


# WATER ONLY SCHOOLS

secondary school toolkit



**CREATING HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS**



#WaterOnlySchools

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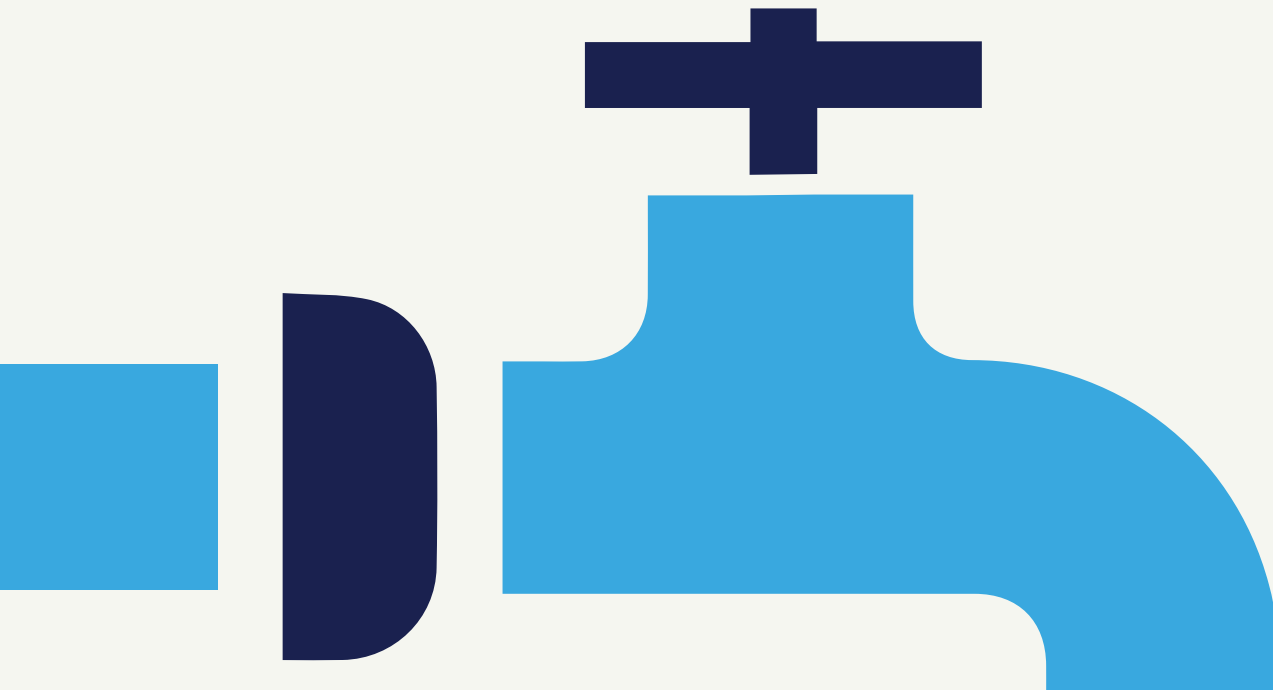
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**#WaterOnlySchools**

# **INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND**



The water-only toolkit for secondary schools has been co-produced with school staff and pupils. It aims to provide you with the information and resources to enable you to implement a water-only policy at your secondary school.

Adopting a water-only policy at your school, in which water and plain reduced-fat milk are the only liquids served during school, is a huge step towards improving young people's health and academic performance.

The Mayor of London is committed to helping young people and families to maintain a healthy weight. Ensuring

the free availability of water at school will encourage pupils to remain hydrated and discourage drinking sugar sweetened drinks.

It is envisaged that the Water only toolkit for secondary schools will have a positive impact on child health indicators such as obesity, dental health and educational attainment. Schools are in a unique position to promote pupils' health and well-being.

Focus groups were held with young people and teachers to understand their relationship with water and factors that would encourage them to drink more water.

# WHAT MATTERS TO PUPILS

from the focus groups



## Community support

“Me and my friends say to each other, ‘let’s try being healthy today’. And we all like, hold each accountable.”

Pupils suggested involving parents, teachers and friends as people who could be positive role models that could encourage young people to drink more water.

## Being healthier

“It’s good to have water because then it encourages people to be like, healthier.”

Pupils had a good understanding about the benefits of drinking water, some pupils mentioned that drinking water kept them hydrated, concentrated, prevented headaches, and helped them maintain a healthy weight.

