

School News

January 2025



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!



Welcome to the January 2025 Leicester Sustainable Schools newsletter.

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

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

Take a look at our updated calendar for the 2024/25 school year for an overview of things happening.

As always, get in touch if you need any support - Marc, Jasmine and Laura.



Pictures from our Eco-Schools Roadshow in November 2024

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

🐦 [EcoSchoolsLCC](https://twitter.com/EcoSchoolsLCC)

📷 [EcoSchoolsLCC](https://www.instagram.com/EcoSchoolsLCC)

📘 [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 **Friday 28 March 2025**. 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

We now have our [annual calendar](#) with all the date for the academic year on.



Event Details	Date	Month
Energy Saving Week Starts	Monday 20	January
Big Garden Birdwatch	Friday 24	January
Energy Saving Week Ends	Sunday 26	January
Eco-Schools training session 2	Friday 31	January
World Wetlands Day	Sunday 2	February
National Nest Box Week	Friday 14	February
World Wildlife Day	Monday 3	March
International Women's Day	Saturday 8	March
Global Recycling Day	Tuesday 18	March
Earth Hour virtual assembly	Friday 21	March
World Water Day and Earth Hour 8:30-9:30pm	Saturday 22	March
Big Walk and Wheel 2025	24 March – 4 April	March/April
Deadline for Newsletter submissions	Friday 18	April
Earth Day	Monday 22	April
Eco-Schools training session 3 (1-3:30pm)	Tuesday 29	April
World Bee Day virtual assembly	Tuesday 20	May
World Environment Day	Thursday 5	June
Great Big Green Week starts	Saturday 7	June
World Oceans Day	Sunday 8	June
Great Big Green Week ends	Sunday 15	June
Eco Schools Celebration (all day)	Thursday 19	June
Deadline for Newsletter submissions	Friday 28	June
Plastic bag free day	Thursday 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 www.eco-schools.org.uk/register.

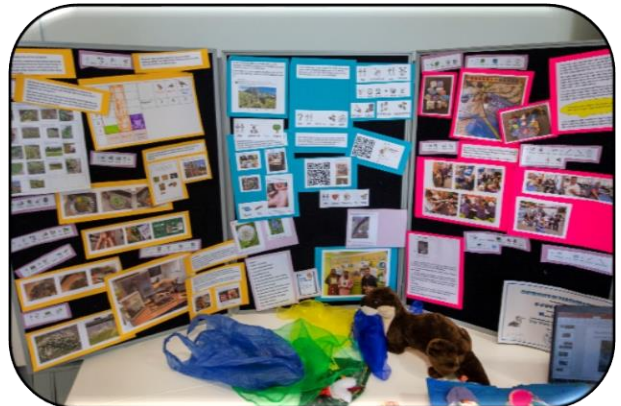
Green Flags are renewed on an **annual basis with an application window open from 1 May until 31 July every year.**

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, making it £50 per school.

Top 5 in the country

We are thrilled that Leicester City Council has been placed in the top 5 performing local authorities 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 Laura on Laura.Barke@leicester.gov.uk

Eco-Schools Training Session 2

FREE in person Training course:

Friday 31 January 2024, 1.00 – 3.30pm

Venue –TBC* if you would like to host at your school, please let us know!

[Sign Up Here](#)

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

This training will:

- Work through stages 4-7 of the application process
- Look at what can be used for monitoring and evaluating relating to your actions
- Focus on applying for the Merit and Distinction awards through Eco-Schools
- 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:

Laura Barke on

laura.Barke@leicester.gov.uk

Sustainable Schools Team

✉ SustainableSchools@leicester.gov.uk

🌐 schools.leicester.gov.uk/eco-schools

🐦 [EcoSchoolsLCC](https://twitter.com/EcoSchoolsLCC)

📘 [EnvEducationLeicester](https://www.facebook.com/EnvEducationLeicester)

☎ 0116 454 7156



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. By joining us, you will help put your school ahead of the rest!

In Person:

Tuesday 4 February 2025; Friday 16 May 2025

9am – 4pm at City Hall, Charles Street,

Leicester. Complete the [eForm](#) to sign up.

