

Sustainable Schools Newsletter

January 2026



What is Sustainable Schools Leicester?

Leicester City Council has a dedicated Sustainable Schools team based in the Energy & Sustainability team who provide *free support* to schools to help them become more sustainable in all that they do. As well as one-to-one support and environmentally linked projects, schools can engage through EcoTeachMeets, staff training, resource planning & workshops, assemblies, Eco-Schools conferences & celebration events and can keep up to date through dedicated social media, monthly eBulletins and termly newsletters.

The Eco-Schools Green Flag programme provides opportunities for students to take an active role in their school community and work on environmentally minded projects that matter to them. Each schools' journey with Eco-Schools will be unique but the Sustainable Schools team are here to support you in any way that we can!



Happy New Year! Welcome to the January 2026 Sustainable Schools Leicester newsletter.

We hope you all had a well-earned break over the Christmas holidays, and we are looking forward to working with you this coming year.

Now that schools are getting back into full swing, we are preparing for the next round of sustainable workshops, training sessions, virtual assemblies, and events!

Take a look at our updated calendar for the 2025/26 academic year for an overview of what is happening.

As always, get in touch if you need any support – Marc and Vicky.



Pictures from our Eco-Schools Roadshow in November 2025

How to find out more

Sustainable Schools Team

City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester LE1 1FZ

- ✉ SustainableSchools@leicester.gov.uk
- 🌐 schools.leicester.gov.uk/eco-schools
- 𝕏 [EcoSchoolsLCC](https://twitter.com/EcoSchoolsLCC)
- instagram [EcoSchoolsLCC](https://www.instagram.com/ECOSCHOOLSLCC/)
- facebook [EnvEducationLeicester](https://www.facebook.com/EnvEducationLeicester)
- 📞 0116 454 6746



Newsletter

Our newsletters are published 4 times per year. If you would like to submit an article for the next newsletter, the deadline is **Wednesday 25th March 2026**. We ask for around 200 words, at least 1 photo, and contact details e.g. name and email address to:

SustainableSchools@leicester.gov.uk

Finished reading? Pass on to a colleague

Dates for your diary – Eco events this year



Event Details	Date	Month
Energy Saving Week starts	Saturday 17	January
Big Schools Birdwatch	6 January - 13 February	January - February
Big Garden Birdwatch	Friday 23 - 25	January
Eco-Schools training session 2	Friday 23	January
Carbon literacy training (1 day training at City Hall)	Friday 30	January
World Wetlands Day	Monday 2	February
National Nest Box Week	Saturday 14 - 21	February
World Wildlife Day	Tuesday 3	March
International Womens Day	Sunday 8	March
Big Walk and Wheel 2026	Monday 16 - Friday 27	March
Global Recycling Day	Wednesday 18	March
Earth Hour (8.30pm to 9:30pm)	Saturday 28	March
World Water Day	Sunday 22	March
Deadline for Newsletter submissions	Wednesday 25	March
Earth Day	Wednesday 22	April
Eco-Schools training session 3 (1-3.30pm)	Thursday 30	April
World Bee Day	Wednesday 20	May
Outdoor Classroom Day	Thursday 21	May
World Environment Day	Friday 5	June
Great Big Green Week	Saturday 6 - Sunday 14	June
World Oceans Day	Monday 8	June
Eco-Schools Celebration (all day)	Friday 12	June
Clean Air Day	Thursday 16	June
Plastic bag free day	Friday 3	July

- Leicester - staff training/information
- Leicester - student activities/events
- National events



Eco-Schools updates and awards



Eco-School Green Flag awards

Schools can register for Eco-Schools for free at <https://members.eco-schools.org.uk/signup>

The online application form is continuing for this year, with options to apply for Merit and Distinction on top of your Eco-Schools Green Flag award.

Leicester City Council will subsidise the cost of the Eco-Schools Green Flag for Leicester Schools, making it £50 per school.

Green Flags are renewed on an annual basis with an application window open from 1 May until 31 July every year.



Top 5 in the country

We are thrilled that Leicester City Council has been placed in the top 5 performing local authorities once again last year for Eco-Schools. Last year we supported 42 schools across Leicester City to achieve their Green Flag accreditation. This year, we are hoping to support even more of you!