## Providing more water facilities

“In my school, they kind have just provided water bottles quite readily. And then in assemblies, they’ll talk about health quite a lot, so I think my school did a good job.”

Another barrier that prevented pupils from drinking water was the lack of access to water in schools. Pupils felt more encouraged to drink water when the water facilities looked clean and the water was cold.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What does it mean to be a Water Only School?

Plain water and plain reduced fat milk (this include skimmed or semi skimmed, lactose free, and soya milk) are the only drinks allowed at a water-only school (unless for medical reasons). This implies that all other drinks are strongly discouraged from being brought to school and are not offered on site, including through the canteen and lunch programmes. Schools should ensure that vending machines have healthier options excluding sugary drinks. Many primary and secondary schools in London have already started doing this.

### How much fluid do young people need?

The Eatwell guide recommends that young people should aim to drink about 6-8 glasses fluid per day (on top of the water provided by food in their

diet). Water and lower fat milk are recommended. Water is a healthy and cheap choice for quenching thirst at any time. It has no calories and contains no sugars that can damage teeth. It is helpful for teachers to remind pupils to drink throughout the day to stay hydrated.

### How can we get the pupils involved?

Pupils suggested a wide variety of things to get pupils involved. Some ideas included setting challenges with friends to drink 2 litres of water a day, using social media, pupil role models such as water champions, allowing pupils to drink water in class, reducing the price of water and use of educational posters amongst others.

### How do we go about implementing this?

The school canteen will also need to comply with the water-only school policy. The details about which drinks can be supplied can also be included within the canteen contract. Speak to your catering company or the local authority to make the necessary changes.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How can we get the parents involved?

Parents can also be good role models for their children. By letting parents know about the changes in school (i.e. becoming water only) and their involvement in this is critical. Parents can help ensure that their children aren't given sugary drinks to take to school.

### The school staff is already very busy. Why should we take part?

There are many incentives to becoming a water only school, including, being a Healthy School. In addition, talking about public health topics such as healthy living and water are part of applying the science and physical education curriculum to the real world.

We have worked with teachers from Healthy Schools London, and secondary school pupils investigating ways in which schools can encourage pupils to drink more water and to make this programme more sustainable and feasible for schools.

Monitor the implementation of becoming a water only school, e.g. a questionnaire at start and end of intervention to show your school's achievements. This could help motivate your school, pupils and board of governors to continue the work of being a water only school.

### What if they don't like water?

Encouraging pupils to bring just water to school is a great way to promote water and to keep them hydrated throughout the day. Alternative ways to encourage pupils to drink more water include: making infused water by adding slices of fruit, cucumber, lemon, oranges, strawberries etc. The canteen could provide this during break and lunch time.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**We don't have enough money. Is there any way we can still get involved?**

There are many ways to get involved such as encouraging pupils to bring their own water bottle to school, making water at school free, teaching pupils about the benefits of water through the curriculum and using teachers and pupils as positive role models.

**Some pupils 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. Letters to parents from the pupils explaining the changes and importance of drinking more water, and less sugary drinks is another way to promote the benefits of water only schools.

**What about sports drinks, flavoured water, and diet drinks?**

Surely, these drinks are needed after exercise, or for hydration, or to combat obesity? Water is able to fulfil all hydration needs, and milk provides nutritional benefits whilst sports and sugary drinks have no nutritional benefits. In addition, some diet and sports drinks contain caffeine. Excessive consumption of caffeinated drinks by young people is linked to negative health outcomes such as headaches, sleeping problems, irritation, and tiredness.

**Some pupils don't think that the drinking water from fountains is clean. How can I 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. 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.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 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. Pupils 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.

## 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.

## What's the cost of installation?

The costs quoted on fountains can vary hugely from £300 to £10,000! This usually varies depending on the model and setting, and whether the installation is waived.





# TIPS ON HOW TO BECOME

a water only school

## ① Making water more accessible

**Water is a healthier alternative to sugary drinks for pupils. It helps with hydration and better learning. Fluoridated water helps to reduce tooth decay in areas where it is available.**

💧 Examine the number and location of water fountains in the school. Consider installing water fountains in areas where pupils normally congregate on the school grounds.

💧 Think about providing each pupil with their own water bottle.

💧 Survey pupils at key points during the school term to monitor attitudes and behaviours towards drinking water.

