What’s in your lunch box?

This factsheet uses pupils’ lunches as a starting point for discussing sustainable development and human impact on the environment.

What is sustainable development?

The idea of sustainable development became popular in the 1980s when we started to acknowledge the need to change the way we use the world’s natural resources to preserve the environment and ensure a better quality of life for everyone, both now, and for generations to come.

The aim of this activity sheet is to encourage children to think about ways in which they can help the environment through the ‘3 Rs’ – reduce, reuse, recycle. Use the activities to discuss the links between rubbish, landfill sites and pollution. Look at recycling facilities in your area and help children see how they (and their parents) can reduce the amount of rubbish they produce every day, for example through their choice of packed lunch.

Activity: What’s in your lunch box?

What you’ll need:
- Large sheet of paper and pens
- Copies of four activity sheets
- Plastic gloves
- Plastic bags
- Labels
- Scales (to weigh packaging)
- Calculators
- Leftovers from packed lunches

All the following activity sheets are downloadable from www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools/resources/teachingresources/detail.cfm?id=237

Step one:
Give children activity sheet ‘Mike’s packed lunch and Annabel’s packed lunch’.

The activity sheet shows two lunch boxes, one with lots of packaging – crisps, carton of drink and yoghurt pot – while the other lunch is in recyclable containers. Ask the class to discuss how the two packed lunches are different.

continued overleaf
Step two:
Give children activity sheet ‘Whose rubbish is whose?’ The sheet shows the leftover rubbish from Mike’s and Annabel’s lunches. Ask the class to work out why Mike has less rubbish than Annabel. Discuss how most of the rubbish is packaging and what happens to it.

Step three:
Provide plastic gloves and ask the class to remove the rubbish from their packed lunches. Give children the factsheet ‘Are our packed lunches sustainable?’ which has a tick list to help children decide which leftover items they can reuse, recycle or compost.

Step four:
The next step is to look at the total amount of rubbish produced by the class. Give children copies of the activity sheet ‘Class Rubbish – How much do we waste?’ which will help children work out how much rubbish the class wastes every day, every week and every year.

Label four plastic bags ‘Compost’, ‘Reuse’, ‘Recycle’ and ‘Throw away’. Collect the whole class’s rubbish in the four bags. Ask the children to weigh each bag and calculate the average weekly amount in each category. Get the children to fill in the results on the activity sheet.

Related topics
Food miles – discuss the benefits of buying locally produced food rather than products flown in from abroad. See factsheet 7.

Organic food – discuss the benefits of organic food.

For additional information and resources visit English Nature [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk). English Nature works in partnership to conserve and enhance our landscapes and natural environment, to promote countryside access and recreation as well as public well-being, now and for future generations.

Useful links
- [www.recycle-more.co.uk](http://www.recycle-more.co.uk) find out about local recycling facilities
- [www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com) information on reducing, reusing and recycling household rubbish
- [www.ollierecycles.com](http://www.ollierecycles.com) fun, Australian site aimed at children
- [www.epa.gov/recyclecity](http://www.epa.gov/recyclecity) fun, American site set in the town of ‘Dumptown’ with games and activities for use with children
- [www.recoup.org](http://www.recoup.org) informative site about plastics recycling for use with children
- [www.recyclingglass.co.uk](http://www.recyclingglass.co.uk) fun site about glass recycling
- [www.recycleroom.org](http://www.recycleroom.org) fun site about steel recycling, aimed at children

Other Useful Organisations
Learning through Landscapes [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)
Groundwork [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)