

change
4 life

water only schools

toolkit



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We would like to acknowledge the work of the following partners in the development of this resource to support water only schools across London.

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Public Health
England



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This pack contains ...

- ★ Introduction and background information
- ★ Frequently asked questions about going water only
- ★ Using water fountains safely during Covid-19
- ★ Draft policy
- ★ Step by step guide to implementation
- ★ A template letter to parents
- ★ Social media resources
- ★ Useful links and resources

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Introduction and background

Become a water only school

Schools are ideally placed to nurture not just learning but also the health and wellbeing of their pupils. Creating a healthy whole school environment supports children to thrive and reach their potential.

Partners across London have come together to encourage all primary schools to become water only. Being water only means making sure that water (and plain semi skimmed or skimmed milk, lactose free or soya milk) is the only drink in your school.

By choosing water, this means children are not drinking sugary drinks which contribute to many preventable health conditions like obesity, tooth decay and type 2 diabetes. What's more is that London's tap water is excellent and one litre of tap water costs less than a fifth of a penny, 500 times less than bottled water and by using reusable water bottles we can help cut single-use plastics.

How to get started to become a water only school

Each school will follow its own path to becoming water only. Here are a few activities to get you started:

- ★ **Consult with your school community e.g. governors, parents and pupils about becoming a water only school and update your school food policy or create a water only policy if you don't already have one.**
- ★ **Review your current school food policy and add statements about becoming a water only school, it helps to include practical examples of what this means to your school.**
- ★ **Review canteen and lunch menus to make sure that water and plain reduced fat milk are the only options.**

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- ★ Ensure plenty of drinking water is available in the canteen at lunchtime.
- ★ Review fundraising, class rewards and celebration ideas to make sure they fit with your school food and water only policy.
- ★ Review tuck shops and vending machines to ensure that they do not sell sugary drinks.

Healthy Schools London supports and rewards schools that create healthy environments for their pupils including becoming 'water only' schools. Schools can achieve a Healthy Schools London Award if they are providing drinks for school lunches and any food provided other than lunches e.g. breakfast club, after school clubs that meet the statutory DfE Standards for school food (2015).

In addition to meeting these standards, all HSL-awarded schools must provide pupils with easy access to free, clean drinking water at all times.

There is a water only schools section on the Healthy Schools London website at www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/health/healthy-schools-london/awards/home that has lots of tools, resources and links for more information.

**Thank you for supporting water only schools and
creating a healthy environment for all your pupils.**

What does it mean to be a water only school?

In a water only school, plain water and plain reduced fat milk (this includes skimmed or semi skimmed, lactose free and soya milk) are the only drinks permitted (unless for medical reasons or if children are under 5). This means all other drinks are actively discouraged from being brought into school and are also not sold at school, including through canteen and lunch offers. Many schools are already doing this.

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Steps to take to become water only:

- ★ Plain water and plain reduced fat milk (skimmed or semi skimmed, lactose free and soya milk) are the only drinks permitted at school, including: at breakfast clubs, in canteens, in packed lunches, at after school clubs, and in tuck shops (unless for medical reasons or if children are under 5).
- ★ All prizes at school sporting and extra curriculum events are sugar free.
- ★ Pupils have access to clean drinking water throughout the day.

Some schools may wish to take this policy further and think about taking the following actions:

- ★ Develop a whole school food policy setting out the school's approach to its provision of food, food education (including practical cooking) and the role of the catering team in providing a healthy balanced diet to school pupils.
- ★ Include this within the pupil welcome pack and code of conduct.
- ★ Most/all fundraising activities are free from sugary snacks and prizes which are not high in fat sugar or salt and sugary drinks.
- ★ Pupils actively participate in promoting water only.
- ★ Review the terms and hire agreement for external agencies who use the school buildings for events to align this with the school food policy/water only policy.
- ★ Sugary drinks and snacks are not sold at school or during school events.



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Frequently asked questions

What is a water only school?

