Schools' monthly eBulletin

Visit the schools extranet site schools.leicester.gov.uk/eco-schools

October 2026

Welcome to the **October Sustainable Schools Leicester eBulletin**.

As we head into mid-Autumn, it is time to look ahead at all the projects and events coming up.

Upcoming events, projects and competitions:

International Walk to School Month takes place throughout October
World Animal Day is on Saturday 4th October
World teacher Day is on Sunday 5th October
Just One Tree Day is on Friday 16th October
World Food Day is on Friday 16th October
World Sustainability Day is on Wednesday 30th October

Eco Schools Training Session 1 – Thursday 8th October 2026. Find out more below.
Eco-Schools Roadshow – Sign up deadline is Friday 9th October. Find out more below.

Deadline for submissions for our November ebulletin = Wednesday 28th October 2026

Congratulations to Laura!
As many of you know, our Education Officer, Laura, went on maternity leave a couple of weeks ago. We are delighted to say she has welcomed her new arrival and both mother and baby are doing well. She will be back next year once her maternity leave comes to an end. In the meantime, Vicky continues to cover her maternity leave and is available to support you this year.

Take care and, as always, if you need any help or support do get in touch.

Follow us on Social Media
The Sustainable Schools Team have their own social media channels where you can keep up to date with all things related to sustainability in schools.

SustainableSchools@leicester.gov.uk
SustainableSchoolsExtranet
EcoSchoolsLCC
Sustainableschoolslcc
SustainableSchoolsLeicester
0116 454 6746

Eco Schools Training Session 1 – Thursday 8 October, 4-5:15pm

- Are you wanting to find out about Eco-Schools and how your school can gain their Green Flag Award?
- Do you want to find out about national and local environmental events and projects to help you achieve the award?
- Are you wanting to connect with other school staff in Leicester schools and support each other to gain your Eco-Schools Green Flag Award?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes", then come along to our online training session to find out more!

We are running a free online Eco Schools Training Session to find out about Eco-Schools and how your school can gain or renew your Green Flag Award. This training, delivered by the Sustainable Schools team at Leicester City Council, will explain the Green Flag Award process including the 7 steps, provide top tips for working on Eco-Schools, and ideas for new projects.

The session is on Wednesday 8 October, from 4-5:15pm via Teams. Sign up using the **eform**.

Don't forget that we can also come in to your school and meet your Eco-Team, help with the environmental review or run another session for your students. Get in touch and let us know how we can help!



Eco Schools Green Flag Award – support available

The Eco-Schools programme is a pupil-led initiative that empowers young people to lead sustainability efforts within their schools and communities. The programme provides a simple, seven-step framework that guides schools on their environmental journey, focusing on ten key topics, such as biodiversity, energy, litter and transport.

This structured approach ensures that schools develop long-term, sustainable habits, turning environmental action into an integral part of school life.

Sign up and registrations are now open for the 2026-27 award.

Register now at: https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/

Last year, 44 schools achieved their Green Flag Awards, the highest ever number in one year for Leicester!

If you need any help or support with any step of the process, feel free to get in touch and ask as Vicky can come to your school to go over steps with you and your eco group, or can provide support via Teams or phone call. Email Vicky at victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk.

Eco-Schools Roadshow – Book now!

We are excited to announce that our annual Eco-Schools Roadshow is back for another year, with some very exciting workshops taking place - book now **to avoid disappointment**! Initial booking close on **Friday 9 October**.

Thursday 29 October 2026	Brook Mead Academy
Friday 6 November 2026	Sir Jonathan North College
Thursday 19 November 2026	The City of Leicester College
Friday 27 November 2026	Rushey Mead Academy





Workshops provided by: **Twycross Zoo; Walk, Wheel Cycle Trust, Living Streets, Plastic Clever Schools, Leicester Libraries, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF), School of Artisan Food, Climate Ambassadors, and National Education Nature Park (NENP).**

Education Nature Park

The National Education Nature Park is a DfE fully funded programme designed to support education settings across England with increasing biodiversity on their grounds and in doing so connecting children and young people to nature. As well as the many resources available on the website there are also digital tools which enable educators to take the learning outside and through habitat mapping activities and flow charts pupils are able to identity the habitats on their site and then add them digitally to the Nature Park map.