Support for Eco-Schools

We are always happy to visit schools and help you with your Green Flag work, whether this is through running sessions with your Eco-Team or meeting with staff to create an action plan. These sessions can fit within your school timetable and can be bespoke to your needs for this year. For more information, please contact Vicky on victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk



Eco-Schools Training Sessions 2 – Next steps and going for Merit and Distinction

FREE in person training :

Session 2: Next steps and going for merit or distinction - Friday 23rd January 2026, 1.00 – 3.30pm

Session 3: Completing your application -
Thursday 30th April 2026, 1.00 – 3.30pm

Venue –TBC *let us know if you would like to host!

[Sign Up Here](#)

This training is open to both attendees of earlier training sessions and those who did not attend.



This training will:

- Provide an overview of the Eco-Schools Green Flag award
- Work through stages 4-7 of the application process
- How to monitor and evaluate your actions
- Focus on applying for the Merit and Distinction awards
- Consider projects that can be implemented in your schools to work towards your Green Flag award
- Share examples of good practice from schools across Leicester
- Answer any questions you may have



In Leicester there are now 42 schools with the prestigious Green Flag Award putting us in the top 5 Local Authorities in England again!

Who would benefit from this course?

This training is aimed at staff who are new to Eco-Schools or those who would like a refresher on the process. This could be Eco-leads and all school staff with an interest in environmental education - heads, deputy heads, assistant heads, classroom teachers, TAs, support staff, premises officers, business managers and governors/trustees.



For more information please contact:

Vicky Brown at

[**victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk**](mailto:victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk)

Sustainable Schools Team

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Eco-Schools Celebration 2026



Friday 12 June 2026 • City Hall, Leicester

Celebrate the work that your school has completed this year by attending our annual Eco-Schools Celebration. Bring along up to 6 students to display your environmental and Eco-Schools projects! Please note that you do not have to have completed or submitted your Eco-Schools application to attend the celebration event.



Schools can display 2 projects that they have worked on throughout the year. Often, schools choose to relate these to the Eco-Schools topics, as listed below:

- Biodiversity
- Energy
- Litter
- Waste
- Transport
- Water
- School Grounds
- Healthy Living
- Global Citizenship
- Marine



All schools will be entered into three categories:

- Eco-School of the Year
- Judge's Special Award
- Eco-factor Award (voted by students)

Prizes will be awarded to top scoring schools (details TBC).



The event will run from 9.30am – 2.15pm.

Students and staff will need to bring a 'plastic clever' packed lunch.

Approximate timing of the day

- 09.30-10.00 Students/staff set up stalls
- 10.00-12.00 Judges visit stalls and speak to students
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch and activities
- 13.00-14.00 Presentations and awards
- 14.00-14.15 Stalls dismantled and students/staff leave

**Book your place now via
our [eForm](#)**

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READY →
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**Sustainable
Schools
LEICESTER**

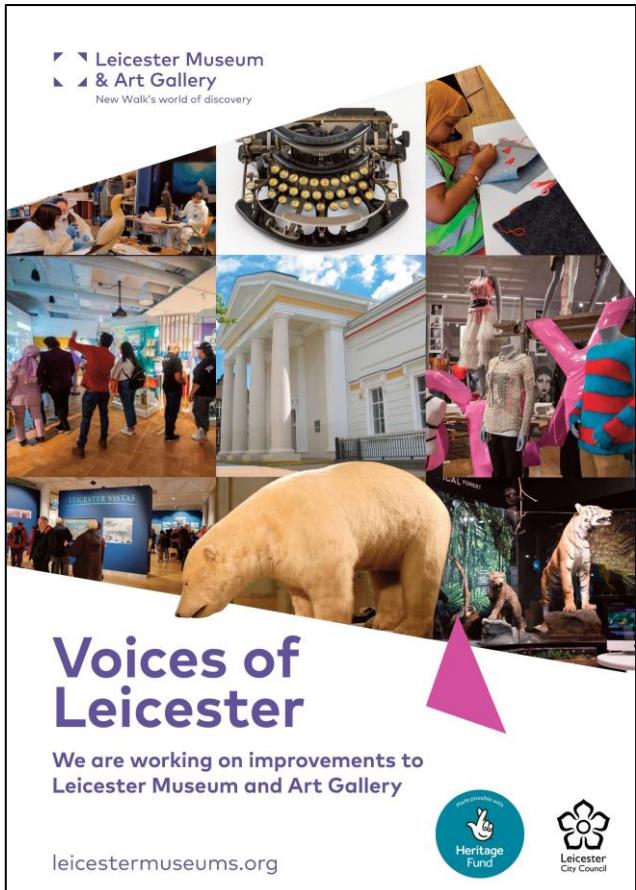
For more information contact:
victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk
07501 808 330

