**Plastic Pollution**

**What is plastic?**

Plastic is a man-made material and different types of plastics can do different jobs. Mobile phones, shopping bags, chairs, rulers, water bottles and even clothes can all be made of plastic. Look around you. What can you see that is made from plastic?

**Why is plastic important?**

Plastics can be very useful materials because they can be moulded into many different shapes. They are also quite cheap to make and they last for a long time so most plastic objects can be used again and again and again. As well as reusing plastics, some plastics can be recycled. This means that old plastic is broken down by machines and used to make new objects.

**What happens to plastic when it is thrown away?**

Some plastics cannot be recycled. Some of these plastics are burned but most of them are buried underground in huge holes called landfill sites. Most waste like food or paper can be broken down into tiny pieces and small creatures called microbes can eat the waste and help it to decompose (break down). However, no creatures can eat plastic and it does not break down easily so plastic that is buried can stay underground or in the environment for many years.

**What is plastic pollution?**

Plastic pollution mean pieces of plastic that have been thrown away are found in rivers, in soil, on the beach or in the sea. Plastic pollution looks horrible but it can damage the environment and harm animals and wildlife too. Some plastic pollution is made of large pieces of plastic like bottles or plastic bags but some plastics break up into tiny little pieces called micro-plastics and these can be buried in the soil or float in rivers and seas.

**Why is plastic harmful?**

A lot of plastic pollution gets washed into rivers or the sea. Large pieces of plastic like nets, bottles and bags can trap or injure animals. Smaller pieces of plastic can be swallowed by animals and this can hurt them or it might fill their tummies so that they can’t eat any real food. Eventually, some animals die because they have swallowed so much plastic.

**What can we do to help?**

There are many ways to help stop plastic pollution:

1. Reduce your use of plastic. That means try to use less plastic, especially less plastic cups, straws, bags and bottles.
2. Pick up litter! Can you help the Kids Against Plastic to collect 100,000 pieces of plastic litter?
3. Tell your friends, teachers and parents! Help others to use less plastic so that we can reduce plastic waste.

**Questions**

**Looking on the surface…**

What is plastic?

Which word tells you that plastic is not a natural material?

Name something that can be made from plastic.

Give two reasons why plastic can be useful.

What does recycled mean?

What happens to plastics that cannot be recycled? Give two answers.

What happens to plastic when it is buried?

Where might plastic pollution be found?

Give two reasons that plastic pollution can be harmful.

Can you name the 4 main plastic items that cause pollution?

**Looking deeper…**

Do you think plastic waste should be buried under the ground?

If you looked into a landfill site, what plastic items might you see?

What animals might be harmed by plastic pollution?

Do you think it is OK to use plastic?

Do we need to recycle waste?

What can we do to help to stop plastic pollution?

How can we reduce our use of plastic cups, straws, bags and bottles? What other materials could be useful?