A water only school has a whole school food policy or water only policy in place and a plan that promotes water and plain reduced fat milk (skimmed and semi skimmed, lactose free and soya milk) as the only drinks available at school (unless for medical reasons or if children are under 5). They will have a plan to make sure their policy is followed. Some schools will also make sure that water and plain milk are the only drinks at events such as sports days and other drinks are not used for fundraising, as a reward, or at celebrations.

Won't restricting pupil's choice of beverages affect their hydration?

Water, which by law must always be freely available to pupils, is enough to meet children's hydration needs, and pupils are encouraged to drink water as part of the school's food policy. Hydration is not compromised by a lack of availability of sugary drinks in schools.

Why introduce more rules? Surely pupils can be educated to make appropriate choices?

Schools are ideally placed to provide an environment that helps pupils to be as healthy as possible giving them the best chance in life. As part of that commitment, schools are uniquely placed to provide an environment where the healthy and most affordable choice is the easy one. Many primary schools across the country already have water only policies. By only providing and allowing water (and milk at break or lunchtime) schools will reflect the healthy eating messages taught in lessons.

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What about fruit juice? Isn't that healthy?

Schools should actively encourage pupils to eat fruits. But fruit juice is often high in sugar and does not contain the fibre contained within whole fruits.

We have a school canteen/lunch order which provides a range of drinks. How do we go about changing this?

If your school specifies within its school food policy/water only policy that water and plain reduced fat milk are the only drinks to be provided at school, then the school canteen will need to ensure that supplied drinks align with this policy. The supplier that you get your school food from should be informed of your new policy and your contract updated to include this.

What about sports drinks, flavoured water, and diet drinks? Surely, they are needed after exercise, or for hydration, or to combat obesity?

Water is able to fulfil all hydration needs, and milk provides nutritional benefits.

In addition, some diet and sports drinks contain caffeine. Excessive consumption of caffeinated drinks by children is linked to negative health outcomes such as headaches, sleeping problems, irritation and tiredness.

What other benefits are there to making the school 'water only'?

Other than the health benefits, improved behaviour and learning, restricting fizzy and sugary drinks helps the environment by reducing waste and keeps the school and grounds litter free.

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How will this water only policy be enforced?

Pupils who are found with a drink other than water (or low-fat milk) while at school will be asked to put it away. Schools must ensure that water is freely available for pupils to access via fountains around the school and in jugs at lunchtime. This will not apply to pupils who have a medical reason which requires them to drink something that is not water or milk. Parents and carers of children who this affects should inform teachers directly.

If children start drinking more water in class, won't they need the toilet more often and cause disruption to their lessons?

Water only schools have not found this to be the case. Some schools have found that the number of toilet visits decrease.

How much fluid do children need?

The amount of fluid a child needs depends on many factors including their age, their gender, the weather and how much physical activity they do, but generally they should aim to drink about 6-8 glasses of fluid per day (on top of the water provided by food in their diet).

Younger children need relatively smaller drinks (e.g. 120–150 ml serving) and older children need larger drinks (e.g. 250–300 ml serving). This is based on recommendations from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which set out how much fluid children of different ages need.

Assuming 70-80% of fluid in the diet comes from drinks (20-30% from food) the EFSA recommendations from drinks only are equivalent to 1.1-1.3 litres per day for 4-8 year olds, 1.3-1.5 litres per day for 9-13 year old girls and 1.5-1.7 litres per day 9-13 year old boys.

It is helpful for teachers to remind pupils to drink throughout the day to stay hydrated.

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Might water get spilt on tables in class?

Schools could provide or encourage parents to provide personal reusable bottles. A spilled bottle of water is much easier to clean up than a sugary drink.

Some children are bringing in sugary drinks from home, what can I do?

Recommending that pupils use transparent water bottles can reduce the likelihood of this happening. You could send a letter to parents explaining the changes and importance of drinking more water, and less sugary drinks – a template is included in this pack.

Some children don't think that the drinking water from fountains is clean, what can I do to encourage them?

Listen to your pupils to understand why they think this. You might want to address this topic in lessons or a school assembly, a letter to parents might also help. Water in the UK is safe to drink and pupils should feel confident that there have been no cases of sickness or infection caused by drinking from fountains.

