The Plastic Free Schools committee of St Mary’s School in Melrose Investigate the impact of plastic pollution on our oceans.
8 BILLION TONS
(8,000,000,000,000 TONS)
HAS BEEN MADE
PLASTIC CAN LAST FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS
ALL THE PLASTIC EVER MADE STILL EXISTS
THIS HAS BECOME A BIG PROBLEM
8 MILLION TONS GOES IN THE OCEANS EVERY YEAR
5.25 TRILLION PIECES
5,250,000,000,000 PIECES
500,000,000,000 PLASTIC BOTTLES
1,000,000,000,000
PLASTIC BAGS
WHAT CAN WE DO?
There is an estimated 200 million tons of plastic littering our oceans.

- The majority of this plastic debris ultimately finds its way to one of these massive swirling gyres.

- The largest of the oceanic gyres is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

- In parts of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, there are over 2 million pieces of plastic per square mile of ocean.

- While plastic is not biodegradable, it is photodegradable. Sunlight breaks it down into ever-smaller pieces known as microplastics.

- Over 90% of plastic pollution is made up of microplastics smaller than your fingernail.

- These microplastics often absorb highly toxic chemicals like DDT & PCB.

- Unable to distinguish microplastics from food, many animals starve to death, their bellies choked with plastic; others survive just long enough to contaminate our food chain.

- Hindered by a stale way of thinking, gyre cleanup has been virtually nonexistent. Thanks to recent innovations in science and technology, hope is on the horizon.

- Our oceans could well be void of life within the next two generations if nothing is done to stem this.

**DECOMPOSITION RATES**

- Banana peel: 2-3 wks
- Paper: 5-10 yrs
- Cigarette butt: 10-15 yrs
- Aluminum can: 60-320 yrs
- Glass bottle: 1,000,000 yrs
- Styrofoam: never
- Plastic bottle: never
- Plastic bag: never

* Plastic is not biodegradable
WHAT CAN YOU DO?
AVOID SINGLE USE PLASTICS:

• Buy things with less plastic packaging
• Use re-usable water bottles
• Use re-usable shopping bags
• Don’t put plastic down the loo
• Drink coffee from your own mug
• No plastic straws in your drinks
“The future of humanity, and indeed all life on Planet Earth, depends on us.”

Sir David Attenborough