

How to remove pointless plastics from your school

KEEP
NORTHERN
IRELAND
BEAUTIFUL



ECO-SCHOOLS



#TacklingPlasticNI #PlasticPromise

Why Take Action on Plastics

Single-use plastic (SUP) products are used once, or for a short period of time, before being thrown away. The impact of this plastic pollution on the environment and our health is a global problem and at a critical stage. Single-use plastic products are more likely to end up in our seas than to be reused or recycled.

In 2021, plastics continue to be the most commonly recorded item on Northern Ireland beaches, making up 81% of all litter counted during surveys (up from 67% in 2020). On average, 77 drinks containers and 61 caps and lids were found per 100 metres surveyed. Additionally, short pieces of string, cord and rope were found across all beaches with an average of 217 lengths of string (1cm diameter) counted per survey. 1,012 heavy duty gloves were recorded in 2021, double 2020's figure. These are most commonly associated with fishing gear.*

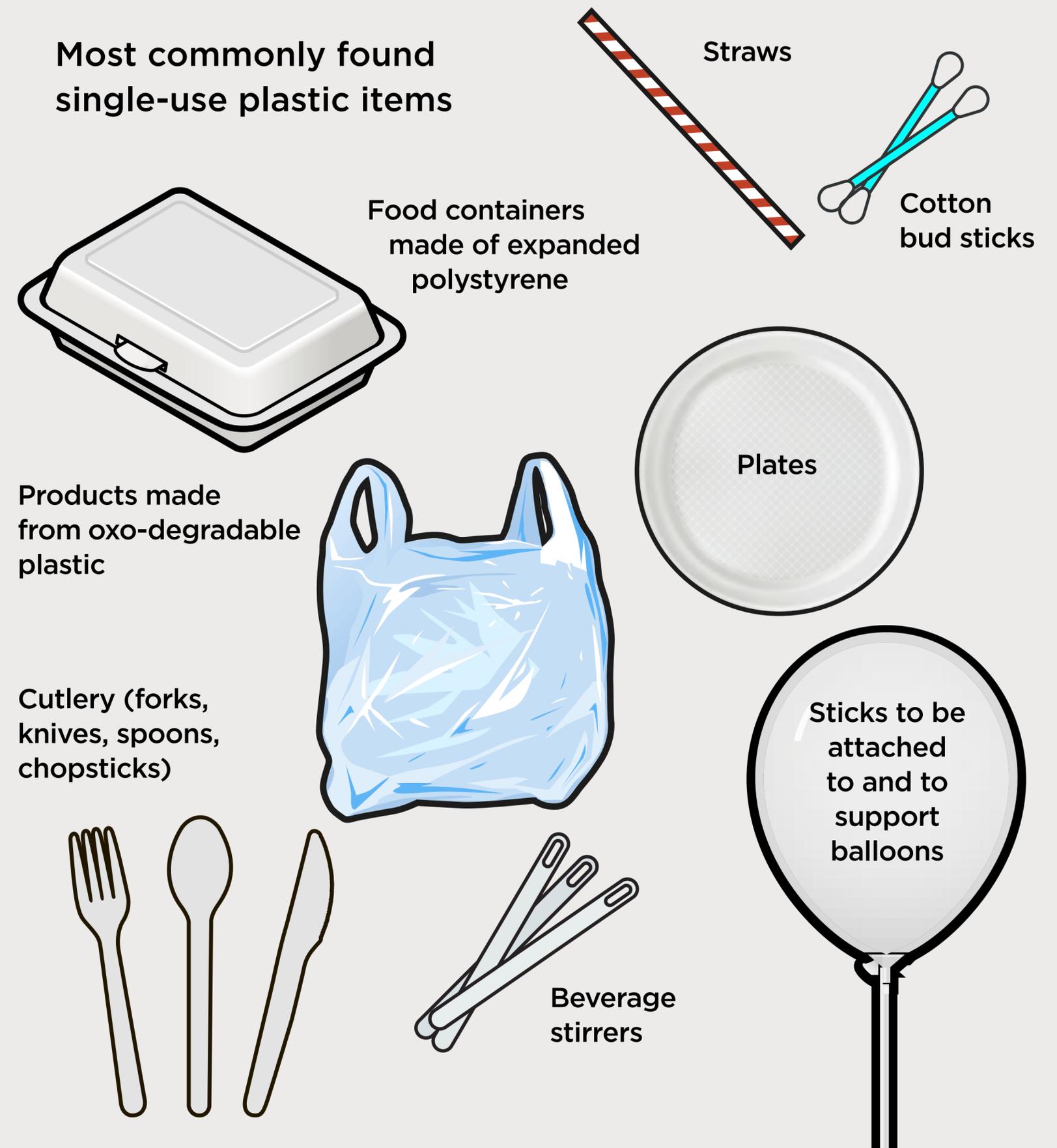


Reasons To Act Now

The EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) came into force on 3 July 2021. Its key aim – to reduce the amount of plastic waste in the environment as part of the Circular Economy, which it is hoped will improve the health and well-being of citizens and the natural world.

