 Evaluating

It is really important that members frequently evaluate the progress of their own and their family's or school's RRR practices. RRR targets should be set for the group, and progress monitored against those targets. Improvement will encourage them and lead to further improvement. New targets can be set every term/year, and all group members should have a voice in defining those targets. The Every Action Counts website (referred to on page 11) provides a useful evaluation tool.

7 Generating income

Explore ways of generating income from collecting reusable or recyclable materials. Spare or leftover school materials such as metal, wood or cardboard might be used, or ask members to bring materials from home – toys or clothes they no longer use, for example. They might like to open a scrapstore for other schools or for the community. The income generated might go towards equipment for the school from which the children involved would directly benefit, or to an environmental charity.

8 Interviewing and writing

Members might like to interview other pupils, staff, their families and friends to find out their views or practices on RRR. Together with some 'facts and figures' about national waste management, this could form the basis for a regular newsletter or magazine. (See the Magazines Mini Guide for more ideas about how to run school magazine activities.)

9 Representing

Explore local children and young people's environmental groups, which may give some of your members the opportunity to represent their school and spread the word of their sustainability practice. Did you know that 2008 sees the third annual Youth Eco-Parliament in Prague? (See the Recycle More website referred to on page 11.) Perhaps young people from your school might be attending in the future.

10 Testing

Hold quizzes to test members' knowledge about waste management facts and figures. Involve members in setting questions and testing each other. As well as being a fun activity, the research undertaken in setting the questions will provide valuable learning. Many of the websites in the 'Useful resources' section of this guide offer a wealth of interesting and amazing facts and figures.



Essential checklist

Below is a summary of all the main issues you will need to consider as you set about planning your reduce, reuse and recycle study support activities or club. Taking the time to get everything right before you start will definitely help to sustain your club.

Find out what's needed

- What gaps are there in your existing provision?
- What do you want to achieve through your club?

Find the right time for your club

- If you are introducing a new club, when is the best day/time of day and what is the best frequency to attract members?
- What might affect pupils' ability to come to your club, for example, transport, other clubs, and community commitments?

Find the right staff

- Who is the best person to run your club, and how many staff will you need for each activity?
- Can you use older pupils to help run activities?

Involve others

- What existing/new partners could support your club?
- How will you approach them?

Cover the costs

- What resources (money and otherwise) will you need to provide your planned activities?
- What funding are you eligible to apply for and how long will the application process take?

Keep it safe

- What are the health and safety considerations of your provision?
- Do you need to undertake a risk assessment for your planned activities, including off-site visits?

Get pupils involved

- How can you involve pupils in developing and running new activities?
- Have you asked pupils what they are interested in?

Decide which pupils to target

- How will you identify which groups or individuals will benefit from your club?
- How will you encourage them to take part?

Promote your club

- How can you give your waste management club its own identity within the school?
- How can you turn waste management and recycling activities into publicity opportunities for the school?

Keep it going

- How will you review the success of your club and decide what you need to change in order to improve it?
- Who will you ask for views on your waste management activities, and what will you ask them?

Useful resources

Type 'recycling' into Google, or another search engine, and you will find literally thousands of resources. Dozens of new ones appear each week. Below are just some of the useful websites and organisations that support learning and action in this area.

BBC Recycling Game – www.bbc.co.uk/schools/barnabybear/games/recycle.shtml

A delightful animated game for Key Stage 1 pupils – help Barnaby Bear put all the items in the correct recycling bins!

Colchester Environmental Information Centre – www.en-form.supanet.com

This service aims to inform and educate the local population on environmental matters by offering a link between schools and other local groups and environmental education services. It also aims, through its website, to provide comprehensive information nationally on a range of environmental issues and services to assist local groups to achieve their environmental projects by building partnerships with like-minded groups, by helping with funding advice and providing general advice. Amongst other useful resources, this site includes directories of UK scrapstores and waste exchanges. These are very incomplete lists at the moment – if you know of any good scrapstores and waste exchanges in your area, please tell the Colchester Environmental Information Centre about them.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/index.htm

The recycling and waste section of DEFRA's website provides a wealth of authoritative news and information. It is particularly helpful for placing the issues of waste management within the bigger sustainability picture. The downloadable *Shoppers guide to green labels* is useful.

