



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Class 3H
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Dear Class 3H,

Thank you very much for your letter of 22 February to the Prime Minister about litter, I apologise for the delay. The Prime Minister is incredibly busy and, as the Minister responsible for this policy area, I am replying on his behalf.

It is great to see young people like yourselves show such passion and care for our environment. Reducing waste is a big challenge for everyone in the world and the decisions we make today will affect the future of our planet for generations to come. I am grateful to you all for the work you have been doing to research environmental issues. I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the things our Government is doing to help combat litter, as well as what young people like yourself can do in your homes, schools, and local areas.

We share your passion for making the environment a better place and we can all do our bit to reduce the amount of problem plastics we use and throw away. In December 2018, the UK Government published the Resources & Waste Strategy. This document sets out how we will work towards our goal of removing all avoidable plastic waste by 2042.

In doing this, we must remember that as a material plastic is incredibly useful. Its strength makes it a valuable material in many areas of life from creating packaging for food items, to being in the rubber in tyres. Problems occur when plastics are leaked into our environment, where they survive for hundreds of years. It is important that we manage the plastic problem, to reduce, reuse, and recycle the material we have and not let it escape into, and damage, our environment and its inhabitants.

We also want to encourage everyone to use fewer single use plastic bags, which is why we put a charge on them and increased it to 10p last year. By using a reusable bag over and over again, you can make a big difference in reducing the amount of plastic that goes into the bin, and potentially into our oceans. A reusable wicker or cotton bag is an example, and we encourage you and your friends to do this and save 10p each time you do so!

We can swap out so many different plastic items with reusable ones – here are a few you can try:

- Swap those plastic sachets you get from fast-food/takeaway restaurants with a bigger bottle you may have in your home
- Swap plastic cutlery (knives, forks, spoons) with reusable ones
- Swap a plastic bag you can only use once with a reusable bag (like the wicker bag suggested above)
- Swap a throwaway cup you can only use once with a reusable one

Reusing things can help stop them from becoming waste – we need to focus on this as much as we can.

Litter problems are often quite specific to the local area and may need different answers in different places. We think local councils know best how to solve these problems. The Government supports this local action by making the law clear, giving councils the powers that they need and setting national standards.

We published the Litter Strategy for England in April 2017, setting out our aim to deliver a significant reduction in litter and littering within a generation. The Litter Strategy brings together communities, businesses, charities and schools to bring about real change by focusing on three key themes: education and awareness; improving enforcement; and better cleaning and access to bins. A copy of the Litter Strategy can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england.

As you correctly point out, dropping litter is illegal. Councils take those caught littering to court which can lead to a fine of up to £2,500. Instead of taking someone to court, councils can issue an on-the-spot fine, which we have increased to a maximum of up to £150. We are also working with the Ministry of Justice to explore how we can make better use of the Community Payback Scheme for activities like litter picking.

There are many ways that we as individuals can help reduce the human impact on the environment. In your case, you can sign your school up to be an 'Eco-school' (if it isn't one already). This programme works to help change littering habits and reduce waste amongst schools and communities. We want to make sure young people are at the heart of environmental issues, so ask your teachers to join the programme if they haven't already and organise a litter pick in your school playground today. More information can be found at: www.eco-schools.org.uk.

We also encourage everyone to look at how much plastic they use and see if they can reduce it. You can remind your parents to take bags with them to the supermarket, use a flannel instead of single-use wipes, carry a reusable bottle and share tips with their friends. On top of this, we can all cut down on the quantities of waste we throw away wherever possible by reusing, recycling and repairing items. This will help the planet by saving precious resources.

Together, we can all make a difference and help to stop our ocean being polluted with plastic waste. With your enthusiasm and voices, we can improve the natural environment and make our world a better place for all to enjoy. I am also attaching a poster and factsheet on ways you can help reduce waste, which you are free to reproduce for use around your school. You may also like to share them with their friends or family.

I hope this reply is helpful to you. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance with this or any other matters in the future.

Yours sincerely,



JO CHURCHILL MP