Voices of Leicester: a global city

– School survey

Leicester Museum and Art Gallery is in an exciting development stage. In addition to current works to create a new café and suite of art galleries, we're also working on **plans to develop other parts of the museum**. These later works are part of a **National Lottery Heritage Fund** project called **Voices of Leicester** and include the creation of **two new social history galleries** on the ground floor of the museum, and **a new family friendly environment gallery** on the first floor.

The environment gallery will **explore issues around climate change and our changing planet**. In support of this new gallery, we will also be **developing learning programmes and resources for schools linked to the environment**.



Leicester Museum & Art Gallery
New Walk's world of discovery

Voices of Leicester

We are working on improvements to Leicester Museum and Art Gallery

leicestermuseums.org

We are keen to hear from teachers and their students about **what stories we should be telling**, how they feel about **environmental issues**, and **how you might want to get involved**.

Please take 5 minutes to help us by completing our **short survey**:
Voices of Leicester: a global city - Teacher survey

Carbon Literacy Training for School Staff and Governors



In February 2019, Leicester City Council declared a climate emergency. We are working to develop a climate emergency programme of action to reduce carbon with the aim of the city becoming zero carbon.

In order to raise awareness of the climate emergency, we are using the Carbon Literacy Project as a way of accrediting school staff in becoming Carbon Literate. By 2025, the DfE have said that each school will have a sustainability lead who will have taken part in Carbon Literacy Training.

In Person:

Friday 30th January 2026 9am – 4pm at City Hall, Leicester

Virtual:

Tuesdays 14th, 21st, 28th April 2026 – 4-6pm (all 3 sessions needed)

Complete the [eform](#) sign up.

Who would benefit from this project: All school staff, including premises officers, business managers and governors with an interest in becoming carbon literate, especially those involved in teaching about climate change or with responsibility for school operations.



Why participate?

- Gain a better understanding of how climate change will affect you and those around you
- Become an accredited Carbon Literate individual
- Acquire knowledge and skills to develop your own responses to lowering your carbon footprint, and the carbon footprint of others

Your commitments

- Create at least one significant action, as an individual, to reduce your own personal carbon footprint
- Create at least one significant action involving other people to reduce the collective footprint of your workplace, community or place of education
- Encourage your school to participate in Carbon Literacy

Carbon Literacy Training -
2025/2026



**CLIMATE
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The cost of the training course is £50 for school staff/governors or £70 for non-school staff and staff outside of Leicester City. This includes the individual and course accreditation fees from the Carbon Literacy Project.

Welcome to Good Life Schools!

We only have **one** place left on the exciting Good Life Schools programme.
Get in touch to sign up!

Good Life Schools is a student-led programme for secondary schools, working with young people to reimagine ways of living and learning that are good for us, and good for the planet.

Schools joining the programme in the 2025/26 academic year will receive:

- **£2000 funding** for Good Life Schools project and to cover staff time.
- **Free teacher training** session for your school staff (1-2 hours)
- **Free green skills workshops** from local community organisations on request
- Invitation to the online Good Life Schools **National Summit** in the Spring Term
- **Ongoing support** from a local Community Engagement Lead.



Amie Seal Photography, Leicester Regional Summit

The 4 steps:

1. Get to know your Good Life Group
2. The Goods Life vs The Good Life
3. Design a Good Life Project
4. Celebrate and share your story

What does it involve?

Schools receive a pack of resources to guide a group of students through a four-step journey over a minimum of 10x 40-minute meetings.

The meetings can be delivered in a way that fits your school timetable in a term of your choice, making it ideal for enrichment sessions, after-school clubs or even as part of PSHE, Citizenship or Design and technology!

To find out more and sign up, email Laura Brown (Community Engagement Lead) at laura.brown@globalactionplan.org.uk



Supports the Eco-Schools
global citizenship topic



Litter Less Leicester



The Sustainable Schools team at Leicester City Council are running Litter Less Leicester again this year! This project runs from Monday 23 February to Friday 3 June 2026.

