

Water is a crucial aspect of our lives. We use it not just for drinking and washing but also for industry, agriculture and making almost any kind of product, from hamburgers and tin cans to newspapers and cars.

Our demand for water has grown to the point that the natural water cycle can no longer keep up. Pollution, mainly caused by sewage leaks and chemical discharges, has made clean water a rare and valuable commodity.

- Less than 2% of the world's water supply is fresh water.
- Taking showers rather than baths would save enough water every week to make 1,000 cups of tea.
- A garden sprinkler uses as much water in half an hour as a family of four in a day.



Water organisations have an important role to play in managing, treating and distributing supplies to make sure that our demand for clean, fresh water is satisfied. But this process is expensive – and will become more so as our demand for water grows.

Water itself doesn't cost money but we do pay water companies for recycling water to supplement the natural recycling process of evaporation and rainfall. Water is big business in England and Wales, where water and sewerage services are mainly under private control. The more we waste water and the more polluted natural supplies get, the harder water companies have to work to make sure we have enough of the clean water we need – which means bigger water bills.

Water and schools

Schools spend around £106m a year on water. A large secondary school can spend as much as £20,000. Careful water management together with an effective education programme can reduce water use by two-thirds. This could save a school of 600 pupils around £5,000 every year.

Schools can reduce their water consumption by assessing how much they use every day and by looking at the size of their meter, identifying leaks and drips, adapting the flow rate on taps and reducing the amount of water used in toilets.

Further information

Many Eco-Schools have addressed water and utility costs as part of their Action Plan. Visit the Case Studies section for more details on tackling these issues. It's also worth visiting the Links and Resources section for further information on organisations that can help your school to reduce its water consumption.