FREE assemblies and workshops on waste management, reduction and recycling for Leicester Schools

Did you know Leicester City Council's Waste Management team offer FREE assemblies or bespoke workshops on waste reduction and recycling for Leicester Schools. They offer a range of activities tailored to your school for all things recycling and waste related, including assemblies, workshops and classroom presentations, tailored to your needs and covering a range of topics.



For further information on the FREE activities we can provide please contact Kimberley Tilley, Service Development Officer (Waste Management), Leicester City Council - kimberley.tilley@leicester.gov.uk or 0116 454 6742

Welcome to Orchard Farm, the home of The Countryside Kitchen Classroom



The Countryside Kitchen is a fully immersive on farm classroom, based just over the border in Northamptonshire, and brings school children, SEN provisions and vulnerable adult groups from Northamptonshire and Leicestershire for 2 hour 'Grow, Cook, Eat, Discover!' workshops, where participants can understand more about where their food comes from.



During your visit, you can explore our working farm, engage in practical food-based activities, and even take home some farm-fresh produce from our small shop. Whether you're a teacher looking for an engaging trip for your class, a group seeking a hands-on learning experience, or a business interested in wellbeing sessions, we'd love to welcome you.

The not for profit organisation has secured grant funding for a number of Leicester-based primary schools to benefit from a workshop for up to 30 children in one class, as well as a contribution towards transport. A pre-visit meeting will need to be conducted prior to the school visit to understand learning objectives and individual group needs.

To find out more information, please email contact@thecountrysidekitchen.co.uk, phone 07752989544, or visit the website at www.thecountrysidekitchen.co.uk

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Green Libraries Week - Free climate and sustainability activities at City libraries



You can now book activities taking place in our libraries for Green Libraries Week. From 21 to 28 October, you can choose from author talks, writing workshops, learning sessions and arts and crafts activities, with a focus on the climate and sustainability. All sessions are free, but activities fill up fast so booking is advised. Find out more and book on the libraries website.

Just one Tree Day

JUST ONE TREE

There's still time to sign up for **JUST ONE Tree Day – Friday 16th October 2026** (or hold your event at any time of the year to suit your school calendar). Last year 33 schools across Leicester took part!

Inspire your pupils to tackle climate action and grow a greener future with JUST ONE Tree Day – a fun, educational non-uniform day where every £1 raised plants a tree in a reforestation project in Africa, Asia & South America. It's **free** for schools to take part, comes with curriculum-linked resources, and helps children feel empowered rather than anxious about the planet.

Run by non-profit JUST ONE Tree – proud partner of the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration** and **Eco-Schools England** – the initiative tackles climate change head-on by growing forests, regenerating oceans and educating future generations. Over 250,000 pupils have already taken part, helping plant **475,000+** trees.

Unite with schools across the world and make sure your school is part of this growing movement. Sign up today at **www.justonetree.life/schools-sustainability**

Twycross Zoo CPD Course for school staff

Join us for a two-day course for teachers and educators, turning real conservation work into lesson plans, assignments, and activities that pupils will carry into the world.

This two-day course introduces a curated selection of conservation topics for use in education settings. Our specialist conservation educators share insight into real-world conservation challenges, and demonstrate ways to embed that content into daily delivery, enriching classroom learning.



Topics and techniques are chosen to support key elements of the KS1–4 curriculums, ready to build into lesson plans, assignments, extra-curricular clubs and more.

This is suitable for: Teachers | Teaching assistants | SEN support staff | Forest school leaders | ITT and PGCE students | Outdoor learning facilitators | Wildlife ambassadors

Find out more here: CPD Courses for Teachers

Pro Veg

Isn't food an amazing thing! Exploring the joy and wonder of food with students is essential in nurturing future generations that are both health and environmentally conscious. It's all about transforming knowledge into action.

With this in mind, check out ProVeg UK's educational programme - Canteen to Classroom. With high-quality, evidence-based lesson plans, we save teachers precious time and effort. All of our resources are fully-funded and free to download.

