

# Primary School

Bin Check Toolkit

**WHAT'S IN YOUR  
BIN?**



# Introduction

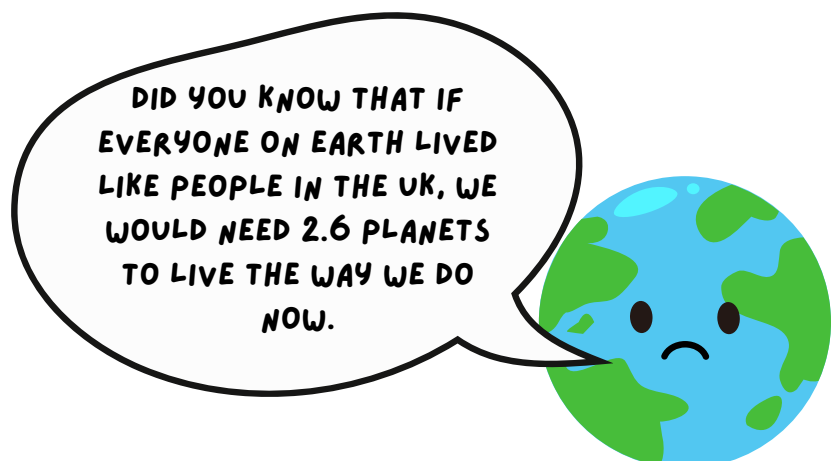
## What is the purpose of this booklet?

It is incredibly important that we keep track of **what** we put in our bin, how **much** we put in the bin and if we are putting the **correct** stuff in each bin.

All our 'stuff' is made from natural resources which are found in nature. But, we are using natural resources much faster than Earth can make them back...

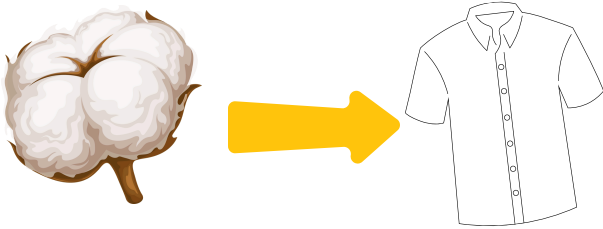
By keeping track of the things we put in our bins, we can learn what we are using the most of and make a plan to reduce the amount we throw away.

This helps keep Earth healthy so that future generations can enjoy our planet just as much as you do!



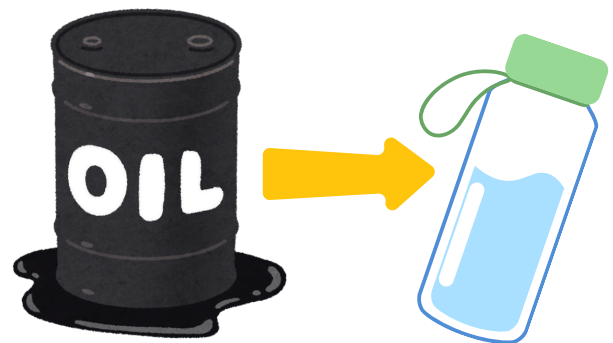
# Natural Resources

Everything we have is made from a natural resource. Two examples are given below.



Your school shirts are made from cotton plants.

Your reusable water bottle is made of plastic which is created from oil deep within the ground.



## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Growing and extracting resources to make our 'stuff' disturbs our habitats. Also, the energy used to make our 'stuff' makes climate change worse because it releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.



## What can we do?

Our planet is precious... from vibrant seas and swirling oceans to magnificent rainforests, flourishing woodlands and carpeted meadows thick with wildflowers and brimming with all kinds of wildlife. But... it is in danger.

We must do all we can to protect our planet and reduce the number of natural resources we use. One way we can do this is by completing a **bin check**.

A bin check is simply where you sort, weigh and list all the stuff you find in the bins that have been thrown away.

This helps identify what type of material your school uses the most of and which location uses the most natural resources.

Once we know this, we can make a plan to monitor what we throw in the bins and make changes to protect Earth and secure a sustainable future for us all!



# Location of Bin Checks

This booklet is to help you perform a **bin check** within 5 areas of your school: the playground, the lunch hall, the staff room, the classroom, and the school office.