Aren't water bottles or fountains unhygienic?

Bottles should be washed regularly at home in warm, soapy water and left to air dry upside down. Children should also be encouraged to avoid touching the fountain with their mouth and to wash their hands regularly to minimise contamination. The school can also install more swan neck fountains which are more hygienic.

You can get more information about fountains here: www.sustainweb.org/publications/drinking_water_fountains/#

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There have been no widely reported cases of illnesses being picked up from drinking fountains but the negative health impact of sugary drinks is now well documented.

What's the rough cost of installation?

The costs quoted on fountains can vary hugely from £500 – to £10,000! This usually varies depending on the model and setting, and whether the installation is waived.

How many water fountains are needed for a school?

There isn't a recommended number of water fountains per school. Schools should consider installing water fountains, drinking taps or water zip taps in strategic places such as playgrounds and areas with high footfall and to consider the ratio of pupils to water fountains, their school layout and the demand at busy times of day (e.g. at break times). Free drinking water should also be easily available to pupils in the canteen.



Covid-19 guidance

Is it safe to use a water fountain in school?

UK Government Guidance for consumers on coronavirus (COVID-19) and food, written by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), states that it is very unlikely that you can catch coronavirus (COVID-19) from food. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness. It is not known to be transmitted to food or food packaging. It is recommended that pupils are encouraged to wash their hands regularly with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, to reduce the risk of illness.

How often should a water fountain be cleaned?

Water fountains should be cleaned frequently (minimum of once a day) by the organisation that is responsible for maintaining the potability of the water. Water fountains should be maintained regularly as per standard guidelines.

How can pupils fill their water bottles safely?

It is recommended that pupils wash their hands with soap and water before using the fountain. If this is not possible, it is recommended that pupils use hand sanitiser before and after using the fountain, whilst avoiding touching the waterspout/nozzle with their water bottle or hands. The water should run freely for 10 seconds before refilling a water bottle to ensure that the water is fresh. It is recommended that pupils avoid coughing or sneezing when near the water fountain.

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What if there isn't any handwashing facility or sanitiser available?

If there are no facilities for hand washing/hand sanitising the pupil/s should be advised to use their elbow/back of hand/knee to operate the water fountain button.

How should pupils line up?

Everybody using the water fountain should maintain a safe distance from the fountain and from other pupils following the national guidance. Establish a queue system with the pupils, use floor markings and promote the message through school and class assemblies. Always check the latest government guidance for your local area about safe social distancing guidelines. Promote the message - Stay Safe, Stay Hydrated, Stay Apart.

Can we fill water bottles for pupils if we don't have access to water fountains?

Yes, you can set up a water refill station. A designated, supervised area will need to be established as the refill station point.

Follow the rule - Step up, Step Back

Step up – pupils place their water bottles (without the top) at the designated point.

Step back - A member of staff fills up the water bottle without touching the bottle. The member of staff steps back.

Step up - the pupil steps up to take the water bottle. The lid is secured by the pupil and the pupil moves away from the water refill station.

at the

refill station

1

step up

place your water bottle on the counter

2

step back

your water bottle will be filled

3

step up

collect your water bottle, put the lid on
and walk away from the refill station



Guide to
refilling
your
bottle

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How can the message about the safe use of water fountains be conveyed to the school community?

Develop clear and age-appropriate signage for your school and place near the water fountain. Encourage the school council members to promote the safe use of water fountains through school assemblies, the school website and social media channels that are applicable to your schools, such as the school Facebook page/Twitter account. As part of the PSHE lesson promote the safe use of water fountains and the importance of drinking water.



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Case studies

St Aidan's Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Haringey

Surveys at St Aidan's Voluntary Controlled Primary School in Haringey found that only a third of pupils were consuming water with their packed lunch, and only a third were consuming enough water during the day.

Working with the National Hydration Council and the University of East London, St Aidan's participated in a water only school pilot, resulting in children drinking more water throughout the school day.