Put simply, it's designed to reverse the plastic-pollution trend by transforming how we make, use and dispose of plastic.

Implementation of the directive varies across the EU. While most Member States have fully implemented the measures, some countries, such as Ireland, have opted for even stricter regulations, while others, such as Italy, have provided for some digressions. Overall, the SUP Directive is tackling the ten single-use plastic items most commonly found on Europe's beaches, and is promoting sustainable alternatives.



For other single-use plastic products, the EU is focusing on limiting their use through:

- Reducing consumption through awareness-raising measures
- Introducing design requirements, such as a requirements to connect caps to bottles
- Introducing labelling requirements, to inform consumers about the plastic content of products, disposal options that are to be avoided, and harm done to nature if the products are littered in the environment
- Introducing waste-management and clean-up obligations for producers, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes

How This Affects Northern Ireland

Here in Northern Ireland the Executive made a commitment to address plastic pollution as part of its 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement, and, in line with this and policy developments across the UK, the DAERA Minister asked officials to consider appropriate policy initiatives and legislation on common single-use plastic items for Northern Ireland. As of yet, implementation has been postponed, but it's hoped that this will be rolled out in 2023.



What Can Schools Do?

Schools can do so much to stop the plastic pollution. Children are keen on environmental issues, and by discussing the problem of throwaway plastic from an early age, we can motivate them to consider alternatives. Just by asking the question, “What plastic did you use today?” we can start a conversation with pupils about the effects discarded plastics have on the environment and wildlife. Schools can lead the way for change, setting the standard and instilling the importance for us to look after the world around us.

Many schools in Northern Ireland are already tackling the plastic issue through Eco-Schools NI, which provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in the entire school that links to many curriculum subjects. The primary aim of the Eco-Schools programme is to educate and empower young people to make positive decisions. To become change makers for an environmentally sustainable world, which can filter out to our homes and local community.

[Find out how](#)



Make A Plastic Promise - Harness Pupil Power

We recognise that small steps by a large number of people can have a significant impact, and so have developed the “Plastic Promise” to encourage individuals, community groups, schools and organisations across Northern Ireland to rethink their use of pointless plastic. This initiative asks people to consider where they can refuse or reduce single-use plastics and make a promise to do so. The list of potential promises that can be made includes beverage bottles, carrier bags, cutlery and takeaway cups, among other items.

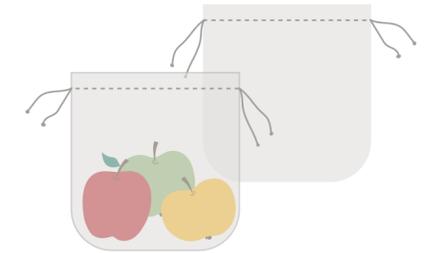
Those who make a promise record it online and are entered onto a leaderboard.



glass water bottle



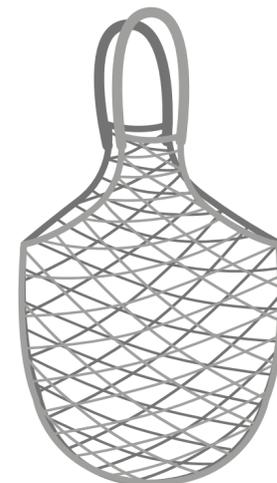
reusable shopping bag



reusable produce bags



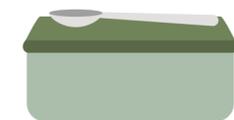
reusable coffee cup



mesh market bag



stainless steel bottle



lunch box



stainless steel straw

Schools Creating Plastic Promise Impact

67

schools taking action against beverage bottles

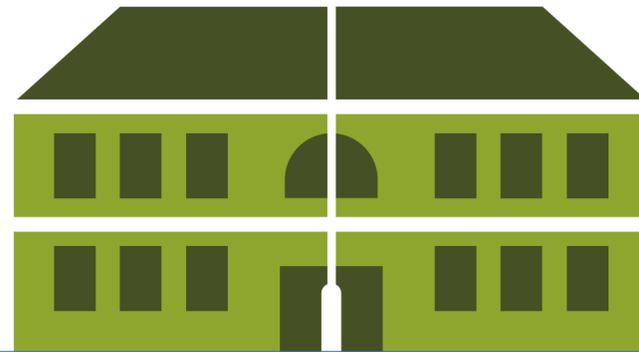


90

schools taking action against plastic straws



125
schools



86

schools have taken action against take away cups



90

schools have taken action against food containers



already signed up to the Plastic Promise in Northern Ireland..

