

ST. PATRICK'S PS, THE LOUP IS TACKLING PLASTIC

We've known about the devastating impact of plastics for more than a decade. It's polluting our oceans, killing wildlife and damaging our health. Yet our consumption of plastic continues to increase! Not all plastics are bad however. It's our misuse of plastic that's the problem.

Schools play an important part in educating children about pointless plastics, so we were delighted when **St. Patrick's Primary School, The Loup** signed up to make their 'Plastic Promise' in December 2020. St. Patrick's PS is one of 70+ schools in Northern Ireland that is committed to reducing their plastic footprint.

The Tackling Plastic NI team spoke to teacher and Eco-Schools advocate **Áine Gribben** to see how St. Patrick's has been getting on with their 'Plastic Promise' journey...

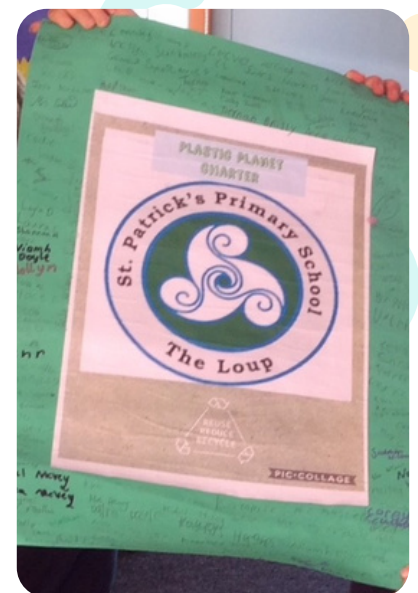


How did St. Patrick's 'Tackling Plastic' journey begin?

St. Patrick's Tackling Plastic journey began very simply by choosing something manageable that staff and pupils knew that they could achieve. Our Primary 5 teacher Mrs McVey asked her class to **ban the use of straws**. Soon the rest of the school followed!

What efforts has St. Colm's made to tackle pointless plastic?

After the success of the banning of straws, we realised that the pupils were highlighting other pointless plastic. The Eco-Committee asked everybody in the school to **ditch their single-use plastic bottles in favour of reusable drinks bottles**. Children in Key Stage 2 took part in the Tackling Plastic NI webinar with Doug Allan, which they really enjoyed (watch webinar [here](#)). Doug had followed the journey of a 'throw away' piece of plastic rubbish and showed the children how it eventually got carried out to sea and into the food chain. The **children themselves then decided to write a letter to the Principal** (see next page) asking if we could start a Plastic Promise group to champion other initiatives in school, including whole school action on reducing single-use plastic in our school lunch boxes.



Dear Mr. Scullion,

We were lucky enough to join a Zoom meeting with a famous photographer this week. His name was Doug Allan; he photographs animals in the wild. We saw a Polar Bear in its natural environment, we saw a really cute penguin with a heart shaped mark on it and a killer whale that was about to eat a seal.

He taught us about the journey of a plastic bag that was thrown away at a school gate, it then got blown into a river and drifted out into the sea.

We learned that plastic bag broke down into something called micro plastics and unfortunately all those beautiful animals that we saw in the photos ended up eating them as part of the food chain. This is because they ate the fish that had eaten the micro plastics.

Even the smallest of micro plastics can kill the biggest of blue whales. One was washed up and when they investigated they found that his stomach was full of plastic so he thought he was full, he could no longer eat fish like he was supposed to and died of hunger.

We have decided that this is not good enough and we are asking each class to make a small plastic promise. We are promising to stop using single use plastic bottles and sandwich bags in our class.

Here are a few ideas of what you could do:

- **Keep up the good work you started last year and continue to not use plastic straws**
- **Don't use plastic bags - use a reusable one instead**
- **Reuse plastic that you already have**
- **Get your parents to buy paper cups and plates next time you have a party**
- **Do not use plastic cutlery, just wash the cutlery you have or buy wooden disposable cutlery**
- **Use beeswax sandwich wrappers or even old newspapers.**

Please write back to us and tell us your plastic promise for your class, we can't wait to hear from you.

Warm regards, Primary 5

How have tackling plastic efforts been received by pupils and staff?

There was an amazing interest and effort put in by all with our Tackling Plastic initiatives. After the initial ideas, lockdown followed quickly after unfortunately but **we are looking forward to getting it up and running again in the third term!**

What tackling plastic challenges have you experienced since St. Patrick's make their Plastic Promise in December 2020?

One of the biggest challenges we've found comes from food producers. Supermarkets are not providing adequate lunch box filler options in biodegradable packaging. This makes it difficult for parents to get on board when they're pushed for time, and faced with plastic wrapped choices for their children's lunches.



What's ahead for the pupils of St. Patrick's PS, The Loup?

St. Patrick's pupils are going 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. We are also going to make a video for parents on alternative ways of providing healthy snacks without relying on single-use plastic.

Inspired by St. Patrick's PS, The Loup?

Sign up to the Plastic Promise today!

[Click here](#) to make your Plastic Promise.

Keep up the good work!

The Tackling Plastic NI team