We are aiming for as many schools as possible to become Litter Less Champions, running litter awareness assemblies or sessions and carrying out litter picks in your school grounds or local area.

Why take part?

- Get students involved in a great project to **raise awareness** about and **reduce litter** at school and in your community.
- **Borrow litter picking equipment** for a half term (if required and subject to availability).
- Links to **Eco-Schools topics** litter, waste, marine and school grounds to help achieve your Green Flag!
- Receive a **free virtual or in-person assembly** (or resources to run your own) on litter, **or individual class sessions**.
- Have fun and help to keep the environment free from litter!



All you need to do:

- Attend an optional webinar on Weds 11th Feb 2026, 3:45-4:15pm to find out more.
- Carry out at least **5 litter picks**.
- **Weigh and record** how much you collect (luggage scales can be borrowed for this).
- Write a **short case study** (100 words) once completed with 2 photos (template provided).



Supports the Eco-Schools litter, waste, school grounds and marine topics

If you would like your school to take part in this project
please complete our [eform](#)



For more information, please contact Vicky Brown, Education Officer
victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk

Grow Your Own Grub Mealbarrow Competition 2026



Leicester's Grow Your Own Grub Mealbarrow competition is back for its 9th year and is a great way to encourage food growing in the school community. New for 2026, we have introduced a 'rainbow' theme to the event!



School commitments

- Source a wheelbarrow (ask around or get in touch if you are struggling)
- Grow at least 5 ingredients in your "mealbarrow"
- Provide compost, seeds and/or plug plants to grow (*some seeds provided after the training*)
- Attend an optional, **free**, in-person food growing training on **Tuesday 10th March 2026, 4-5pm (Venue TBC)**
- Design and submit a healthy 3-course menu by **Friday 15th May 2026**
- Submit a simple report on the growing process by **Friday 19th June 2026**
- Advertise the competition and the celebration day (**Saturday 4th July 2026**) to parents & families via school newsletters and the school's social media channels

Why participate?

- Combining creative, culinary skills and gardening, students are challenged to design a three-course menu and grow at least 5 ingredients in your Mealbarrow.
- Mealbarrows will be showcased at a public event on **Saturday 4th July 2026**. This is a great way to involve the whole school community!
- Raise awareness of environmentally friendly gardening, healthy eating, and cooking in your school. Use as part of your Food for Life and Eco-Schools Awards
- Free food growing training for school staff to take part in.

What's new?

This year's **mealbarrow theme** is '**rainbows**' and we ask that you base your menu and food growing on it. You could even decorate your mealbarrow around the theme! Maybe Richard of York, or Rainbows Hospice, Pride, or just bright and colourful! Come up with your own take and wow us!



Supports your Eco-Schools *healthy living, school grounds and biodiversity* topics

This event is free and open to all schools in Leicester City and our Leicestershire Traded Service Schools

Deadline for registration is Friday 6th March 2026 and will be filled on a first-come basis

Book your school's place via [the E-form](#) as soon as possible.

Any questions please email Victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk



Energy Sparks



Energy Sparks is an online platform which monitor schools' gas and electricity consumption. The platform includes an educational programme which can be used with classes or small groups of children, such as your eco-committee. Energy Sparks can help to reduce carbon emissions and work towards addressing the climate emergency.

How can Energy Sparks help you?

- Using smart meter data will show you how much energy your school uses.
- Pupils and staff can use information to help save energy.
- A scoreboard is in place for schools to compare energy savings with others nearby.
- Online, email and text notification of changes in energy consumption, with recommended energy saving actions tailored just for your school.
- Energy saving interventions and investments are suggested to maximise cost and energy savings.
- Over 70 energy related activities for eco-teams or class-based learning.

Last year your school used 280,000 kWh of gas.
It will take 66 trees, each living 40 years, to absorb the carbon dioxide released when this gas was burnt.

[Find out how much energy has been used](#)



Let's look at the energy use data for your school:



For more information about Energy Sparks, please visit the website at <https://energysparks.uk/>



Supports the Eco-Schools energy topic

Sustainable Schools

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Big Schools' Birdwatch 2026



The RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch is back for 2026! Join thousands of other schools to find out which birds visit your school grounds. Together, we can make it count.

1. Register today

[Register today](#) and you'll be directed to all our online resources enabling you and your class to take part in Big Schools' Birdwatch. All our resources support curriculum learning, including providing you with historical records of Big Schools' Birdwatch, so you can compare what you see.