Pupils learned about reducing plastic usage and measured the positive impact that drinking more water had on their work and behaviour. Parents and staff were supportive of the change, and the focus on reducing single-use plastics also supported St Aidan's to become an eco-school.

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Draft policy

We want to provide a healthy environment for all our pupils to thrive, so we are proud to be a water only school.

This means plain water and plain reduced fat milk (plain semi skimmed or skimmed milk, lactose free or soya milk) are the only drinks allowed to be consumed on school grounds (unless for medical reasons or if children are under 5).

Providing environments which encourage pupils to drink plain water and plain reduced fat milk will improve their health, behavior and learning outcomes.

In compliance with the National School Food Standards¹, we provide water and milk for all pupils during school meals. We will actively discourage pupils from bringing fizzy or sugary drinks to school. This means children are not drinking sugary drinks which contribute to many preventable health conditions like obesity, tooth decay and type 2 diabetes.

We care about our pupil's health and wellbeing so we will continue to promote water as the best option and help pupils understand the importance of healthy drink choices and the benefits of consuming water. We will also ensure our staff are committed to model healthy drinking habits.

We have water fountains at various locations throughout the school grounds and pupils are encouraged to drink water regularly throughout the day and carry reusable water bottles to minimize the risk of spillages. Clean free drinking water is also available to staff and visitors throughout the school.

If pupils bring in a fizzy or sugary drink, they will be asked to put it away and take it home and we will remind families of the water only policy.

Kind regards, <Head teacher> <School name>

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Step-by-step guide

How can we make the case for a water only policy?

- ★ It provides a healthy environment that gives pupils the best possible chance to thrive.
- ★ In London, by the time young people reach secondary school 37% are overweight or obese. Specific data for your local area can be found here: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>
- ★ Single-use plastic bottles contribute towards the production of CO2 and one third of plastic waste.
- ★ Excess sugar contributes to tooth decay and can lead to weight gain, which increases the risk of heart disease and Type 2 diabetes and some cancers.
- ★ More than a quarter of the added sugar in a young person's diet comes from sugary drinks, so swapping to water makes a real difference.
- ★ High levels of caffeine (found in sports and energy drinks) and dehydration can cause poor concentration in class, headaches, irritability, sleepiness, dizziness and can ultimately affect attainment.
- ★ It supports a whole school approach to healthy eating.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england

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How can we deliver this in practice?

Stage 1: Education

- ★ Send a letter to parents/carers to explain new policy and changes taking place.
- ★ Discuss water only policy at staff INSET days.
- ★ Hold a school assembly or lessons to help pupils understand the benefits of drinking water and raise awareness of the amount of sugar contained in sugary drinks.
- ★ Poster displays to promote and encourage pupils to drink water. Encourage children to create posters.
- ★ Competitions and activities such as “how much sugar in drinks?” games to engage pupils.
- ★ Book a community speaker from a utility company, or organise a trip to the utility company, to understand where tap water comes from
- ★ Nominate pupils as a water champion/water monitor to encourage peers to drink more water.
- ★ Redesign the water fountains or water fountain areas to make them more accessible and welcoming for pupils.

Stage 2: Campaign for change

- ★ Gain Senior Leadership Team support.
- ★ Consult governors, pupils and parents.

Stage 3: Ensure the policy is implemented

- ★ Agree how the policy will be implemented and monitored with the school's senior management team.