Brooklands Nursery Unit, Belfast

9/10

have banned 9 of the 10 proposed single-use items for use in their school. These include balloons, beverage bottles, carrier bags, cotton buds, cutlery, food containers, lollipop sticks and takeaway cups.

Combined, they are taking action by banning, pledging and introducing new policies to reduce the top 10 plastic items.

Drumnamoe Nursery School, Lurgan

8/10

have banned 8 of the 10 proposed single-use items. These include balloons, beverage bottles, cotton buds, cutlery, food containers, lollipop sticks. They are also actively reducing their use of carrier bags and takeaway cups.

Willowbridge School Enniskillen



Willowbridge School in Enniskillen embarked on their Plastic Promise journey in December 2019 and have since introduced reusable drinks bottles as policy as well as having wooden tables/chairs/partitions and, where possible, wooden toys rather than plastic. The school also try to order from businesses that promote natural materials or recycled plastic items. They have a fantastic Eco Team, who are very diligent.

Future projects will include completing the Litterless Campaign programme, Live Here Love Here's BIG Spring Clean, a visit to a local recycling plant to see what happens to plastics, a 'Sport Top' day and a Fashion Show using only recycled products from plastic.

“Overall we found that once we realised the extent of the problem, coming up with ideas in school was the easy bit”.

Willowbridge School



[Read more about their journey](#) 



St Colm's Draperstown

St Colm's Draperstown has been active in their local community, carrying out litter picks for over 20 years and raising awareness of the problems of litter and what can be done to halt it.

They began their Plastic Promise venture in July 2019. The school has significantly reduced plastic, particularly bottles by taking out vending machines and replacing them with refill stations. They have also been busy in the canteen, reducing the use of plastic spoons, trays and cups by over 40%.

The Plastic Promise has led the school to participate in the WWF's annual 'Earth Hour' and 'Wear it Wild' events, as well as competitions like 'The Future We Want.'

"We've taken a structured approach to education for sustainable development since 2006. We wanted to inspire and support young people to embrace environmental responsibility."

St Colm's Draperstown

[Read more on their inspiring story](#) 

St Patrick's The Loup

The P5 pupils decided to ban all plastic straws in December 2020 and soon the rest of the school followed. Since then the school has ditched their single-use plastic bottles in favour of reusable drinks bottles.

Children in KS2 took part in the Tackling Plastic NI webinar with Doug Allan, where they followed the journey of a 'throw away' piece of plastic rubbish and how it eventually got carried out to sea and into the food chain. The children have since engaged the whole school on reducing single-use plastic in lunch boxes.

One of the biggest challenges St Patrick's has is finding lunch-box options in biodegradable packaging. This makes it difficult for parents to get on board when they're pushed for

"There was an amazing interest and effort put in by all with our Tackling Plastic initiatives."

St Patrick's The Loup

time. St. Patrick's pupils are planning to write to the main supermarket chains asking them to provide alternatives to plastic containers for frequently used lunch items such as yogurt and fruit pots. They are also going to make a video for parents on alternative ways of providing healthy snacks without relying on single-use plastic.

[Learn more about their plastic progress](#) >

Where To Begin with Your School?

To start making a difference to plastic pollution as soon as possible, here are **FIVE** practical steps to reduce plastic in your school and get you well on your way...



1

Make reusable water bottles part of school culture: fill your bottle up as part of your morning routine and keep it in your school bag. Make sure your school has a refill station and that pupils know where to locate it



2

Ban single-use plastic straws: if pupils need a straw, encourage metal, paper or bamboo alternatives

Switch to reusable plates and cutlery: use ceramic plates and metal cutlery instead of pointless single-use plastic. Bring a reusable lunch box to school and ask the canteen manager if it can be filled up instead. This will save the school money in the long term



3

4



Bring reusable lunch boxes or sandwiches wrapped in beeswax wraps: cling film isn't currently recycled in NI so get creative with alternatives!

Have a reusable party kit: avoid spending money on disposable cups and plates for parties in or out of school. Ask the school to purchase a reusable party kit, use it in school and encourage parents to use it for after school birthday parties



5

Next steps

Inspired by the passion and power of our young people? To get involved in the Plastic Promise is easy. Make your commitment to reducing your use of pointless plastic. Find out more by visiting the [Live Here Love Here Plastic Promise page](#).

Pupil Power can kick the habit of pointless plastic!



Does your school want to be more eco-friendly? Don't know where to begin? Please get in touch, we are here to help:

enquiries@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org

[#TacklingPlasticNI](#) [#PlasticPromise](#)



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