

# FIVE STEP GUIDE TO PLASTIC FREE 4 SCHOOLS



change **X**

# WELCOME

**“Welcome to the ChangeX Plastic Free 4 Schools guide! We’re delighted you’re thinking about starting Plastic Free 4 Schools. We want to help your school to avoid single use plastics, reduce waste and maximise recycling.**

**Here you’ll find all the information, practical tips and resources you need. There is someone to help you at each stage of the journey so don’t be afraid to get in touch!”**

**Dr Tara Shine and Madeleine Murray,  
Co-Founders of Plastic Free 4 Schools**



## Introduction to the Idea

### What is Plastic Free 4 Schools?

Plastic Free 4 Schools is a programme to help schools to go plastic free, through 3 plastic free actions, and in turn, act as ambassadors for change in their communities. It has been designed by Change by Degrees and tested through Plastic Free Kinsale - a community initiative to free a whole town from single use plastic. In its first couple of months, all 4 national schools and the secondary school in Kinsale have signed up to start the Plastic Free 4 Schools journey. You can become a Plastic Free Champion in your school by building a team of helpers (both staff and students) and taking the following 3 actions:

- i) Encourage reusable water bottles
- ii) Say no to plastic in lunch boxes
- iii) Become a Plastic Free Ambassador in your community

The Plastic Free 4 Schools actions are complimentary with the Green Flag programme, so you can take these actions as part of working towards this award, or outside of it.

### Why is it important?

Plastic pollution is a problem that affects every person living in Ireland today – either directly through rising waste collection charges due to recent changes to recycling

waste processes, or indirectly through potential impacts on health and wellbeing. Plastic waste litters our countryside, our beaches and usually ends up in the sea. In February 2018 researchers in NUI Galway found that 73% of deep water fish had ingested plastic particles, one of the highest frequencies in fish ever reported. Many varieties of plastics are toxic and it is not yet known how these toxins will affect human health.

### The background

Plastic Free 4 Schools founders Tara and Madeline met while swimming in the sea and decided to join forces to help people in their community to come together and take practical steps to reduce their consumption of single use plastic. They co-founded Plastic Free 4 Schools in 2018 to educate, inspire and change behaviour related to plastic consumption and plastic waste. Their approach is based on empowering and mobilising stakeholder groups in a community to take action, through 3 simple actions and their goal is to have 300 national schools pledged to Plastic Free 4 Schools within 12 months.

# STARTING PLASTIC FREE 4 SCHOOLS

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED

### TIME



3-4 hours initially and then just one hour a week, a little more if you want to organise a workshop

### PEOPLE



You'll need a team of about 3-4 people, this could be your school's Green Team if you have one

### FUNDING



No costs involved, unless you choose to buy extra resources for a workshop or want co-founders Tara and Madeleine to visit your school

#### Who typically starts Plastic Free 4 Schools?

Someone who:

- is a teacher or works in a primary school
- is passionate about waste, pollution and health impacts of plastic pollution
- has a desire to do something about this problem in your school and beyond

#### 5 Step Summary

- 1 Complete your 30 Day Jumpstart Challenge
- 2 Visit classrooms and get the whole school involved
- 3 Communicate with the wider school community
- 4 Organise a workshop
- 5 Become Plastic Free Ambassadors in the community

#### Support and Additional Resources

Support from ChangeX: Call us on (086) 468 5361. Email: [hello@changex.org](mailto:hello@changex.org)

Contact Information for Change By Degrees Email: [info@changebydegrees.com](mailto:info@changebydegrees.com)

# STEP 1: COMPLETE YOUR 30 DAY CHALLENGE



The 30 Day Jumpstart Challenge has been designed to get your project off to the strongest possible start by building momentum in the first month.

## **Understand the challenge**

Watch the short welcome video on your ChangeX page and read this page.

## **Learn more about the idea you're starting**

Your '5 Step Guide' includes all you need to know about the specifics of starting your project.

## **Find 3-5 interested people**

You already have your own project page on changex.org. Use it to share the project with others and recruit your first supporters.

## **Set up a casual kick-off meeting**

Host a meeting at your home, school, in a pub or in a café and come up with an action plan along with your team. You can use your ChangeX page to set up an event and invite people.

## **Give us a heads up that you are up and running**

At your event, take a team picture and agree the first step you will take as a group to get started.

## STEP 2: VISIT CLASSROOMS AND GET THE WHOLE SCHOOL INVOLVED

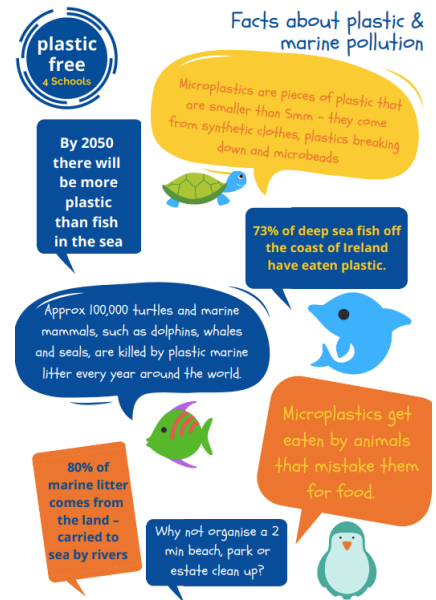
Now that you have completed the 30 Day Challenge you should have a couple of interested people to help you with your project. Assign different roles to each person, including visiting each class, designing a workshop, internal communications in the school and linking with the wider community. Of course, make sure you also have buy-in from the school principal!

If your school has a Green Team be sure to link in with them - they might be the key to finding other interested people in your school to help you and they will most likely be those that monitor the three actions once the project is up and running. There's no point in having multiple committees in your school doing similar work - much better to pool your energy and talents!

