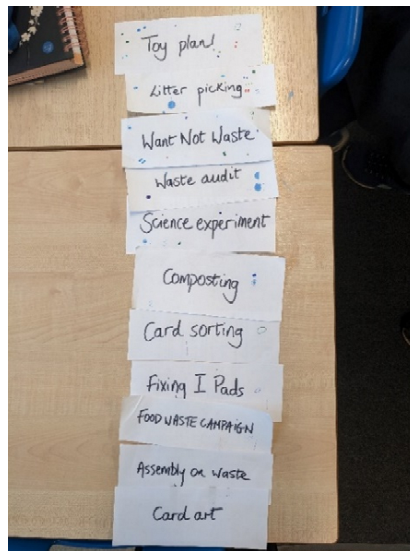
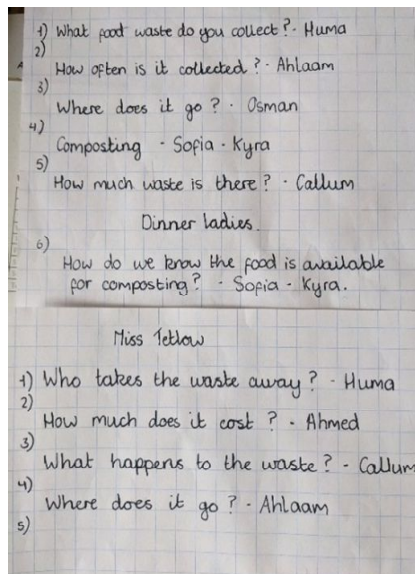


Plymouth Grove Primary School

Plymouth Grove Primary were keen to support their pupils in making a difference to the environmental impact of their school. MEEN worked with a group of ten pupils and in our first activity we discussed what actions could be taken to reduce waste and then voted on which actions the team wanted to work on.

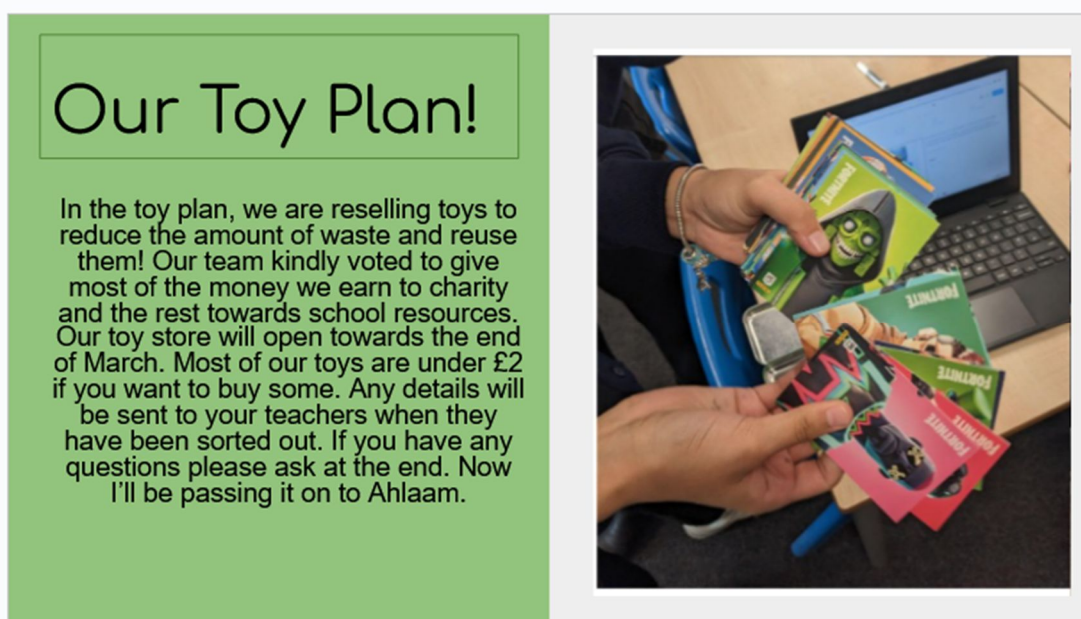


Having voted in favour of undertaking a school waste audit to understand the different types and amount of waste produced by the school, the second activity was an investigation which involved not only a hands-on sorting and weighing of the school's rubbish and a lot of maths, but also a process of engaging with members of staff from the site manager to the dinner ladies.




The team estimated that 35kg of waste was produced by the school every day, which would amount to 175kg per week and 6.8 tons per year. They discovered that about a third was food waste, another third paper and the remainder was a mixture of plastics, metals and miscellaneous waste. On the day of the waste audit the team retrieved about twenty working pens and pencils which they cleaned up, sharpened up and returned to the classrooms.

However, at the top of the voting list the team had decided to set up and run a toy fair. The idea was to put out a call for unwanted toys and then resell them. As the pupils described it in a slide for their whole-school assembly:



**Our Toy Plan!**

In the toy plan, we are reselling toys to reduce the amount of waste and reuse them! Our team kindly voted to give most of the money we earn to charity and the rest towards school resources. Our toy store will open towards the end of March. Most of our toys are under £2 if you want to buy some. Any details will be sent to your teachers when they have been sorted out. If you have any questions please ask at the end. Now I'll be passing it on to Ahlaam.



As the toys were being collected the pupils did an excellent job of researching their value and pricing them up for the fair.

Meanwhile, the decision was made to begin composting the school food waste, so we organised where to put the bins and set them up with a layer of twigs and brown leaves at the bottom. The next task was to ensure that the fruit waste could be collected from classes which meant giving a small presentation to each of the classes involved on the use of the green caddies whilst also needing to organise a rota to ensure the bins were emptied on a regular basis. The team also encouraged the kitchen staff to collect compost fresh food waste from the dining hall.