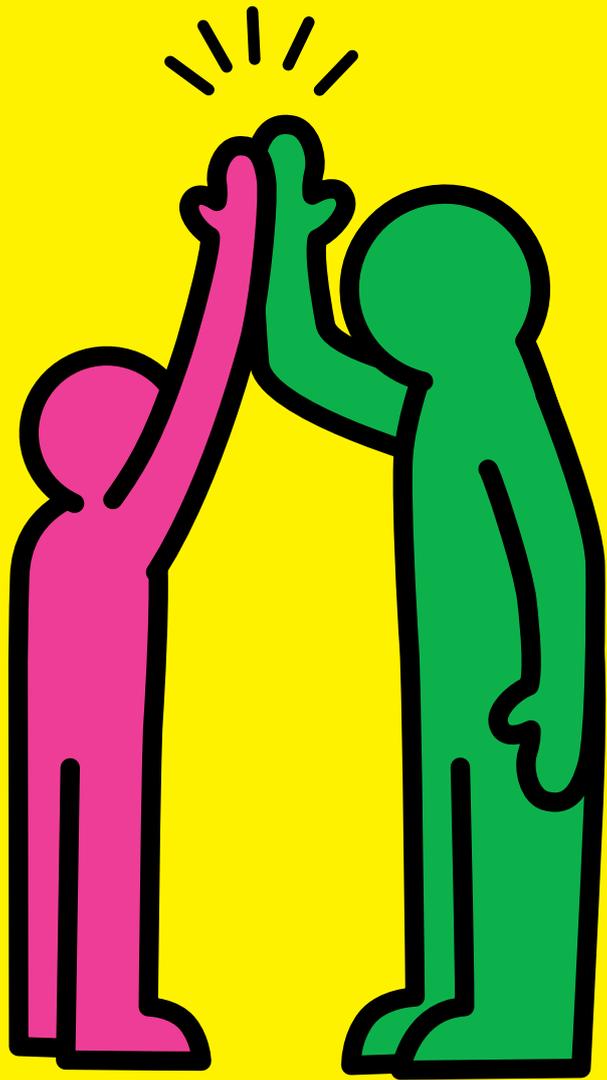
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- ★ Engage with parents and pupils e.g. via a discussion group or survey.
- ★ Establish a method by which your water only policy will be promoted and applied (e.g. asking pupils to put away any drink not permitted).
- ★ Integrate water only policy into the school food policy if you have one in place.
- ★ Letter home to parents including FAQs.
- ★ Schools are encouraged to develop a whole school food policy – to support the water only policy - setting out the school's approach to its provision of food, food education (including practical cooking) and the role of catering team in providing a healthy balanced diet to school pupils. The school food standards have a checklist that can support enforcement and a change in the school's food and drink culture: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools.

Stage 4: Monitor and evaluate

- ★ To establish the impact of the water only policy schools should ask pupils and parents to complete a short questionnaire about their attitudes to fizzy and sugary drinks.
- ★ Their intake of fizzy and sugary drinks pre and post implementation of the policy.
- ★ The findings from this assessment of the impact of the water only policy should be completed to share with pupils, parents, teachers and governors. Longer-term you may like to consider whether the policy has had an impact on health, behavioural and attainment.



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Template letter to parents

Dear parent/guardian/caregiver,

We want to provide the healthiest environment possible for all our pupils to thrive. We have therefore decided to join many other schools in London as a Water Only school.

Please help us with this by encouraging your child / children to only bring in drinks that are water or plain low-fat milk (this includes plain semi skimmed or skimmed milk, lactose free or soya milk. Unless for medical reasons or if children are under 5).

We have made this pledge because we are aware that schools who have adopted a water only policy, have seen pupil health, behaviour and learning improve. Children who have too much sugar in their diet have an increased chance of experiencing tooth decay, obesity and diabetes.

We are also committed to reducing the use of single use plastics.

Water is a great choice throughout the day as it hydrates without providing additional calories or risking harm to teeth. Please help us provide an environment for all our pupils to thrive by supporting our work.

When you are able to please:

- ★ **Have a clear, reusable water bottle to avoid spillages available for your child to take to school.**
- ★ **Fill drink bottles with plain tap water.**
- ★ **Help your child clean their bottle in warm, soapy water and leave it to air dry upside down.**
- ★ **Be a positive role model and continue to drink water at home.**

We appreciate your help with supporting our new policy and hope that you share our vision of creating the healthiest environment possible for all our children.