Who would benefit from this project: All school staff, including premises officers, and governors with an interest in becoming carbon literate, especially those involved in teaching about climate change and the climate emergency.



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 -
2024/2025



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.

To book your place please complete the [eForm](#). For more information, contact Laura.Barke@leicester.gov.uk

Good Life Schools

We still have two places for schools this year and five spaces next year on the exciting Good Life Schools programme. Get in touch to sign up for this year or next year!

What is Good Life Schools?

Good Life Schools is a free programme for secondary schools which brings communities together to create ways of living and learning together that are good for us, and good for the planet. Through the Good Life Schools programme, a group of students at your school will work together to explore the issues surrounding consumerism, reflect on what makes a good life and design projects which will benefit your whole school community. We will introduce your students to local community, businesses and authority initiatives that help them put their plans into action: from “fix and repair” shops to solar installation to Meat-Less Mondays.



What does joining the programme involve?

By joining the programme, your school will receive:

- A free pack of resources, session plans and delivery timeframe
- A programme launch assembly delivered by a Good Life Schools coordinator
- Ongoing planning support from your designated Good Life Schools coordinator
- **Funding of up to £2,000** to help you deliver the project in your school
- Free workshops from local community organisations
- Access to the Good Life Schools Support Network and Newsletter
- Student and staff invites to local and national Celebration Events, providing the opportunity to meet with, and learn from, other schools



Supports the Eco-Schools global citizenship topic

Find out more on [Good Life Schools website](#)

To sign up, please email Jasmine Jasmine.Walker@leicester.gov.uk or Sian Buckley (Community Engagement Lead for Good Life Schools) sian.buckley@globalactionplan.org.uk



Less Litter for Leicester

The Sustainable Schools team at Leicester City Council are running **Less Litter for Leicester** again this year! This project runs from Monday 3 March to Friday 4 July 2025.

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

Why participate?

- Receive a free **virtual or in-person assembly** (or resources to run your own **litter assemblies** or individual class/form sessions)
- **Raise awareness** across your school community of the problems caused by litter
- Receive a **loan of litter picking equipment** for a half term if required (subject to availability)
- Link to **Eco-Schools** as part of the litter, marine, waste and school grounds topics, helping to achieve your **Green Flag**
- **Have fun and help to keep your school grounds or local area free from litter!**

Your school commitments

- Attend an optional online webinar to find out more at 3.30-4pm on the **25 February 2025** (recording will be provided)
- Carry out at least **5 litter picks** in the school grounds or local area, and record the amount collected. (luggage scales can be provided for you to weigh the bags)
- Complete a short case study (100 words) after the project ends with two photos – (template provided)



Supports the Eco-Schools litter topic



Leicester
City Council

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

For more information, please contact Jasmine Walker, Project Officer
Jasmine.Walker@leicester.gov.uk



Leicester's Grow Your Own Grub Mealbarrow Competition 2025



Now in its 8th year, Leicester's Grow Your Own Grub Mealbarrow competition is a great way to encourage food growing in the school community. New for 2025, we have introduced a 'country theme' to the event, meaning you need to choose a country and base your menu and food growing on that country!

What's changed?

This year, we are asking all schools to **choose a country and base your menu and food growing on that country**. You could even decorate your mealbarrow around the theme!



School commitments

- Source a wheelbarrow for the growing – either reuse one from last year or upcycle an old one (ask around in school or get in touch if you are struggling)
- Create a “mealbarrow” where at least 5 food items will be grown
- Provide compost, seeds and/or plug plants to grow (*some seeds provided after the training*)
- Attend an optional free in person food growing training at **Hamilton Library 4-4:45pm Tuesday 4 March**
- Design and submit a healthy 3-course menu by **Friday 16 May 2025**
- Submit a simple report on the growing process by **Friday 20 June 2025**
- Advertise the competition and the celebration day to parents & families via school newsletters and the school's social media channels

Why participate?