We offer a range of options to suit your school's needs:

- Canteen to Classroom: Downloadable lesson plans and teaching materials covering key topics like climate change, nutrition, and food waste.
- Quick Bites: Concise, high-impact sessions for all ages that engage students in topical discussion and debate - perfect for busy timetables!
- Cooking with Plants: Interactive student cookery workshops where a professional chef trainer guides students through prepping and cooking a main dish, giving them the confidence to innovate with their own flavours.

Please feel free to explore the resources on our webpage, or reach out if you would like to discuss booking a workshop for your school: www.proveg.org/uk/canteen-to-classroom



A hidden world in a school pond: eDNA at Montrose Ravine

This summer, the pond at Montrose Primary School revealed far more life than the eye can see. Working with molecular ecology company Trace Biomonitoring, the Montrose Ravine Project used environmental DNA (eDNA) to build a full picture of the wildlife living in and around the site.

What is eDNA?

Every living thing leaves traces behind: skin cells, hair, scales, mucus. An eDNA survey captures this shed DNA from a simple water sample. Users can pass pond water through a fine filter using a syringe, then send the filter to the lab. There, the DNA is extracted, sequenced, and matched against global databases to reveal which species have been present.

The sampling takes minutes, needs no specialist training, and involves no handling of animals. It is safe, simple, and a engaging way to get children and adults alike doing real science in their own grounds.

What did it find?

At Montrose, the summer water sample identified 439 different taxa. Highlights included:

- Strong signs of smooth newts, testament to the pond's recovery from its previously anoxic state, and to the work of teacher Will Warley and the local community
- Rich bird life, notable for a sample taken from a pond
- Common Ash, a species of conservation concern
- Five invasive species, including Reeve's muntjac and Himalayan balsam

Results were delivered through an interactive online dashboard, showing species counts and flagging anything invasive or of conservation concern. You can explore the Montrose dashboard here: https://trace-biomonitoring.shinyapps.io/eDNA-Report-Montrose-001-v2/

Why it matters for schools and citizen science groups

eDNA gives a clear baseline of what lives at a site right now. Where a community group is working to improve a habitat, that baseline becomes a benchmark. Repeat the survey later, and you can show with hard evidence how biodiversity has responded. It turns conservation work into something volunteers and pupils can measure, track, and take pride in. Dashboards can be tailored to suit the audience too, from a classroom display to a report for funders, so the results stay easy to understand and engaging to explore.

Interested in your own site?

Trace Biomonitoring's Comprehensive Biodiversity Service is available to other Leicester schools. Find out more at https://tracebiomonitoring.com/biodiversity-edna/ or get in touch by emailing hello@trace-biomonitoring.com to discuss what a survey could look like at your site.

Montrose Ravine: Education and Conservation is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, the project has restored access to the ravine through a new boardwalk and steps, improved the site's biodiversity, and created digital access to the ravine.

Pesticide-free schools - Has your school stopped spraying? Please let us know!

Leicester Friends of the Earth have been campaigning to end the use of pesticides in public places for the last five years. We are particularly concerned about the widespread use of the herbicide glyphosate, often known as 'Roundup', in parks, on pavements and in school grounds. Glyphosate is known to be harmful to humans, as well as to the wider environment.

The Global Glyphosate Study published research last year that shows that even low doses of glyphosate, (below the level previously considered safe for human health), cause multiple types of cancer. This includes early life leukaemia, so they recommend that pregnant women and children should reduce their exposure.

Glyphosate also harms bees. Research has shown that being exposed to this herbicide makes bumblebees less able to keep their nests cool and can impair honeybees' navigational abilities. We all know that we need to look after our bees!

Earlier this year, Leicester City Council agreed to stop using glyphosate in and around children's play areas. However, it is still used in many school grounds, where children spend more of their time. We want to encourage schools to stop the spraying and it would be really helpful to have positive examples to share. If your school has stopped using glyphosate, could you get in touch? We'd love to hear how you're managing your grounds without pesticides and if you have any lessons you could share with other schools.

Hannah Wakley, Leicester Friends of the Earth & Samantha Woodhead, Parents for Future Leicestershire. Please email leicesterfoe@gmail.com



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Our mailing address is:
Leicester City Council – Sustainability and Energy Team
115 Charles St,
Leicester LE1 1FZ
United Kingdom

To unsubscribe, please click email victoria.brown@leicester.gov.uk

