

The best way to describe litter is to say it is waste in the wrong place. That is, rather than being placed in a bin or other waste container waste is left on the pavement, park or school field. Litter is untidy and unsightly and can affect people's view on the quality and safety of an area. Litter can consist of anything from a tiny sweet wrapper or an empty sandwich box to a discarded mattress in a public park. The majority of litter comes from people dropping it either on purpose or by accident, although some litter comes from other sources, for example wind-blown or natural litter.

### **Litter and schools**

Many schools have a litter problem to some degree. Controlling litter, and making sure that school grounds are cleaned up regularly, is an important priority. A school with a serious litter problem:

- Creates complaints from local residents and businesses
- Is off-putting to visitors
- Can be demoralising for staff and pupils
- Can be dangerous, due to broken glass or cans on the playing field
- Is breaking the law



In terms of the law, all state-funded schools have responsibilities to make sure that their grounds are kept free of litter. Any private individual can take a school to court for having litter in its grounds. A school can be fined up to £2,500 plus a daily fine until the litter is cleared.

Most people are aware that they shouldn't drop litter and the majority of adults feel very guilty when they do. However, research has shown that most children (particularly those aged 12+) do drop litter and are not ashamed to admit it. Children are more likely to bin their litter when in the company of their parents or teachers than when alone or with their friends. As primary school children are generally supervised quite closely, the litter problems in primary schools are often less severe than in secondary schools.

Research has also shown that children, in particular teenagers, do not respond well to the term 'litter', they use the term 'rubbish'. Litter is associated with adults and preachy messages, whereas rubbish is part of their everyday vocabulary, for example 'that was a rubbish film', 'what a load of rubbish'. Many Eco-Schools choose to tackle litter as one of their first priorities following their Environmental Review. It is a highly visible issue and one that is easily understood by all ages. A litter free school is very noticeable and can enhance the school's image in the local community. There are lots of ways to tackle litter in your

Action Plan. This can include raising awareness in class and at assemblies; appointing litter monitors to check/advise pupils not to drop litter and installing more bins or moving existing ones to problem areas.

### Run a Litter Campaign in Your School



CPRE and The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust have worked together to produce a new creative and inspiring education pack for schools revealing how litter can easily hurt or even kill wildlife, and the wider damage litter has on our environment.

The resource pack, How to Run a Whole School Litter Campaign, includes facts about litter and photographs that show wildlife injured by carelessly dropped rubbish.

Practical activities and lessons encourage children to understand the problem of litter and the harm it can do to wildlife and the wider environment.

[Download the Pack](#) (15.8MB PDF)

### Further information

To see how other schools have tackled litter visit the Case Studies section. The Links and Resources section provides details of organisations to contact for further help on this issue, as well as a range of promotional materials available to order to support anti-litter campaigns you may want to run in your school.