- Combining creative culinary skills and gardening, your school is challenged to design a three-course menu and grow a minimum of 5 ingredients in your Mealbarrow.
- Mealbarrows will be showcased at a public event on **Saturday 5 July 2025**. 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.



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 entries is Monday 3 March 2025 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 GrowYourOwnGrub@Leicester.gov.uk

Virtual Assemblies

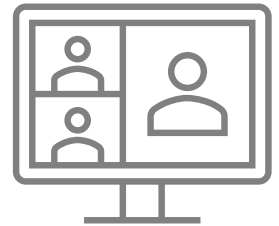
The Sustainable Schools team will be holding another series of virtual assemblies to coincide with environmental events throughout the school year!

Our virtual assemblies will all be held at **1:30pm via Microsoft Teams** on the following dates:

- [Earth Hour – Friday 21 March](#)
- [Sustainable Travel – Monday 24 March](#)
- [World Bee Day – Tuesday 20 May](#)

The assemblies will last approximately 20 minutes and there will be time for questions at the end

There is no need to sign up – just use the links above to join at the time!



If you have any questions, feel free to contact us on SustainableSchools@leicester.gov.uk



Tree art competition!

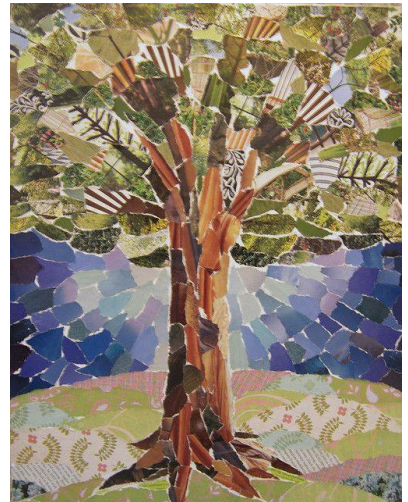
To celebrate the launch of Leicester City Council's new Tree Strategy on Tuesday 1 April 2025, we are holding a competition!

- Open for any students aged 5 to 18 years old.
- Art can be in any form but must be tree themed! Think drawings, photos, collages, sculptures.

A photo of each entry needs to be emailed to **SustainableSchools@leicester.gov.uk** by **Friday 14 March 2025**.

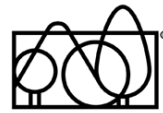
Winners will be announced Tuesday 1 April 2025.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd place will win a gardening gift voucher for their school, and the student will also win a prize. The winning entries will also be displayed and celebrated on Leicester City Council webpage.





Tiny Forests in Leicester



We are really pleased to announce that we have received funding from the Local Authority Treescaping Funding for another planting season, meaning we can add a further 5 Tiny Forests to sites in Leicester. We have already Tiny Forests at Montrose Primary School, Netherhall Drive Open Space and Featherstone Drive Open Space this planting season, bringing our total of Tiny Forests in Leicester to 29!



What is a Tiny Forest?

A Tiny Forest is a dense, fast growing nature woodland roughly the size of a tennis court. Each forest consists of 600 trees specifically selected for the site meaning each Tiny Forest is unique. Benefits to the Tiny Forest programme include reconnecting people with nature, enhancing wellbeing, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change and providing nature-rich habitat patches to support urban wildlife.

Becoming a Tree Keeper!

How can you get involved?

The best way to get involved in the Tiny Forest project is to sign up as a Tree Keeper for one of the forests within Leicester. This way, you can be involved in looking after the site and gain access to a wealth of knowledge from Earthwach! There are educational resources available on the portal along with a wealth of knowledge. This way, even if your site does not have space for a forest, you can be involved in this important project! To find out more visit the [Earthwach website](https://www.earthwach.org).

New sites for 2024/2025

- Montrose Primary School
- Eyres Monsell Primary School
- North Mead Primary Academy
- Featherstone Drive Open Space
- Netherhall Open Space

For more information about Tiny Forests, or to sign up as a Tree Keeper, please contact Laura on Laura.Barke@leicester.gov.uk



Supports the Eco-Schools School grounds and biodiversity topics

Tiny Forest Community Sites Planting

Leicester Environmental Volunteers

Two of our Tiny Forests completed this planting season are in community spaces in Featherstone Drive Open Space and Netherhall Drive.

