Organising a School Litter Pick

General Advice on Litter Picks

- They can be a popular activity with primary school children;
- They can be an acceptable activity with pupils from years 7-8;
- They are generally resented by older pupils - this may be related to teenage attitudes to litter and dirt and teenage rebellion - see ‘Key Findings from Youth Research’ section for more details;
- Ensure that litter picks are always positive activities and not used as a punishment, which can be counter-productive;
- It is helpful if a member of staff picks up litter as well as supervising the activity – children appreciate leadership by example.

Plan Ahead

- Identify the area of land to be cleaned. If it is outside school grounds, for example along the street at the front entrance, obtain permission from the council or other landowner;
- Children appreciate being thanked. Feedback from schools suggests that at primary schools verbal congratulations and association with being good citizens or gaining merit points is appreciated. Secondary school pupils respond more positively if there is a greater reward. As an example the Eco-Schools Coordinator of Great Barr School provides participants with a drink and a biscuit as a thank you;
- Unless you anticipate collecting large or bulky items (unlikely in a school litter pick) there is no need to make special arrangements to dispose of the waste other than placing it in the school bin;
- Before you start any litter pick it is important to carry out a risk assessment. Identify any hazardous areas, for example a staff or visitors car park, and undertake a visual check to see if hazardous materials are present. Examples include broken glass, condoms and syringes. Children should be briefed in advance not to touch any of these. The former two may be dealt with by caretaking staff. If any drugs related litter is found make a note of the location, ask the council for advice and place the area out of bounds until it is hazard free. NEVER TOUCH DRUGS RELATED LITTER;
Contact your council cleansing or environmental health department for support such as the provision of litter pickers, refuse sacks and protective gloves;

Check that you have public liability insurance. This will provide cover for the legal liability arising from any injury or accidental damage that occurs during the litter pick. You may have cover through the school or council insurance policy.

**Making Arrangements**

- Arrange in advance who is invited or welcome to attend. Invitations may be sent to pupils, teaching and ancillary staff and governors, though care should be taken that all those working with children have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance. It is vital to have appropriate levels of pupil supervision at all times;
- Set clear start and finish times. Litter picks are more sustainable, enjoyable and less onerous if they are for a short time.

**Equipment and Preparation**

- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of equipment, including rubbish sacks, protective gloves (child sized) and litter pickers. Gloves and litter pickers can be ordered from the Helping Hand Company, telephone: 01531 635678
  
  Web: [www.helpinghand.co.uk](http://www.helpinghand.co.uk)

- Ensure that the school first-aider has been advised about the location and timing of the event;
- If you require resources, consider seeking sponsorship for your event from local companies; additionally local authority grants may be available.

**Good Publicity**

- Depending on the event, it may be appropriate to issue a press release to maximise good publicity for the initiative and the school. Consider reporting the event in a school newsletter and in reports to parents and governors. This spreads awareness of the work and helps participants feel that their work is valued.
Pre-Clean up Briefing/Preparations

- Go over: start and finish times, health and safety instructions including that broken glass, condoms and drugs related litter including any form of needle should not be touched. Additionally, ask pupils not to pick up any large, heavy or bulky items – boys in particular can be very enthusiastic;
- If fly-tipping is found report it to the Environment Agency, telephone: 0800 80 70 60;
- Avoid working near hedges or other wildlife habitats during the nesting or breeding season. Encourage pickers to leave natural features such as logs and boulders undisturbed, as they may be home to animals;
- Consider taking a pre-clean up photograph. This can be compared with a post-clean up photo to see the visible difference;
- Consider recycling some of the items, for example aluminium cans.

Post-Litter Pick

- Thank all participants;
- To monitor the impact of the initiative, consider capturing the following information:
  - Note the amount of rubbish collected - this can be by counting the number of bags or by weighing the rubbish;
  - Consider taking a team photo of participants posing with what they have collected and a photo of the area after it has been cleared.

Further Information

ENCAMS provides a publication entitled ‘Litter organising a clean up’. A pdf of this document is attached, and printed copies can be ordered free of charge at:

www.encams.org