All bins in each location must be 'checked'. There are three types of bins that are being checked in this booklet: the general bin, recycling bin and food bin.



**The Playground**



**The Lunch Hall**



**The Staff Room**



**The School Office**



**The Classroom**

# Types of Bins

Our bin checks will focus on three different types of bins: recycling bins, food bins and general bins.

## Recycling Bins

These are bins where you can put damaged or unwanted items so they can be made into new things. E.g. paper, cardboard...

## Food Bins

These are bins where you can put left over food from your breakfast club, breaktime snacks, lunches and cooking lessons. E.g. apple cores, crusts etc...

## General Bins

This is where you can put items which can't be recycled. E.g. laminated paper, crisp packets etc... If your school does not yet have a food bin, your general bin will also contain food items.



# Planning your bin check...

A bin check is super simple! You simply sort, weigh and list all of the stuff you find in the bins that have been thrown away.

Follow these steps to make sure you get great results!

## PLAN

What do we need to complete this bin check?

What equipment will you use?



## CHECK

How can we measure what is in the bin?

How can we check it safely?



## DISCUSS

What can we do with our results?

How can we reduce the amount we put in the bin and recycle more?



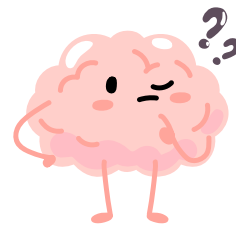
## Our plan...

By the end, you should be able to...

1. Identify which areas of your school use the most stuff.
2. Identify which materials you use the most of.
3. Write down the amount of material measured.
4. Develop an action plan to reduce the amount of stuff you throw away!

To do this... **What do we need to think about?**

Who will this be  
done by?



How do we stay  
safe?

When will  
this be  
done?



## You choose:

➡ Who will do the bin checks.

Location	Who will do this?
Classroom	E.g. Each class will do their own classroom.
Playground	
Lunch Hall	
Staff Room	
School Office	

➡ When you will do the bin checks.

➡ How long you will complete the bin check for. E.g. 1 day, 1 week...

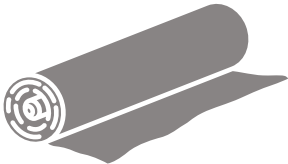
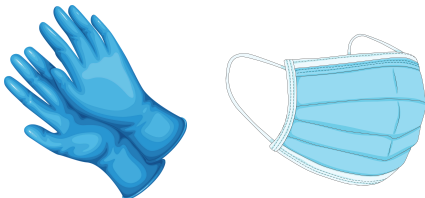
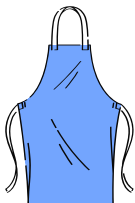
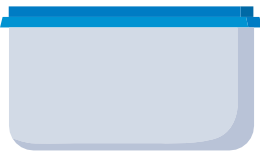


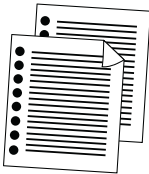



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### ✦ TEACHER'S NOTES:

We recommend repeating this bin check two times within the school year so that you can assess the before and after changes within the amount your school or classroom produces. It is your choice at what point in the term you decide to complete the bin checks to ensure the results are comparable e.g. Completing a bin check in the middle of term 1 and middle of term 2 as opposed to the end of term 6. **Make sure you have completed a risk assessment and consulted the school health and safety policy.**

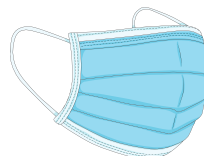
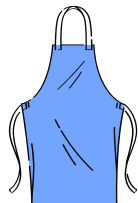
## Things we need:

To safely do a bin check we must listen, protect and wear items that keep us and our environment safe.

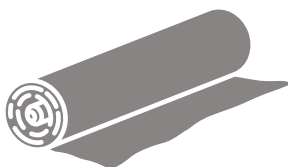
 <p>Protective Sheet</p>	 <p>Gloves and face masks</p>
 <p>Apron</p>	 <p>Large empty box</p>
 <p>Safety Glasses</p>	 <p>Bins or Bags of waste</p>
 <p>Worksheets</p>	 <p>Signs to group materials</p>
 <p>Mixing Tray</p>	 <p>Electronic Scales</p>

## Getting ready and staying safe!

1. Before we start, we must put our safety glasses, gloves, face masks and aprons on!



2. Once we have protected ourselves, we must protect the ground! Roll out the protective sheet flat on the floor.



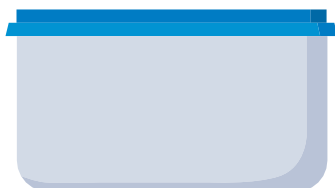
3. Then put the large mixing tray on top of the sheet.