Featherstone Drive Open Space was our quickest Tiny Forest planting so far, thanks to the amazing volunteers from LEV, GoodGym Leicester, and other volunteers from the community. Councillor Pantling, who is Assistant City Mayor for Education, and ward councillor for Eyres Monsell also joined in with planting.

Netherhall Drive was also brilliant, with two classes from St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy planting hundreds of trees. We also had a fantastic volunteer who came along on both planting days!

Thank you to everyone who volunteered and planted some trees!

If you would like to volunteer to be a tree keeper at one of our public sites, please contact Laura.Barke@leicester.gov.uk



WWF A Daily Dose of Nature



Connecting with nature has been proven time and time again to work wonders for our wellbeing. At school, nature connections can help boost children's moods, improve focus and help them to feel less stressed and anxious.

WWF are offering FREE daily dose of nature classroom packs – sign up to receive one or find out more [here](#).

ProVeg International is a food awareness organisation working to transform the global food system.

ProVeg have developed a new education programme – Canteen to Classroom – to teach children about the food they eat: where it comes from, how it is made, and its impact on our health and the planet. You can access 24 lesson plans, all for free. Resources available [here](#).

If you would like ProVeg to provide free support to your school with your menu, they can work with your caterers to make small changes to menus that can have a big impact on children's health and the health of the planet. See more about the [School Plates programme](#).

Free Trees for schools and communities



WOODLAND
TRUST

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.



Supports the Eco-Schools biodiversity and school grounds topics



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

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

Applications for tree packs close 13 January, so act quickly!

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



Energy Sparks



Energy Sparks are 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, Energy Sparks 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 other schools 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.
- Activities can also count towards your Eco-Schools Green Flag award!

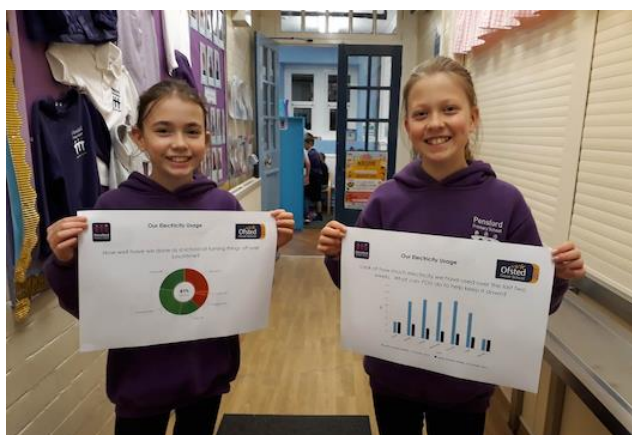
Last year your school used 280,000 kWh of gas

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 see the [Energy Sparks User guide 2024](#).

Our Schools, Our World



Our Schools,
Our World



16 schools in Leicester have started work on the Our Schools, Our World programme. This framework helps schools to develop a transformative whole school approach to climate change. It supports schools to set up a sustainability strategy group, green their curriculum, make climate education a key focus, and develop systems and practices that support sustainability.



Programme launch training days

The three days of training was led by representatives from the Brighton and Hove programme, Our City, Our World, and the Sustainable Schools team from Leicester City Council.

On Day 1, the training day aimed to start the formation of the sustainability strategy group in each school and explored the importance of strong leadership when adopting a whole school approach to climate change. Day 2 focused on 'greening' the curriculum, with senior programme leads exploring how to develop their existing curriculums and interweave climate change into each year group's learning. Day 3 brought together school business managers and site managers from each school to focus on climate action planning and decarbonisation.

Participating schools:

- Montrose Primary School
- Inglehurst Junior School
- Elmbrook School
- Scraftoft Valley Primary School
- Spinney Hill Primary School
- Stokes Wood Primary School
- Shaftsbury Primary School
- Queensmead Primary Academy
- Abbey Mead Primary Academy
- Fosse Mead Primary Academy
- Kestrel Mead Primary Academy
- Knighton Mead Primary Academy
- North Mead Primary Academy
- Rowlatts Mead Primary Academy
- Thurnby Mead Primary Academy
- Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy



As the programme moves forward over the next two years, Leicester City Council will be supporting each school to implement the Our Schools Our World framework and create links with local businesses and communities.



