

Caring for the Environment

Have you seen the litter around the school or on the streets? Our school is barely a year old, and we already have to 'wade' through all the rubbish at break time and lunch.

For those of you who do not yet know, littering is throwing away, dropping or leaving rubbish lying around in public places thoughtlessly. Why not just use the rubbish bins provided?

Plastic is used to make many things that we use on a day-to-day basis. From clothing to crisp packets, and bottles to cars, making things out of plastic is so popular because there are many types and it can be made into all sorts of shapes, colours and sizes. It is also very easy to work with. Plastics are man-made and can be produced from natural materials like coal and oil.

However, plastic also has its downsides. Enough plastic is thrown away each year to circle the Earth four times! The United Kingdom produces more than 100 million tonnes of waste every year and in less than two hours, the waste we produce would fill the Albert Hall in London. The problem is that not all plastic can be recycled, and usually ends up in a landfill. Rubbish that cannot be recycled is sometimes used as art. Most rubbish is disposed at a landfill site and left to biodegrade for thousands of years. Some waste is even thrown into the ocean!

A truckload of plastic enters the sea every minute. This is very harmful towards all flora and fauna in the ocean, and their extinction will affect us all. For instance, imagine that all of the cod in the sea died out. No more cod and chips. Ever. In David Attenborough's television programme 'Blue Planet II', footage was shown of a whale trying to eat a plastic bucket mistaking it for food. The plastic bucket had become lodged inside the mouth of the whale and prevented it from being able to eat. We want to stop this. Now.

Maiden Erigh Reading Geography teacher, Mr Dean Harrison, gave us his opinion on littering. "Littering is antisocial. Littering is lazy. Littering is environmentally unaware. We see a lot of



litter from break and lunch. The school needs to be more aware that these times are pinch points for littering.” Dropping a plastic bag, food wrapper or plastic bottle will cause a lot of damage to the environment. Litter is not just horrible to look at; it can cause serious road traffic accidents, kill plants, start fires and kill animals. It also attracts rats and thousands of harmful bacteria, which may cause illnesses and diseases.

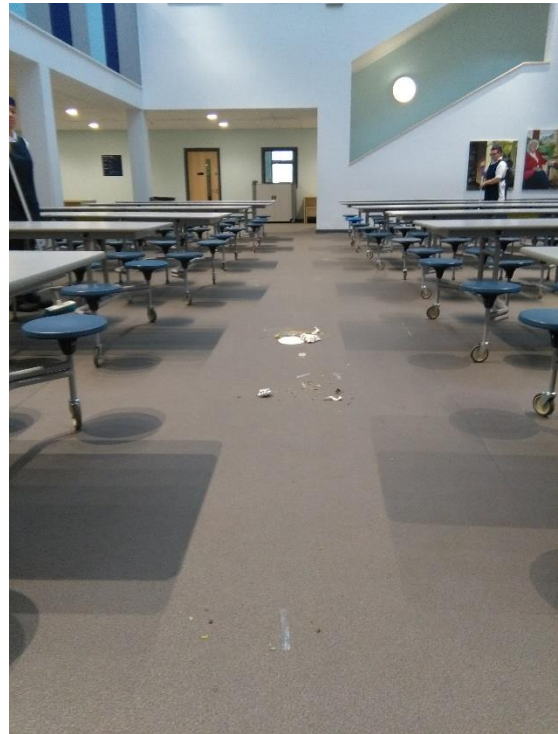


A plastic bottle will take from 450 to even 1000 years to biodegrade! This is a great example of why you should recycle. A plastic bag will take 1000 years to decompose. Supermarkets have started charging their customers 10p for each plastic bag in hope that it will push people towards re-using them.

Recently, Year 8 Silver Programme students have attended a 'UN Model Climate Change Conference' at the Reading Civic Centre where they debated about the effects of global warming on different countries.

You could do some small things to help your local environment. If you see someone littering, pick it up after them and throw it into the bin. At home, you could have a separate bin for recycling and food waste. Make sure you use things to their fullest potential, for example plastic bottles. Re-fill them until they become dirty.

We really hope that we have made you think about how much of an impact littering can have.



Jan and Helene