4. Now place the electronic scales on top of the mixing tray.



5. Find your empty box and weigh the box on the scales and make note of the weight.



# The Big Sort

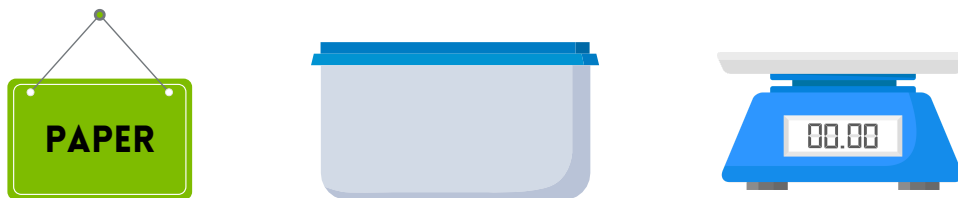
6. Empty the first bin or bag of waste on the protective sheet.



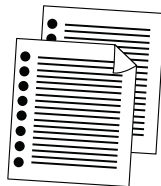
7. Sort the materials into different groups using the signs: paper, cardboard, plastic, metal...



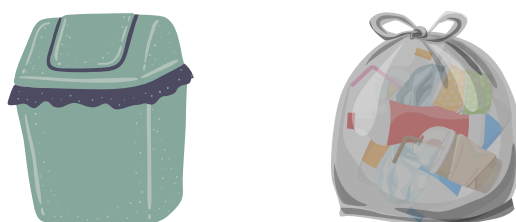
8. Place one group of materials into the box on the scales and make note of the weight on the worksheet given.



9. For each material, write down the different types you can see. Example: For paper there might be workbooks or pieces from a display board.



10. Once each material has been weighed and sorted, place it back into the bin or the bag.



Repeat these steps for each location!

## The clean up!

11. Move all the items off the sheet.

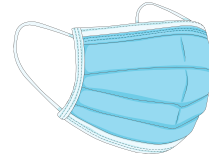
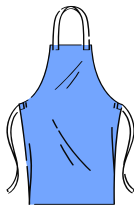
12. Sweep up any left over materials to keep the area clean & tidy.



13. Wipe everything down with antibacterial wipes.



14. Remove any safety glasses, gloves, aprons and facemasks.



15. Then wash your hands with warm soapy water ... Well done for staying safe!



16. Let's talk about your findings! Use the next few pages to help you discuss what you have found...

# Bin Check

**Which area of the school is your bin in?**

- ☐ Playground
- ☐ Lunch Hall
- ☐ Classroom
- ☐ School Office
- ☐ Staffroom
- ☐ Bathroom



**Which type of bin are you checking?**

- ☐ General Bin
- ☐ Recycling Bin
- ☐ Food Bin

*Weight of empty plastic box:*



Material	Weight of materials in grams (g)	Types of items found
Paper		
Plastic		
Metal		
Food		
General		

**Total weight of bin content:** \_\_\_\_\_



# Observations



Were there any incorrect items in the bin? E.g. food in the general bin or paper in the food bin or recycling in the general waste...

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, record the incorrect items you found in the bin in the table below.

General bin	Recycling bin	Food bin

## Percentage of Bin Materials

Now we can work out which location has the most recycling!

Use this equation to work out the percentage of each type of material in each area.

$$\frac{\text{Total weight of recyclable material} \times 100}{\text{Total weight of general bin material}}$$

Example:  $\frac{10 \times 100}{100} = 10\%$

Which area of the school are your bins from?

- ☐ Playground
- ☐ Lunch Hall
- ☐ Classroom
- ☐ School Office
- ☐ Staffroom
- ☐ Bathroom



Total weight of general bin material \_\_\_\_\_

Total weight of recycling bin material \_\_\_\_\_

Total weight of food bin material \_\_\_\_\_

Grand total of all bin material \_\_\_\_\_

% of general bin material

% of Recycling bin material

% of food bin material



# Conclusions

## Overall, what did you find out?

E.g. we already recycle lots, we have a lot of material in our bins, people put the wrong items in the bin.