2. Get counting

Get counting in your school grounds any time from 6 January to 13 February 2026. Use our [differentiated ID resources and survey sheets](#) to record the highest number of each species that you see at the same time.



Supports the
Eco-Schools
biodiversity topic



3. Submit your results

Submit your results online. It's easy to do with your class interactively on the whiteboard. We really want to know what you see, even if you see nothing at all. You'll receive certificates to print out, plus a link to a more resources to compare your sightings with the national results from previous years.

The last day for sending us your results is 23 February 2026.

RSPB Wild Challenge for Schools



Supports the Eco-Schools
biodiversity and school
grounds topics

Support your pupils to achieve and learn through Wild Challenge, by exploring nature and helping wildlife.

The Big Schools' Birdwatch counts as one activity towards the **RSPB's free Wild Challenge Award**. Inspire your pupils to learn through nature by choosing from more than 20 activities. Tick off another five and you'll earn your Bronze Award, then work your way up to Gold. Find out more about the Wild Challenge for Schools [here](#)

Big Walk and Wheel 2026



Big Walk and Wheel is the UK's largest inter-school walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling challenge. Now in its 17th year, it inspires pupils to make active journeys to school to improve air quality in their neighbourhood.

**This year, the Big Walk and Wheel is taking place from
Monday 16 March to Friday 27 March 2026.**

Active, sustainable travel has never been more important. It helps pupils arrive alert and ready to learn, while creating a safer and more pleasant environment around school.

We've designed our interactive school resources to be fun, flexible and informative, showing how small changes can make a big difference.

All schools can take part in the Big Walk and Wheel and it is free to register and easy to participate.

School registration opens in January - visit the dedicated [Big Walk and Wheel website](#) and follow the instructions.

There are some fantastic prizes awarded to schools taking part, one awarded for each day of the challenge and for the schools who log the most active journeys overall. Check out the website to see last year's prizes!

There are many free interactive resources available, designed to be fun, flexible, and informative on how small changes can make a big difference!



*Supports the Eco-Schools
transport topic*



If you have any questions or would like any more information, don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing Aasiya at Aasiya.Bora@walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk

<https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/our-blog/projects/big-walk-and-wheel-2026/>

Free Trees for schools and communities



Woodland Trust wants everybody in the UK to have the chance to plant a tree! They are giving away hundreds of thousands of trees to schools and communities. All schools, colleges and nurseries in the UK can apply.

The UK needs millions more trees to reach its 2050 carbon net-zero target!



Supports the Eco-Schools biodiversity and school grounds topics



Choose your pack(s) from the list [here](#) and fill out the application form.

Applications for tree packs close mid January, so act quickly!

[**Apply here - Free Tree Packs Application Form**](#)

Clean Air Day 2026

Clean air day is on June 16 2026, so save the date!

Clean Air Day is the UK's biggest initiative to reduce air pollution. It provides an opportunity to raise awareness about air pollution and take action towards improving the quality of air for a healthier environment. Clean Air Day is a national initiative that Leicester City Council has been a part of since 2018.

The day aims to raise awareness of the importance of clean air for our health and the environment. It encourages our city's communities, schools and businesses to take action to reduce air pollution to create a healthier and sustainable future, for everyone.

Keep an eye out for updates!



Plastic Clever Schools



As we start the new year, we are really pleased to say that there are over 40 school in Leicester currently registered on the Plastic Clever Schools website. This means we have a huge opportunity to reduce problem plastics in Leicester!



Inspire



Investigate



Act



What does Plastic Clever Schools involve?

There are three stages to the programme:

1. Inspire – hold a litter pick and share why YOU want to be a Plastic Clever School
2. Investigate – look at the use of plastic in your school and create an action plan
3. Act – Take steps to reduce 2 problem plastics in your school and celebrate YOUR success!

There are brand new resources available on the online platform, including workbooks for students, resources for teachers and a display board showing success stories from schools across the countries.

How can you join?

Simply sign up online through the Plastic Clever Schools [website](#). Work through the stages and start reducing your schools plastic waste now!

All of the work you do for Plastic Clever Schools can be used to support your Green Flag application!

For more information about the award, please contact Vicky on
victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk



Supports the Eco-Schools water, litter, waste and marine topics