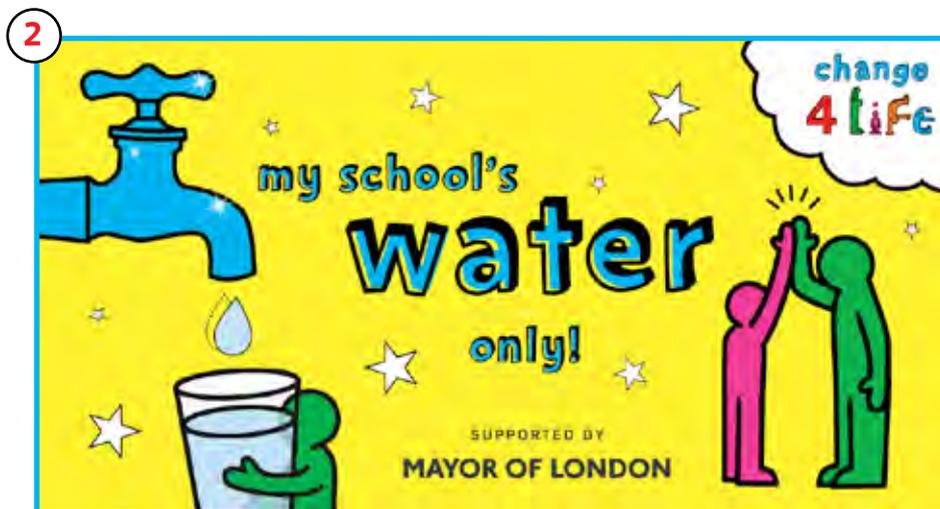
Kind regards, <Head teacher><School name>

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Social media assets



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Useful links and resources

Healthy Schools London

Healthy Schools London is an award scheme sponsored by the Mayor of London which recognises and celebrates schools that are making a difference for their pupils. There are 3 award tiers; bronze, silver and gold. Encouraging pupils to drink more water will help you towards achieving a Healthy Schools award school.

You can find out more here: www.healthyschools.london.gov.uk

Be Food Smart: KS2 toolkit

This toolkit helps teach key stage 2 pupils about what's in their food and making healthier swaps. Lesson objectives include raising awareness of the varying amounts of sugar, saturated fat and sat in food and drink, developing skills to work out the healthiest food and drink choices and understand the maximum daily limit of sugar for their age.

You can find out more here: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/be-food-smart-ks2-toolkit>

PHE School Zone

The PHE school zone website has a range of teaching resources linked to the school curriculum to support teachers to educate children about eating a balanced meal. Available resources include lesson power points, display board print outs and worksheets to educate children about health eating and being active.

You can find out more here: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/healthy-eating/overview>

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School Food in England

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. The school food in England guidelines outlines the role of school governing bodies and stipulates the legal requirements for food provided across the school day.

You can find out more here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools>

Sugar Smart

Sugar Smart is a campaign championed by Jamie Oliver and Sustain – it works with local authorities, food groups and food outlets from schools, to hospitals, workplaces, universities and restaurants.

As a school you can sign up to pledge action and be part of a national effort to reduce sugar consumption. You can find out more here: www.sugarsmartuk.org

Change for Life

The Change for Life campaign provides some great resources and tips on how to encourage children (and adults!) to drink more water and some ideas for healthy alternatives to sugary drinks.

You can find out more here: www.nhs.uk/change4life

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Refill London

Refill is an award-winning campaign to help people live with less plastic; connecting people to places they can eat, drink and shop without the pointless packaging. Anyone can download the free Refill app to tap into a global network of places to reduce, reuse and refill.

From a coffee on your commute, to drinking water on the go, or even shopping with less plastic, Refill puts the power to go packaging free at your fingertips.

With over 3,600 Refill Stations in London alone it couldn't be easier to choose to reuse.

You can find out more here: <https://refill.org.uk/refill-london/> and here: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/waste-and-recycling/single-use-plastic-bottles/drinking-fountains-london>

Thames Water education programme

Thames Water have produced a video with GB Rower and Olympic Gold Medallist Andy Triggs Hodge, which explains why drinking water is so important. This could be incorporated into a school assembly or a lesson plan.

You can watch the video here: <https://corporate.thameswater.co.uk/About-us/Community/Tools-for-schools/Primary-schools/Key-stage-2-resources>

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