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## Which are the 3 main things you want to improve?



- ☐ Add more bins
- ☐ Add more bin signs
- ☐ Improve the signs
- ☐ Change the location of the signs
- ☐ Reduce how much we put in our bins
- ☐ Find extra ways to recycle
- ☐ Find more ways to reuse items at school
- ☐ Find more ways to rehome the things we no longer need
- ☐ Teach children how to look after their things e.g. books, uniform
- ☐ Find new ways to buy less using online resources e.g. Bug Club and Rockstars
- ☐ Hold events to swap or sell preloved items e.g. uniform, story books
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

# Making New Bin Signs

We can help people to put the correct items in the correct bins by having good signage next to the bins.

**1. Decide which bin you want to talk to your classmates and teachers about.** E.g. the general bin, food bin or recycling.

**2. Decide what you want people to know.**

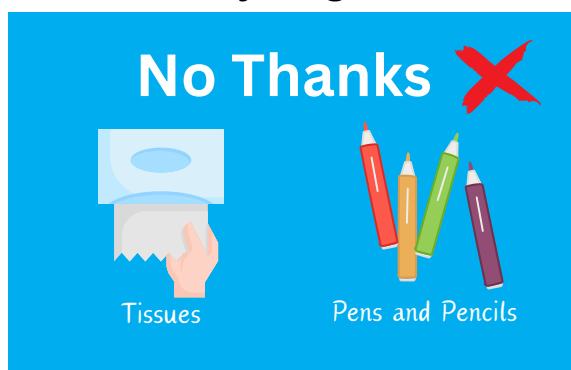
- A sign to show where misplaced items go. For example if you have lot of paper towels in the recycling bin you could chose to have a sign just about this.
- A sign to show all types of things which can go in a bin.

**3. A great poster will have:**

- Few words
- Clear simple pictures

Here are two ideas of what your poster could look like:

Recycling Bin



Food Bin



## Glossary:

**Extract** - Stuff taken by humans from underneath the ground such as metals, minerals, oil and gas.

**Emissions** - These are gases released when humans burn oil, coal and gas.

**Habitats** - A place where plants and animals live.

**Materials** - Natural resources are used to make materials. Materials are the stuff humans use and put in the bin.



# Plenary Quiz & Feedback

1. **What is a natural resource?**

A natural resources is \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Give 1 reasons why using fewer natural resources is good for the environment.**

Using fewer natural resources is good because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **Say one new thing you learnt today.**

I learnt that \_\_\_\_\_

5. **Tell us how you found this session. Circle up to 3 words.**

Interesting

Boring

Exciting

Thought provoking

Motivating

A bit difficult

A bit easy

6. **Tell us what you liked best.**

The best bit was \_\_\_\_\_

7. **Tell us what you would like to be different next time.**

Next time I would like \_\_\_\_\_

# Our Project Plan

**Our Goal**

**Our ideas to do this:**

1

2.

3

**Things we need...**

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

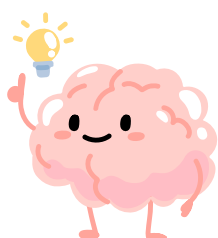
\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

**How will you know if it worked?**

**How will you tell your teachers and classmates about your project?**



- 1. Make a list of things you need to do.**
- 2. Decide when each thing needs to happen.**
- 3. Decide who will do each action.**

See the example on the next page to help you complete this!

Things to do	Name	Date

# EXAMPLE: Our Project Plan

## Our Goal

We would like to reduce the number of juice cartons in the general bin.

## Our ideas to do this:

1. Tell people about reusable bottles in the school newsletter and social media.
2. Make posters
3. Sell juice in reusable beakers at breaktime

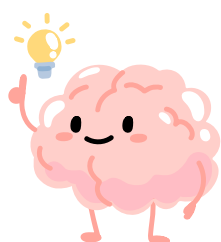
## Things we need...

- ☐ Reusable beakers and juice
- ☐ Article for newsletter
- ☐ Posters
- ☐ Volunteers to sell juice
- ☐ A table or stall

## How will you know if it worked?

We will complete another bin check of the general bin in our playground after we have made posters, sold drinks and told parents about reusable bottles.

