

KS1 Geography: Oceans and seas

The problem with plastic pollution in oceans and seas

NAOMI: Hi, everyone. What are you up to today?

CHILD: We're litter-picking.

NAOMI: Great! You've done a good job there. What have you found?

CHILD: I found this piece of a plastic bottle.

CHILD: I found this plastic container.

NAOMI: That's a lot of plastic on the beach!

We use plastic in many different ways. To wrap our food and drinks. To make toys. To make bags for carrying shopping. There's even plastic where you'd never expect to find it, like in some clothes. So how does plastic end up in the ocean?

There are many ways that plastic gets into our oceans and seas. One way is litter. When plastic rubbish drops on the ground, it can end up in our drains. Drains eventually lead to the oceans.

Another way is through our toilets! Sometimes things with plastic in them, like wet wipes and dental floss, get flushed down our toilets and because they're small, they pass through the grates that are used to catch rubbish and end up in the ocean.

There's so much plastic in our oceans that it's washing up on beaches, even in places where there are no people, like here at an island in the Pacific Ocean called Henderson Island. Thousands of bits of rubbish wash up here every day.

Some of the plastic will sink under the waves where sea creatures can mistake it for food. If a sea creature eats some of the plastic, it might get stuck in its throat, or end up in its stomach making it feel unwell.

The plastic also breaks down into smaller and smaller parts which get eaten by small fish. Those small fish get eaten by bigger fish which can get eaten by people. So the plastic problem affects us all.

Let's check in with our Nature Explorers.

CHILD: Hello, everybody! Today I'm out for a litter-pick with my mummy. Let's go!

For a litter-pick you need four things. A litter-picker, gloves, a bin bag and a high-vis jacket. Let's go!

CHILD: There's a tissue here. Got it, in it goes. This litter is so bad for the environment.

Hopefully you've learnt something more about litter, bye!

NAOMI: Thanks, Aleesha!

What have you found?

CHILD: We found these ropes.

CHILD: We think they might be dangerous for the animals.

NAOMI: You're absolutely right: wildlife can get caught in nets and ropes and this can cause them a lot of problems.

Around the world people are trying to solve the problem of plastics in our oceans. One way that everyone can help is through organised litter-picks at local beaches. Another way is through machines, like this one, that clean up plastic floating in our oceans and bring it back to land to be recycled. Scientists are also working on making a bacteria that could eat plastic.

Our oceans are vast and beautiful and home to lots of different creatures. Around the world people are doing what they can to solve the plastic problem and we can do our bit too! Reduce the amount of plastic we use. Reuse any plastic that we can. And recycle the plastic once we're finished with it.