Alongside learning about how to compost and what to compost we also held sessions on the climate impact of food production and food waste as the team played with climate food flashcards to discover the carbon footprints of various common food items.

The pupils were also asked to deliver an assembly as a part of Science Week, sharing the stage with a physicist from the University of Manchester. Having a guest speaker was exciting, but one of the highlights from the team was when they handed round some worm casts, or worm poo, samples. The pupils were surprised by the fact that worm castings are such an incredibly fertile resource – even weirder was the report that it smelt like chocolate!



Below is another slide from the assembly which highlights the issues that they had decided to tackle.

## Waste & Composting



One of our first activities we did was a waste audit around the school. We collected 5 bins from a few classrooms and the staff room and weighed them. We had to do a lot of math and figured out that we produce 32kg of waste every school day. This means that there is 180-185kg per week and 6400kg per year. In the second picture, we have Sofia busy working on our composting. To do this we collected leaves and twigs to use for composting. We also collected food waste from the kitchen and fruit waste from the year 1 and year 2 classrooms to use in this.

With the team having to collect the fruit waste three times a week the whole process involved a considerable commitment from a small group of pupils.

Unfortunately, we did struggle to organise activities off the school site such as a local litter pick, due to staff cover and external DBS issues. However, we did plenty of other activities with the pupils' chosen science experiment being one of the highlights. This involved examining healthy soil samples

with hand-held microscopes and the pupils enjoyed it so much they requested a repeat of the session.



This activity also featured strongly in the Science Week assembly stating that they had found a habitat they previously did not know existed.

# Science Experiment



MEEN team using the microscopes

Last week we used microscopes to have a closer look at some average garden soil. You would not believe what we found. There was hundreds of different life forms crawling in the soil. We were split ourselves into three groups and each group found something unique and wonderful. We saw worms, that you would find hard to believe but they look scary up close. 1 group found protozoa, which is a form of bacteria. Others saw springtails jump towards the microscopes and nematodes. Some of us even saw millipedes eating their natural diet.

As the date of the Toy fair approached the team decided to have a planning session and then a session creating posters to advertise the event.



The fair also asked for people to bring in old and broken electrical items, as well as engaging parents and family members in learning activities, such as the various games we had played on composting, worms and food. This meant team members needed to do different jobs, with some advertising the event in the playground, others selling toys and yet more running activities.



The fair was a great success with a large number of people attending and a lot of toys being sold. In some instances items were given away with the school's nursery also benefitting. The team were also very pleased that they had raised over £50.

As the academic year was winding down the team were also asked to support recruits for the following year from Year 4. The aim was to make sure that the new team understood how to compost and would be able to continue with the composting in the next academic year.



This involved the team acting as community educators and although not everyone reported back having enjoyed this responsibility in the feedback session, the team excelled in their efforts at peer-to-peer learning. They ran educational activities and supported the new members in the practical application of composting by showing them how to weigh and record the waste and how to add brown material to the fruit mix to keep the compost in balance.

The team were also keen to attend the Youth Sustainability Conference. All the schools in attendance had been asked to run a stall over lunchtime and the group requested access to the hand-held microscopes and some healthy soil for the other guests to examine. They had also been asked to give a presentation in one of MEEN's intergenerational workshops to showcase their work and did a great job alongside Dr Maggie Fostier, from the University of Manchester and two other schools.

The first picture shows how much attention their stall attracted from other schools, whilst the second shows how relieved and happy they were to have contributed to the event.



On their stall they were also very keen to promote MEEN's newsletter, Beehive. This was largely because one of the pupils had written the front cover story and was thrilled to be recognised as the lead author.

Given all the team's successes, especially in training up new recruits, the hope is for all the work to be sustained and embedded in the school in the next academic year.



**Manchester  
Environmental  
Education  
Network**

**BEEHIVE**  
Summer 2023

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- 👉 Contact us at:  
[coord@meen.org.uk](mailto:coord@meen.org.uk)

**Don't forget:**

MEEN runs on project funding but we continue to deliver our newsletter, maintain our website and run free network events for educationalists interested in Education for Sustainability.

If you would like to support MEEN's work please consider becoming a member:  
<https://www.meen.org.uk/join/membership>

or make a donation at:  
<https://www.meen.org.uk/donations>

MEEN would like to thank SUEZ and R4GM for funding our More Haste Less Waste project, the National Heritage Lottery for funding Treemarkable and Unicorn Grocery.

### Meenies want to be Greenies

Plymouth Grove Primary School's 'MEENies' are working to make the world greener. Eco team member Osman said, 'I want to make the world greener because of the state of the environment'. Ahlaam added, 'I want to make the world greener due to global warming because global warming is a threat to us all.' The MEENies ran a school waste audit, then estimated that around the school there is 35kg of waste per day, that is 175kg per week and 6.8 tons per year. Once they calculated the amount of waste they worked out ways to reduce the numbers.



The MEENies really enjoyed composting the school's fruit waste and kitchen waste. In just 9 weeks they have composted 99.7kg. Every few days members of the team, especially Callum, Kyra and Mihran, collect, weigh and compost the waste from KS1. But it was not just about reducing school waste because as Ahmed said, 'I liked composting due to the fact we can find wildlife living inside'.



The team led a whole school Science Week assembly and ran a very successful toy stall selling old toys people had donated raising £51.33 from their efforts.



The MEENies meet every Wednesday and thanks to their efforts, as Sofia put it, 'We are making the school a more environmentally friendly place'. Thank you, Harris (Y6) for crafting this article.