💧 Allowing pupils to have their water bottles during lessons

💧 Have a range of water facilities i.e. water bottles, water cups, fountains, water dispensers. Ensure that water is free on the school site.

💧 Ensure that sports teams and all groups representing the school both on and off site have access to water (fountains, bottle re-fill and/or extra water bottles).

💧 Providing or selling slices of fruits or cucumber that can be added to water to make drinking water more enjoyable.

# TIPS ON HOW TO BECOME

a water only school

## ② Involving pupils, staff and parents

**Parents, friends, and teachers were all noted as positive role models for pupils that could help motivate young people to drink more water.**

💧 The whole school community is involved in choosing the best approach to carry out the water-only commitment.

💧 The progress of the water-only commitment is communicated/celebrated to the larger school community via different means, such as newsletters, Facebook, and/or letters.

💧 Employees, contractors, and others agree to becoming positive role models by adhering to the same diet and/or fitness ideals.

💧 Hold information sessions for parents led by the pupils who want to make the change avoiding the top-down approach and nanny state culture.

💧 Adopting a water aid charity.

# TIPS ON HOW TO BECOME

a water only school

## 3 Promote 'Water Only' through education and awareness

**Education is an important factor in encouraging pupils to drink more water. It raises awareness of the health benefits of drinking water.**

💧 Use PHSE lessons to promote the benefits of water. This can also be done regularly through newsletters, social media and at school events.

💧 Staff should include messages about the benefits of drinking water and the dangers of sugary drinks into their curriculum. It is also possible to examine how sugary drinks businesses persuade young people to drink more sugary drinks (for example, through marketing, ease of access, and low price on sugary drinks).

💧 Using posters and banners to promote water across the school.

💧 Organising writing, drawing or photograph competitions about the benefits of drinking water.

# TIPS ON HOW TO BECOME

a water only school

## ④ Embedding 'Water Only' in the culture of the school

**Pupils highlighted the importance of consistent messaging across the entire school.**

- 💧 Develop good pupil role models, such as water champions.
- 💧 Constantly remind pupils to bring their water bottles and drink 2 litres of water a day via assemblies and school newsletters.
- 💧 Set a tutor group or house challenge of drinking 2 litres of water a day. Earning points or rewards will encourage pupils to drink more water.
- 💧 Encourage the recycling of water bottles at school via recycle bins and raising awareness in assemblies.
- 💧 Align water-only school goals with the vision and values of the school charter.
- 💧 Make changes to your food and nutrition policies and processes to reflect the water-only changes.
- 💧 Add the implementation of water-only related goals, policies, and procedures to school self-review cycles.

# TIPS ON HOW TO BECOME

a water only school

## 5 Monitoring and evaluation

💧 To assess the effects of the water-only policy, schools should invite pupils and parents to complete a brief survey regarding their attitudes towards water.

💧 Consumption of fizzy and sugary drinks before and after the water-only policy was implemented.

💧 The conclusions from this impact evaluation of the water-only policy should be finalised and shared with pupils, parents, teachers, and governors. In the long term, you might want to analyse how the policy has affected health, behaviour, and academic achievement.

# 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 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.

## 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.

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE

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

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

## 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.

## How can the message about the safe use of water fountains be communicated?

Develop clear and age-appropriate signage for your school and place it near the water fountain. Encourage the school council members to promote the safe user of water fountains through school assemblies, the school website and social media channels that are applicable to your school, such as the school Facebook or Twitter account.

As part of the PHSE lesson, promote the safe use of water fountains and the importance of drinking water. All school staff members can promote the safe use of the water fountains by modelling good practice when filling their personal water bottles.

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE

**1** Step up

Pupils place their water bottles (without the top) at the designated point.

**2** Step back

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

**3** 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.



# USEFUL RESOURCES

1

## 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 achieve a Healthy Schools award school.

2

## 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.

3

## 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.

4

## 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.

# USEFUL RESOURCES

5

## Better Health Healthier Families

### **Better Health Healthier Families**

brings together all of the NHS's tips, tools and apps in one place to help the nation make small, simple changes to kickstart and improve health across a full range of activities. Better Health provides essential support and tools for families to help them make healthier choices – from a fun smartphone app to find healthier food swaps, to easy recipes for busy midweek meals, simple snack ideas and Disney-inspired play-along games to keep the kids moving.

6

## Refill London

**Refill London** 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.

#WaterOnlySchools

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