Big Schools' Birdwatch 2025



The RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch is back for 2025! Join thousands of other schools to find out which birds visit your school grounds. Together, we can make it count.

1. Register today

Sign up today and you'll be directed to all our online resources enabling you and your class to take part in Big Schools' Birdwatch. A very limited quantity of printed packs is available on request this year, so we'd appreciate it if you could download our digital resources where possible.

- [Register and download our resources straight away.](#)
- [Register and request a printed pack](#) (these are very limited in number and are sent out from December). *Please note that from December, there can be around two weeks between requesting your pack and receiving it.*

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 7 January to 14 February 2025.

Use our [differentiated ID resources and survey sheets](#) to record the highest number of each species that you see at the same time.

Why not make Big Schools' Birdwatch the first step you take to find out about the nature on your school grounds? Complete five more challenges and you can gain your Bronze Wild Challenge award.

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 a certificate to print out for your class, plus a link to a further historical data resource to compare your sightings with the national results from previous years.

The last day for sending us your results is 24 February 2025.



Supports the Eco-Schools
biodiversity topic

The Big Walk and Wheel

Sustrans' Big Walk and Wheel is the UK's largest inter-school walking, wheeling, scooting, and cycling challenge. 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 24 March to Friday 4 April.

Travelling actively and sustainably has never been so important, it helps pupils arrive at school alert and ready to start the day and helps create a more welcoming environment around the school. The Big Walk and Wheel is a great kickstart to the spring term, many pupils carry on travelling actively into the school year and beyond.

The 2024 challenge was a huge success, 19 Leicester schools took part recording over their journeys. Madani Boys Schools came 1st in the secondary schools category, with Mandani Girls Schools and Brook Mead Academy placing 3rd and 6th respectively. With your help, we can make this year even bigger!

All schools can take part in Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel and it is free to register and easy to participate. **School registration opens in January**, visit the dedicated [Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel website](https://www.bigwalkandwheel.org.uk) 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!



If you have any questions or would like any more information, don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing - leicesterschools@sustrans.org.uk

<https://bigwalkandwheel.org.uk/>

Green Football's Great Save – March 2024

The UK's biggest campaign, unleashing the power of football to tackle climate change is back and we're inviting all schools to take part.

With free, ready-to-use classroom toolkits and resources, Green Football's Great Save makes it easy for teachers to bring climate topics into the classroom in fun, interactive ways. Next year's theme, The Great Save, spotlights how fans, clubs, and leagues can help prevent millions of tonnes of sportswear from ending up in landfills each year. From donating and swapping to selling, schools will have plenty of ways to get involved—and some fantastic prizes to win! Join our mailing list to stay updated and be the first to access our free toolkits, available soon.

Get more info [here](#).



Clean Air Day

Clean air day is on June 20, 2025, so save the date!

See this [video](#) from last years Clean Air Day!

Watch [this page](#) for updates!



For more information contact Air Quality Education Officer - danielle.kennell@leicester.gov.uk



Plastic Clever Schools



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

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?

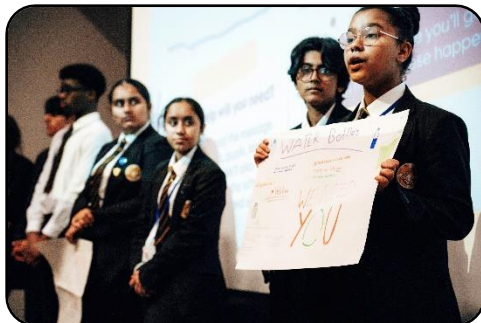
Simply sign up online through the Plastic Clever Schools [website](#). Work through the stages and start reducing your schools plastic waste now!

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 Laura on Laura.Barke@leicester.gov.uk.



Inspire



Investigate



Act



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