Eco Schools – www.eco-schools.org.uk

An international group of schools, co-ordinated by Environmental Campaigns (ENCAMS), contributes towards education for sustainable development and a better quality of life for local and global communities. Schools can register and follow a programme providing a framework to enable them to analyse their practice and to become more sustainable.

e4s (Education for Sustainability) – www.e4s.org.uk

Set up by a partnership of teachers, environmentalists and industrial organisations, this site provides free teaching resources, ideas and planning materials covering a range of projects involving the sustainable use of timber, water, textiles and issues about waste management.

Environmental Campaigns (ENCAMS) – www.encams.org

ENCAMS is a charity probably best known for running the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. As well as information about its many campaigns, its website includes advice and information about events and policy and research. It also includes a number of fun interactive games for children.

Envirowise – www.envirowise.gov.uk

A government-funded programme of free, confidential advice for UK businesses, which enables them to increase profitability and still reduce environmental impact. While aimed at companies, the website contains useful information and advice for any organisation aiming to become more sustainable.

Every Action Counts – www.everyactioncounts.org.uk

An organisation that provides advice and support to voluntary and community organisations wanting to reduce their impact on the environment, tackle climate change and improve their local areas. Registration is free, after which members have access to a variety of information, practical tips, games, and tools to measure their progress in ensuring that every action counts. Training is provided for community champions.

Google Carbon Footprint – www.google.co.uk/carbonfootprint

One of several sites that enable you to calculate your own carbon footprint and look at practical ways to reduce it.

Let's Recycle – www.letsrecycle.com

As well as daily updated recycling news, this site contains a useful directory of recycling and waste management companies, and an informative section on waste sector legislation. Club Recycle allows you to register for personal e-newsletters and up-to-the-minute information.

Mazuma Mobile – www.mazumamobile.com

One of an increasing number of companies that pays for redundant mobile phones, refurbishes them and sends them to developing countries, giving a clear message why throwing them away is bad for the planet.

Natural History Museum – www.nhm.ac.uk

The Natural History Museum provides national exhibitions, education programmes and on-line resources. Visit the Nature On-line/Environmental Change section on its website to find out about the global impact of climate change, rainforest destruction and overuse of resources.

Planet Science – www.planet-science.com

A first-class science education site, set up by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts). Click on the 'Out There' icon and then on 'Green Scene' to find a range of excellent information, projects, links, tips and games.

Recycle – www.recycle.co.uk

The 'original premier free giveaway website to recycle all your unwanted items for free to people in your area' This site is a bit like ebay – but items are free. So, there is no money to be made, but a lot of savings to local landfill.

Recycle More – www.recycle-more.co.uk

Described as 'a one-stop recycling information centre,' this site has sections dedicated to recycling at home, in business and in schools. It also includes the UK Youth Eco-Parliament website.

Recycle Now – www.recyclenow.com

A fun site containing lots of good ideas for reuse and recycling projects, featuring recycling champions, and recycling tips from celebrities. There is a Recycle Now helpline on 0845 331 3131.

The Recycled Products Guide – www.recycledproducts.org.uk

A useful resource that allows you to search for thousands of products made from recycled materials.

Recycling Expert – www.recyclingexpert.co.uk

This informative site, with a wealth of articles and case studies on a wide range of aspects of recycling, may be more useful for secondary school pupils than primary. It has a page dedicated to eco schools.

The Recycling Guide – www.recycling-guide.org.uk

This site offers information about why recycling is important, and how materials are recycled, as well as practical ideas about how to recycle and turn household and school rubbish into something useful. It includes a blog of up-to-the-minute news about recycling and reuse schemes, an ideas forum and links to other useful and interesting sites.

Unique Scrapstore – www.uniquescrapstore.com

Unique Scrap Store is the first online scrapstore in the UK. It operates in a similar way to other scrapstores, but offers online ordering and UK mainland delivery. It is a not-for-profit social enterprise, owned and operated by the Unique Coffee Bar charity, which supports young people in the Newark area.

WRAP – The Waste and Resource Action Programme – www.wrap.org.uk

WRAP is a private company that encourages and enables businesses and consumers to be more efficient in their use of materials. It provides a range of training courses, including a one and a half day course, Recycling in Schools, which aims to enable delegates to provide advice on strategies for recycling collection schemes in schools. The site also contains much authoritative information on the environmental benefits of recycling.



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This Extra Time Sustainability: Purchasing and Waste Mini Guide is one of a series of **free** guides to setting up and running study support clubs in and around your school:

Engineering
History
Libraries
Magazines
Modern foreign languages
Museums
Science
Sport and maths.

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The Extra Time Mini Guides can be downloaded from www.continyou.org.uk/miniguides.