Plastic Free 4 Schools is a whole school effort, so everyone needs to make the decision to get involved and help out. To make sure it is fully participatory you need to visit each classroom and let everyone know what you are planning and encourage the students to ask questions and make suggestions. Tell them about the three actions:

- Encourage reusable Water Bottles
- Say no to plastic in lunch boxes
- Become a Plastic Free Ambassador in your community

There are lots of posters available in the resources section (<https://www.changex.org/plasticfree4schools/resources>) to help you communicate why it makes sense for your school to become plastic free, and what everyone can do to help the school achieve the three actions. At each classroom visit ask everyone to commit to the 3 actions and (with the teacher's permission!) put some posters up in the classroom.



## STEP 3: COMMUNICATE WITH THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY

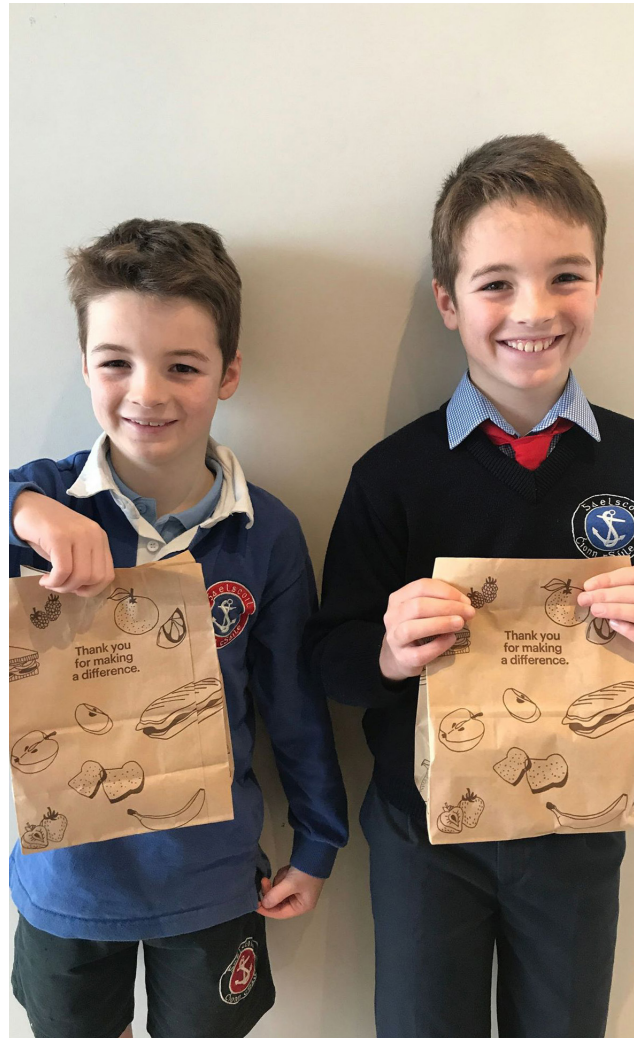
This project will only be a success if it has support from the wider school community, particularly parents and guardians, as they will be involved, for example, in reducing plastic in lunch boxes, and in supporting the children as they spread the message in the wider community. Communicate through any and all mediums that the school usually uses, for example the newsletter, website and Whatsapp and Facebook groups.

### TIPS



In your communications to the wider community you could include:

- the three actions
- any updates on how the school is taking action e.g posters the kids have made
- any results achieved e.g. a reduction in the volume of plastics in the bins



## STEP 4: ORGANISE A WORKSHOP

If you want to take this project a step further and create an interactive experience for the students, you can prepare and deliver a workshop, either to each class individually, or at a school assembly, depending on the size of your school. In the resources section (<https://www.changex.org/plasticfree4schools/resources>) you will find a detailed guide to help you prepare the workshop, which includes worksheet activities and group discussion. Here is an overview of the suggested activities:

1. Introduction to plastic pollution – Prepare facts and stories covering single-use plastics, necessary and unnecessary plastics and alternatives.

2. Meet the Pollutoys and learn about the impacts of marine pollution on sea life (if you have the resources).

3. Sand tray activity – use containers, boxes or empty drawers and play sand to set up this activity.

4. Understanding degradation – using the litter found in the sand trays guess the degradation time.

5. Let's talk about the solutions - get inputs and ideas from the class on how to avoid unnecessary plastic.

6. School commitment - discuss the 3 Plastic Free actions for schools and invite the school staff and students to make the Plastic Free 4 Schools commitment.

### EXTRA FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES



Hold a school poster competition to highlight plastic pollution and the solutions

Write a letter to an important person in your community to propose a way to reduce single use plastics (e.g. local café, supermarket, St Patrick's Day parade committee)

Design new signs for recycling and rubbish bins in your school

Ask the Green Team to be class champions and remind their classmates about plastic free lunch boxes

Ask the Parent's Association to implement the school's Plastic Free actions in the activities they organise



# STEP 5: BECOME PLASTIC FREE AMBASSADORS IN THE COMMUNITY

Once your school is up and running on its path to becoming a Plastic Free School, it's time for you all to become ambassadors in the community! There are lots of ways to do this, some ideas are:

- Link up with your local Tidy Towns group to get them to spread the message and maybe organise a joint clean up in your local area
- Link with other schools to encourage them to get involved too
- Support those in 6th class to come up with ways to bring the Plastic Free 4 Schools actions into their new secondary school
- Replicate the actions in local sports clubs that students are involved with

## TIPS

If you would like extra help from co-founders Tara and Madeleine in getting your community involved or you would like them to come to your community for a visit, get in touch with them here: [info@changebydegrees.com](mailto:info@changebydegrees.com) to discuss further and work out what costs would be involved.



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