**How will you tell your teachers and classmates about your project?**



Teachers & classmates – assembly

Parents – school newsletter &  
social media

- 1. Make a list of things you need to do.**
- 2. Decide when each thing needs to happen.**
- 3. Decide who will do each action.**

Things to do	Name	Date
Ask the PTA for money to buy reusable beakers	Pav	20th September
Find volunteers to sell juice	Lena	20th September
Make a poster	Isaac	4th October
Write an article for the newsletter	Sophie	4th October



# What swaps can we make?

These pages will help you think about what swaps you can make at home and in school to be more eco-friendly.

## Classroom



**Pens**

We can swap our normal handwriting and whiteboard pens for refillable pens. Or we can purchase pens that are made from recycled materials.



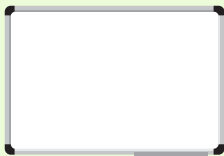
**Exercise Books**

Go digital by using tablets or laptops to record your work!  
Unfinished exercise books can be used for scrap paper.



**Textbooks**

Use online resources to extend your knowledge.  
Or buy fewer sets to share between classes.



**Display boards**

Leave work unlaminated so it can be recycled.  
Reuse display material again or buy recycled display paper.



**Equipment**

Buy fewer sets and share between classes. E.g. compasses, rulers, scissors.  
Donate old or unused equipment to places that recycle or donate them!

## Lunch Hall and Staffroom



**Plastic Wrap**

Swap plastic sandwich bags and wrap for beeswax coated wraps.  
Or use tupperware containers that you can reuse again and again.



**Juice Cartons**

Use larger juice cartons to refill a small recyclable water bottle with juice instead of buying smaller individual cartons.



**Plastic Bottles**

Buy a reusable water bottle to refill at home and school to stop the use of plastic water bottles. Wash it every night to reuse the next day!

## School Office



**Technology**

Go paperless!  
Use cloud-based networks to keep everything online and reduce your use of paper.



**Office Supplies**

Choose sustainable office supplies such as pens made from recyclable materials or pens with refillable cartridges.

## **Suggested Social Media Content**

Share the work you do on social media to parents and carers using our suggested content and our graphics.

### *Social Media Text:*

#### **Suggestion 1:**

#### **[Insert name of school]'s Planetary Protectors**

This week, our school has been learning about the Earth's natural resources and how we are using them more quickly than the Earth can make them back. We discovered how we can all be planetary protectors to reduce the effects of climate change, protect habitats and conserve resources for our future! We can do this by reducing the amount we buy, repairing our broken items and sharing them with our friends and family to use until we can't use them anymore! They can then go in the recycling bin to be made into something brand new.

#### **Suggestion 2:**

#### **[Insert name of school]'s Planetary Protectors**

This week the children have completed bin checks which involved sorting and weighing the material in our school bins to find out what we use and how much we use. The children have been busy creating an action plan to help us reduce what goes in our bin and to recycle as much as possible. We are proud of our planetary protectors and all their efforts this week!

Newsletter or Website Text:

Title: **Our Planetary Protectors!**

This week, our school has been learning about natural resources and how we can all be planetary protectors! Natural resources are things made in nature that humans use. For example, cotton is made from cotton plants, plastic is made from oil, metal is made ore mined from the ground and food is farmed from soil.

Everything we buy, use and eat comes from our beautiful planet. We learnt we are using the Earth's natural resources more quickly than the Earth can make them back and that this can worsen climate change, disturb habitats and affect people's quality of life.

We discovered how we can all be planetary protectors to reduce the effects of climate change, protect habitats and conserve resources for our future use by buying less, repairing and sharing our things, using our things again and again until we put them in our recycle bin where they can be made into something brand new.

This week the children have completed bin checks which involved sorting and weighing the material in our school to find out what we use and how much. The children have been busy creating an action plan to help us reduce what goes in our bin and recycle as much as possible.

We are proud of our planetary protectors and all their efforts this week!

## Suggested Social Media Content

### Social Media Graphics:



RECOUP  
1 Metro Centre  
Wellbeck way  
Peterborough  
PE2 7UH

[recoup.org](http://recoup.org)

**RSTUFF**  
Our stuff. Our responsibility.

[rstuff.uk](http://rstuff.uk)  
[rstuff@recoup.org](mailto:rstuff@recoup.org)